Saving the Bottom 50%

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[Beginning of Audio]

Dr. Jefferson: Thank you. I figured I'd start with a little bit more detail about my history and why I got involved in Austin Pets Alive!. And when I first graduated from vet school in '97 and moved to Austin in '98, I was working at an emergency hospital and before I moved to Austin I worked in rural Rocky Mountain, Virginia at a mixed practice and so I got a lot of bare bones experience working with very few resources and then moved to Austin, worked at an emergency clinic and was doing volunteer work at the shelters in and around Austin during the day. And I started Emancipet Spay and Neuter Clinic because I wanted to see fewer animals end up in the shelter. That was back when our city was euthanizing about 85 percent of the 25,000 animals that came in the door.

So, I didn't really feel like my skills as a volunteer vet were really put to good use and so I started the spay/neuter clinic in an effort to try to stem the flow of animals into the shelter so that we'd have fewer to deal with and fewer would get euthanized. And after about nine years of doing low cost and free spay/neuter, we were still at a 50 percent euthanasia rate that had been static for eight years. So, we saw an initial improvement and I don't know that it was all related to us, but it didn't improve.

And so I started thinking more about how are we going to make Austin a no-kill city. How are we going to prevent them from being euthanized and started examining the gaps, and that's kind of what happened with Austin Pets Alive! and why I got involved with Austin Pets Alive!. They had already been – they were already established, but didn't have – they weren't doing any kind of rescue or animal care. They were just an advocacy organization and were – back in 2000 were trying to make Austin a no-kill city by the millennium. That didn't work, obviously, and so in 2008 we sort of revitalized that mission to try to make Austin have a 90 percent or better save rate at the city shelter.

So the first definition that we need to go over is just what is the bottom 50 percent? And that is the portion of the animals that were being euthanized at our shelter and I think probably at a lot of shelters. Fifty percent is kind of a place that shelters get to and seem to kind of get stuck. And that 50 percent, what we were told and what the data seemed to show is that these animals were not wanted. There weren't very specific reasons, because the documentation wasn't that great, but it included healthy animals, as well as *[inaudible]*. And what we found over time is that we could break out the bottom 50 percent and I wish there was a way to turn this pyramid upside down, because the 50 percent that's saved should be at the top and then the bottom 50 percent that's not saved – and we found that 10 to 15 percent are healthy, desirable dogs and cats and 10 to 15 percent are desirable dogs and cats with just minor issues. That could be like a little bit of mange or kennel cough or something that's pretty easy to fix. And then under age kittens and puppies make up about five percent of our population and critically ill and injured, five percent, and then ten percent are the chronic, severe medical and behavioral problems that are going to take a lifetime of work for that animal to be saved.

And so for – we started trying to examine why is this happening? Why are these 50 percent being euthanized and just from the outside, it appears to be a lack of adopters. We know only 20 to 30 percent of animals come from shelters and rescue groups, so the rest come from some other resource. It seems like it's a lack of resources. The shelters don't have the resources to care for the animals, to get them out, a lack of space. If you're going to try to save them all, where do you put them if you have a quick turnover shelter. And all of that leads to a feeling of helplessness, which I certainly have. That's why I went and started a spay/neuter clinic, because I didn't feel like I could help them.

And then, you know, this is a controversial subject, but I think that because euthanasia is the default choice when a shelter is full, there's a – we don't take it – and I hope I don't offend anybody with this, but I don't feel like we take it as seriously as it is. It's a life and death issue and I think that if euthanasia was not as easy as it is – and again, I don't mean any disrespect with that. I've certainly been involved in euthanizing healthy animals. I think that maybe we would be more creative in trying to figure out how to get them out. And it's also the cheapest route, which from the budget point of view is a huge deal and that makes it the default.

So why is not saving them a problem? Why should we address this? One, it's bad publicity. What we found in Austin is that the citizens overwhelmingly wanted to save the animals and they didn't care about all the internal politics, all of the reasons why. They just wanted the animals saved. It leads to poor moral in volunteers and shelter employees. They don't want to have to euthanize these animals either and then also, you

know, I think that animals – every living being, their strongest instinct is to survive. And I think that's a good reason to try to save them and companion animals are becoming more and more valuable.

So the change in focus of working with inputs, which is spay/neuter, we were measuring inputs as if that was our performance measure to try to make the city euthanize fewer animals and the inputs were spay and neuter, rabies vaccine clinics, wellness clinics, microchipping – all of these things that lead to a better community and a better lifestyle for animals, but don't actually target the endpoint that we were looking for, which was to euthanize fewer animals. And the city wanted to do that, but we weren't measuring what would actually get us to the end.

Spaying and neutering, obviously, it has a huge effect. We – Austin has spayed and neutered over 150,000 animals at least and we're seeing that there are fewer and fewer stray dogs out in our population, fewer and fewer stray cats and I think that's probably related, but it's hard – again, pretty hard to measure. And it doesn't help the ones that are already at the shelter. So having that focus is good, but it has to be paired with how do you get the animals out also.

This is why we know we can save them. This is just a quick slide on people are becoming more aware of shelter animals and the reasons to adopt and to save them, to save a life. That means there's more opportunities for us to encroach on that 70 percent that are not adopting from shelters and rescue groups.

The thing that we found politically, which is really interesting, is that the politicians love this issue and will help raise the money for cities, because it crosses every political barrier out there. And so they can appeal to the animal groups and reach everybody. And so that was a real eye opener for me, because that was a way for us to go to the city and ask for more funding to try to save more animals. And I don't believe that in the U.S. that there's probably any community that doesn't want to see this happen.

We started looking at statistics. Again, how do we know we're going to be able to save them? And the AVMA does a study for new veterinarians in their demographics book. I think it's called *The Handbook – The Demographics Handbook*. And they talk about how many people are in a community based on state that are – that have a pet under the age of one year. So that means they would have gotten them within that last 12 months. So that means that that's a new home that doesn't turn over. That's a number of new homes that are available every year, and so 75,000 people have a pet less than one year of age. How do we get our pets into those homes? And if only 25 percent come from shelter and rescue, again, we've got a huge opportunity to just compete with these

other sources, marketing, making people more aware, trying to get them into our shelter. And people are spending more and more on pets, which means they're more and more valuable.

So how do we save them? Getting creative, if you know it's just an exercise to think about what would you do if you couldn't euthanize. How would you save them if you couldn't euthanize? It doesn't mean you don't, but how – you know, if you start thinking along those lines, what would you do differently? Veterinarians, I think one reason that we've been successful is because I'm a veterinarian and I think we're trained to problem solve. We're trained to deal with the weird, random stuff that comes up and create a solution and make that animal better. You can apply that same logic to a whole city. If there's – and you'll kind of see the way that I work through our problem solving, but I think it applies directly to how we're trained to deal with disease.

So step one is moving people to act. We've got to get the marketing out there, get them into our shelter, increase adopters and fosters, build up support in the community. This is not something that can be done by your paid staff only. There's just no way. And we need to embrace those people. The other – one thing that animal people are not really good at is being nice to people that want to help and I think that we have – if we want them to help we have to be nice to them. We have to show them how much their contribution means and how much – even if it's annoying, how much they're helping. Keep them engaged, because every action leads to a group of action.

People are the solutions. Increasing shelter resources for care. We have to increase shelter space and capacity. That's done through foster homes and creative use of space. Increasing the difficulty of euthanasia. Making protocols so that there's hoops that have to be jumped through makes people have to think a little bit outside the box, and increasing the motivation and commitment to save. And that is applied directly to shelter staff in the sense that if there – our shelter, we did surgeries three or four days a week – spay and neuter surgeries, so if an animal was adopted on a Friday it might not get surgery until Tuesday, but it can't leave the shelter until it's spayed or neutered, so it sits in that cage for those four days. That's another animal that could have come in and done its stray hold during that four days and kept – if that animal had been able to leave immediately. So, increasing the turnover and being more efficient with how we get the animals out the door is a big part of increasing the capacity.

So, if you try to break this down into actions, every single person that comes into a shelter is bringing an animal. It might be an animal control officer. It might be a person who finds a stray. It might be an owner, but

it's all actions by people that get these animals into the shelter. So if you start thinking that backwards, all we need is the same number of actions for people to get them out of the shelter. And so it really is building this massive component of people, who can take one action to get an animal out of the shelter.

It's overwhelming. We were euthanizing 14,000 animals in 2007 and that's a huge, huge number and I think that the key is to break it down, break it down into digestible chunks of animals, problems, groups, whatever it is so that you can get people to devote themselves to one task that's attainable and then that makes everything else – if you can get multiple people or groups working on one task each the that all *[inaudible]* to saving a whole bunch. We always like to say that everybody can do one thing to save an animal. There's not one person in our community that can't do something to save an animal.

And we had to – we had no resources when we started. We had no volunteers. We had no fosters. We had no building. We had nothing. And so we had a philosophy that every single person can become an expert. So if you have a foster, who fosters a litter of bottle babies and they do it well, then they're your expert. They do one litter, then they become the mentor for the next group and they train people. So it's not all on the veterinarian's back or the executive director's back to try to make sure that everybody is doing it perfectly. When you're in a crisis situation or an emergency situation, which I know we never think of city euthanasia like that, but I don't know why we don't, because I think that we'd be motivated and capable of doing a lot more if we were thinking along those terms of who would you empower to help if this was an emergency, like a hurricane or a fire or anything like that? We've been through a fire in Austin, which was horrible, and everybody was an expert. I mean we were out in the fire helping to save animals and we're not trained in, you know, the fire or police or rescue or anything. And so I think that we've got to be a little bit more lenient about who can help and empowering them to do it.

So creating a huge lifesaving program, compartmentalizing the work, we've already talked about that, trusting people and one of my friends has a saying that I think is really good: Perfect is the enemy of life saving, because we're never going to be perfect at this and if we were we would have already had it solved. And so this is something that is a work in progress. We're building the bike as we're riding it. Nothing is going to be perfect before we start saving the first animal or the first group of animals, but we have to try.

So how do we get people to actually step up and act? There's an organization out there that does motivational speaking and talks about how

you get social movements going and this is a social movement, because you need the entire community to help. It's not something that's just going to be a group of people at your shelter doing it. And the first piece is that the right people at the right time are there and I actually don't think that that's that important, because I think that there's a ton of right people and it is the right time and every city probably has the right moment to get started.

One thing that doesn't work is when you keep just throwing information out at people with no action plan. That doesn't help them. It actually decreases their ability to act.

Hope: Hope is the most important piece, so giving people the hope that we can actually solve this – maybe, again, breaking it down to a small group of animals that we can save – giving people the hope that we can get a piece solved and then we'll move on to the next piece and then we'll move on to the next piece and then we'll move on to the next piece. And as long as there's hope for something attainable you'll have people supporting you in droves. And where there's life there's hope. I love that saying.

Okay. So this is the last slide for moving people from this motivational group, but people need to know, believe, and care enough to want to act. They need to have the will and instructions to act. And once they act they have to be rewarded for doing so. And I think that the reward is in saving the lives and as long as you keep pushing that message out you don't have to get people expensive presents or, you know actual awards, but I think that congratulating them on saving a life, congratulating them on the hard work they've done, even if it's not perfect, but just constantly reinforcing how important their action is to the whole mission, people keep coming back to help.

Okay, so what did we do? We decided to make – we wanted to make Austin a no-kill city and we put it out there. So these are things that we put out there to the world and Austin had already failed. So keep that in mind – Austin Pets Alive! had already failed. So by putting this back out there we were kind of like, "Well, nobody is going to believe us. Nobody's going to help us." But we felt like it was important to have a big goal with the end being something that people really want to see and not just a better community or a better welfare, you know? We wanted something very tangible, a no-kill city, 90 percent plus being saved.

And who are we, Austin Pets Alive!? Why are we here? 14,000 animals died in 2007 and we couldn't see any change without something drastic happening. And so we decide – how are we going to save those 14,000

animals? Obviously, they're already dead, so we can't save them, so how do we actually save them?

The way that we started was by being very focused on only the animals that are going to be euthanized, so that was kind of a struggle. How do we even know which ones are going to be euthanized, but almost every shelter has a list that they prepare, generally before closing and then the next day, morning, the animals are euthanized before the shelter opens. So we were able to get that list and start promoting those animals immediately out, and so we had one hour to make decisions. We were out there Facebooking, Craigs Listing, sending out notes to our e-mail groups of volunteers and whichever ones we felt like we could find a foster for – again, we had no building, so we had nowhere to take them – then we would put a hold on them and come get them the next day, have the foster come get them the next day. And that worked out to be a pretty good relationship with the city, because they were willing to extend the hold for 24 hours if we felt like we could get them out. Of course, we couldn't abuse that and just hold everybody and then only come pick up one or two, but we tried. We had people who were really good at choosing the animals that they felt were most desirable and then also getting that urgent plea out.

We definitely wanted to produce measurable results. Having a no-kill city is a – there's an end goal. It's a numerical end goal, so we needed to be able to show how we were contributing to that numerical end goal and so every animal that we saved from the actual euthanasia list was a number that contributed to the percent of animals being saved. And so we were able to see exactly how much impact we were making, which was a huge motivator, which was a huge motivator for our volunteers and our fosters. And then, of course, never relenting, I mean it's – you want to quit almost every day, but you have to keep going.

Okay. So, we have six key – what I think are key ingredients for Austin Pets Alive!'s success and one is leadership. There has to be somebody who's responsible and knowledgeable and I think that veterinarians, again, that's a role that veterinarians could step into. I'm not – you know, I don't have any special gifts to be the leader of Austin Pets Alive!. I just – and I don't even have any business training. I'm not – I'm not the best leader, but somebody had to step up that knew what they were talking about related to animal care and animal welfare. And so, without somebody else doing it, that was me, but I think that there's plenty of veterinarians out there that could do the same.

We needed a specific attainable goal. We've already talked about that 90 percent.

We needed a rally cry and if you look at rally cries that are successful, they're very motivating. And even though it feels negative to talk about the number of animals being euthanized, you can't not talk about it and still expect people to act. And so what we tried to do is make it positive. We tried to – we can do better than this. Austin – Austinites – everybody in Austin wants to do better. The shelter wants to do better. The city wants to do better. Everybody wants to do better, so join us so that we can do better.

Team spirit. I love this picture because these girls just sent us a photo of them in their t-shirts, because they were excited to have their new t-shirts. And that is exciting, because it's clear that the mission is inspiring people to be part of it and so it's kind of like creating something fun for people to join and saving animals. It can't be more fun than that.

Support structure. Not all people are strong when the going gets tough, so you have to have people who have been through it. Again, it's the learn one, do one, teach one philosophy that veterinarians are so good at. We need to do – empower people to have that same model for every aspect that's not veterinarian related, because everybody needs to feel like it's okay to make a mistake, it's okay to keep trying and to get back in the saddle. Nobody's going to judge you. Just keep trying to go towards the end goal.

Specific instructions are really important too. You can't just say, "Let's go save a bunch of animals." It has to be, "We need you to transport this animal from the shelter over to the vet clinic to get spayed and neutered. We need you to pick up this animal and foster it for two weeks. We need you to go to the adoption site on Saturday and drop your animal off." People need very specific instructions and then if they have that they're more – they – there's no risk to them, so they're more likely to act and to actually help.

These are messages that we've already talked about, that this is a crisis. You're needed immediately. We can all act now to help. Talking about the facts and figures is important, because there's a lot of worry about not enough homes and we found that that was not true in Austin. And then, you know, we pretty much already talked about these.

Measurable results: It's important to promote the results too, because again, people need to see that you're actually making progress.

So, messages that don't work: When it's already too late. When the animal's dead, don't put that out there. People don't want to see it. It makes them not want to help and they don't want to even look at your Facebook page again if we're the radical group saying, "Look at all these

animals that this community didn't save yesterday." That doesn't help anybody.

When people feel like their action doesn't add up to a whole, you need to keep reminding everybody that your one action combined with 100 other people's actions actually has a huge impact. If it's just one person that feels like they're doing all the work then they're not going to keep going.

Doing the work, again, appreciating volunteers and fosters. You can have the best ones out there and they'll love their foster so much and they have five million questions about it and it drives you crazy and you just want them to relinquish the animal and get out of your life. But you need them – you really need them. You need to coddle them. You need to send them to somebody else, who knows a little bit more about it, or send them to a website or something that doesn't require you to suck up all your time, but we do need those people.

And then no real solution: If you just send out photos like this and tell people to go rescue this dog, if you don't have the organization behind them to give the medical resources to allow them to positively impact this animal, it's overwhelming. There's no – there's not very many people who are going to go just save this dog by themselves with no support from any other group.

So the strategy: Again, we had clear rescue criteria. We had no duplication of effort. All of our effort was spent on helping the animals that were definitely going to die, so we were not duplicating the effort of the shelter, of the humane society, of rescue groups, of the adopters that were coming into the shelter. Everybody else got first pick and again, we're strategically doing that, because we wanted to see who was left and what gaps were in the community so that we could save them.

We started. We couldn't save them all immediately, like I said. So we had to – had to create a structure of how we're going to save the easy ones first. And when you think about the pyramid you've got that 10 to 15 percent that are healthy. All they need is more time to be seen by the public or better marketing or some way – some avenue to get out of the shelter. And so those are the ones we started with and then we started working our way up the pyramid.

So, once you save them, where do they go? If you don't have a building and the shelter's full, where do these animals go? And foster homes was our answer. We were able to create a massive foster group and I'll talk a little bit about that in a minute. Adoption centers. PetSmarts and some PetCos allow you to house cats permanently, so that can be a home for these animals. So we would put cats – our shelter had a big upper

respiratory infection problem, so they would all have to go to foster first, but then after two weeks we would have the foster surrender them and bring them to PetSmart or PETCO, so we filled up all the PetSmarts and PETCO's that we could find and developed a volunteer group to do the adoptions. And so that's capacity.

Unused cages: A lot of shelters have unused cages. That's unused capacity. Creating more cages and creative spaces, using cages more efficiently – that goes back to getting them out faster. Once they've got a live outcome, get them out. They need to get out quickly so that you can save another life.

And then creating wards: For some of the problems that will go over we had to create separate spaces for these animals and most of them were in foster homes to begin with, but now that we're big enough to have our own building, we do have wards that deal with these specific problems when there's no foster.

So there's urgency: It doesn't matter where the cage is. We call our foster homes cages. They have two – every foster is allowed to have two cages and that's it. And the idea behind that is that we don't want them to get ten cages. Everybody wants to come save them. We want them to work really hard to get the ones they have out the door and then they can save more. So if every little piece has the same urgency to turn that cage over, then you have this massive motion of turning over animals and getting them out quickly. And so everybody – we call it kind of a game of Hot Potato, because we just want them – you know we're kind of rushing them to the next stage and then rushing them to adoption and then as soon as that one's adopted, rushing over to the shelter to save another one and then starting the whole process again. If you can tie the end goal with the save, again, you motivate people. You motivate people to act faster and to do harder work, because they can see who gets saved immediately from the action that just happened over here.

So, what we found by looking at the euthanasia list – we had no idea going in – this was just a concept. Let's look – let's save the animals on the euthanasia list. How bad can it be? And what we found is that there's specific groups of animals that need help and then there's specific groups of problems. There's obviously a connection between those and we found over time that we needed a massive foster program. We needed a very large medical program, a large adoption program, and then programs that didn't exist in our city needed to be created. Again, compartmentalize the work, trust people, and don't be perfect.

So, foster homes: We've doubled the capacity of our shelter by having foster homes. We have about 700 animals, 700 to 1,000 animals in foster

at any one time. And it was only in the last six months that we had paid foster coordinators. So fostering is something people love and we have foster teams of 12 people that coordinate all of these hundreds of foster homes and they do it all for free. They do it from home. They screen all the fosters. They do applications. They do – they push people to come in for their vaccines. They push people to come in for adoptions. They coordinate foster adoptions. They do this massive amount of work and it's all for free and that's a way that you can save money in your budget, by just creating the place for people to help. So these people, they came out of the woodwork. We didn't go specifically recruit people to do this. We said, "This is what we're going to do. Here's the areas we need help with," and they came out of the woodwork and did it.

And the same thing – I'm working in San Antonio now too and the same thing happened in San Antonio. The foster program is our strongest volunteer program and you can get a lot of people to help with it. You just have to get a good person at the head of it, which happened by – you know, again, just happened for us. So I think it's pretty possible anywhere.

The foster program challenges: It's all volunteer structure. Maintaining the program and managing the growth – I'll show you some slides on our growth in foster. And the program, as it gets bigger, becomes harder and we have a lot of turnover of foster people, foster parents and also volunteers and that's just part of the deal. And I'll show you a slide on that too. It's to be expected. It doesn't mean you're failing. It's just part of the deal. And foster parents they – a lot of them adopt their foster, you know, pet, so you lose them right there. And you just have to expect it. Thank them for their work and thank you for saving the life that you fostered and then move on to trying to recruit the next one that's going to save a life.

So, we have – this is the total number of animals that entered foster homes per year and you can see in 2012 that it's a massive number of fosters. Again, the only way that can be maintained is through turnover of the animal going through the foster homes quickly. And if you look at – so that's the total number of animals. That includes foster moves. That's a huge component of the foster coordination team is when a foster says, "Oh, this puppy is driving me crazy. I really can't deal with any more. Where do I drop it off?" Then that foster team has to find another foster to take the animal. That, again, is just part of the deal. A lot of people want to quit when that starts happening, but it's just part of the deal. We don't really care, as long as that animal has a safe place to be. It's okay if it's in three homes over the two weeks before it gets an adoption. It doesn't matter.

And then this is the unique animals in foster. So you can see that it's 1,000 less. There's probably 25 to 30 percent of the animals in foster get moved at some point.

Our foster numbers: In 2008 you can see actually the point of this slide is just to show that the breakdown hasn't changed very much. People want babies and so the majority of the animals in foster are babies and that's the lowest hanging fruit, which we'll talk about in a second. Actually, I think it might be the next slide. Yep.

Puppies: So, people want puppies and people want to foster puppies. And so – and we're euthanizing puppies, so save them. Put them in foster homes. Let people have them. And we didn't know that we'd be able to conquer that category very quickly, but it turned out that we started in June of 2008 and by November, we – just because we saved our first parvo puppies, we were like, "Okay. Well, we have a parvo home now," which is mine. "Why don't we just commit to saving them all?" And so we quietly did that. I don't think you need to quietly do that. I think it would actually be better if you loudly make a commitment to saving all the puppies, because then you can get a lot more support, funding, volunteers, and fosters. But we were able to actually pull it off the minute we decided to do it, because there were not that many puppies compared to the rest of the group that were being euthanized. And this is the most desirable group that is being euthanized.

They're dying because there's not enough space. If they – if they had their three days – a lot of shelters, when they're still at a very high euthanasia rate they – the turnover happens after their three-day stray hold and it doesn't matter if you're the most adorable little puppy that's ever lived. If your three days is up it's up. And so some of these were very healthy and had zero problems, super cute, just were in a littler of ten others that were also super cute. Half of them get adopted. Half don't. What do you do with them?

They also were dying, obviously, because of problems, because they're very susceptible to disease and they're fragile, so parvo, mange, ringworm, diarrhea, broken bones, being too little, and also, a big fear is that they'll contract disease while they're at the shelter. And so one of the motivations for euthanizing is to prevent an illness outbreak, and so not keeping a lot of puppies around for a long time is a motivator. You know, it makes sense, because puppies are very fragile.

So, the strategies are as many foster homes as possible. Get them out of the shelter. Push them out. Again, people want them. We didn't get 100 percent saved in the first summer, but we did in the second summer.

And disease treatment plans: And again, you know, looking at the euthanasia list, we didn't have to put 100 percent of the puppies that came into the shelter into our foster program, only the ones that didn't – weren't going to make it out alive. So that's a small fraction of the ones that came into the shelter, because again, they're the most desirable, so they're getting out through other means.

Creating disease treatment plans: For whatever is their problem, creating it and sending the to foster with it, sending them to their adopters with it – we had some speakers yesterday talking about that and I think that that's really important, because there's no reason that we have to hold on to these animals because they need to heal in our care. There's people out there that are perfectly capable of doing it themselves, so let – empower your fosters. Empower your adopters. Let them do it. That creates a bond. Why bond with a foster? Why have a puppy that has a broken leg bond with a foster through the healing process when it's most marketable with that broken leg right when the broken leg happens? Get them into an adoption home. Let the adopter be the foster and they bond with the animal instead and then your foster, who wouldn't – of course, all the fosters want to foster the ones that have broken legs too, but you can redirect them to one that maybe there's not a line of people wanting to adopt and waiting.

[Inaudible] we'll talk about later. And then, yeah, just foster.

The contagious disease: These are the challenges. Everybody knows. Hard to find foster for contagious diseases. Hard to keep in the shelter if they contract a contagious disease and then keeping them healthy from contagious disease is difficult.

And then one challenge that we faced early on that's no longer a challenge for us for some reason was that they were – people, fosters would hold onto them and not turn their cage space over and so the animal would grow up in foster and then by the time it got to an adoption event it was six months old and not as cute as it used to be.

In this last slide I put these little puppies up there because this stage of puppy, even though they've got massive Demodex and we call them Chupacabras in Austin, they are still more adoptable than a four month, fully haired Pit Bull mix. So get them out when they're little and even if they have a problem, send them home with medicine. You can be their vet for that one specific problem. It's not that hard. We have not had a high irritation level with adopters that adopt these animals. They come in for their Promeris. They pick it up after 30 days and then we send them home with information on how to get it so they can keep doing it at home.

Puppy challenges: Puppy stats. So, in November of '08 we decided to rescue all of the puppies and we were successful. Now, once we pull them out, they don't all survive, because they've got problems. Some of them have problems. Parvo we have an 85 percent survival rate. We have mange is 100 percent as long as there's not another problem; ringworm, 100 percent; fractures, 100 percent. We haven't had any puppies die of fractures, which I think is really interesting, because there's so many that come in hit by cars. We take everything that's still alive. If the shelter says, "We just got this dog hit by a car," we take it and we have had a 100 percent success rate with the puppies, which is, again, kind of amazing and I think that speaks more to their ability to heal than us being amazing. And distemper is a big question mark, which we'll talk about later. So, 4,700 puppies since 2008.

Okay. So the next group of animals that are the lowest hanging fruit are small breed dogs. People want small breed dogs, even the Chihuahuas. And they do – it's amazing, but they do, because we used to call Chihuahuas the small Pit Bulls of the world and, you know, it's hard to adopt out both groups, but comparatively speaking, they're nowhere near each other. Chihuahuas are – people do want them and people want Pit Bulls too, it's just a little bit harder to get the right person in the door.

Okay, so the definition of small breed dog to us was 25 pounds at adult weight that's normal. So if we got an extremely emaciated – if we got an extremely emaciated Pit Bull in the door that weighed 25 pounds, that doesn't count as a small breed dog. So – because we got some of those – I'm sure everybody has seen those. And they're generally dying because they run out of time, just like the puppies. They are terrified in the shelter environment. They are one-person dogs and so when they go to the shelter they are freaked out, you know? There's people grabbing them, all sorts of strangers. There's big dogs barking. You know, if you think about the typical little dog, they don't even spend ten minutes outside a day and then all of the sudden they're in a shelter. And of course, they're terrible patients, so they get labeled aggressive very quickly and then fast-tracked to euthanasia.

So, small breed strategies: Foster homes – again, foster, foster, foster. One of the strategies that one of our rescue workers came up with that I think was just brilliant was a hold and release technique and what she would do is literally put on oven mitts and go grab these little dogs and just hold on to them, put them up against her body and just hold them. Not talk to them, not pet them, not interact with them in any way, shape, or form and just wait for them to sigh and lick their lips. And it would generally take five to ten minutes and they would just be stiff and sitting there and then all of the sudden they would sigh and lick their lips and she would put them down, not talk to them. Don't pet them. Don't do

anything. Just put them down, back out of the cage and leave. And over 90 percent of these guys that were aggressive and unhandlable, the next day when she showed up, these dogs would see her from across the courtyard and just go crazy and just – jumping up the front of the cage, "Come over here. Come over here. Come over here." And so what we – you know, it makes sense. These dogs bond with one person. They need somebody to bond with and in that environment the bond happens really quickly. And that was good, because we were worried that some of these dogs were actually really aggressive and we've come across less than five that actually have something wrong with their brain that they're human aggressive. But the rest of them are just terrified and they're little jerks. You know, we all know that and that's normal, but people love them.

So – and the other thing about small breed dogs and puppies is their fractures heal very fast. They're not the large dogs that have weight problems that – so bone fractures can be taken a little bit less seriously. We'll talk about triaging bone fractures, but you don't have to go to these elaborate surgeries for these small breed dogs, as long as you're up front about your communication about what you're doing and also trying to create a good four legs that are pain free for the rest of their lives – or three.

And then foster: Fostering – these are just strategies to get them adopted. Some of these dogs won't bond. You know, they don't bond with anybody in the shelter except for that one person. The same thing happens in a foster home, so they go to a foster home and the foster has adopters come over to their house and the dogs are trying to bite the new people that want to adopt them and so one of our strategies is just to pack up their bags and send them to the adopter's house for a sleepover and then 30 minutes later they're bonding with the adopter and the foster is nowhere to be found.

Small breed stats: We've been able to save over 1,800 in the last three years and so that's, again, that's a chunk that's digestible. That's not a huge, huge number of the 14,000 animals that were being euthanized and so that's a really good, attainable goal is to save every small breed dog. A 95 percent save rate overall. A lot of small breed dogs are turned into the shelter for humane euthanasia when they're extremely old and are ready to be euthanized.

Okay. So, kittens are the next group. There's three groups of kittens that are savable; bottle babies, less than four to six weeks of age; grow babies, six to eight weeks of age; and kittens eight to twelve weeks of age. Ringworm complicates everything, as you know.

Kitten strategies: Foster homes, again, send them to foster, trying to find as many fosters as possible. In Austin – I'm sure it's the same in Florida, kittens, there are so many kittens. Of that 14,000 animals that were euthanized in 2007, 9,500 of them were kittens and cats and so it's a huge problem.

We created a bottle baby program to handle mass feedings, which we'll talk about at a later session. And the strategy for cats and kittens that are adoptable age is to just push them back out to the community. So it's recycling and we'll talk about that, I think, at maybe the next couple of slides. We've been able to save over 4,000 bottle babies, 2,500 kittens, and 2,400 teenagers.

So, cats, again dying because so many come in the door seasonally. They all hit in the summer. The good thing about adult cats is you can put them in a foster home and you don't care if they become delinquent, because it's actually better if they just hold onto them for a few months and then they show up in November and want to place the cat, because we don't have any cats then. So it's great and cats are easy. They fit into a foster home and people often do try to keep them longer, because it's harder to get to adoption events or whatever. And for cats we just don't care. That's okay. If the foster wants to hold onto them longer that's fine. For kittens it's a little different, because they have a window of opportunity to get adopted when they're adorable.

So, our strategies: Recycling; getting them back out. So our city is about 800,000 people and we have one shelter. It used to be in the middle of town when we first got started, but the entire community was bringing all those animals to one spot. So we can't – we know people don't go out of their way to adopt cats. We know that. They can find cats on any street corner. If they're in the market to adopt a cat, the first cat they see is probably the one they're going to adopt. So they don't have to go to too much effort to go find a cat. So we try to be that default position. We try to be everywhere with cats and by spreading – compartmentalizing the work, they're not all in one building. We spread them out over every PetSmart, every PETCO that didn't already have a group in it. We did events on the weekends where we bring cats out in front of those stores. We set up at fairs. We did online marketing, anything that we could think of to get – malls. I think there's a picture of one in the mall. And you can generally find volunteers to run cat adoption events, so again, using your resources wisely, trying to get the community engaged. It doesn't have to be a staff person that does all of this work.

Open adoptions: I know that's a controversial subject, but we microchip all of our animals. We have a no-exceptions return policy. We always take them back. And we have – we are pretty open – so what that means

is that we talk to people. If they've got – if they're – if they put the wrong answer on our application then we talk them through it and we try to see is this a real issue or is this just an ignorance issue and most of the time it's ignorance of what we think is a really important issue for cats. So it might be that they're going to adopt a six-week old or eight-week old kitten and put it outside and they want it to be an outside cat. So we talk to them about it. We're like, "No, that's not going to work. It's going to get eaten." They don't understand that. They're too little and people generally, once you give them the information, they're generally able to digest it and make a good decision. And if the decision is not to adopt because they're not ready or maybe you should adopt this adult cat that's already lived outside, you can direct people in a way that you still get an adoption and a live outcome out of them, but you don't put the animal at risk.

So there's – so these hard screening tactics that we in the animal welfare world have used for so long, which is natural – I think it's human nature. We all do it. I've done it. You know, I have a foster animal and I put them through the ringer to get them adopted, but our policy is not to and so it's a hard balance. But I think that statistically what we're seeing is people care about the pets. If they're going out of their way to adopt an animal that means they actually care and they want to do the right thing for that animal.

Cat strategies: The other things that really work is asking people to ping their own network, so that's a network that we don't even have access to. It's not in our e-mail list. It's not on our Facebook. These people – every single person that has an animal in their foster care, they have the ability to send one e-mail out with a cute picture that says, "I've got adorable kittens that need a home." And so that goes out to all of their friends and more often than not, those animals get adopted through their own network, which again, makes them feel better, because they are responsible and they know these people.

Ringworm cats: We have – that's a huge problem in Austin. We've – we all know it's a huge problem. We treat it with Itraconazole. For the first year, we had a volunteer that donated all the Itraconazole. She'd go pay in cash at the pharmacy so her husband wouldn't know what she was buying. And it's awesome – our ringworm angel. We started checking ALTs after we had some cats with high liver values – well, they showed up with liver disease. We didn't check it preemptively, so now if we have to refill it at the three week mark we check an ALT just to make sure that they're okay with it, because the stress of being at the shelter, being through the whole process of being in the shelter, spayed, neutered, all of that makes it hard for them to metabolize drugs, I think anyway.

Lime sulfur dips twice a week and then the black light. We don't do culturing yet. That's something that we want to do, but again, we're very resource limited and so we – and time limited, and so we – basically, anything that has hair loss that's a cat is ringworm. And there's exceptions, obviously, but the default is if it's hair loss we treat it as if it's ringworm so that we don't accidentally give somebody a cat with ringworm.

We have some strategies to deal with it. If they go – if they're in a foster or they're in the – we have a ringworm ward for them that's totally run by volunteers and the cattery entrance checklist – they go to the vet clinic before they can be in the adoption areas. They have to go through a black light. They have to be checked from head to tail. They are – you know, we just make sure that they've gone through a full course of the treatment, kind of just making sure we're dotting our Is and crossing our Ts before we put them in the adoption area. And then they go into a cage, not a habitat, for the first week, just to make sure again that the stress doesn't cause a relapse in the ringworm.

We've had some adoption events, Adopt a Fun Guy was our favorite one and it worked. We – they get adopted surprisingly and one – there's two reasons why they get adopted. One is they're cheaper than normal cats, so we send them home with the medicine, even though it costs us more money to pay for the medicine than we're getting back in an adoption fee, we still send them out with the medicine and we do the recheck. So they don't have to go to their private vet and spend a fortune, just like we were talking about yesterday – is that these shelter diseases kind of freak out the private practice vets and so anything we can do to minimize drama is a good thing. And so we take responsibility for the ringworm. We'll treat it until it's gone. Again, it doesn't turn into a huge issue with lots and lots of complaining and doctor visits from these people. Most people are pretty self-sufficient as long as you give them the information and you give them the medicine to get the job done.

We also display them. So that – so one is they're cheaper than regular cats and, two, they're out in the open. They are accessible to the public and we found that out – we know that because we would do adoption events and they would get adopted, but what we found – we found it kind of by accident that when we moved into the old city shelter there were two cat buildings and one was for strays and one was for adoptions. So we moved our adoption cats into the adoption one and we moved ringworm into the stray. Both of these were open to the public and so the public would mill around. We'd have signs everywhere, but since they were accessible and viewable and cheaper, those cats got adopted faster than the other ones, especially in the winter. So we were shocked. The first month we

adopted 17 ringworm cats out and we were like, "What is going on?" But it's amazing.

Fat cat. Anorexia. We take the cats after their three-day stray hold from the shelter. We're not taking cats from the public, so a lot of these cats, if they come in fat it may not be noticed that they haven't been eating or they may stop eating after the second move from the shelter to us. So we put them kind of on high alert and make sure they're weighted daily, make sure that we have them in a cage – an individual cage or in a foster home so they can be observed and not fall through the cracks. Like if they were in a habitat and everybody's eating out of one dish we wouldn't necessarily notice that they're not eating until it's too late.

And then force feeding: If they've got upper respiratory, which a lot of them do, force feeding, force feeding, force feeding. We can prevent liver failure with just tons and tons of force feeding. And four fosters got really good at force feeding and we did place a lot of E-Tubes too for the ones that refused to be force fed.

We started a feral barn cat program. There's – the Austin Humane Society has a TNR program and so they take the cats that come into the shelter to the city shelter that are in a trap and they release them back where they came from. So they do the Feral Freedom Project mostly. The piece that was missing were the cats that came in where the person said, "I do not, under any circumstances, want this cat back and if it comes back I'm going to hurt it." So those cats would fall through the cracks, because they would be not TNR-able and they're not handlable necessarily, so what do you do with them? They were one of the last pieces to saving all the cats and we have a volunteer who does barn cat placement for us and she – she just – she has this amazing networkability to work through horse vets, feed barns, places where people go that have barns and property and she's able to place about 30 a month. It turns out that's all we needed and so we're able to save every single cat that's feral that doesn't – can't get TNRed. And she does a whole process of interviewing them. It's an adoption and she takes the cats herself out there and sets them up in their little acclimation building that she's built. I mean she's amazing.

So this is the actual last piece of no-kill. It's the Feline Leukemia cats. These are the hardest to save. They're the – it's the wisest choice not to save them if anything else is out there that is savable. And so there are some things that we learned with Feline Leukemia over time. One is that one thing I didn't know, even though it is written in the Idexx Snap Test, is that if you get a positive you should test with serum, because the red blood cells interact with the test on a certain percentage of cats and cause a false positive. So cats that are deemed positive and only on a whole blood test may actually be negative. So doing a serum test is vital.

The kittens – what – the other thing we found out is that kittens often sero-convert to negative, so we get a positive test; we take kittens of all ages; and almost all of our kittens become negative over time. We have a few litters that don't, but for the most part – and I don't know the statistics. I'd love to compile them, but it's definitely over 50 percent become negative, so putting them into foster, isolating them in some way so that they can just deal with the disease on their own time – getting out of the shelter is good, because they have less stress. We don't spay them while we're waiting to see if they can become negative. We just make sure that they've got rest and TLC and no stress and then we retest them in three to four weeks after their initial test with serum. And for the ones that truly are positive, we don't do a lot of confirmation at the lab. We do the Idexx testing and if somebody wants to adopt them and to confirm, then we can do more expensive testing, but we just don't have the funds to send out the IFA test on everybody.

Generally, what we've seen for the ones that are testing consecutively, testing positive on their serum tests, that they live six months to two years. We've created a ward for them, for the ones that can't find foster. They do get adopted. We have about two a month that get adopted that are Feline Leukemia positive. And we market them as short-term commitments. You know, if somebody's in Austin for two years this is the perfect cat for you, because we'll take care of – we'll do – we'll take care of any medical that comes up that's related to Feline Leukemia, so recurrent infections is pretty much it. We tell them up front we're not doing blood work. We're not doing blood transfusions. We're not doing any heroic measures, but if this cat can live a healthy life for the next year or two and you're willing to take it into your home, we'll help you. If it gets run over by a car, we're not doing that. That's your fault. It needs to go to a regular vet; but if it's related to Feline Leukemia we deal with and again, it's not turned into a burden. It's very few visits. We're really up front about the amount of work that we're willing to do.

Big dogs: Okay. So big dogs are the last piece for dogs. Big dogs with behavioral problems are really the last piece for dogs and that's because it's a chronic problem. Big dogs with behavior problems, that's something that has to be worked on for their entire lives generally. And so finding a committed adopter for these dogs is difficult. I would put a portion of these dogs in that last ten percent that is very difficult – very, very difficult to save. We have several programs that we created to try to deal with them.

One is a walking program. So we have volunteers come at 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM to walk the dogs, just to get them out of their kennels, help with housetraining, a little bit of stimulation.

We have a Jog-A-Dog program that is with a jogging group in town, a running group, and they recruit and train volunteers to come rent our dogs and take them out for a jog around the track that's near our building.

Playgroup therapy: If anybody has a chance to check out Aimee Sadler and what she's done at the *[inaudible]* Humane Society, we recruited one of her people to come work with us and now we do playgroup every day and almost every dog that we had labeled as dog aggressive is now doing playgroups, because we were just wrong. The testing that we do on a leash to check – to test whether they're dog aggressive is a fallible test, because there's so many things that go into it, but when you have the playgroups and you have somebody who can do them right, the dogs can be themselves and then you can see what their true interaction is with dogs. Nine times out of ten, the dogs that we thought – that were labeled aggressive – we pulled them and we found out later that they were aggressive because of a fight on a leash or dogs getting loose in the courtyard and fighting or they were labeled at the shelter as dog aggressive and we were like, "Well, we're not sure," and when we got him on board to come do the trainings with us and do playgroup – and I had a video, but I can't play it for some reason, but the length of stay has dropped. We used to have a 60 – 65 days for big dogs with behavior problems and now we're down to 52 days. So that's awesome and he's only been with us for two months.

We created a Big Brother/Big Sister program where we try to encourage volunteers to pick one dog, again, compartmentalizing the work – pick one dog and really baby it. Take it on walks. Take it out to the public and help it to just stay sane while it's with us.

Then we did a Big Dog Crisis of 2012, where we split up our kennels – compartmentalizing the work – again, it's all about making it digestible. We now have 150 kennels at the shelter that we have and so people are overwhelmed. They come in. Adopters are overwhelmed. Fosters are overwhelmed. Volunteers are overwhelmed and so we created what we're calling the Wing Man Project and we have wings of the shelter that volunteers are taking on and they're doing cage signage. They're doing marketing for those dogs specifically. They're coming and walking those dogs specifically. They're bringing those dogs treats. They're doing things for those – it's easier when there's only 20 as opposed to 150. So we tried to just make it something that's digestible. And then the wings are competing against each other for adoptions, which is great.

Okay. So, severe, generalized Demodex: We treat – we take all of them, no matter how bad it is and we have a 100 percent success rate with this. We do treat with Promeris. We've had a few reactions to Promeris, but

the vast majority do great on it and the reactions aren't near as bad as what I had read about. We do great with anti-inflammatories and their swelling goes down after a couple of days. And then we also make sure that they're parasite free on the inside and we'll adopt them out. Again, he is much more adoptable with no hair than he would be in three months with all his hair.

Fractures: So this is sort of our triage for fractures and we try to kind of do it old school, because we don't have – the reason we can take every single broken dog is that we don't have the resources to send every single one out for surgery. We just can't, so this goes back to my one year in Rocky Mountain, Virginia where we had – you know, we didn't really have very many resources at all and we've developed criteria of what we send to surgery and what we don't send to surgery. And we don't send long bone fractures to surgery, no matter how awful they are. There's a saying that if the bones are in the same room they'll find each other and make a callus and it's kind of true, as long as you immobilize them. So the long bones, we don't do any repair. Pelvises we don't repair, unless the acetabulum is fractured and in that case we wait six weeks for the dog to heal, because we're not doing a lot of x-rays. We're not doing a lot of internal diagnostics. We don't know what else is broken in there soft tissue wise, so putting them through surgery immediately after their accident doesn't seem – if you're doing a salvage procedure – doesn't seem like the best choice for us. So they go to foster. We re-evaluate at six weeks and then send them for their FHO.

We do surgery if it's a joint and especially if it's a big dog with a joint, because we don't want them to have chronic pain for the rest of their life. We're trying to give them a happy life and they may not have the most perfect looking leg, but as long as it's pain free then that's all we care about. If the splint or the sling doesn't work, the dog keeps getting out of it, they keep refracturing the callous, then okay, the long bone is going to end up going to surgery. If it's a huge dog – recently we had a 140 pound dog that had a fractured humerus and we just felt like there was no other option but to send him to surgery. The smaller dogs do great with that and cats and puppies.

Of course, you can't not do pain management and immobilization. So you can't just leave the fracture and do nothing. It has to be taken care of appropriately, even if you're not doing surgery.

Okay. So, triage. Somebody called it scarce resource management and I think that's a really great way of looking at trying to save these animals, because it's not the same as a private practice where people are willing to pay the bill or an established shelter, where you've got more funds for each animal that comes in the door. We have to conserve every dollar we

get and try to put it to its best use while trying to save everything. So, our doctors have to be flexible with their drug choices. We get a ton of drugs donated and they're spectrums and every type of use and we try really hard to use everything that we get. That decreases our costs – our medical costs. Our medical costs are, by far, our largest cost for the whole program, for the whole Austin Pets Alive! program and if we can decrease that in any way, especially in the summer crunch, we put out an APB, spending freeze – we've got to start looking through all the donations. Everybody hates it, but they generally find what they're looking for. There's exceptions to the rule, obviously.

Following protocols for efficiency: Just like we heard yesterday, if you can have something that is protocol, we call them recipes. If you have that set and written down where everybody can find it, then everybody can move faster through the process for 99 percent of the animals. And we only again – just like with fractures – only the worst conditions that have the highest likelihood of chronic pain later in life are the ones that end up going to a specialist or getting blood work or getting surgery.

Heartworm treatment: This is pretty simple. I'm just going to – I don't – how much time? I don't see a clock anywhere. So our non-medical programs to save other pets: We have a positive alternative to shelter surrender, which is on the next slide also, and then a reclaim and adopt from our city and I think I have another slide about that.

So, prevention at the front gates: Our Pass Program is somebody who sits outside – used to sit outside in front of the shelter and as people walked in, talked to them about why they've got their pet there. What is going on? Why are they having to leave it? And they do it in a very nuturing, counseling way. It's not accusatory. It's not how dare you. It's just information. Okay. What have you tried already? What have – have you tried re-homing this pet on your own? Have you asked family? Have you – you know, kind of go through the questions. And they spend a lot of time talking to people. They get about 10 to 20 percent of people to turn around and leave with the pet in a positive way. And we do marketing for those pets to help re-home them, by helping to create Facebook pages or Facebook ads and Craigs List ads and help screen adopters for the person so that the animal doesn't have to go into the shelter.

We were initially focused on the high risk animals that had the highest risk of being euthanized but, as we'll talk about in the distemper study or distemper program, there was a distemper outbreak, so even the most adorable dog that came into our shelter was at risk for getting a disease that would make it not leave the shelter alive. So helping people not drop their pet off is an amazing use of resources and there was information yesterday about counseling and having staff do the appointment only. I

think it's a brilliant idea and I think it's something every shelter should try, because it really, really helps. And most people just don't realize it – they don't realize that if they drop their pet off it might be euthanized. They just don't – they don't even think that it could possibly be the one they're dropping off, even if you say eight out of ten, they're like, "Well, but not this one." It's just – well –

So, adoptions: We do positive messaging. We have – we try to have healthy, happy animals. If they're not healthy we tell them what's going on and why they're there. We do send out Demodex and ringworm puppies to adoption events. And consistency is important, great customer service, open adoptions – I'm just going to quickly go through this, because we're almost out of time.

These are outside adoptions I think are critical. Again, recycling animals – putting them in – back into the community so that people have a chance to see them – not everybody wants to come to the shelter, so make it easy for them to find their soul mate.

Online adoptions: This is really important, because people do everything on the internet now, everything. And I know there's a stigma for putting animals out there on the internet, but you think about the major life decisions that people make on the internet. They get – they find their partner. They get vehicles. They go on vacation. They buy homes. They do things on the internet that we used to not do. And so finding a pet is a – should be – they should be on the internet. Your pets should be on the internet and one the cornerstone pieces of online adoptions is that you have to have somebody to answer the call. If somebody sees one of your pets on the internet they need to be directed somewhere quickly, because most of these people don't have a lot of patience and they're going to fall – it's not that hard to create a bond between a person and the animal, so the first one they come into contact with even remotely like them is probably the one that's going to get adopted. So if yours can be the first one that meets these people, who are interested, you have a higher likelihood of being the one that gets adopted.

We also try to tell people when they go meet pets that there's a high chance that they'll see some behaviors that make them look less adoptable. One of them with adult dogs, the longer that we have an adult dog the more likely they are to ignore people, strangers who come up to them at events and at our building, and we try to tell people before they go the dog is probably going to ignore you. It doesn't mean that he doesn't like you. You just need to get him out of the cage and take him somewhere quiet and try to spend about 30 minutes with him. Bring some treats – you know, just try to engage. And that helps, because people think oh, well, we just didn't connect and that's not – that's not the case at all. The poor

dog's just seen 50 people in the last two weeks and they're tired of connecting at the first instance.

Small breed dogs expect to be ignored and maybe bitten *[inaudible]*. You know, if they've got a problem we tell people up front we will adopt out anything with any problem. It doesn't matter what the problem is. We don't – again, an adopter is no different than a foster home, so if we trust a foster to take care of an animal there's no reason why we wouldn't trust an adopter to take care of an animal and that helps us with turnover. And then all of our online adoptions get channeled to our adoption site so a counselor can go over the paperwork and the process of adoption and just make sure that it's all good.

Adoptions: This was reclaim and that other slide had – and we had – when we were first involved with our city we had volunteers that would post animals that we knew we couldn't take and try to get them out that way, so just trying to get the general public to get engaged and come down and look at these animals. We would also call the person who dropped them off and that's kind of controversial, but for the most part people don't mind. There's a few people who really mind, but most part, people don't mind because they – again, they didn't expect that pet to get euthanized, so they want to be given the last right of refusal so that they can come and foster it if need be or think of another solution. So we call them if we know the pet's not going to make it. We don't call them until that point.

Our facility adoptions at an adoption facility: We're not reliant on people just walking by that might happen to like pets and stop and pet them. Everybody who walks into an adoption facility has an intention of adopting, so we should think about them like that – that this isn't a sell. All we have to do is do good customer service, ask them what they're looking for, point them to a few animals that might fit the description and the process should work. But it does take customer service if you're – and our shelter is just as guilty as anybody else – it's easy to ignore the person that walks in the door and they can self-serve, they can look at all the dogs and cats, but if you can provide that customer service and help them find that bond with that right animal, then they are more likely to leave with one.

Our challenges with adoption is, you know, giving access to these animals. We're taking the bottom 50 percent, so some of them have unknown behaviors. Some of them have known behaviors. Some of them have known diseases or unknown diseases and there is some liability to that. It's not overwhelming. I think that we've probably made every mistake that could possibly be made and we're still here and so I don't think

liability is a good reason not to try to get animals adopted and then getting them out of foster, I said earlier, is kind of a challenge.

Our statistics: We've moved from a 50 percent save rate to over 90 percent since and we've been at 90 percent consistently since 2011 in February. And we, again, going back to those measurable results, we know for a fact that 45 percent of the decrease in euthanasia was because of us – not the jump from 50 percent to 95 percent save rate, but the decrease in the 50 percent euthanasia. We are responsible for almost half of that, which means the city ponied up the rest of it. They actually increased their adoptions. They did the positive energy that came into this project from a city level resulted in positive results across the city. The Humane Society had higher adoptions. The city had higher adoptions. We had higher adoptions. Everybody did. In Austin you can barely find any pure bred dogs walking around, which is really astounding.

This is just a chart of kind of our growth. It's been kind of exponential. And that's it. Any questions?

[End of Audio]