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No Kill Movement Descends on the Nation's Capital

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On May 2nd and 3rd, [George Washington University's Law School](#) will become a sanctuary for animal welfare advocates as [Nathan Winograd](#) and the [No Kill Conference](#) arrive in Washington, D.C. Winograd, a pioneer of the No Kill movement, has taken a successful strategy from his work in San Francisco and transformed it into a nationwide endeavor to end the needless killing of companion animals. His inspiring work has touched the lives of thousands of animal supporters, as demonstrated by the 400-person conference selling out over two months before it occurs.

Winograd was born into an animal-friendly environment, describing his mother as "the original cat lady." When he attended law school and even in his work as a criminal prosecutor, he was always drawn to animal lovers and kept animal advocacy a crucial aspect of his life. He eventually left his career in law to take on various leadership positions within the animal community, including Director of Operations for the San Francisco SPCA and Executive Director for the Tompkins County (NY) SPCA. In both the urban and rural locations, he implemented the ten-step [No Kill Equation](#), and thus demonstrated that No Kill shelters can occur in any environment in the United States.

Critics of the No Kill movement tout that these achievements were a fluke, and that these results could never be duplicated nationwide. But as the successful city numbers continue to grow, Winograd can see that this nation is turning a corner in animal relations.

"For the last 50 years, we've been living under this fog that says the best we can do is to adopt a precious few and kill the rest. We elevated the idea of killing animals to a religion; regardless of facts, regardless of data, we believed it to be the only way. But now we've cut the fog, and people are seeing an alternative method."

One of the most inspiring elements of Winograd's methods is his belief that the voices of a few can implement this change. While many animal volunteers see their influence as fairly minimal, Winograd sees an opportunity for them to be the driving force in No Kill implementation. "This initiative is more driven from the bottom up as opposed to the top down- the prognosis for its success is *because* it's being driven from the bottom. There isn't a large scale organization pushing their beliefs on people; it's one of the few moments where the people are really driving the agenda." The power of the people has been demonstrated both in his experiences with San Francisco and Tompkins County, as well as more recent cases in Charlottesville, VA and Reno, NV. With the blueprints for success mapped out in the No Kill Equation, all a community requires is a champion in animal or city leadership to give the promising method a chance.

Winograd's optimism for nationwide shelter reform is infectious, as he has truly seen shelters in the worst state of turmoil. "When I first began at Tompkins County, I literally got out of my car greeted by a guy with a box of kittens. That same day, a litter of puppies was also brought in. One of the staff workers asked me 'Who are we going to kill? There's nothing else we can do,' to which I responded 'I never want to hear from someone who gets a paycheck that there is nothing else we can do.' So we found a plan B- we took the horse trough, filled it with newspapers, and stuck it in the lobby. With the constant foot traffic, the animals got adopted very quickly. That first act of flexibility led to successful adoptions, pet retention programs, offsite adoptions, and more lifesaving initiatives. I was crestfallen when I arrived, but seeing the final results was nothing short of magnificent."

As Winograd and his accomplished colleagues appear before eager Washingtonians, he doesn't doubt that similar successes can be duplicated on a national scale. "I've seen how successful this is- in San Francisco and throughout the country. It's been stressful, it's been hard work, and in the beginning I definitely had doubts that this could be accomplished. But now... well, it's exciting to be part of a movement that will reach its goal in just one generation."

Stayed tuned for more articles from my interview with Nathan Winograd.

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