

Leaders of the no kill movement endorse Oreo's law

By SF Animal Shelters Examiner, Nathan Winograd
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Michael Mountain, the founder of Best Friends and its recently retired President, sees in Oreo's Law a chance to save lives and save taxpayers money. He joins other leaders of the No Kill movement in their embrace of Oreo's Law.

They are on the front lines in the fight for a No Kill nation. They run shelters with the highest save rates in the country. They know what is necessary to save lives. And all of them have embraced Oreo's Law:

- Myself: Nathan J. Winograd, Director of the No Kill Advocacy Center, who held a variety of leadership positions including Director of Operations for the San Francisco SPCA at a time San Francisco was the safest community in the U.S. to be a homeless dog or cat, and then left to create the nation's first No Kill community in upstate New York;
- Abigail Smith, Executive Director of the Tompkins County NY SPCA. Her open admission animal control shelter has saved at least 92% of the animals every year for the last seven years;
- Susanne Kogut of the Charlottesville SPCA, a No Kill open admission shelter three years running;
- Bonney Brown of the Nevada Humane Society who has led a No Kill initiative that cut the death rate over 50%, nearly doubled adoptions, and is now saving nine of out of ten dogs and cats countywide despite a per capita intake rate over twice the national average;
- Michael Mountain, founder of Best Friends Animal Society, who grew a small organization to the largest

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sanctuary for animals in the United States and a financial powerhouse with over \$30 million in revenue annually;

- Mike Fry, host of the nationally syndicated Animal Wise Radio, and director of Minnesota's largest No Kill shelter.

They join Pets Alive who spearheaded the initiative, No More Homeless Pets of Kansas City, Coalition for a No Kill King County, FixAustin, and a host of other groups, large and small, inside New York and around the country, shelters and shelter reformers, who see in Oreo's Law a chance to reclaim shelters, and help reorient the humane movement away from killing and toward lifesaving.

In my letter on behalf of the No Kill Advocacy Center, I wrote,

For far too long, those running our animal shelters – agencies funded by the philanthropic donations and tax dollars of an animal loving American public – have refused to mirror our progressive values. For far too long, they have assumed a power and authority to act independent of public opinion, and the will of the people who have entrusted them to do their jobs with compassion, dedication and integrity. In betraying this trust, they have proven that they can't be trusted, and that we must regulate them in the same way we regulate other agencies which hold the power of life and death: by removing the discretion which has for too long allowed them to

thwart the public's will and to kill animals who should be saved. Oreo's Law, thankfully, seeks to do just that.

Abigail Smith of the Tompkins County SPCA says,

When we began our No Kill initiative, one of the first things we established was a vibrant rescue group network. While some of the rescue groups were local, many were not only based across New York State, but in neighboring ones as well. We are amazed at the broad support we received from all of these groups, but frankly, we were mystified that they were willing to make the drive when they had shelters in their own community. When asked why they rescued from us rather than their local shelter, the answer was always the same: "our local shelter refuses to work with rescue groups." Oreo's Law would change that, and save thousands of animals in the process. You have our unqualified support.

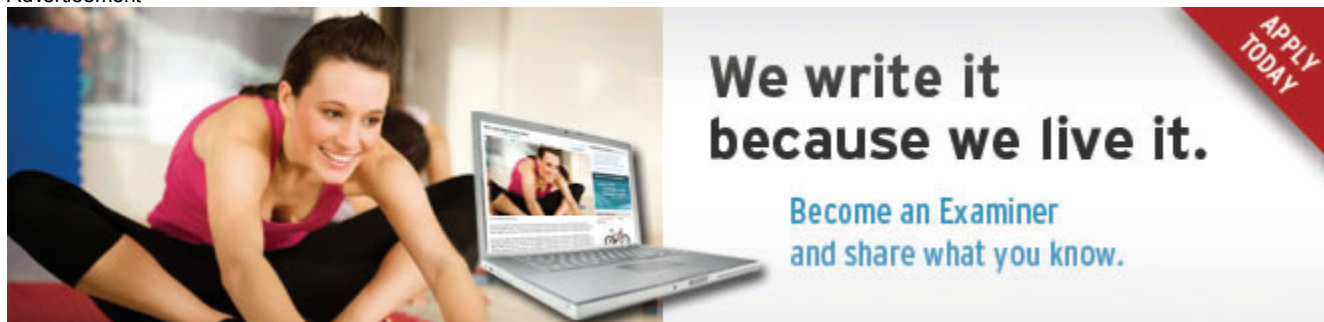
Bonney Brown of the Nevada Humane Society says,

Not all shelters have kept pace with the values and expectations of the public. Oreo's Law will help to reform antiquated policies that still linger in some animal shelters. It will ensure that rescue groups will be allowed to rescue homeless pets that may otherwise be doomed to die.

Michael Mountain calls Oreo's Law "critical" to the creation of a No Kill nation and says,

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[It] will ensure that no companion animal will die needlessly – and at the taxpayer's expense – when a responsible no-kill shelter or other private rescue organization is willing to spend its own funds to give that homeless pet a good new life.

Susanne Kogut says,

I wish that all shelters were staffed by directors and managers dedicated to saving lives. I've long believed that leadership is the key component to lifesaving success. But I've seen too many which are not. And in the absence of fully committed leadership in all shelters in all communities, "Oreo's Law" is, sadly, necessary at this time in history.

Mike Fry says,

I have had the opportunity to experience first-hand animal "shelters" that are operated in a way that is not consistent with their stated missions or purposes. Because people falsely assume that anyone working in the field of animal welfare must be caring and compassionate, animal welfare organizations, including the ASPCA, have operated for too long with little accountability or public oversight. Oreo's Law is a good first step toward ensuring that no wanted, savable animal is destroyed unnecessarily by wealthy animal welfare organizations wanting to simply take the easy way out and destroy animals they don't really have to... Oreo's law can help those animals in New York and, hopefully, ignite a fire that will spread similar laws to other states in the USA.

Ryan Clinton of FixAustin says,

One might understandably ask why an animal-advocacy group in Austin, Texas, is so heavily supportive of a bill proposed in a state thousands of miles away. The answer is that where New York goes, so goes the nation. New Yorkers were the first to create humane societies and societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals more than a century ago. And Tompkins County, New York, led the nation's first successful effort for an open-admission community shelter to save all healthy and treatable impounded animals—a movement that has now spread across the country. Today, we ask that New York be a leader yet again by passing "Oreo's law" to safeguard the lives of even more lost and homeless pets. With hope, the nation will follow.

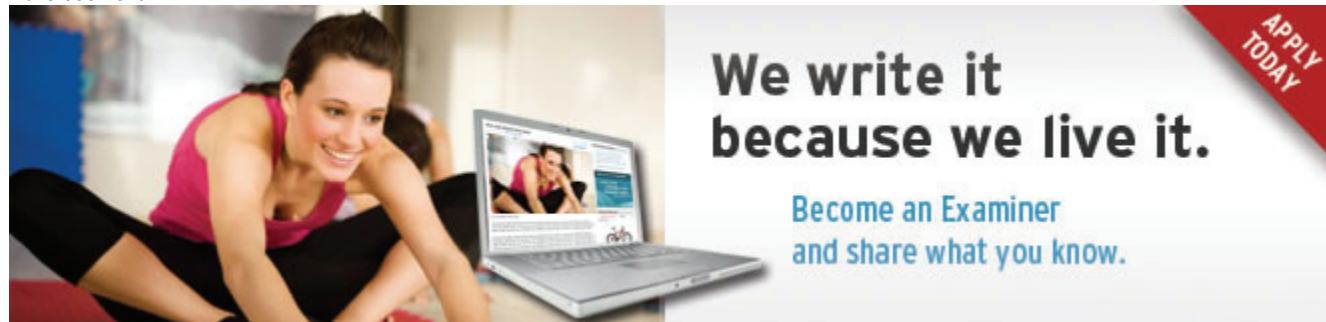
Gail Longstaff of No More Homeless Pets of Kansas City says,

It is time for all of us to lift our voices for those who cannot speak for themselves.

But while today's No Kill leaders stand united, the ASPCA is leading the charge to derail this lifesaving initiative in order to "save face" from its untoward actions in the killing of Oreo, the abused dog, for whom the law is named. In doing so, Ed Sayres of the ASPCA is demonstrating once again how easily he is able to sacrifice the lives of animals. He is

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joined by a coalition of regressive, draconian killing shelters, and those beholden to the ASPCA for its money.

Sadly, some organizations which have historically claimed support of the No Kill philosophy are choosing to remain silent, in the hopes that they too will benefit from the ASPCA's financial largesse. These are the animal's "Fairweather Friends." Those who give lip service to saving lives when it is easy and profitable to do so, but when the animals most need their support, when they are required to defend the animals against those in positions of power within the humane movement, they abandon the animals in deference to personal relationships with people. As such, they have not embraced Oreo's Law because they are willing to sacrifice the lives of the animals to their own selfish ends. While they may claim a leadership position in the No Kill movement, such claims ring hollow: *you can't be a leader of a movement you do not faithfully represent. You cannot, by definition, be a leader in cause you refuse to fight for.*

A Bellwether of Change

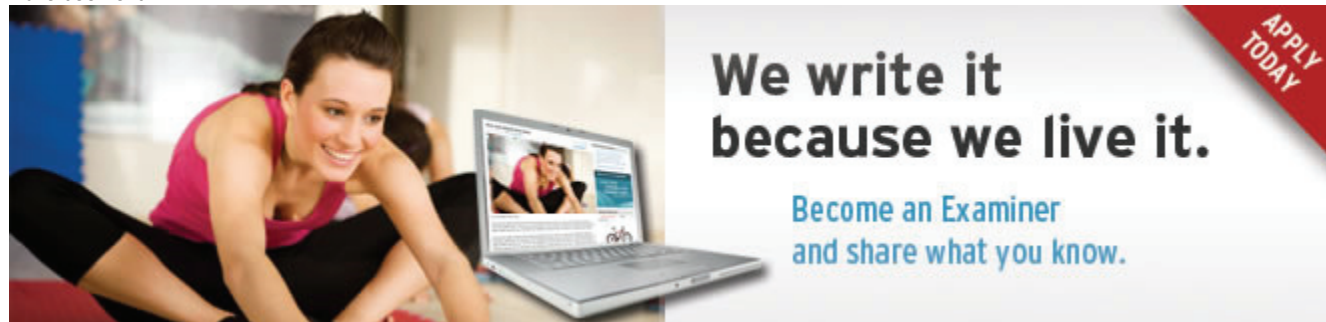
Since the 1990s when the No Kill movement began in earnest, there have been numerous occasions when the will of the animal loving public and grassroots have been disregarded

by those in positions of power within the humane movement: In Wilkes County, North Carolina, when HSUS lobbied to have each and every dog killed including healthy and friendly puppies; in Virginia, when the large national organizations lobbied the court to kill each and every one of Michael Vick's victims; in Tangipahoa Parish, LA, when they legitimized and excused the willful killing of over 170 shelter animals, including cats, for a mild coronavirus in dogs; and in Austin, TX, where the ASPCA is backing and empowering a regressive shelter director who has killed over 12,000 animals despite hundreds of empty cages; just to name a recent few.

In each of these circumstances, the No Kill movement has increasingly found its collective voice, condemning the killing and the hollow excuses build up over the years to justify it. And while our numbers, our demands, and our determination have grown with each of those tragedies, we have yet to find a permanent and sustained solution to prevent them from recurring: a fundamental alteration of our society to ensure that such outcomes are prevented from happening again. The killing of the abused dog, Oreo, and the collective condemnation of the ASPCA which followed has had—to our great credit—a seminal and altogether different outcome. In this case, we did not simply accept the two-faced, vague, unenforceable "promises" of change as we

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have in the past. This time, we put forth a law that will *force* them to change their behavior and thereby ensure that a tragedy like Oreo will *never* happen again. Not because they promise not to; but because we are taking measures that permanently take away their power to do otherwise.

This response, however, has put our movement to the ultimate test. It is exposing for all to see who actually speaks for the animals; and who merely claims to. Which organizations and individuals can the animals count on to champion their best interest when it is most urgently needed? And which organizations are bowing to the pressure from the ASPCA and sacrificing the animals—and their fundamental duty as an animal protection organization to push the envelope on their behalf—in the process? The support, and lack of support, for Oreo's Law, is exposing which groups are true champions of No Kill, and which groups are proving themselves to be mere "Fairweather Friends"—eager to champion the No Kill philosophy in the abstract, eager to accept the accolades and donations of the grassroots when it is easy, convenient and profitable for them to promote No Kill, but not willing to put concrete actions behind that abstract rhetoric, nor to put the animals' best interest—indeed, their very lives—before their personal relationships with those who kill animals, and

embody the very attitude the No Kill movement was founded to oppose.

The voices above have stood up for the animals, and given us all hope for a brighter future. The others, tragically and most regrettably, have not.

For more information:

[Oreo's Law: Courage & Cowardice in the Fight for a No Kill Nation](#)
[Understanding Oreo's Law](#)

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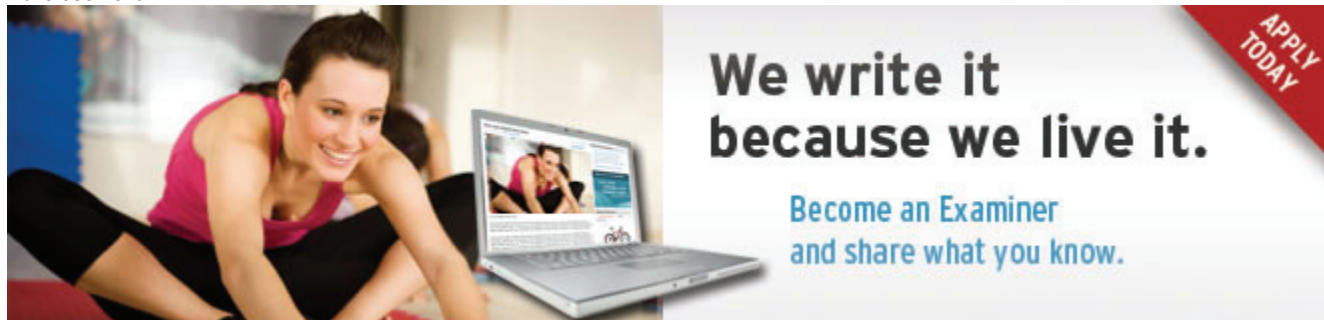
If you like Nathan's articles, you'll love his books. *Redemption* is the most acclaimed book on animal shelters ever written and the winner of five national book awards. His new book, *Irreconcilable Differences*, is a collection of essays on animals, animal lovers, and the No Kill revolution.

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