

2013

No More Homeless Pets® National Conference Playbook



No-Kill Community:

What Worked, What Didn't,
What's Next

Brown County, Indiana



**SAVE
THEM
ALL™**

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Jane Weatherford

Community: Brown County, Indiana

Key participant in helping the community to become no-kill:
Brown County Humane Society

Introduction

Brown County, Indiana, is a rural community with a population of 15,000. Brown County Humane Society (BCHS), which is the only shelter in the county, implemented various strategies to make the county no-kill. From 2001 to 2011, the live release rate climbed from a dismal 29 percent to a staggering 96 percent.

Brown County Humane Society was founded in 1966 as a foster-based rescue for abused and abandoned pets. BCHS worked tirelessly to raise funds to open a permanent animal shelter. In the meantime, they leased a building from 1977 to 1982. In 1982, a BCHS member donated land with a barn to the organization. A few years later, the humane society constructed a shelter, which opened in 1987. The organization worked to expand and improve its facility and programs in subsequent years.

BCHS is an open-admission shelter, which means that it accepts relinquished and stray animals from the public, and it has an animal control contract as well. The shelter cares for 1,000 to 1,450 pets per year, with room for 40 dogs and 100 cats at a given time. With more than four times the per capita national average of pets coming into the shelter, the organization has worked to reduce intake.

BCHS has implemented various strategies, focusing on adoption programs, including a foster program, dog transport program, breed rescue partnerships, and off-site adoptions, as well as a proactive spay/neuter program to help the county achieve no-kill status. Looking to the future, the organization is confident that continued commitment to spay/neuter is the key to decreasing intake.



Serving Pets Outreach Team (SPOT)

The Serving Pets Outreach Team (SPOT) focuses on eliminating pet overpopulation through spaying/neutering and educating the public about responsible pet ownership. With nearly four times the per capita national average of pets ending up in the shelter, BCHS took action. An intense spay/neuter effort is the key component of their program to reduce intake. In its first year, 2010, SPOT helped spay and neuter 828 animals and has a goal of 1,000 animals this year.

The SPOT program was tremendously successful and exceeded expectations. In the first year, BCHS saw a 32 percent reduction in the number of cats (252 fewer cats) and 18 percent reduction in number of dogs (81 fewer dogs) relinquished to the shelter. Board secretary Jane Weatherford advises that implementing an intensive spay/neuter effort in the beginning is crucial, but she does caution that the reduction in intake at BCHS was extraordinary and other communities may not experience similar strides so soon after implementation of such a program.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Financial assistance for spay/neuter:** BCHS offers reduced-price and free spays/neuters for people who need assistance.
- **Making spay/neuter accessible:** Jane explains there is an old-time country vet in the community who is affordable but not very accessible. He doesn't offer appointments, so people have to go to his clinic and often end up waiting several hours to see him. BCHS has worked to make spaying/neutering easy for people to do and low cost. Jane says, "You have to put it on a silver plate and give it to them."
- **Partnership with Pets Alive spay/neuter clinic:** BCHS has established a successful partnership with the Pets Alive spay/neuter clinic in Bloomington. The clinic sterilizes a cat for \$33 and a dog for \$53. Pets Alive picks up animals at BCHS. However, BCHS will pick up animals from people who can't get their pets to the shelter. Jane says, "You have to do whatever you can to get (spay/neuter) done. You need to make it as easy and painless as possible."
- **Spay/neuter specials:** At the beginning of the second year of SPOT, 2011, BCHS sent out a beautiful and snazzy postcard to every house in the county advertising \$1 spay/neuters for the first 100 cats and 100 dogs signed up. This really boosted their efforts. As an ongoing strategy, BCHS runs a spay/neuter incentive targeted at different pet populations every other month. For example, in June a "Fix Your Mama" campaign offered to fix all kittens/puppies for free when the client paid to have the mom fixed. In September, SPOT ran a "Fix Your Pit" special where the first 25 pit bull terriers or pit bull terrier mixes were fixed for free. The limited-time nature of the campaigns has motivated people to act fast to take advantage of the specials. BCHS has also offered free fixes for feral cats. Jane

notes that word of mouth is really big in rural communities: “If your neighbor got a dog neutered for five bucks, and it was really easy, he’s going to tell his neighbor; he’s going to tell all his cousins that live around the corner. The word is just going to get out – really, that’s just the way it is.”

- **Spay/neuter price negotiation:** BCHS always offers \$33 cat and \$53 dog sterilizations. However, if someone contacts them who can’t afford these prices, the organization will negotiate the price.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Not doing enough surgeries:** Peter Marsh, founder of Solutions to Overpopulation of Pets, estimates that the tipping point to see a decrease in the shelter intake is five “effective” surgeries per 1,000 people annually. BCHS found that seven to 23 surgeries per 1,000 was not enough, but with 55 surgeries per 1,000 people there was an impressive reduction in intake (34 percent for cats and 18 percent for dogs).
- **Unfocused spay/neuter program:** Early on, BCHS was doing spay/neuter but was not completely dedicated to the effort. The organization was dependent on donations and grants, the money from which fluctuated quite a bit. They weren’t really making a dent in the animal population in the county, and shelter intake was going up. It took an intense and concerted effort for spay/neuter to pay off. In retrospect, Jane says that they should have focused on spay/neuter more exclusively in the beginning, but then hesitates and explains that putting efforts into adoption programs also saved animals’ lives and helped BCHS raise money for spay/neuter. “It’s a catch-22,” she says.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Spaying/neutering more animals:** The goal of the spay/neuter program, now in its second year, is 67 surgeries per 1,000 people. By 2014, the target is to reach a 50 percent reduction in intake from the high in 2009. After reaching their target, BCHS estimates that a continued effort of at least 15 surgeries per 1,000 people will be necessary.
- **Exporting SPOT:** BCHS realizes that addressing pet overpopulation in their community is not enough. The borders do not keep pets from surrounding counties with high pet population rates from coming into Brown County. SPOT volunteers are offering to help other nearby shelters implement a SPOT-like program in their community.



Dog transport

Once a month, Brown County Humane Society works with the CanINE Express to transport healthy, friendly dogs from south-central Indiana shelters to New England, where rescues they collaborate with adopt out the dogs. BCHS sends 150 dogs per year on this transport. As a side note, the dog transport helped the folks at BCHS “see the light,” as Jane describes it, and realize there are communities that are not killing animals, and BCHS could realize this same goal.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Volunteer-run program:** Volunteers are responsible for making the dog transport program happen. They do everything from picking up the dogs for the transport to actually driving the vans to take the dogs to the Northeast.

- **Collaboration:** The CanINE Express dog transport program expanded to include approximately 12 south-central Indiana shelters and 15 shelters in New England and northeastern Ohio. This gave the Indiana shelters an opportunity to work together. The New England shelters have been great at sharing best practices and protocols with the Indiana shelters. Currently, about 100 dogs a month are transported from these Indiana shelters to New England and Ohio.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Expense:** The dog transport program costs a lot in terms of the actual money needed to get a dog ready to be transported to the Northeast. All dogs must be spayed/neutered, vaccinated and dewormed, which costs about \$80 to \$100 per dog. This is money that BCHS does not recoup.
- **Labor intensiveness:** Finding enough drivers to make the 2,000-mile trek each month is a challenge. An average of five vans go and ideally there are two drivers per van. It is a straight-through drive, with one lengthy stop to get all the dogs out, fed and exercised. It's a tough volunteer assignment.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Phasing out program:** Though the dog transport program has been a huge help to BCHS, the shelter would like to wean themselves off the program because of the expense involved, and instead place animals locally.
- **Creating a statewide spay/neuter fund:** Volunteers at BCHS have researched how New England was able to achieve a position of needing to import dogs to have enough in their shelters to meet their communities' needs. These volunteers are working with an Indiana state representative to create a spay/neuter fund similar to those in New England to help decrease pet overpopulation.



Barn Cats program

Brown County Humane Society uses the Barn Cat program to get feral cats adopted. They have not euthanized a feral cat in over a year. In this rural community, many people want cats around their farms and homes to keep the rodent population in check. People are not concerned about the cats being friendly. Jane cautions that all felines should be evaluated before being labeled “barn cats” as some may turn out to not actually be feral.

WHAT WORKED:

- **No adoption fee:** BCHS does not charge an adoption fee for barn cats, but instead asks for a donation. This has encouraged more people to adopt ferals from the shelter.
- **Fixing barn cats:** Barn cats are spayed/neutered before being adopted out. This has two benefits. Obviously, this helps control the cat population in the community. It also encourages people to adopt from BCHS instead of just getting a stray cat from their neighbor since they won't have to worry about a population problem on their farm if they have sterilized cats.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Treating ferals like other cats:** When kept in the shelter, ferals need hidey boxes that they can retreat to while the staff cleans their cages. This reduces potential injury to staff and helps the cats feel

safer. It also allows staff time to evaluate the cats and determine which are really feral. Sometimes the “scaredy cats” will come out of their hidey boxes after they get used to the shelter routine.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Educating the community about feral cats:** There are still huge misconceptions about at what age and how often cats can breed and the environmental “danger” feral cats pose to native wildlife. BCHS plans to work to educate the community to encourage a wider acceptance of feral cat colonies.
- **Decreasing feral population:** SPOT will continue to work with people who have feral cat problems by helping to trap and sterilize the cats.



Off-site adoptions

Brown County has no big box stores, only local mom-and-pop stores. Since this is the case, BCHS does off-site adoptions at a PETCO and PetSmart in larger communities nearby. The organization houses four to five cats at the PETCO in Bloomington, resulting in 85 to 100 adoptions per year, and organizes an adoption event at PetSmart in Greenwood every Saturday, which is anticipated to result in about 170 adoptions per year.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Volunteer caregivers:** Two times per day, volunteers care for the cats at the PETCO in Bloomington. This has helped BCHS avoid additional costs for animal care. It has been a bit of a challenge to get volunteers to drive 20 miles to Bloomington to care for cats, so local Bloomington volunteers are being used as well.
- **Knowing demographics of community:** Cat adoptions at the Bloomington PETCO have been successful because of the demographics. Bloomington is a college town, and many college students have living arrangements that can accommodate a cat. The city of Greenwood, where BCHS holds weekly adoption events at the PetSmart, has a higher median age and income level than Bloomington, so adoptions of cats and dogs are successful there.
- **Choosing stores wisely:** Picking which stores to hold adoption events at is very important. BCHS has had a lot of success with holding weekly events at the second busiest PetSmart in the state in Greenwood.
- **Event consistency:** Being consistent about holding adoption events regularly at a store is key. The public has come to count on and expect the BCHS events at the pet stores.
- **Paid staff person to oversee adoption event at PetSmart:** One paid staff person oversees the weekly adoption events at PetSmart and the volunteers. Because of the logistics of the events, which are held at a store 50 miles from the BCHS shelter, it requires a person to be highly dependable and always available. The investment has been worth it since paying a staff person has created dependability and structure. BCHS determined that they would need to place 2.5 pets per week to make paying a staff person worthwhile; it is currently placing 3.3 each week.
- **Building good relationships with stores:** Both PETCO and PetSmart have been generous to BCHS when the stores run special promotions to help shelters. Additionally, PetSmart offers incentives for

each adoption done through their store. Therefore, working with these stores has resulted in donations that would not otherwise have been realized.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Local off-site adoptions:** Originally, BCHS held adoption events at a local grocery store in the town of Nashville. This provided good PR for the shelter, but since the Nashville community is so small this effort wasn't successful or sustainable. Doing off-site adoptions in cities nearby with a larger population base has been much more effective.
- **Dog adoptions in Bloomington PetSmart:** Trying to adopt out dogs at the Bloomington PetSmart was not successful because of the town's demographics. Bloomington is a college town, and many students are unable to care for a dog in a dorm or apartment.
- **Volunteer-run adoption events:** It wasn't effective to have volunteers oversee adoption events at any of the locations. The volunteers were not familiar enough with the pets or with the adoption procedure to be able to properly counsel an adopter or ensure all the necessary steps were taken to complete the adoption.
- **Holding off-site events irregularly:** Customers need to know when to expect an off-site event to happen. Just showing up on an occasional Saturday does not lend the consistency needed to make the effort worthwhile. Though they did not hold some of their past events on a consistent basis, BCHS now holds events regularly and consistently.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Second staff person:** BCHS is considering hiring a second staff person to help at these events. Although volunteers are a great help, they are not always as dependable as needed. Getting the pets ready, making the long drive, interacting with potential adopters, packing up, driving back, and getting the unadopted pets settled back into the shelter makes for a long day.



Foster homes

Brown County Humane Society has a successful foster program. The organization started out as a foster-based group, but now primarily places animals who need extra TLC in foster care, including those with medical or behavioral issues and young puppies and kittens.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Fosters helping to find adoptive homes for animals:** BCHS foster families become very invested in the animals they care for and often use their connections to find the pets homes.
- **Non-local fosters:** BCHS has had great success with foster families who live outside of the local community in bigger cities. For example, the organization had one particular foster mom who turned two of the bedrooms in her house into catteries. She adopted out 100 cats per year herself. She had a large network — she worked for a large company and had connections with local vets.
- **Being selective about animals placed in foster care:** Young animals and animals with medical or behavioral problems are typically the best candidates for fostering. It's harder for people to meet ani-

mals when they are in foster care since they need to arrange a visit. Drop-in adopters to the shelter don't have the chance to meet foster animals.

- **Being selective about who is allowed to foster:** Home visits are done for any potential foster home to ensure the home is safe for the BCHS animals and to evaluate the pets currently in the home. This is an effective way to get a really good feel for what type of pet the home could foster and to understand the foster family's limitations.
- **Foster manual:** Each foster home is provided a manual with details about fostering, whom to contact if there are problems, basic animal husbandry, and in-depth information related to development of young puppies and kittens.
- **Access to a veterinary technician:** One of the BCHS board members is a registered veterinary technician and generously donates her time and expertise to be on call for foster families that have questions related to their foster pet's health. Having this resource just a phone call away is very reassuring to foster families.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Mass recruitment of foster families:** BCHS tried a large media blitz to kick off the foster program several years ago, hoping to do a large orientation and jump into the program big time. In addition to having a low turnout, it became apparent that fostering is a big commitment for both the shelter and the foster family. Foster family recruitment is now done on a lower key and more one on one.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Foster home coordinator:** BCHS would like to have one person who is responsible for the entire foster program. Right now, the shelter manager is primarily responsible for the foster program but does not have enough time to devote to growing the program.
- **Foster homes trained to do behavior modification:** Getting a pet into a foster home to learn basic manners or a few cute tricks would help move some of the harder-to-place pets. Providing training to foster homes for this purpose would be beneficial.



Breed rescue partnerships and shelter trades

Brown County Humane Society has established positive relationships with several breed rescues and shelters. Indy Great Pyreenes Rescue, Central Indiana Lab Rescue and Adoption, and Rescue Farm are a few of the rescue groups that BCHS works with. When BCHS receives particular breeds, the organization contacts the breed-specific rescues to see if they have openings. This collaboration with other rescues opens up spaces in the BCHS shelter for other animals. BCHS ensures that all rescue groups it works with operate as no-kill and are reputable by thoroughly investigating each organization and getting references.

BCHS has also built strong and trusting relationships with other shelters. Since shelters have different capabilities and strengths, shelter trades have been mutually beneficial in various

instances. For example, BCHS can take care of animals with ringworm while the Humane Society of Indianapolis cannot, so the two groups regularly engage in animal swaps.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Collaboration:** The dog transport program provided an opportunity for BCHS to work with regional shelters, and thus get to know them better. Through these relationships, shelter trades have occurred. In addition, when BCHS considers working with an unknown breed rescue group, it's helpful to call a trusted shelter and ask about their experience with a particular group.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Isolation:** For years, BCHS was very internally focused and did little to get to know other animal welfare groups. Trying to "go it alone" did not work well. Realizing that collaboration is more effective than isolation has opened the doors to opportunities to better serve homeless pets.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Regional meeting:** Pets Alive, the spay/neuter clinic that BCHS works with, is hosting a meeting of all the shelters and rescue organizations they work with. BCHS is excited to be able to meet the folks at these other organizations to expand their own network of trusted animal welfare organizations.



Adoption counseling

Prospective adopters meet with a Brown County Humane Society adoption counselor. The staffer talks with people about the kind of animal they are looking for and what kind of animal would be best for their home and lifestyle situation. The counselor gives suggestions for animals and sometimes suggests alternatives to fit each adopter's situation.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Being open and friendly:** BCHS has a policy of being inviting and approachable. They do not make people feel bad or guilty. The shelter encourages adopters to return an animal to the shelter if things don't work out. It's all about understanding and keeping the best interest of the animal in mind, says Jane.
- **Try a pet option:** BCHS may let a family who is interested in a pet who is ready for adoption (has received all vaccinations, been behavior tested, spayed or neutered, and so on) take the animal home for an overnight or weekend outing. This gives the family a chance to see how the pet will fit with their lifestyle and reduces the pressure of having to make a decision on the spot.
- **Being no-kill:** People feel more comfortable about returning an animal to the shelter since it does not euthanize healthy, adoptable animals.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Stringent adoption rules:** BCHS used to have rigid adoption guidelines, but now they instead focus on having a truthful conversation with people to understand where they're coming from and to offer suggestions and information. Establishing a good relationship with adopters from the get-go is in the best interest of the animals.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Adoption counseling room:** A private area in the shelter to do adoption counseling is on the BCHS wish list. The shelter is cramped right now and it is difficult to find a quiet place to have a conversation.



Adoptable pets advertising

Brown County Humane Society has created a handsome pet flyer that is updated and posted at various locations in and out of the county twice per month.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Volunteers update and post flyers:** A volunteer updates the pet flyer twice per month and then about 15 to 20 additional volunteers post flyers at over 60 locations, including mom-and-pop grocery stores, laundromats, apartment complexes, senior citizen buildings, gas stations, vet offices, the library, county office building, post office, and water company, as well as offices where the volunteers themselves work. Flyers are posted both in and out of the county. Having a large contingent of volunteers helps get a large number of flyers posted.
- **Pictures of available pets on flyers:** Having pictures of pets currently available at the shelter helps generate interest. Jane says people often stop her on the street to ask if a particular animal they saw on the flyer has been adopted yet. In one amazing instance, a very senior dog who had been in foster for four months was featured on the flyer. His original family saw his picture in the local gas station and within hours the dog was reunited with his family.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Pictures of pets in newspaper:** BCHS used to run pictures of individual pets in a local newspaper with a short description. This seemed to be effective at first, but after several years it turned out not to be cost effective.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Pet Tails section in newspaper:** BCHS recently procured a quarter-page section of the local paper every other week. This section is paid for by local businesses and supporters. BCHS provides all the content for the section and is able to feature a cat and dog in each edition, run educational pieces, and promote various events, adoption promotions, and spay/neuter specials. The shelter has received positive feedback from readers.



Animal promotion on websites

Brown County Humane Society uses Petfinder and its own website, BCHumane.org, to promote animals for adoption. About 70 percent of its placements are with people outside the county, many of whom saw the pets online.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Every adoptable animal featured:** Every BCHS animal is included on Petfinder. BCHumane.org then links to the animal profiles on Petfinder. Early on, Jane wondered if they really needed to include, for instance, 10 black cats, but staff were insistent that every animal should get an equal chance at adoption. The strategy has worked out well. Featuring all the available animals has drawn more people out to BCHS who want to go to a shelter that has lots of animals to choose from.
- **Volunteer photographers:** Volunteer photographers come out once a week to take pictures and write up descriptions of the animals available for adoption. They do a really nice job on the pictures and take care writing the descriptions, which helps get the animals adopted.
- **Cat and dog of the week:** BCHS features a cat and dog of the week on its website. The extra exposure has helped these animals find loving homes.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Staff taking pictures and writing descriptions:** The staff simply did not have enough time to give this task the attention needed. Having dedicated volunteers who take great pride in their photos and descriptions, and who love hearing about the successful adoptions, has been more effective.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Videos:** BCHS has started posting videos on Petfinder for harder-to-place pets. The clips show the pets at their best. As an example, for that rambunctious Lab who is just crazy in the kennel, having a video of him fetching a tennis ball will capture him at his best and help him find that active family he needs.



Shelter open hours

Brown County Humane Society experimented with their open hours to find the days and times that were most convenient and best for the local population.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Weekend hours:** Since many people in Brown County are commuters who work Monday through Friday, having the shelter open noon to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday has helped draw more people in and get more animals adopted.
- **Being flexible:** If a potential adopter is not available to visit during open hours, the staff schedules an appointment to meet with him or her after hours. On the days the shelter is closed to the public, if someone stops by and staff are available, they will welcome the customer into the shelter.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Evening hours:** BCHS experimented with being open after 5:00 p.m. on weeknights, but this was not effective, probably because many people are commuters and just want to enjoy some downtime at home after work.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Monitoring:** BCHS will continue to monitor the days/times that people ask for appointments and evaluate the traffic on closed days. In addition, surveys are being utilized to evaluate overall customer service and one of the questions on the survey is related to the shelter hours. As data is gathered, BCHS will determine if adjustments need to be made.



Social media and email

Brown County Humane Society uses Facebook, Twitter and email to get the word out about adoptable animals.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Featuring pets on Facebook:** On their Facebook page (www.facebook.com/bchumane), BCHS features a pet of the week, updates on special-needs pets, shelter supply requests, and event promotions. They also post volunteer opportunities and share adoption statistics and successes.

- **Email newsletter:** BCHS sends out a twice-monthly email newsletter to volunteers and supporters. The newsletter includes at least one pet who needs a foster home and one who is waiting for adoption. It also includes volunteer opportunities, shelter news, easy ways to help the shelter, reminders about important legislative issues, monthly shelter statistics, updates on various programs, and anything else that supporters might be interested in.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Being slow on the uptake:** BCHS is a bit behind on their use of social media and have most likely missed opportunities on many fronts.
- **Email contact management:** Donor software and email address lists are not currently integrated. This has caused some extra work for BCHS to ensure they are reaching as many people as possible.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Twitter:** BCHS has just started using Twitter (twitter.com/bchumane) and will be determining how best to use this media to help fulfill its mission. At this time, how effective the use of Twitter will be for BCHS is an unknown.



Adoption specials

Brown County Humane Society runs successful discounted adoption specials, including limited-time and continually running promotions. When they have a large number of a particular type of pet, they use these specials to adopt out as many of them as they can. These discounts help create a sense of urgency in people's minds and inspire them to come into the shelter to adopt.

WHAT WORKED:

- **2-for-1 cats and kittens:** During kitten season, this promo has been particularly effective. Approximately 50 percent of kitten adoptions and about 25 percent of adult adoptions resulted from this special.
- **Hearts for Hounds:** During the month of February, BCHS did a Hearts for Hounds promotion. All hounds and hound mixes had a \$10 adoption fee. This promotion really brought attention to the excessive number of hunting dogs who end up in the shelter due to the number of hunters in the community. It gave BCHS a chance to educate people about the great family pet a hound can be. All seven hounds at the shelter were adopted in February.
- **Red Collar Club:** Any pet who has been in the shelter longer than six months or is over 7 years of age becomes a member of the Red Collar Club. These pets have a discounted adoption fee of \$10. A red collar flyer is hung on their cage to visually bring attention to them, and they are advertised on the websites as having a reduced adoption fee. This promotion has been particularly effective because some people want to adopt those pets who need the very most help. When they know a pet has been waiting a long time, they are more apt to give the animal a chance.
- **Pet sponsorship program:** This program gives someone who has a special pet they like but cannot adopt the option to pay the adoption fee to make the pet more attractive to someone else. The great

thing about this program is that about 50 percent of the people go ahead and pay for the adoption and choose another pet to give the sponsorship to. A laminated flyer with a heart and the sponsor's name is placed on the cage to indicate which pets have a sponsor.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Not choosing adoption promotion tagline carefully:** A Free Over Three promotion was misinterpreted by some people as meaning if they adopted more than three pets, the fourth, fifth, and so on were free. Yikes! That was not the intent. BCHS was promoting a special to get pets over 3 years of age adopted. After clarifying, people were then more interested, but the promotion lost its punch.
- **Adopt a Lucky Charm:** During the week of St. Patrick's Day, any black or mostly black cat had a discounted adoption fee. This promotion was not very successful probably because it was just a week long. Month-long promotions seem to work better.

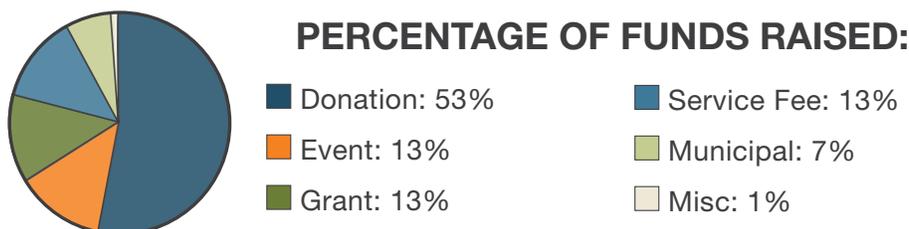
WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Better use of social media:** As BCHS comes up with more catchy promotions, they hope to better utilize Facebook and Twitter to help get the word out.



Raising funds

Brown County Humane Society uses a number of techniques to raise money, including donation solicitation, fundraising events, and grants. Below is a graph showing what percentage of funds was raised via each technique.



WHAT WORKED:

- **Appeal letters:** The shelter has had success sending out appeal letters to people who have previously given money to the organization. The letters include a story of a dog or cat that ended successfully and then a request for money so that the shelter can continue doing their lifesaving work. BCHS sends out three appeal letters per year.
- **Prospect letters:** BCHS sends out a prospect letter once a year to people who are not currently supporters. The goal of a prospect letter is not necessarily to make a lot of money, but to find new supporters who over the years will continue to donate. This year they obtained a list of everyone who had paid dog taxes last year. In previous years, they have purchased lists from mailing companies and procured a client list from a local vet. After crossing off current supporters, they sent a prospect letter to the remaining individuals.

- **SPOT phone-a-thon:** Once a year, BCHS holds a phone-a-thon during which they call people who support them and people who have adopted from them in the past to solicit donations for the SPOT program. This has been very successful.
- **Grants:** BCHS has had success securing grants, including grants for facility improvements, such as a new fenced enclosure to exercise dogs, and cat condos; donor management software; and initiatives, including a volunteer and spay/neuter program. There are many grants, especially for spay/neuter, that can be found via an Internet search. For spay/neuter grants, Jane advises to prove the value with statistical data. In the case of BCHS, it costs \$196 per cat and \$100 per dog for care at the shelter, while fixing a cat costs \$33 and fixing a dog \$53.
- **Fundraising events:** Brown County Humane Society hosts four major events a year: Chocolate! Chocolate!, Dawg Gone Walk & Fiesta, Barn Sale, and Chocolate Walk. All events are organized and staffed by volunteers. Thus, no paid staff time is taken away from the shelter.
 1. **Chocolate! Chocolate!:** This event is held around Valentine's Day at a hotel conference center. Board members and volunteers make their favorite chocolate items and donate them for the event. Ticket holders buy a ticket to eat all the chocolate they want. A silent auction is held during the event. Tickets are fairly inexpensive at \$10 per person. This event is a favorite with locals.
 2. **Dawg Gone Walk & Fiesta:** This event is held at a local sports complex in May, prior to the sports season kickoff. Dog lovers pay a registration fee and collect donations. On the day of the event, they enjoy contests and activities with their dogs. Local businesses sponsor the event and help make it a success.
 3. **Barn sale:** New and gently used items, along with antiques and obsolete inventory items from local shops, are donated to the barn sale by supporters. Items are reasonably priced. People flock to the barn sale year after year.
 4. **Chocolate Walk:** For the price of a ticket, Chocolate Walkers stroll through the quaint village of Nashville, sampling chocolate at over 30 shops. Restaurants, candy stores, and specialty shops donate chocolate for 1,250 chocolate walkers.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Trying to do too many events:** BCHS used to try to do several smaller events to raise money. Events are labor intensive and take a lot of time and energy. It is better to put on fewer events and develop and grow those instead of adding more events.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Getting more from existing events:** Keeping the same events fresh and adding new twists each year are important for keeping people excited about attending. BCHS will be concentrating on making the 2012 Dawg Walk especially exciting, as it will be its 10th year. The Chocolate Walk will be in its fifth year, and BCHS is looking to expand either the number of shops that participate or making it a weekend event instead of just a Saturday event.



BCHS shelter setup

The current shelter was built in 1987 and had a major addition in 2000. It operates over capacity the majority of the time. There are 20 indoor/outdoor dog runs, built in the old style with concrete dividers and chain-link fence. The cat adoption room contains 15 large cat cages and a cat isolation room. As the cat population fluctuates, several temporary cat condos are used. A small room serves as the medical clinic and provides space for a veterinarian, who comes once a week, to spay/neuter shelter pets. There is also a room with a raised tub to bathe pets as well as a laundry/storage room. The lobby area is large and open, giving a welcoming feeling to visitors. However, due to its high ceilings, the lobby can be very noisy when several people are talking at once.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Indoor/outdoor dog runs:** BCHS staff love the indoor/outdoor dog runs. They are large and can easily accommodate multiple dogs. Many dogs seem more comfortable in the shelter if they have a buddy to share their space with.
- **Lobby area:** The lobby area is large and open with lots of natural light. It is welcoming to the public.
- **“Get to know a pet” room:** This room allows prospective adopters to interact with a dog or cat away from other pets and people. It has a window so staff can keep an eye on how things are going, and it is near the lobby so the potential adopter can get the attention of a staff member if needed.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Dog kennels facing each other:** Currently, the dog kennels face each other, which creates a loud and oftentimes overwhelming environment for potential adopters. It is very difficult for people to figure out what a particular dog might be like with all the ruckus.
- **No dog/puppy isolation area:** There currently is no where to isolate incoming or sick dogs or puppies from the rest of the population.
- **Lack of space:** Currently, there is no office space, staff break area, or place to hold educational programs.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **Major renovation or new building:** The BCHS board has started discussions about expanding the current facility or possibly replacing it. They are conferring with other organizations to get recommendations for architects who specialize in shelter construction. There are several items on the new constructions wish list.
- **Free-roaming cat area:** Currently, cats are kept in individual cages, which makes it difficult for people to meet and get to know them. BCHS does have an adoption room where people can spend time with one cat at a time, but it's not ideal. BCHS has plans to add a cage-free cat area so it will be easier for potential adopters to mix and mingle with the felines.
- **Other dedicated areas:** In the new or renovated shelter, BCHS would like areas for adoption counseling, dog isolation, training and conferences, staff breaks, and offices.



Community outreach

In addition to the spay/neuter program that SPOT administers, SPOT is also the community outreach arm of BCHS. SPOT spends at least one day a week on field runs, visiting clients at their homes or attending community events. The outreach portion of the SPOT program helped identify some folks who were contributing to pet overpopulation. Building relationships with people in the community who don't trust or who have never visited the shelter is important.

WHAT WORKED:

- **Advertising free straw to outside pets:** SPOT's first effort was to offer delivery of free straw to anyone in the county who had outside dogs or cats. This was very well received by the target group of people SPOT needed to engage. It was important to deliver the straw so that SPOT volunteers could evaluate how pets were being cared for and offer to help with any issues. Many spay/neuter surgeries were scheduled due to this initial outreach.
- **Going out into the community:** SPOT often just stops by houses where they see dogs or cats outside and strike up a conversation with the resident. Most people are very willing to talk about their pets. Offering free food or a free collar is a great ice breaker. Really getting to know and understand citizens is important in determining how to create a community where all animals are valued and respected.

WHAT DIDN'T:

- **Expecting people to come to the shelter:** Many people in Brown County still think of the shelter as the "pound," where animals are killed. They also fear being judged by animal welfare advocates. It was not until these folks met friendly BCHS volunteers and were treated with respect and educated about the shelter that they would ever consider coming into the shelter. SPOT took the shelter to them and has made friends with many people who previously avoided the shelter.
- **Not making the effort to connect with impoverished people:** BCHS had offered free food to needy families for many years and many folks benefited from the program. The problem was that they would stop in, get the food, and leave, and BCHS never really established a relationship with them. Having SPOT volunteers specifically tasked with building relationships with lower income people has helped tap into the group of people that are creating the majority of the pet overpopulation.

WHAT'S NEXT:

- **County spay/neuter fund:** A few counties in Indiana have set aside funds to help poor people get their pets spayed and neutered. BCHS plans to partner with the Brown County Animal Control Commission to propose creation of such a fund to the county commissioners.
- **Public dog training program:** BCHS would like to partner with a positive-reinforcement dog trainer to offer dog training classes to the public. This effort would help reduce the number of dogs who end up at the shelter due to behavioral issues.

2012-2013 Update

The Brown County Humane Society continues to make great strides in its no-kill efforts. Spay/neuter surgeries are up and, in 2013, there were fewer pets coming into the shelter. In 2014, BCHS expects to see close to a 50 percent reduction in pets entering the shelter. The humane society is also working with a new organization in nearby Jackson County to help it initiate a program similar to BCHS's Serving Pets Outreach Team. And two of BCHS's volunteers have stepped up to help with Saturday off-site adoption events and help coordinate the shelter's foster program.

SERVING PETS OUTREACH TEAM: The Serving Pets Outreach Team (SPOT) focuses on eliminating pet over-population through spay/neuter and educating the public about responsible pet ownership. As mentioned above, in 2013, BCHS saw fewer animals coming into the shelter and is on target to reach its goal of a 50 percent reduction in incoming pets in 2014. BCHS has also reached beyond its borders to work with a new organization in adjacent Jackson County to initiate a SPOT-like program. Funds for the program are being secured and the first spay/neuter transport day is scheduled for October 2013. Discussions are also taking place with volunteers in neighboring Morgan County to create a similar program in that community.

CREATING A STATEWIDE SPAY/NEUTER FUND: In 2013, BCHS garnered the support of more people and organizations, including the Indiana Veterinary Medical Association and the Indiana Board of Animal Health. Getting legislation passed is a slow process and raising awareness of the problems is very important, so BCHS is in it for the long haul and will continue to push for a statewide spay/neuter fund until it's successful.

DOG TRANSPORT: Fewer dogs are going on transport, but BCHS hasn't completely eliminated transport as a way to find homes for its dogs. Some of its partner shelters in the Northeast are still willing to take some of BCHS's more challenging dogs and help find them homes, which has been a huge help to BCHS.

BARN CATS PROGRAM: BCHS has been working mostly "under the radar" with this program. The humane society has assisted many pro-TNR (trap/neuter/return) people with managed feral cat colonies, but has not made a big splash with announcing TNR to the general public. BCHS recently received a grant specifically for this project and will be working to create a marketing and education program in the latter part of 2013. The SPOT program will continue to work with people who have community cat problems by helping to trap and sterilize the cats.

OFF-SITE ADOPTIONS: A volunteer stepped up and offered to go to off-site adoption events on Saturdays so BCHS doesn't have to pay another staff person to go. BCHS has experienced a decrease in the number of dogs getting adopted at its off-site location and so has not invested in paying a second person to go to the events. The cause of the decline in the number of dogs adopted is likely two-fold. The store is getting fewer customers and BCHS has a smaller selection of dogs to offer. BCHS will continue the program, though, because it's still finding homes for dogs and it gives the organization good exposure.

FOSTER HOMES: BCHS has a volunteer who coordinates the foster program and the program is running more smoothly. BCHS has not made much progress in getting foster volunteers trained to do behavior modification. Most of the foster volunteers prefer easy-to-care-for pets in their homes. BCHS has hired a person to focus specifically on pet behavior and as he gains more experience, he can be a resource for foster volunteers who are willing to bring in more challenging pets.

BREED RESCUE PARTNERSHIPS AND SHELTER TRADES: Pets Alive, a spay/neuter clinic that BCHS works with, as well as CanINE Express, has hosted regional group meetings of all the shelters and rescue organizations they work with, which has helped BCHS form closer relationships with other shelters. This has helped BCHS gather data for SPOT-like programs in other counties.

ADOPTION COUNSELING: BCHS wants to provide an area in the shelter to do adoption counseling and preliminary steps have been taken to expand its facility. BCHS has determined the size and needed floor space, but it is still probably a few years away from having a new or expanded facility.

ADOPTABLE PETS ADVERTISING: BCHS has procured a quarter-page space in the local newspaper every other week, paid for by local businesses and other supporters. BCHS provides all the content for the space and is able to feature a cat and dog in each edition, run educational pieces, and promote various events and adoption and spay/neuter specials. The section has been well received by the community; people are eager to hear about the pets featured in the articles.

ANIMAL PROMOTION ON WEBSITES: BCHS has started posting videos on Petfinder.com for harder-to-place pets. The videos, which show the pets at their best, have been a great addition to the marketing of BCHS's animals. For example, a rambunctious Labrador who is stir-crazy in the kennel is shown in the video clip enthusiastically fetching a tennis ball, which will help him find that active family he needs. Although the organization doesn't have time to make videos of all its pets, they try to create videos of all pets who may be hard to place or who have been at the shelter longer than expected.

SHELTER HOURS: BCHS has not changed the hours that it is open to the public, but it appears that more people are stopping by when the shelter is closed. BCHS will continue to monitor the situation and might consider changes to shelter hours in the future.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND EMAIL: BCHS has expanded its Facebook presence, which has been very helpful in finding adopters and reuniting lost pets with their people. Postings about promotions and events on Facebook have increased, along with the number of BCHS's Facebook followers. BCHS is still learning the best ways to use this tool and will continue to use it to connect with its supporters.

RAISING FUNDS: BCHS has been working to get more funds from existing events. However, it has not found an effective way to expand its existing fundraisers, which have continued to be successful but may have reached a plateau. In 2013, BCHS added some new smaller fundraisers organized by volunteers.

SHELTER SETUP: BCHS has completed a sizing and program study to determine how big a building it needs, and has an approximate cost. They are now putting together a capital campaign plan. A new building is still a few years away, but the idea has moved beyond a dream and the board is committed to making it happen.

FREE-ROAMING CAT AREA: Currently, cats are kept in individual cages, which makes it difficult for people to meet and get to know them. BCHS does have an adoption room where people can spend time with one cat at a time, but it's not ideal. They have plans to add a cage-free cat area so it will be easier for potential adopters to mingle with the felines. This is on the wish list for the new building.

OTHER DEDICATED AREAS: In the new or renovated shelter, BCHS would like areas for adoption counseling, dog isolation, training, conferences, staff breaks and offices. These areas are on its wish list for the new building.

SPAY/NEUTER FUNDING: A few counties in Indiana have set aside funds to help low-income people get their pets spayed or neutered. BCHS plans to partner with the Brown County Animal Control Commission to propose the creation of such a fund to the county commissioners.

In 2012, at the request of BCHS, the county commissioners assigned a study group to investigate pet overpopulation in the community and to recommend solutions. The study group consisted of a county commissioner, a county council representative, the sheriff, a local veterinarian and three animal welfare representatives. Research was conducted on how other communities address pet overpopulation. Two town hall meetings were held to gather public input. The final recommendations accepted by the county commissioners were:

- 1) All dogs and cats must wear identification or be microchipped.
- 2) All animals adopted from animal welfare organizations must be sterilized prior to adoption.
- 3) Any dog or cat who ends up in the shelter twice during a 12-month period must be sterilized.
- 4) Any resident who has more than three litters of dogs or cats a year must get a breeder's permit.

Although a county spay/neuter fund was not created, the county gave BCHS \$14,000 to help fund its spay/neuter program. Since BCHS already had the infrastructure in place, the county thought it was more efficient to allow BCHS to run the program instead of coming up with its own. The county council has approved the 2014 budget with money allocated to the BCHS spay/neuter program. BCHS anticipates that as long as it does a good job helping the community spay or neuter their pets, the county will continue to help pay for it.

DOG TRAINING CLASSES FOR THE PUBLIC: BCHS would like to partner with a positive-reinforcement dog trainer to offer dog training classes to the public, which could help reduce the number of dogs who end up at the shelter due to behavioral issues. This program, however, is still on BCHS's wish list and it may be a few more years before they are able to implement the classes.

In 2013, BCHS did hire a person to focus solely on pet behavior modification and kennel enrichment. BCHS could not afford a seasoned positive-reinforcement trainer, so they hired a young man straight out of college with a degree in psychology who wants to learn behavior modification. He has been spending one day a week with two trainers taught by Karen Pryor. The trainers are donating their time to teach the new staff person how to use positive reinforcement to change undesirable behaviors. This is a new position, but so far BCHS is delighted with the results.