

The Decade That Changed Everything

January 1, 2010

On December 30, I did a month by [month review of 2009](#). Yesterday, I posted my [predictions for 2010](#). Today, I review the last ten years, and what is in store for the next decade.

Part III: The Best Decade Ever*

Most pundits have said “good riddance” to the last decade, proclaiming it one of the worst in recent history. From the standpoint of the No Kill movement, however, the last ten years were unparalleled in terms of success. The first decade of the 21st Century not only saw No Kill go from the theoretical to the real, it saw its meteoric rise. Largely ignored and ridiculed in the 1990s and early part of the decade by the large national organizations like HSUS, ASPCA, the American Humane Association, the National Animal Control Association and the Society for Animal Welfare Administrators, No Kill proved itself the paradigm of the future. In 2004, threatened by its success, these organizations unsuccessfully tried to hijack the movement through the “[Asilomar Accords](#),” but fell victim to the [U.S. No Kill Declaration](#), the success of No Kill communities, the 2007 release of *Redemption*, and the will of a companion animal loving nation.

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Loser: *The San Francisco SPCA*

While the No Kill movement saw tremendous growth, success, and national acceptance, the agency that sparked it goes in the other direction. The fall of the San Francisco SPCA emerges as one of the worst events of the decade, as the former crown jewel of the No Kill movement—under the disastrous leadership of Ed Sayres and his hand-picked acolytes—[abandoned its No Kill mission and rejected the movement it helped spark](#).

Loser: *Asilomar Accords*

In 2004, as the No Kill movement gained momentum following Tompkins County, NY’s success and with the founding of the No Kill Advocacy Center, the architects of the status quo met in Asilomar, California to take back their hegemony over the sheltering discourse. They identified the terms “No Kill” and “killing” as hurtful and divisive and demanded that they ceased being used. They argued that the decision to save lives through TNR, offsite adoptions, and other needed programs should not be forced on shelters but left to their own determination. They also argued that killing was not their fault. Despite this, they claimed they were committed to saving healthy and treatable animals, narrowly defined to exclude whole categories of animals including feral cats. Groups like HSUS pledged to enforce the Accords and traveled the country telling groups they could not call themselves “No Kill” or use the term “killing” for animals killed in shelters. By the end of the decade, only two communities had embraced the Accords, and though it lives on for record keeping purposes among some groups, the [Asilomar](#)

[Accords](#) were challenged by the [U.S. No Kill Declaration](#), and found themselves essentially, “Dead On Arrival.”

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The Decade to Come

We ended this past decade with a hope that did not exist at the close of the prior one—in which not a single No Kill community existed. Now, as this decade closes, No Kill communities dot the American landscape, and activists throughout the nation are working to replicate that success in their own hometowns. It is a time of great hope and promise.

As the decade opened ten years ago, the humane movement was (erroneously) united in its perception of who was to blame for the killing and the hopelessness that it would ever end. But the truth came out, and splintered the movement—dividing us into two opposing camps: those who embrace the No Kill philosophy, its achievability, and the great promise held out by the American public’s great love for companion animals; and those who cling to the old paradigm of killing and blaming, on which their hold on power is based. Today, the heads of the three largest animal protection organizations—HSUS, ASPCA, and PETA—tragically remain No Kill’s most vociferous enemies as they continue to uphold the tradition of killing, continue to defend draconian shelter directors, continue to fight reform efforts, and continue to advance deadly shelter policies. We have learned that our fight is not with the many (the public) but with the few.

Loser: *The Dinosaurs* and **Winner:** *No Kill*

As the new decade opens, we stand at a cross roads. There are some in the No Kill movement who want to celebrate every half-hearted and self-serving gesture by HSUS or the ASPCA as proof that they are changing, proof that they can be trusted again, proof that they are on our side after all. Many in this movement seem so anxious to declare victory—to provide praise for miserly and hard won changes begrudgingly given as evidence of a sea change. And this is a mistake.

Now is not the time to seek appeasement. Now is not the time to declare peace. There will come a day when No Kill is fully established, when we can gently agree to disagree on issues because, truly, we will all be on the same page—and the big question relating to whether animals should live or die will be put to bed once and for all, and the systematic killing of four million animals a year will be viewed as the cruel practice it always was; a national shame that is inconceivable to us as a people.

When that day comes, as it invariably will, and the voices of killing are finally silenced, when the practices they condone are unequivocally rejected, when killing innocent animals is unthinkable, and when those who staff our nation’s humane societies, SPCAs, animal shelters, and large, national groups are truly committed to the best interests of animals; then we can shake hands across the aisles over our disagreements, because the stakes will be much lower—and no animal will be killed as a result of someone’s “differing” point of view.

But to behave now as though our goals are the same—when all evidence is to the contrary—and the change we get is nowhere near approaching the vast changes that are truly needed, is to sacrifice the animals for political expediency, for the desire to be the first to “blog” about success, to raise money by falsely telling supporters of “great” victories that are, in reality, merely superficial. Right now, the “changes” some are quick to celebrate are insincere token gestures, paid out of mere self-preservation. They are parsed out begrudgingly, in a miserly fashion with the hope they will quell criticism, not because they are what justice and ethics demand. By praising these minimal actions, when it is within their power to end the killing now if they so chose, we embolden them to continue on this course, and allow animals to be killed as a result.

Today, the will of 100 million Americans is being thwarted by only 3,000 or so shelter directors and a small handful of regressive national “leaders”: Wayne Pacelle, Ed Sayres, Ingrid Newkirk, and a few others. If we had the will and desire, we could—by refusing to accept anything less—impose our vision immediately and without restraint. Indeed, our power is already being felt: [Sayres is besieged](#), Newkirk is increasingly seen for [the Butcher that she is](#), and Pacelle’s recent [temper tantrum over No Kill](#) shows just how vulnerable he is.

And so I predict this: As the next decade comes to a close, it will do so without the Wayne Pacelles, Ed Sayres, Ingrid Newkirks and other agents of killing still holding the power. The reign of the dinosaurs will come to an end. As will the allegiance of the agencies they hold hostage to their kill-oriented colleagues, to their antiquated philosophies, and to their failed models, which hold us all back from the success that their organizations and this movement can achieve the moment they decide to embrace it. Those who replace them will truly champion No Kill both in word and in deeds. And we will see, if not the achievement of a No Kill nation, a nation on the cusp of that seminal and revolutionary achievement.

No more compromises, no more excuses, no more killing. That is the challenge for the decade. A No Kill nation is within our reach.

Looking to 2010

December 31, 2009

Yesterday, [I did a month by month review of 2009](#). Today, I post my predictions for 2010.

Part II: A Pivotal Year for No Kill

Back in [January of 2009](#), I predicated success in Reno, NV and Indianapolis, IN. I was right on the first, and half right on the second, as Indianapolis came out swinging—beating BSL, ending the systematic killing of “Pit Bulls,” having a record breaking day (153) on adoptions, and seeing declines in killing under new leadership. Sadly, it was short lived. The union fought back, and with the help of a corrupt government bureaucracy and the Humane Society of Indianapolis, conspired to fire the progressive director toward the end of 2009.

As to the final prediction, I declared a coin toss:

HSUS started the year championing killing but ended it proclaiming the moral superiority of and easy attainability of No Kill. Which Wayne Pacelle will emerge in 2009?

We now know the answer to that one: His actions in 2009 showed that the head of the nation’s largest animal protection organization is [a dog killer, an apologist for dog killers, an embracer of animal abusers, a thief, and a liar](#).

As for 2010 predictions: *two winners, two losers, and two which remain a toss-up.*

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Winner: *Animal Rescuers*

If animal rescuers win, so do the animals. And if Oreó’s Law—[a new law introduced in New York State named after a dog killed by the ASPCA](#)—passes, animal rescuers will win big—and thousands of animals across the state will be saved. As one reformer stated, “Where New York goes, so goes the nation.” *Will rescuers finally take the power they should have always had?*

Loser: *Ed Sayres*

Every time [Ed Sayres of the ASPCA](#) opens his mouth, he sticks his foot in it. He claims he supports No Kill, but his actions time and time again belie the claim. From saying killing was the moral equivalent of not killing, to opposing No Kill in San Francisco, to backing a killing oriented animal control director in Austin, TX (and then taking credit for the work of No Kill advocates there), calling dog killer Michael Vick’s reinstatement into the NFL “thoughtful,” to needlessly killing Oreó, Sayres may “talk the talk” on occasion, but he rarely “walks the walk.” A new chairman of the ASPCA board, however, is an animal

lover and if she gets the information she needs, Sayres may finally be held accountable. Regardless of what happens between the two, look for the ASPCA's No Kill-in-name-only *Mission: Orange* to continue its fade into oblivion.

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A Banner Year

December 30, 2009

It was the best of times and the worst of times. But 2009 will be remembered as a seminal year for the No Kill movement, as new victories combined with scandals on the part of the “catch and kill” establishment, to make “No Kill” a household word. The Humane Society of the United States and the ASPCA came off as the biggest losers, while No Kill advocates emerged to take center stage in the humane movement...

March Losers: *Wayne Pacelle & Ed Sayres*

In 2009, San Francisco began debate on a city law that would end the needless killing of savable animals in local shelters. Ed Sayres, the former President of the San Francisco SPCA and now head of the ASPCA, sent a representative to testify at the hearing in March, who [called No Kill “radical” and asked the city to continue the status quo](#). Not to be outdone, Wayne Pacelle of HSUS also [told the City to reject the No Kill legislation, and this allow the SPCA and animal control to continue killing](#).

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July Losers: *Wayne Pacelle & Ed Sayres*

Making yet another disturbing appearance on the worst of 2009, Sayres and Pacelle return for more ignominy. After his release from prison, Pacelle and HSUS help the [most notorious animal abuser of our time get reinstated into the National Football League](#), erasing any punishment and making Vick a millionaire once more. Vick gets his life back, while the dogs he killed are still, well, dead. As dog lovers across the country cry foul, [Ed Sayres of the ASPCA calls the NFL Commissioner’s decision to reinstate Vick “thoughtful.”](#) Vick follows up by saying he wants dogs again: will HSUS help him with that also? And will the ASPCA call that result “thoughtful”?

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November Loser: ASPCA

An abused dog who survived being thrown from a sixth floor Brooklyn rooftop does not survive the “rescue” by the ASPCA. Ed Sayres, the President of the ASPCA, [ordered a dog named “Oreo” killed despite the offer of guaranteed lifetime care by a No Kill sanctuary](#). Dog lovers across the country are outraged, prompting two New York State legislators to [introduce “Oreo’s Law” which would prevent shelters from killing animals when a rescue group offers to save that animal’s life](#). Leadership of the No Kill movement, the nation’s top animal law professors, rescuers and shelter reformers across New York State and the country immediately embraced the legislation. Only the ASPCA came out in opposition. A few weeks later in December, the ASPCA does it again, [killing a dog named Max despite a sanctuary’s offer of lifetime care](#).

An Avalanche of Bad News for Abused Dogs

December 22, 2009

ASPCA kills again; Then allegedly returns neglected dog to home; Some rescued Colorado dogs may be destined for death.

As much of the nation endures one of the worst winter storms in history, the past few days have also brought an avalanche of bad news for abused dogs, who face additional betrayal at the hands of those who are supposed to protect them.

Just a few short weeks ago, Ed Sayres, the beleaguered president of the ASPCA, ordered [the killing of the abused dog Oreo, despite the offer of a rescue group to save her life](#). The unnecessary killing of Oreo, who survived being thrown off of a sixth floor Brooklyn rooftop, but could not survive the “rescue” by the ASPCA, sparked national outrage and led to [the introduction of “Oreo’s Law,”](#) pending New York State legislation which would make it illegal for shelters like the ASPCA to kill animals when bona fide rescue groups are willing to save their lives.

Some groups have questioned the need for Oreo’s Law, but any debate as to the pressing need for such legislation should be put to rest once and for all because Sayres has done it again. [Mariah’s Promise, a No Kill shelter and sanctuary in Colorado](#), offered to save Max, a Pit Bull-type dog the ASPCA was determined to kill. Like Oreo, the ASPCA deemed Max “aggressive.” Mariah’s Promise has rescued dogs like Max from shelters in New York City in the past. Last Thanksgiving, they saved a dog deemed vicious from animal control in the City. According to Toni Phillips, the director of Mariah’s Promise, that dog is now a favorite at the sanctuary.

Ed Sayres was personally informed by the representative from Mariah’s Promise that a space was available for Max in the Colorado sanctuary, and that transport of the dog to Colorado had already been arranged. The Behavior Department at the ASPCA was also informed of this fact. Despite this, the ASPCA killed Max anyway.

Mariah’s Promise is a well known sanctuary in Colorado and has saved over 500 Pit Bull-type dogs at danger of being killed from places like Denver, where regressive bans result in mass killing of dogs deemed Pit Bulls, including healthy, friendly puppies. It is also currently caring for nine of the 100 “sled dogs” rescued from an abusive home in Colorado, a case that has [made national headlines](#).

While some of the Colorado dogs have gone to killing shelters, such as Pikes Peak Humane Society and Denver Dumb Friends League, only Mariah’s Promise has ensured that none of the dogs will be killed. Pikes Peak Humane Society has stated that only four of the 10 dogs it received “will likely make a full recovery” and “time will only tell for the rest.” Given that Pikes Peak is a killing shelter (over 9,000 in 2008) and has dubbed itself a “no suffering” shelter, a euphemism for killing designed to respond to the public’s demand for No Kill solutions, it is not clear what this means.

Mariah’s Promise indicates that all nine of the dogs it received—though severely malnourished, including one blind dog—will be saved. “They need medical care which they will get, and all of them will be nursed back to health.” These are the types of assurances the dogs deserve and animal lovers should expect from every agency who took in these abused dogs. If they refuse to save them, Mariah’s Promise

has also offered to take the others. It is not clear whether the other shelters will take them up on the offer, if they refuse to save the dogs themselves.

At the same time that Sayres killed both Oreo and Max, despite offers to save them by No Kill sanctuaries, there are also [reports](#) being circulated that the ASPCA has returned a dog named "Justice" to his "owners" despite the fact that the dog clearly showed signs of neglect. Justice was "underweight, suffering from extreme mange and has bite marks on his neck." Justice is a chained dog, living outdoors, with little to no fur. The weather in the area will dip into the teens this week. (I am still trying confirm specific facts about this case.)

Enough is enough. Not only is it time to stop Ed Sayres before he kills again, it is time for all groups who claim to speak on behalf of animals to support Oreo's Law. And we need these laws, not just in New York, but in Colorado and all over the country.

The Meaning of Oreo

November 16, 2009

Over the last several days, the ASPCA's killing of a dog named Oreo has ignited a furor among animal lovers nationwide. They tried to justify it by claiming she was aggressive. But the question of whether or not Oreo was beyond rehabilitation is merely a side story to the most significant issues raised by Oreo's execution. And while Oreo's killing by those who were supposed to be her protectors has left too many questions unanswered, what has emerged as the most significant one is why did Ed Sayres, the President of the ASPCA, rush to kill an abused dog when the public demanded that she be saved and a sanctuary had offered her lifetime care?

Last June, a one-year old dog named Oreo was intentionally thrown off a sixth floor Brooklyn roof top by her abuser. Oreo sustained two broken legs and a fractured rib. Although the facts are sketchy, Oreo also appears to have been beaten in the past—several of the neighbors in the building where Oreo lived reported hearing the sounds of the dog being hit. The ASPCA nursed her back to health and arrested the perpetrator. They also dubbed her the “miracle dog.”

The miracle was short-lived. According to Ed Sayres, the President of the ASPCA, when Oreo recovered from her injuries, she started to show aggression. After a series of temperament tests, Ed Sayres says he made the decision to kill her. The *New York Times* reported the story the day before Oreo's scheduled execution. Despite the best efforts of Sayres to spin the outcome, the furor and condemnation by dog lovers all over the country was immediate.

In an attempt to contain the wrath of the animal-loving community against him, Sayres issued a press release replete with crocodile tears (“We are all upset by this”), saying that she was truly vicious, and arguing that lifetime care in a sanctuary would have meant no quality of life. Sometimes, Sayres said, there are no happy endings. On Friday, Oreo laid dead, the victim not of her former abuser, but of an overdose of poison from a bottle marked “Fatal-Plus,” at the hands of a shelter bureaucrat.

Refusing a Lifesaving Alternative

Facts are troubling things. Facts get in the way of a contrived story. And there is one troubling fact that all of Ed Sayres' double-speak simply cannot overcome. Try as the ASPCA might to argue that Oreo's death was unavoidable, Sayres' misrepresentation has one fundamental obstacle: Oreo had a place to go. The issue doesn't turn on the real extent of Oreo's aggression. The real issue is that a No Kill shelter and sanctuary, with experience rehabilitating aggression in dogs, which works with area shelters that could have vouched for their credibility, which enjoys wide community esteem, and which is only a short drive outside of New York City, offered to give her lifetime sanctuary, and was refused.

They called and left a voice mail message on Sayres' telephone. They called his secretary. They called the ASPCA Press Office. They contacted everyone on the ASPCA website contact page. And they were ignored, hung up on and lied to.

Pets Alive in Middletown, New York, is not only a member of the Mayor's Alliance for New York City animals, of which the ASPCA is also a member, they are not only an Alliance-approved rescue partner, they not only have had experience with aggressive dogs, but they agreed to take responsibility for a dog the ASPCA was committed to putting in a body bag and then dumping in a landfill. Even though Pets

Alive is already an approved rescue partner, the fact that Oreo may have presented a special case didn't mean the offer should have been rejected out of hand. The ASPCA could have visited Pets Alive; they could have checked veterinary references, community references, could have insisted on specific precautions and liability waivers. But instead, on Friday, before the "media circus got out of hand," Ed Sayres, willfully, neglectfully, cruelly, and dishonestly, chose to kill Oreo instead. That is the true face of the ASPCA. And that is intolerable.

Lowering the Bar

Ironically, had these events taken place in California, it would have been illegal for the ASPCA to kill Oreo instead of giving her to Pets Alive. In 1998, the California legislature overwhelming and bipartisanly passed a law making it illegal for a shelter to kill a dog if a No Kill shelter or rescue group is willing to save that dog—even in cases where the shelter says the dog is aggressive. Having worked in San Francisco, Sayres should be sensitive to the fact that the ASPCA, which claims a leadership position in this movement, should not have a more regressive policy than one approved by an overwhelming number of politicians on both sides of the political spectrum and the State's Republican governor.

And yet the ASPCA, under Sayres, proves once again that the large national organizations have no vision, no desire to truly raise the status of animals in society, and despite claiming they are setting the bar on how society should relate to animals, that they are in reality staffed by those who would rather perpetuate the violence and betrayal Oreo already experienced by killing her—even as true animals lovers offered them a simple, life-affirming alternative, and the second chance at life Oreo so richly deserved.

And as an agency which claims to be the leading voice of animals, the ASPCA has a duty to continually push the envelope and raise the bar on these issues: to ask the tough questions, to give the issue the time it needs to arrive at a just and thoughtful resolution. Instead, the ASPCA rushed to kill Oreo and permanently closed the door to an animal that needed the full force of the ASPCA's compassion—and vast resources—the most.

Ignoring the Public

A few short years ago, this case would have had the same tragic ending, with the majority of the dog loving public angry that Oreo's life had come to this short end. But their anger would have been directed only at her former abuser. Today, that anger is still strong, but it is also being directed at the agency which was supposed to protect her from that ultimate harm and fundamentally failed. This is the same anger that forced Humane Society of the United States CEO Wayne Pacelle—like Sayres, another stalwart defender of killing—to stop pursuing the automatic destruction of abuse victims. Today, despite the claims of aggression which would have ended the dialog in the past, people want, deserve, and believe the dogs deserve the happy endings to which they are not only entitled, but which are readily available if men like Sayres and Pacelle would only give it to them. But time and time again, they choose not to.

That Oreo may not have been an immediate adoption candidate due to aggression issues is therefore secondary to the will of the people who wanted Oreo saved, who demanded that Oreo be saved, who were not swayed by false calculations of quality of life, of talk of being traumatized, of any other rationale that would have allowed Sayres and Pacelle to kill dogs without public condemnation. People are tired of the excuses, they are tired of the justifications, and they are tired of the killing.

Because I was quoted in the *New York Times* article (a bit misquoted actually as I would never call a dog an “it.” I was referring to the testing, not the dog), I was flooded by e-mails and telephone calls. The anger at Sayres was resolute. As one of those individuals noted,

Missing completely from the ASPCA’s response is any acknowledgment whatsoever of the concerns and outrage of the public who fund their work. The public was disrespected; their concerns guided by compassion disregarded.

The gulf between what the public expects from a humane society and the conduct of the ASPCA and others in their league is so at odds with humanity, a gulf so wide, it cannot be crossed. Instead of building a bridge to create needed dialog, Ed Sayres mounted a barricade from which he ran a self-serving propaganda campaign to force his views. He forgot that the ASPCA is publicly funded. He behaved like a dictator, not a leader.

Set Up to Fail?

No analysis on Oreo’s death would be complete without an evaluation of how the ASPCA determined that she was aggressive: Did the ASPCA evaluate her fairly? Given the abuse she suffered, how painful was she? Did they give her enough time to learn to trust again? Critics have charged that the ASPCA set her up for failure. That is an important issue and one that cannot be left to the often self-serving claims that have defined the ASPCA over the years.

As in many of these cases, people are questioning whether she was truly as aggressive as Sayres is trying to make out. There have been unconfirmed reports that staff and volunteers have claimed the ASPCA is exaggerating, and the ASPCA has not yet released any videotapes of her which would shed light on the real extent of her alleged aggression. According to unconfirmed reports, two staff members indicated that while the dog did show aggression, she could also be very affectionate, and as a result, they felt she was treatable. Unconfirmed reports also indicate that staff members asked Sayres for a reprieve so she could be placed in a sanctuary. And finally, unconfirmed reports indicate that a volunteer was able to go in and handle Oreo, despite some aggression issues. I have not been able to verify the veracity of these claims, but since this is secondary to the main issues above, their resolution would not alter what should have been the outcome.

On top of these nagging issues, there is the question of whether Ed Sayres is fit to make the final determination. I worked very closely with Sayres at the San Francisco SPCA. It was Sayres who was responsible for the decline and eventual abandonment of the No Kill goal in San Francisco. It was Sayres who embarked on the boondoggle of building a \$20 million specialty hospital despite other specialty veterinary hospitals in that city and surrounding areas; and projections that it was not needed, would ultimately harm the San Francisco SPCA’s finances without meeting an unmet need, and cause programs for homeless animals to be curtailed. It is no surprise that those predictions have come to pass: The SPCA is now losing \$3,000,000 every year, has eliminated 25% of its staff, has cut lifesaving programs, and appears to be racing toward financial oblivion, all due to the legacy of Sayres’ catastrophic leadership. As I wrote in *Redemption* about his tenure in San Francisco, Sayres inherited an,

SPCA with a strong infrastructure, departments that had become the envy of the growing No Kill movement, and a fundraising apparatus that had amassed an endowment of over forty million dollars. [He] would not fully leverage the opportunity he was given. In a short period of time,

with money being wasted, fundraising opportunities missed, deficits created, an increasingly bloated bureaucracy developing, and key programs gutted or eliminated, the SPCA finally abandoned all pretensions toward No Kill in San Francisco.

This is a man who, as head of the wealthiest and most powerful SPCAs in the nation, claimed on the front page of *USA Today*, the most widely circulated newspaper in the country, that not killing was the moral equivalent of killing. This is a man who in Austin, Texas, has chosen to attack No Kill and shelter reform advocates and hinder their goals by throwing his organization's support behind a shelter director who refuses to embrace alternatives to killing and who also kills tens of thousands of animals annually despite hundreds of empty cages at her facility. Sayres is also taking credit for the modest decline in killing this year which is exclusively the result of the work of a private rescue group saving the animals the ASPCA-partner shelter is otherwise determined to kill.

During my tenure with him in San Francisco, Sayres rarely ventured out of his office, almost never walked the kennels or interacted with the animals, and was so detached, that he simply signed off on whatever his staff said, no matter how regressive those he hired were (and there are plenty of regressive people at the ASPCA also). But there is one incident in particular which sheds light on the Oreo case.

When I was working with Sayres in San Francisco, he had signed off on the killing of a dog who I felt deserved further evaluation. He made the decision to kill a dog without seeing the dog, without observing the evaluation, without, I would venture, even being able to pick the dog out of a kennel of other dogs. I objected and suggested that we needed to set the bar higher. I gave him a formal proposal that, before killing an animal, he appoint a *guardian ad litem*, someone who would represent the dog (or cat) the same way an attorney would defend the accused during a death penalty case. It would not cost him anything, as I was an attorney, I already worked there, and I agreed to represent the animals whenever a behaviorist or veterinarian issued the death warrant. He said, "No." Ironically, that is the process used in the criminal and civil case against dog slayer Michael Vick. A guardian was appointed by the federal judge overseeing the disposition of the dogs. As a result, the vast majority of Vick's victims were saved. In other words, when Sayres is given the chance to be fully involved, he chooses not to be, even when it means death for dogs at the shelter he oversees; or when it means a lost opportunity to advance this movement, as would befit someone in his position.

The Great Betrayal

In 1866, over 140 years ago, Henry Bergh began the modern humane movement in the United States with the founding of the ASPCA. For the rest of his life, Bergh devoted himself to saving the lives of animals in and around New York City. For over two decades, Bergh spent each and every night, regardless of freezing temperatures, walking the streets of New York City tending to sick animals, fighting for their rights, working to save them, and confronting—and stopping—their abusers.

At the time, New York City had the largest horse-pulled railway in the world. In one poignant incident, one evening in February of 1871 during the evening rush hour, working people rushed for the cars, and the horses began to strain with heavy loads through snow and slush. As one overloaded car reached the corner near where Bergh stood, the driver was ready to give the horses another lash when the call came to "Stop!" and "Unload!" It was Bergh. "Who the hell are you?" came the reply from the driver. "Unload!" called the order again. When the driver refused, Bergh reportedly pitched him into a snow bank and unhitched the horses. Often, Bergh would completely stop traffic on the lines, causing traffic

jams that would leave thousands of people stranded and cursing to no avail—because one man had stopped all the traffic to protect a single horse.

As hard as Bergh labored to protect all animals, he worked equally hard to protect dogs, particularly against abuses at the hands of city dogcatchers. Through prosecutions of abusive dogcatchers, lobbying for stronger laws and greater protections, and by striving himself to save them, he reduced deaths for dogs at the hands of the city pound by over 80 percent in just one year alone. Henry Bergh would not have killed Oreo.

Today, Ed Sayres sits in the chair once occupied by Bergh. He does not advance the cause of animal protection. He is not a tireless champion on their behalf. He does not faithfully represent Bergh's vision, nor does he faithfully represent how most Americans now feel about animals. Instead, when given the opportunity to save the life of an animal, he cowers in his office, refusing to return telephone calls, while collecting a paycheck of half a million dollars a year. On the afternoon of Friday, November 13, Ed Sayres had a personal driver take him home. Oreo's body was sitting in a freezer, waiting to be delivered to a landfill.

Toward the end of his life, Bergh would often lament, "I hate to think what will become of this [SPCA] when I am gone." Ed Sayres has answered that question for him. And Sayres' answer: "an agency that kills savable dogs," would have hurt Henry very deeply.

When I was growing up, the ASPCA represented very little beyond an annual fundraising calendar with pictures of kittens and puppies and platitudes about the human-animal bond. And while we have all grown up to demand more than calendars and killing, the ASPCA has not. And while that agency claims to be a leading voice for the animals and the people who love them, their actions toward Oreo demonstrate otherwise: The ASPCA doesn't represent the dog lovers at Pets Alive. It doesn't represent the values of the American people. It no longer represents the fierce compassion of its founder. And it certainly doesn't represent dogs like Oreo.

Down the Rabbit Hole

August 5, 2009

After almost twenty years working to reform the humane movement, to bring it back to its original mission of saving lives, I have experienced many unexpected and heartbreaking moments of animals being betrayed by their so-called protectors. But last week was especially brutal, when not only the Humane Society of the United States, but other national groups released statements supporting the reinstatement of Michael Vick, the most notorious animal abuser of our time, into the National Football League (NFL).

Wayne Pacelle of HSUS defended Vick's right to get his life back together and play in the NFL again.

Ed Sayres, the President of the ASPCA, praised the Commissioner of the NFL for reinstating Vick:

...[T]he Commissioner has been particularly thoughtful and has weighed every factor in his deliberations. The ASPCA can only offer him our gratitude for the gravity to which he has lent the issue of animal cruelty, as well as the provisions that the Commissioner has set forth to ensure that Mr. Vick has a positive impact on the NFL and his community.

Opportunities for redemption are rare—but that is exactly the opportunity that awaits Mr. Vick...

Other national groups, while withholding judgment on Vick's repentance, nonetheless failed to condemn the NFL in their own statements. One of those groups writes:

Any person who is released from prison is allowed to seek and hold employment. The National Football League today decided to give Mr. Vick a chance to return to work as a professional football player. He says he understands the mistakes he made in the past, and we can only hope that he is sincere and able to take steps to turn his life around.

For me, the facts speak for themselves:

The Investigator in charge of the Michael Vick case writes that Vick "thought it was funny to watch the dogs... injure or kill the other dogs." He also writes that Vick and his associates killed dogs in many ways:

- By hanging: "by placing a nylon cord over a 2 x 4 that was nailed to two trees located next to the big shed."
- By drowning: "by putting the dogs' heads in a 5 gallon bucket of water."
- By blunt force trauma: "by slamming [dogs] to the ground several times ... breaking the dog's back or neck."
- By shooting: "by shooting the animal with a .22 caliber handgun."
- By electrocution. According to one of the people Vick paid "to live on the property, take care of the dogs, and arrange dog fights," "He admitted killing numerous dogs after 'testing' and after fights by shooting and electrocuting the dogs and then burying them on the... property."

This sterile, though brutal, rendition of the facts does not nearly tell the story of what the dogs went through. According to Bad Rap, one of the groups who rescued the victims of Vick's brutality:

I just can't get myself away from the swimming pool in Vick's yard. I first learned about it while riding in the back seat of a federal agent's car that sweltering Tuesday back in Sept 07. The agent was assigned with escorting us to the various Virginia shelters so we could evaluate "the evidence" otherwise known as 49 pit bulls – now known as cherished family pets: Hector, Uba, Jhumpa, Georgia, Sweet Jasmine and the rest. I'm not sure if sharing insider information with us was kosher, but you know how driving down long country roads can get you talking. I imagine she just needed to get some things off her chest. She said she was having trouble sleeping since the day they exhumed the bodies on the Moonlight Road property. She said that when she watched the investigators uncover the shallow graves, she was compelled to want to climb in and pick up the decomposing dogs and comfort and cradle them. She knew that was crazy talk, and she was grappling with trying to understand such a surprising impulse.

Her candor set the tone for this entire saga. Everyone we worked with was deeply affected by the case. The details that got to me then and stay with me today involve the swimming pool that was used to kill some of the dogs. Jumper cables were clipped onto the ears of underperforming dogs, then, just like with a car, the cables were connected to the terminals of car batteries before lifting and tossing the shamed dogs into the water. Most of Vick's dogs were small – 40lbs or so – so tossing them in would've been fast and easy work for thick athlete arms. We don't know how many suffered this premeditated murder, but the damage to the pool walls tells a story. It seems that while they were scrambling to escape, they scratched and clawed at the pool liner and bit at the dented aluminum sides like a hungry dog on a tin can.

I wear some pretty thick skin during our work with dogs, but I can't shake my minds-eye image of a little black dog splashing frantically in bloody water ... screaming in pain and terror ... brown eyes saucer wide and tiny black white-toed feet clawing at anything, desperate to get a hold. This death did not come quickly. The rescuer in me keeps trying to think of a way to go back in time and somehow stop this torture and pull the little dog to safety. I think I'll be looking for ways to pull that dog out for the rest of my life.

The government investigator continues: According to one of Vick's associates, "After the testing, he observed a person driving an all terrain vehicle (ATV) with dead dogs stacked in the bed of the ATV. He did not see anyone kill the dogs. However, he heard noises when the dogs were being killed." Investigators found decomposing dogs buried on the property, they found pieces of plywood flooring covered in dog blood, spent bullet casings, clothing with blood stains, syringes, and burned carpet. The cause of death was determined to be "hanging, drowning, and being slammed to death."

Even when some of the abusers wanted to give dogs who would not fight away rather than kill them, "Vick stated 'they got to go,' meaning they needed to be killed." "One dog that did not die from hanging was taken down and drowned in a 5 gallon bucket of water." In another case, "Vick took down one of the dogs that would not die from hanging and tossed the dog to the side. He later hung the same dog until it died. He wore overalls, which were hung in the garage, when he killed the dogs, so he would not soil his clothes."

At first Vick denied killing any dogs. But "Vick was administered a polygraph examination by the FBI. Vick failed the examination as it related to the killing of the dogs... Ultimately, Vick recanted his previous statement wherein he said he was not actually involved in the killing... Vick admitted taking part in the actual hanging of the dogs."

Their brutality was not limited to dogs: “They used live chickens and rabbits as bait when training dogs...”

There are many, many words that come to mind to adequately describe Vick’s reinstatement by the NFL—intolerable, obscene, outrageous, and shameful. But as for the words chosen by the large, national organizations—redemption, a positive impact, mistakes, sincere, thoughtful, gratitude, hope, right—I can only shake my head in disgust.

It's Déjà Vu All Over Again

March 17, 2009

In 1993, both the ASPCA and HSUS opposed a No Kill San Francisco. The ASPCA called it a “hoax” and the HSUS spent years trying to derail it through data distortion and a deliberate campaign of misinformation. Now, both the ASPCA and HSUS are trying to hinder success yet again. If ever agencies were blind to their own interests and bent on their own destruction, it is HSUS and the ASPCA.

The Animal Welfare Commission in San Francisco is considering the [Companion Animal Protection Act](#) (CAPA), shelter reform legislation designed to maximize lifesaving by mandating how shelters operate. Ultimately, the question facing San Francisco is not *will it or won't it pass such a law?* The real question is, *will it do it now or will it do it later?* In the end, laws of this nature are inevitable: not just in San Francisco, but in every community; and not just for sheltering, but in every social justice movement. All movements seek to codify expected norms of behavior into law. That is why we have—and embrace—voting rights acts, environmental protection laws, and laws against discrimination based on gender, race, and sexual orientation. Ultimately, such laws are essential to ensure fair and equal treatment and to prevent abuses which can come when those in power are given too much discretion—a discretion which has been abused by shelter directors to unnecessarily kill almost four million animals every year.

[As I reported earlier](#), I was asked to testify by the San Francisco Animal Welfare Commission as part of its “exploration of a policy that would ensure that no adoptable animal (including those that need medical and behavioral intervention but would be adoptable after that) is [killed] in San Francisco shelters.” The effort is directed at saving the last 10 percent of savable animals still being killed in San Francisco’s animal control shelter—Pit Bulls, feral cats, older animals, sick and injured but treatable animals—and it is an achievement easily in reach given that San Francisco has the lowest per capita intake rate of any municipality in the nation (five times less than that of Reno, NV, four times less than Los Angeles, and half the national average) because of a twenty-plus year history of high volume, low-cost spay/neuter. If it chooses, it can easily achieve this worthy goal, even while importing thousands of out of county young and small dogs and cats, as the San Francisco SPCA is currently doing.

Why do the ASPCA & HSUS Fear the Companion Animal Protection Act?

At the meeting, both the ASPCA and HSUS testified (the latter in a letter from Wayne Pacelle) against legislation of this kind. Why? There are several reasons.

First, the ASPCA and HSUS oppose any form of shelter regulation if a shelter director asks them to do so—regardless of what is right or what is wrong, what will help animals or won't help animals, and despite public desire and clamoring for change. That is why the ASPCA supports the decision by Town Lake Animal Control (TLAC) in Austin, Texas to keep over 100 empty cages daily, even as it claims it has no choice but to kill “for space.” That is also why the ASPCA sided with TLAC when it decided to move the shelter from its currently central location conducive to adoptions to a more remote location in order to build more office space for managers and less kennel space to save animals. That is why HSUS supported the massacre of 145 dogs, including some 60 puppies, in Wilkes County, North Carolina last month even though rescue groups offered to help save them. That is why HSUS supported the shelter in Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana when it decided to kill every single animal in its facility, including cats,

when a few dogs came down with a mild corona virus (which is not fatal to dogs and which cats cannot get).

Moreover, the notion of a city passing legislation of this kind is very threatening to HSUS and the ASPCA. It would prescribe how shelters must operate, removing the discretion that allows shelter directors to ignore what is in the best interests of animals and needlessly kill them. And because it would codify the programs and services responsible for dramatic lifesaving success in communities which have already voluntarily implemented them, its success would prove exactly what is needed in order to create No Kill. For example, before killing an animal, the law would require the shelter to certify that:

- (1) There are no empty cages, kennels, or other living environments in the shelter;
- (2) The animal cannot share a cage or kennel with another animal;
- (3) A foster home is not available;
- (4) Rescue groups have been notified and are not willing to accept the animal;
- (5) The animal is not a feral cat subject to sterilization and release; and,
- (6) The director of the agency certifies he or she has no other alternative.

As such, this law provides a course of action so reasonable, so eminently fair, and so easily doable that there should be no controversy whatsoever. Not only because the public would be shocked to know that such basic and important steps are not commonplace for every animal in every shelter already, but that a law is needed to force shelters to take these simple, ethical steps. Moreover, because San Francisco's SPCA and its Department of Animal Control assured the Commission that they are already doing everything they can to save lives, they should also support this legislation. If they claim to already be behaving in accordance with the law, why oppose it? If the claim is true, the law would not require them to do anything differently. The reason is that they are not doing everything they can as evidenced by the save rate, and thus fear being held accountable. The ASPCA and HSUS' position defends and excuses this resistance—when as the nation's largest animal protection organizations, they should be voices for progress, not champions of those resisting change.

Another reason they are opposed to CAPA is that it will show, in fact, that the killing is the fault of shelter policies and regressive directors—something HSUS and ASPCA will not allow to happen willingly. By changing the way shelters operate, thereby resulting in immediate lifesaving success, the legislation will prove that shelter policies were to blame all along—in opposition to their longstanding assertion that the public is to be blamed for the killing. In fact, it will expose Pacelle and Sayres for what they truly are—bureaucrats who do not care about saving animals, but see their role as protecting a special interest group: shelter directors who do not want to change. Because, in the end, neither Ed Sayres, the President of the ASPCA—who sabotaged No Kill in San Francisco when he was President of the San Francisco SPCA—nor Wayne Pacelle of HSUS could support CAPA because to do so would require them to stand up to their colleagues, something they have proved too cowardly to do in the past.

By contrast, the demands such a law makes on shelters are and would be judged by the public as so reasonable and so successful in achieving their intended aim that for HSUS and the ASPCA to oppose them elsewhere would be politically untenable in other communities that would inevitably follow. This would force Pacelle and Sayres to an even tighter corner than they have already placed themselves through their historically virulent opposition to No Kill—how can they stand before a city council and tell them not to pass a law which leads to No Kill success, in order to defend a kill oriented colleague?

Likewise, when a CAPA-type law passes, and works, it will eliminate any perceived need for the legislation that they, in fact, do promote. Every community will have a choice going forward: continue to pass their leash laws, feeding bans, pet limit laws, and mandatory sterilization laws which have failed in every community, or pass CAPA, and realize immediate life-saving results. It will shine a bright light on just how irrelevant and obsolete HSUS and the ASPCA have become as they cling to outdated, harmful philosophies which have been proven false, no longer make sense, and fail to define a way forward from the quagmire their organizations created.

In fact, during the hearing, when the ASPCA representative referred to No Kill as “radical” and was asked by a commissioner if she really believed that, she realized too late she could not defend her position nor create a smokescreen effective enough, and she was forced to back-pedal. She had not properly anticipated her audience or the issue at hand; namely, that the idea of *not killing* is no longer controversial in San Francisco and hasn’t been for over a decade. So her suggestion that No Kill is “radical” to a room full of people who live in the City that proved high rates of lifesaving are possible showed how completely tone deaf the ASPCA has become, especially since she followed a presentation that discussed the attainment of 90 percent save rates throughout the country. The world of animal sheltering is changing rapidly, and rather than learn, evolve, and positively contribute, they continue their attempts to force failed, worn out ideologies on a movement that has moved beyond them.

Reading Between Wayne Pacelle’s Lines

Despite Pacelle’s unwillingness to compromise HSUS’ defense of killing, he has realized he must modify its language embracing it. In the mid-1990s and early 2000s, it was HSUS that argued that shelters should not send animals to rescue groups rather than kill them because sending them to rescue would “stress” them in transport, even though the alternative was death. It was HSUS that argued that people who trap, sterilize, and re-release feral cats were violating state anti-cruelty laws against abandonment and should be jailed and prosecuted. It was HSUS that falsely inflated San Francisco’s dog and cat death rates in their magazine to downplay the success of the No Kill effort, and refused to print a retraction when the San Francisco SPCA pointed out the lie and demanded that they do so.

But the times are changing and so is Pacelle’s rhetoric. * Though Wayne Pacelle’s letter to the Committee was wrong in its conclusion that the City shouldn’t force the shelters to the goal line, he did acknowledge that the success in San Francisco is real and is due to the No Kill Equation. But he then wrote that a community should not put in place a plan to demand and achieve that success because doing so would take the City further away, not closer, to the goal of not killing—a hopelessly irreconcilable contradiction. Under Pacelle’s muddled thinking, we shouldn’t have voting rights legislation because that will lead to disenfranchisement. We shouldn’t mandate civil rights laws because that will lead to discrimination. We shouldn’t pass environmental laws because that will lead to more pollution. It not only makes no sense *a priori*, it makes no sense in light of the tremendous success communities which have achieved No Kill experienced by committing to the endeavor whole-heartedly as this law would dictate.

Because challenging No Kill outright is no longer politically possible for these agencies, both the ASPCA and HSUS now have to use a less obvious, more subtle ways to fight San Francisco making further progress. They have to make it sound like they were on board all along, while simultaneously pushing the same agenda of hindering lifesaving that they always did.

That is what makes Pacelle's spin so cleverly crafted. Now that leadership has changed and those in charge do not want to save the remaining animals that are at risk in the City, Pacelle now supports the SPCA leadership. Were the situation different, were the San Francisco SPCA promoting this legislation over the objection of animal control, Pacelle's letter would have challenged the SPCA's lifesaving claims, just as HSUS always has.

In the end, however, while HSUS and the ASPCA have not changed, the movement has. And this change offers the San Francisco Animal Welfare Commission a chance for its own redemption.

A Second Chance to Do the Right Thing

In 1993, Richard Avanzino stood before the Commission and asked for its support in forcing animal control to allow the SPCA to save animals in the custody of San Francisco Animal Care & Control (ACC). Avanzino was offering to save every healthy and thousands of sick and injured but treatable animals from animal control's death row by bringing them to the SPCA for adoption. ACC refused. Its leadership argued that they should be allowed to continue to kill animals because the threat of a death sentence is what kept people from surrendering animals to the shelter. Sadly, the Commission refused to act. Given the number of lives that have been saved by the SPCA since, and how obscene it was for the leadership of animal control to demand that killing continue, we look back in astonishment that there was ever any opposition at all, that ACC leadership felt confident enough to voice that position, and that the Commission actually bowed to it. How dare animal control say no. And how was it that the Commission failed to act in support of the animals? What was so controversial about mandating that Animal Control give the San Francisco SPCA animals it was planning to kill, but the SPCA wanted to save?

Likewise, were the City of San Francisco to pass legislation prescribing how shelters in the City must operate in order to maximize lifesaving, it wouldn't be long after they were passed that their precepts would come to be regarded as sacrosanct. In the future, we will likewise look back with bewilderment as to what all the controversy and fuss was about.

Will the San Francisco Animal Welfare Commission take what may now seem to some like a bold leap, but which history will judge to be such an obvious necessity as to leave us astounded by the hesitancy? Will they set aside their hesitation—and in the case of the San Francisco SPCA and San Francisco Animal Control representatives on the Commission, their personal loyalties—and look at the issue for what it is: granting animals the protections they need and deserve, and by doing so, help the city of San Francisco once more attain its reputation as the crown jewel of the No Kill movement? Or will the Commission delay action while other communities continue to move confidently forward? Will they wait to act until public dissatisfaction at the unnecessary deaths of hundreds of animals every year in San Francisco grows even greater? Will they wait until the fight becomes more bitter and divisive as San Francisco animal lovers watch other cities throughout the nation continue to achieve and then supersede San Francisco's lifesaving? Will they wait to act until San Francisco is no longer hailed as the progressive city where no healthy animals are killed, but lamented as a regressive city where they are still killing animals who can and should be saved?

If history is any guide, we may be in for a long fight.

Ed Sayres Opens His Mouth... And Puts His Foot in It, Again

November 14, 2008

The last time we read a quote from Ed Sayres in a newspaper, it was on the cover of *USA Today*, to say that: *"There is no room for No Kill as morally superior."* By stating "There is no room for No Kill as morally superior," Sayres equated killing homeless animals as the moral and ethical equivalent of saving their lives.

The viewpoint is astounding enough coming from a person whose job as the leader of the nation's largest SPCA gives him the tremendous responsibility for defining and upholding our nation's moral treatment of animals; but it is also a slap in the face to the dedicated activists and thousands of animal rescuers all over this nation working to make a lifesaving difference in their communities, as well as to the American public which donates hundreds of millions of dollars a year to agencies like the ASPCA with the expectation that they will work to promote—and not hinder and undermine—the welfare of animals.

In Austin, Texas, Sayres has once again set up the ASPCA in opposition to local rescue groups and animal advocates working to reform the antiquated animal control system. Sayres recently stated:

I think [Town Lake Animal Center Director] Dorinda Pulliam is a very effective leader.

In announcing his backing of Austin animal control shelter director Pulliam, Sayres is legitimizing her refusal, despite intense public pressure and desire for reform, to fully implement the programs and services which save lives including a comprehensive foster care program, offsite adoptions, and Trap-Neuter-Return for feral cats, choosing instead to kill the animals whose lives could be saved with these programs.

Since the current leadership of the shelter was hired, 97,000 animals have been put to death. That's over 12,000 each year, 1,000 each month, 34 each day, 1 every 12 minutes the shelter has been open to the public.

If Sayres means "effective at eradicating homeless animals," Sayres is correct. But that is not what animal lovers are looking for in a leader.

Pay No Attention to the Man Behind the Curtain

June 27, 2008

"Mission: Orange" & the Wizard of "A"

[Fix Austin](#), a grassroots group of animal advocates working to reform Austin's abysmal shelter system has just released [their report](#) on the results of the community's first year under "Mission: Orange," the ASPCA's national No Kill campaign. Austin, TX is a "Mission: Orange" city and its results are key to understanding the program and the implications it has for the rest of the nation.

Rather than see a decline in killing with the infusion of hundreds of thousands of dollars, killing actually increased 11% during the first year of the campaign. An animal had *less* of a chance of coming out of the shelter alive in Austin, TX under "Mission: Orange" than it did just one year before. That this is a travesty goes without saying. But what makes it especially tragic, indeed devastating, is that it was neither surprising nor necessary. As the Fix Austin report makes clear, the city should have gone the way of Reno, Nevada which during the same time period and with a new No Kill initiative of its own unrelated to the ASPCA, saw deaths decline by 53%. The contrast in both approaches and results is a stunning indictment of the "Mission: Orange" program.

But you would not know that if you read the public relations coming out of the ASPCA. By simply not talking about the numbers saved or killed, the ASPCA put out a one-year progress report billing the campaign as a success. And the ASPCA continues to claim that Austin holds promise for the rest of the nation as it moves towards becoming a "sustainable model."

There are many reasons why "Mission: Orange" failed its first year in Austin. Instead of following existing models of communities which are succeeding in their No Kill goals through a foster care program, increasing volunteer and rescue group partnerships, expanding offsite adoption venues, a TNR initiative and all the other programs of [the No Kill Equation](#), the shelters simply "discounted" the costs for cat adoptions during the summer and combined it with token level spay/neuter for feral cats. In addition, [advocacy efforts focused around a decision—supported by "Mission: Orange," the ASPCA, and also the Humane Society of the United States \(HSUS\)—to move the animal control shelter from its central location that is the daily destination of thousands of Austinites to a more remote, out of the way part of the city where it would be "out of sight, and out of mind" but would have given shelter bureaucrats bigger offices at the expense of animal space.](#)

Nor are "Mission: Orange" failures limited to Austin. In Philadelphia, another "Mission: Orange" city, the Pennsylvania SPCA promoted a watered down version of No Kill where "adoptable" standards are so strict that shy cats, cats with ear mites, pregnant cats, and even cats with fleas appeared on a PSPCA draft of animals that would not be saved in "collaboration" with the animal control shelter. Meanwhile, that [animal control shelter has allowed killing-oriented approaches to creep back into the agency, while the ASPCA sits on the sidelines asking everyone not to criticize](#). "Mission: Orange" funding is, in fact,

predicated on not going public with concerns about the policies or practices of shelter directors in the community because this is seen as “criticism” which violates some vague notion of “collaboration.” Not only does this ignore the fact that silence as to inhumane conditions or policies is unethical, but that the approach dooms No Kill to fail.

What makes “Mission: Orange” downright dangerous is that it is being promoted as a legitimate path to No Kill (though the ASPCA is very careful not to use that term, preferring vague terms like “humane community” or “no more unnecessary euthanasia”), when nothing could be further from the truth. Like the fake wizard in the Wizard of Oz, “Mission: Orange” has lots of noise, lots of theatrics, down to the name,^{*} but devoid of substance that will have the level of positive, measurable impact for the animals to make No Kill a reality.

What is behind the “Mission: Orange” curtain of rhetoric? Primarily, “Mission: Orange” fails to address the fundamental problems that lead to killing; and, it fails to demand accountability of those receiving the money to put into place the programs and services which would end it. Instead, it demands silence as to shelter atrocities under the guise of collaboration and allows shelters to continue with programs that represent the status quo, and to reject those programs necessary for lifesaving success.

Campaigns like “Mission: Orange”—which ignore the vital truth that we already know what it takes to save lives—give the public the illusion of progress and a commitment to No Kill but in reality do little to foster its actual implementation. And when such efforts fail, as they invariably do, the public begins to grow weary of unmet promised goals and erroneously concludes that No Kill is simply not achievable. At the same time, these flawed efforts seek to walk the political tightrope of trying to demonstrate support for No Kill to the general public without offending entrenched shelter directors who are hostile to calls for true reform. As a result, while the ASPCA can put out press releases that it supports No Kill, it falls short of what is needed—in fact, makes things worse—as it props up shelter directors whose interests are put above those of the animals, while providing them money and political support without demanding accountability in return.

For years, and despite the tenacious efforts of local grassroots organizations such as Fix Austin, the director of Austin’s Town Lake Animal Control has refused to put in place a public foster care program, for example, even though No Kill is simply impossible without one. She has also publicly stated that [her staff doesn’t have time to do more adoptions](#), although high volume and comprehensive adoption efforts including evening and weekend hours and multiple offsite venues supported by volunteers has

^{*} The ASPCA claims that the “color orange is identified with vibrancy and energy.” Indeed, the color orange appears to be a favorite among the “aura” reading crowd who claim that orange signifies “vibrancy” and “innovation.” As a result, the ASPCA hopes that the public will identify the color “with the welfare of animals.” Hence, the name “Mission: Orange.” This type of un-measurable and “feel good” focus that is devoid of substance also marked the San Francisco SPCA tenure of Sayres. Under Sayres’ direction, the San Francisco SPCA spent a significant amount of money on esoteric conferences about communicating with dead pets, [insects as messengers of the “soul,”](#) and other similar topics instead of focusing all its energy (and resources) on saving the animals actually facing death in shelters. Roughly during the same time period, the San Francisco SPCA underwent its first “forced” lay-offs of staff and cutting of critical programs due to budget problems in 135-years.

proven indispensable in those communities which have achieved No Kill success. As long as this type of thinking is not challenged under “Mission: Orange,” No Kill will remain out of reach. Because without full and comprehensive implementation of all the programs of the No Kill Equation, at risk animals will continue to die.

Ed Sayres, the President of the ASPCA, knows this, but demands no policy changes in line with these principles in exchange for the ASPCA’s “Mission: Orange” financial and political support. As the former head of the San Francisco SPCA, he knows full well what it takes to make a community succeed at lifesaving. While he claims to have “successfully implemented” the model in San Francisco, the reality is that he *inherited* it. Nonetheless, Sayres did oversee a staff that ran the most successful shelter in the country, and he was able to see first hand *why* it was so successful. During his tenure, the San Francisco SPCA produced a document called “Mission: Possible” which underscored the necessity of what eventually would be called the No Kill Equation. Given that, why does he now promote a so-called “solution” which fails to fully demand all of the programs that were responsible for San Francisco’s success?

To say that each community is unique and should decide for itself what programs are wanted, while at the same time putting a premium on “collaboration” at the expense of demanding accountability from shelters and shelter leadership is not only to elevate form over substance, it is a betrayal of the animals. Given that the ASPCA has had a 100-year “free ride” when it comes to providing dogs and cats with substantive solutions to killing, it is not surprising. But it is disturbing nonetheless, given Sayres’ history in San Francisco, the then-safest community in the United States for animals and the first to end the killing of healthy, homeless dogs and cats. (In this same vein, the American Humane Association’s “Getting to Zero” and HSUS’ [“Asilomar Accords”](#) are all variants of the “Mission: Orange” half-hearted effort to diffuse public criticism for kill-oriented histories while doing little to actually end the systematic killing of animals in shelters.)

What Would It Look Like If These Groups Were Sincere and Adamant About No Kill?

We have been conditioned to expect very little from these large, stagnant behemoths. So much so, in fact, that we label it as progress when they merely temper their language to be less openly hostile to No Kill, while doing very little to actually promote it nationwide despite its proven success—on the contrary, some organizations like HSUS continue with business as usual fighting true No Kill initiatives on the local level and [promoting “No Kill equals hoarding” rhetoric at national conferences](#).

Now that we know how to end the killing, there is only one directive: nationally promote the model that has made it a reality in communities which have fully and rigorously implemented it. To do that successfully, we need to replace every shelter director who refuses to implement that model immediately. These are our most pressing and urgent responsibilities towards the animals who end up in our nation’s shelters. As organizations theoretically committed to the goal of promoting animal welfare, and taking in millions of dollars a year from animal lovers who believe this is what their philanthropic dollars are going to promote, this is an ethical, moral and strategic imperative. Shelter directors who

refuse to implement the No Kill Equation have no place in our movement. If we truly care about animals, that is the inevitable conclusion. Because the model of lifesaving has been around for more than a decade, any director who is sincere in their desire to save lives would have implemented it by now. There is no reason to wait any longer. And as Maddie's Fund has proven, even hundreds of millions of dollars can't change the calculus. After ten years, they still do not have one No Kill community based on the collaboration model. Not even one. Why?

Collaboration does not work because lack of collaboration is not why animals are being killed. Because it never was about getting along or not getting along. Often, it isn't even about the money. It's about the No Kill Equation model and those whose job it is to implement the model, but refuse to do so. It is about the shelter directors. Because at the end of the day, what we are suffering from, what is truly killing animals in U.S. shelters is an overpopulation of shelter directors content with the status quo and mired in the failed philosophies of the past.

Raising Our Expectations

Despite this reality, I continue to hear from some people (admittedly, a scant few but often using very forceful and colorful language) saying that I should give credit where credit is due; that groups like HSUS and the ASPCA are "changing." This, of course, begs several questions. What does "changing" mean and how long does it take? Rather than *changing*, why don't they just *change*? Should we have to wait for "animal protection" organizations to stop supporting the systematic killing of animals? Instead, shouldn't that be a given? And, more importantly, what would that change look like? In other words, what would a sincere and adamant commitment to No Kill by these organizations result in? Because instead of the "crumbs" they give with one hand (and often take away with the other), what would a truly No Kill committed HSUS or ASPCA do *in practice*?

First of all, they would recognize that there is an epidemic of uncaring among shelter directors which is at crisis proportions and therefore, they would stop providing the political cover and legitimacy represented by the fiction that "*all stakeholders in the animal welfare community have a passion for and are dedicated to the mutual goal of saving animals' lives.*" (Asilomar Accords signed by HSUS, ASPCA, and AHA.) To do so would recognize the reality that rescuers, grassroots activists, feral cat caretakers and those involved in shelter reform nationwide face daily in their struggle to save the lives of the animals in their communities: that our nation's shelters are failing, that they are hostile to calls for reform and innovation, and that in many cases, [they are neglecting and abusing the animals in their care.](#)

This recognition would immediately put an end to this and other misleading rhetoric that these groups are fond of: "we all want the same things," "no one wants to kill," "collaboration [with these shelters/shelter directors] is key," "we need to stop fighting each other and focus on our common enemies." These pronouncements are, first and foremost, a distraction. But, more importantly, they are simply not true. The evidence is overwhelming that many shelter directors find killing easier than doing what is necessary to stop it. When shelter directors kill animals rather than avail themselves of

opportunities to save them (e.g., foster care, working with rescue, keeping cages and kennels full rather than empty), they would rather kill the animals than not kill them. As a result, they become the enemies of those who truly love dogs and cats and find killing them what it is: unethical, outrageous, abhorrent, and intolerable.'

In practice, recognition of this fact by the large national groups would mean reporting to the public and shelter administrators that No Kill has been achieved, requires full implementation of the No Kill Equation, and requires the removal of shelter leaders who refuse to do so. It means promoting the communities which have achieved levels of No Kill success that others have not. Instead of functionaries from groups like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals which kill over 90% of the animals they take in giving workshops at their national conferences, they would have representatives from communities which save over 90% of the animals they take in.

At Expo 2009, HSUS' national conference on sheltering, we should see workshops like: "Charlottesville saved 90% of all impounded animals. Learn how you can too." And "Reno reduced shelter rates of killing by over 50% in one year, find out how." We should see seminars like: "Reforming your local shelter" which would include not only a sincere discussion about how shelters currently do not reflect the values of animal lovers and often kill in the face of readily available lifesaving alternatives, but how to force them to change when they refuse to do so willingly, as they often do.

It means arguing in all publications, advocacy efforts, educational materials, media interactions and conferences that No Kill is the only legitimate standard for animal sheltering—and must be embraced by all shelters with sincere commitment and with all deliberate speed.

This means stating unequivocally that, [with the possible exception of those who are irremediably suffering, hopelessly ill or injured, or truly vicious dogs with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation,](#) sheltered animals have a right to live, and that shelters must modernize and innovate by replacing century old ways of doing business with the life-affirming programs and services of the No Kill Equation as outlined in the [U.S. No Kill Declaration](#), in order to give meaning to that right.

It means no longer fighting activists who are trying to reform their shelters but assisting them in doing so—even when doing so means fighting an entrenched shelter director that refuses to change. It means no longer rewarding failing shelter directors with speaking engagements at their conferences, with features in their magazines, with national awards, or—as in Austin—with hundreds of thousands of dollars which are squandered.

It is time for action, not empty words, not meaningless platitudes, not ineffectual campaigns that appear sexy or have fancy, esoteric names and give the illusion of promoting No Kill, but, in reality will do nothing but perpetuate the status quo—or, as in the case of Austin, actually make things worse for the animals.

That would be a good start. And would truly demonstrate that these groups are “changing” in deeds, as well as words. But it is only a start. That, of course, would be quickly followed with investments of their huge resources in changing communities, in lobbying for change in communities, including a widespread effort to reform shelters, remove entrenched kill-oriented directors, and provide the infrastructure needed to achieve success. That is the kind of approach critically missing from these organizations. And it is critically missing from campaigns like “Mission: Orange,” “Getting to Zero,” and the “Asilomar Accords.”

Instead of using esoteric references to the color orange that don’t seem to apply, let’s call the campaign for what it is. The continued failure to follow proven models and demand true accountability while thwarting these efforts at the local level is precisely why “Mission: Orange” should be called “Agent Orange.” It will do nothing to end the war against shelter killing just like its namesake did nothing to end the war in Vietnam. Instead, it carpet bombs the local activists working for true reform. By demanding silence in the guise of collaboration as a precondition to receiving support, by using the ASPCA brand to provide legitimacy and political cover to directors who continue to thwart the will of animal lovers, by giving money to groups which know that simply blaming the public will allow them to forestall necessary changes, No Kill can never be achieved. And the sooner we all realize that, the quicker we can move past empty rhetoric and unfulfilled promises and focus our reform efforts where they should be, precisely because that it is where they will have the most impact: on the very shelters and especially the shelter directors actually doing the killing.

We need regime change at all levels of this movement. And we need it now.

Whose Interests Does Ed Sayres Represent?

August 23, 2007

“There is no room for No Kill as morally superior.”

—Ed Sayres, President, ASPCA, as quoted in *USA Today*, August 13, 2007.

On August 13, 2007, [USA Today published a hit piece on the No Kill movement](#) in which the leaders of some of the largest animal welfare organizations in the nation equated the movement to end the systematic killing of animals in shelters with mentally ill individuals who hoard and abuse animals. Sadly, it is not a new tactic. Kill-oriented traditionalists desperate to maintain the status quo on which their reputations and those of their peers were built have been portraying No Kill in an untrue and disparaging light for decades and without much recrimination for doing so. In fact, as recently as five years ago, the story would not have made much a ripple within the animal protection movement. But much has changed in the last five years. And as a result, the story made headlines on CNN, has been passed around by shelters hostile to calls for reform from San Clemente, CA to Beaufort, SC, and has even been printed overseas. Why?

With huge inroads being made by No Kill proponents, the number of communities achieving No Kill status increasing, and with an animal loving American public clamoring for No Kill solutions in communities throughout the United States, the optimistic, life-affirming goals of the No Kill movement are challenging the hegemony of the defeatist, kill-oriented mentality of those running most of our nation’s animal control shelters and large, national companion animal protection organizations, such as HSUS and the ASPCA, as never before. And they are pushing back.

No quote from the unfortunate article reveals this emerging disparity more clearly than that by Ed Sayres, the president of the ASPCA. By stating “There is no room for No Kill as morally superior,” the head of the largest SPCA in North America equated killing homeless animals as the moral and ethical equivalent of saving their lives. The viewpoint is astounding enough coming from a person whose job as the leader of the nation’s largest SPCA gives him the tremendous responsibility for defining and upholding our nation’s moral treatment of animals; but it is even more so given Ed Sayres’ first hand experience with No Kill success.

In 1998, Ed Sayres inherited what was then the most successful SPCA in the nation. At the time, the hard work of his predecessors at the San Francisco SPCA resulted in the only city and county in the U.S. saving each and every healthy homeless dog and cat—a guarantee that extended to the city pound. Although he personally was not responsible for its success, he has first hand knowledge of what is possible when people passionate about saving lives put aside the excuses and focus on building a No Kill community.

As head of the ASPCA, Ed Sayres also knows that other communities which have implemented the programs and services which once made San Francisco successful are the same programs and services

that have allowed communities in New York, Virginia, Utah and Nevada to save better than 90% of all dogs and cats in open admission animal control shelters, reserving shelter killing to those animals who are hopelessly ill or injured, irremediably suffering, or in the case of a very small percentage of dogs, [truly vicious with a poor prognosis for rehabilitation](#).

As the incredible and often immediate lifesaving results reaped by shelter directors who have embraced the No Kill philosophy and its programs and services over the last decade have demonstrated, the No Kill movement has discovered how to end the killing of savable homeless animals. The same [programs and services](#) have resulted in success in every community in which they have been implemented comprehensively and with integrity. Yet while these shelters send thousands of animals every year into foster care to help save lives, Ed Sayres' assertion equates them with the vast majority of shelters which refuse to do so and choose instead to put these animals—neonatal kittens, underaged puppies, scared dogs, and those needing a break from the shelter or special foster care—to death.

While No Kill oriented shelters open their doors to rescue groups, the inference of Ed Sayres' comments is that morally, there is no difference in that action to the vast majority of U.S. shelters which won't let these groups in the front door, while the animals they refuse to give them go out the back door in a body bag.

While No Kill oriented shelters have replaced the killing of feral cats with programs to neuter and release them, Ed Sayres' comment seems to indicate that their doing so is no more ethical than the vast majority of other shelters who not only oppose such efforts, but even send officers out to write citations to feral cat caretakers and subsequently impound—and kill—the cats the caretakers are trying to protect.

And while No Kill oriented shelters have implemented each and every program of the [No Kill Equation](#) and have succeeded in achieving No Kill, Ed Sayres' comment seems to indicate that they are not superior to shelters which continue to kill animals because it is easier for them to kill than take animals offsite to adoption venues throughout a community; because it is easier for them to allow dogs to go "cage crazy" and then kill them for being "cage crazy," than it is to allow volunteers to walk and socialize them; because it is easier for them to allow cats to get URI and then kill them for it, than it is to hold staff accountable to thorough cleaning and handling protocols and the provision of medical care.

Knowing full well that No Kill exists, and can be implemented everywhere with the right leadership, Sayres' claim that "There is no room for No Kill as morally superior" is not only a slap in the face to the dedicated activists and thousands of animal rescuers all over this nation working to make a lifesaving difference in their communities, but also to the American public which donates hundreds of millions of dollars a year to agencies like the ASPCA with the expectation that they will work to promote—and not hinder and undermine—the welfare of animals.

But, most significantly, Sayres' statement reveals a lack of caring and concern for animals that should be a defining characteristic of anyone who has been given the important trust of leading one of our

nation's largest animal protection organizations—especially one that should and could, but is currently choosing not to, lead us into our inevitable No Kill future. Supporting reactionary shelter leaders, rather than the animals, should not be the mission of the ASPCA.

But in Austin TX, the ASPCA is currently supporting the [city's attempts to move the animal shelter from its current location](#) which is closer to the City's geographic and population centers and a daily destination for thousands of Austinites, vital ingredients for maximizing the number of adoptions and volunteers. Instead, the ASPCA is backing shelter leadership which has been promised bigger offices, but not more space for the animals, in a remote, industrial part of the city which is "out of sight, out of mind." In doing so, the ASPCA has set itself up as an adversary of [animal advocates \(and by implication, over 80% of Austinites surveyed\) who want to keep the shelter in its current location.](#)

This kind of undermining of an essential element of lowering death rates is appalling, but not surprising. Since we have discovered how to end the killing of savable homeless animals, the ASPCA's most ardent goal should be [promoting that model](#) nationwide. But the ASPCA has not done so and continues to operate as if the key to ending the killing—and saving the lives of over four million dogs and cats and hundreds of thousands of other species of sheltered animals—has not been discovered. The ASPCA has never published an article saying that No Kill has been achieved. And in fact, the ASPCA has historically called No Kill a "hoax," "misleading," "inflammatory," and "smoke and mirrors."

Were the leader of another social conscious movement to reveal an opinion on par with Sayres' in the USA Today article, the calls for that leader's resignation would have been swift and widespread. Imagine what child welfare activists would say if the head of the nation's largest child protection agency stated that "People who treat their kids kindly are not morally superior to those who abuse them." As animal advocates, we should no more tolerate it when the head of the ASPCA boldly asserts in the most widely read newspaper in America that No Kill is not morally superior to killing.

Promoting the view that "killing" is the moral equivalent of "not killing" is a great betrayal to the animal lover saving feral cats in the neighborhood, the rescuer who finds homes for wayward dogs, and the No Kill shelter which practices the maxim that all life is precious. And more importantly, it is a great betrayal to the animals. And because the ASPCA is supposed to first and foremost represent the interests of animals, that makes Mr. Sayres, in my view, thoroughly unfit to hold the job as its president.

Rejecting the Consensus of Killing

August 18, 2007

A recent story in [USA Today](#) portrayed No Kill shelters in a negative light. The article quoted the Humane Society of the United States, the ASPCA, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, and other groups who legitimize shelter killing as saying that No Kill was akin to warehousing animals and that No Kill groups were derelict because they refused to kill animals. In an astonishing statement, the head of the ASPCA, Ed Sayres, went so far as to say "there is no room for No Kill as morally superior." It is deeply lamentable that agencies founded to care for animals in need would claim that killing is on equal footing to saving lives. But it is not surprising. While taking the lion's share of funding for companion animals, these groups do very little to save the lives of animals in U.S. shelters, while continuing to champion failed models and promoting the Orwellian logic that "killing is kindness."

At open admission shelters in Tompkins County (NY), Charlottesville (VA), at the Nevada Humane Society in Washoe County (NV), shelters with a history of dirty facilities and an over-reliance on killing became transformed virtually overnight when they replaced their long-term directors with animal lovers dedicated to lifesaving. Where there was little more than killing, these communities are now saving over 90% of all the animals, reserving killing to the hopelessly ill or injured, and truly vicious dogs. As one such agency tells it:

Ever creative and resourceful, we find ways to tap the pet needs of a compassionate community and match all of our animals with the right adopters in due course. And while pets reside in [our shelter], they live in an environment as close to residential living as possible, not in cages. They enjoy a great measure of socializing, exercise, premium ... foods, and the best medical care available. And thanks to our award-winning team of volunteer foster families, shelter capacity can be stretched by sending our animals to temporary homes until it's their turn to find their forever home.

As the incredible and often immediate lifesaving results reaped by shelter directors who have embraced the No Kill philosophy and its programs and services over the last decade have demonstrated, we know how to end the killing of homeless animals. The same programs and services have resulted in success in every community in which they have been implemented comprehensively and with integrity. Unfortunately, few communities have done so, and most lack the political will to implement them. This is because most animal control directors are content not to and groups like HSUS and the ASPCA continue to provide them political cover by intentionally omitting the fact that No Kill has already been achieved in several communities and disingenuously portraying No Kill as an unattainable goal.

It should also be noted that HSUS does not run shelters and has not in nearly half a century. Nor are we aware that their Director of Animal Sheltering has ever run an animal shelter and certainly not one that has achieved No Kill success. It is time that the humane community and city governments cease relying on the advice of agencies and individuals who have never achieved lifesaving success. In fact, it is

irresponsible for individuals associated with groups like HSUS to be offering themselves as No Kill experts, in light of the evidence that they are hostile to No Kill, have at best only a superficial understanding of it, have never had success at saving lives in shelters or have never run a shelter, and are ignorant of the dynamic and exciting changes occurring in the field of animal sheltering as a result of the No Kill movement and the models which have proven successful in those communities which have implemented them.

So why do groups like HSUS continue to ignore this and continually mislead the public by framing the issue in a negative light? Historian John Barry writes that "[i]nstitutions reflect the cumulative personalities of those within them, especially their leadership. They tend, unfortunately, to mirror less admirable human traits, developing and protecting self-interest and even ambition. They try to [create] order [not by learning from others or the past, but]... by closing off and isolating themselves from that which does not fit. They become bureaucratic."

One of the fundamental downsides of bureaucracies is their focus on self-preservation at the expense of their mission. And in the case of animal shelters and the national allies who support them, this bureaucracy leads to the unnecessary killing of animals. As a result, regressive shelters and their national allies have long painted No Kill in an unfair and untrue light. Roger Caras, the late-President of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals called No Kill a "hoax." The National Animal Control Association published articles indicating that No Kill was a "delusion" and perhaps even "cruel." And the Humane Society of the United States has likened them to a "glorified collector" at worst, and as leading to animal abandonment at best. This type of cynicism has in design only one purpose: to defend those who are doing a poor job at saving lives from public criticism and public accountability by painting a picture of the alternative as even darker. The picture these naysayers have painted of No Kill is an untrue one in which dogs and cats live out their lives in filthy, cramped quarters prone to disease and mental deterioration. In short, they falsely claim that No Kill is akin to animal hoarding.

Animal hoarding, however, has nothing to do with the No Kill movement. The No Kill movement seeks to end unnecessary shelter killing. Animal hoarding, by contrast, is not about the animals. It is a mental illness and a crime perpetrated by individuals. And it should be treated and punished as such. That some hoarders might call themselves "No Kill shelters" is irrelevant. If No Kill did not exist, they would just call themselves "caring pet owners." Would we condemn sharing our homes with companion animals because of that? Of course not. Indeed, newspapers and news stations periodically report stories of child abuse perpetrated by foster families. Does that mean we should condemn foster care for children? Should we call for the elimination of orphanages and demand that killing of homeless children be the norm? Why then do we allow groups to paint a distorted picture of No Kill shelters?

If anything, true hoarders thrive in high kill shelter communities because they can rationalize to their friends and family the accumulation of too many animals. They have no choice but to keep these animals, they say, because their local shelter will only kill them. With shelters committed to No Kill solutions, there would be no excuses.

In fact, No Kill is the opposite of hoarding, it is the opposite of filth, and it is the opposite of lack of veterinary care. In 1998, No Kill advocates in California pushed a major animal shelter reform package through the State Legislature. One aspect of the reform was the requirement that shelters had to provide care to impounded animals (socialization, nutrition and veterinary care.) It also required shelters to assess cats to differentiate between feral cats and shy or frightened cats. It required shelters to offer animals for adoption. It required them to provide lost and found information to the public. And more. The law was uniformly supported by No Kill shelters and rescue groups around the state. It was, however, opposed by many of the large national organizations and by virtually every major animal control shelter in the state with a few notable and progressive exceptions. This is what happens when you value animals so little that killing them for expediency becomes preferable to putting in place a foster care program, a medical and behavior rehabilitation program, to opening the shelter up to the scrutiny of the public and to their support through a volunteer program, by sterilizing rather than killing feral cats, and by taking animals to offsite adoption locations to better help find them homes.

The philosophical underpinning of the No Kill movement is to put actions behind the words of every shelter's mission statement: "All life is precious." No Kill is about valuing animals. And valuing animals not only means saving their lives, it means good quality care. Saving lives requires a shelter to keep animals healthy and happy, make the shelter more inviting for the public, and allow animals to move through the system as quickly as possible. No Kill does not mean announcing a policy change and then getting bogged down with animals because there are no programs to keep animals moving through the system and into loving homes.

No Kill means comprehensive implementation of the [No Kill Equation](#) which includes adoption, foster care, transfer to rescue groups, pet retention programs, spay/neuter, and helping people overcome medical, behavior and environmental conditions which may cause people to relinquish their animals. Doing so eliminates the problem of "overcrowding," unreasonably feared by sincere animal lovers and unfairly painted by cynical proponents of the status quo.

We need to send a message to people like Ed Sayres of the ASPCA, Kim Intino of HSUS and all the other dinosaurs quoted in the misleading article: No Kill is morally superior to killing. To claim otherwise, is to abandon the very principles of compassion, caring and kindness that are the underpinnings of this movement's founding. But take heart, the days when killing was promoted as kindness are coming to an end. And the dinosaurs of this movement will soon be swept aside.