



'No kill' solution worth a look

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"No kill" animal shelters sound like an impractical indulgence in the complex world of public health and community priorities. But for a couple hours Thursday night a no-kill evangelist made an experiment that succeeded in that non-mainstream world of San Francisco sound plausible for more conservative Shreveport-Bossier City.

The keys are widespread buy-in by animal protection groups, veterinarians and pet-related retailers to support inexpensive spaying/neutering programs for low-income pet owners and the aggressive promotion of adoption that includes owner education and support.

In Caddo Parish, where the annual toll of euthanized animals again reached 10,000, an experiment is worth discussing by animal control authorities and the Parish Commission.

Local philanthropist Bill Robinson, who already is underwriting two additional staffers at the Caddo shelter — one for education and outreach — deserves credit for bringing in Nathan Winograd, founder of "No Kill Solutions", who offered compelling examples of how his compassionate model can succeed both in urban San Francisco and rural New York state.

Whether Winograd's message takes root or not, his presentation again demonstrates the value of bringing fresh ideas and perspectives to a community. Whether the model is civic engagement, public housing or industry, such presentations can get us over the humps of preconceived notions and business-as-usual templates.

Winograd was down on legislation designed to regulate animal populations. And he noted that education about responsible pet ownership, according to studies, fails in comparison to making available inexpensive spaying and neutering. That is crucial for pet owners of modest income who don't have the money for vet visits. Winograd cited examples that showed private veterinarian practices didn't suffer because of low-cost animal clinics. The Caddo animal shelter currently is exploring with Robinson the equipping of a mobile clinic that could go into low-income and underserved neighborhoods to offer spaying and neutering services.

Consider that Caddo's shelter houses 13,000-15,000 animals a year, with only a fifth not being euthanized. Now compare that to San Francisco, a city of 800,000, where only 7,000 animals come into its shelter and every healthy animal is saved.

No-kill efforts also rely on a host of incentives: freebies that range from grooming and a vet visit for animals that are adopted, to a rebate of \$5 for animals brought in for spaying or neutering.

Under the no-kill model, energizing animal protection groups to spearhead adoption and foster-care for discarded pets ensures even feral animals or those that are injured or permanently crippled are saved rather than euthanized.

The No Kill option is worth a hard look. Such an approach can deal with the pragmatic side of animal overpopulation that plagues cities and rural areas alike. And it can speak volumes about a community's storehouse of compassion.

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Caddo Animal Services: www.caddo.org/animal_mosqu.cfm
No Kill Advocacy Center: www.nokillsolutions.com

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