

# PUTTING MORE “WOW” IN YOUR CAT ADOPTION PROGRAM



**Sharon Harvey, M.A.**

Executive Director, Cleveland Animal Protective League



**Adopt • Protect • Love**

# Defining the Challenge

- ❑ Where people are getting their cats<sup>1</sup>
  - 43% of cats are acquired from a family member
  - 34% of cats are acquired as strays
  - 15% of cats are bred at home
  - 18% of cats are adopted from shelters or rescues
  - 4% of cats come from pet stores
  - 3% of cats come from breeders
  - 3% of cats are acquired as gifts
  
- ❑ By a 70% to 20% margin, Americans describe themselves as a “dog person” rather than a cat “person”<sup>2</sup>
  
- ❑ Cat to dog ratio in shelter – 3 to 1

---

<sup>1</sup> *National Council on Pet Population Study & Policy*

<sup>2</sup> *Americans and Their Pets, The Gallup Poll News Service -12/21/06*

# So ...

## □ Knowing that:

- ~75% of people are acquiring pet cats “free” from friends, family or as strays ... ~90% if kittens from litters born at home are included
- Only 18 – 22% of the “market” are adopting
- Only 32% of homes had a cat in 2006 so the market isn’t saturated
- A “free” cat may cost ~\$300 in initial veterinary expenses, whereas adoption fees for cats are typically considerably less

## Why aren’t more coming to us???



# Because ...

- They don't know we're here
- They don't know the value we offer to them and the animals in our community
- They're afraid to come into a shelter

## AND ...

- We don't do a good job of letting them know who we are, what we do, and that we're here!



# About the Cleveland APL

## *Setting the stage ...*

- ❑ Located in downtown Cleveland, off the beaten trail, in an iffy area
- ❑ 30,000 square foot open/managed admissions facility
- ❑ No municipal shelter for stray cats in city or county
- ❑ ~3,500 cat adoptions in 2009 (with 200 still in our care at year end)
- ❑ Regular Cat Adoption Fees
  - Kittens (under 5 mos) \$95
  - Adults (5 mos & up) \$45
  - Seniors (7 yrs & up) \$30
- ❑ Fee includes
  - Spay/neuter, FeLv/FIV testing
  - Age appropriate vaccinations (including rabies)
  - Worm and flea treatment, 30 days Sheltercare pet insurance
- ❑ Use the ASPCA's® Meet Your Match and Feline-ality™ Programs
- ❑ NO euthanasia for time limits or space but there has been overcrowding when intake numbers exceed adoption demand – also not good – so that along with the desire to increase adoptions have driven our cat adoption marketing initiatives.



# Past & Present Strategies

- ❑ During 2008 – we offered a few targeted adoption promotions and reduced cat adoption fees to \$25/\$50 for cats/kittens across the board between June to October.
- ❑ During 2009 – we offered more frequent and strategic adoption promotion events with discounted fees and otherwise charged regular adoption fees when not offering a promotion.



# FIRST STEPS ... Create the BUZZ!

- ❑ Brainstorm fun ideas ...
  - Use “pop culture” and current events
- ❑ Craft a cat adoption message
- ❑ Critically evaluate your message
  - Will the audience you’re targeting relate to it?
  - Will it drive results you need?
    - For instance, increase adoptions vs. raise money
  - Is it clear? Engaging? Compelling? Fun?
    - Avoid jargon - kitten season, pet overpopulation
    - Tie it to current events and pop culture
    - Make it catchy and easy to remember when possible



# Keep it visually appealing, compelling ...



[www.ClevelandAPL.org](http://www.ClevelandAPL.org)

got  
love?



Cleveland Animal Protective League



Adopt • Protect • Love



# ... and FUN!!!

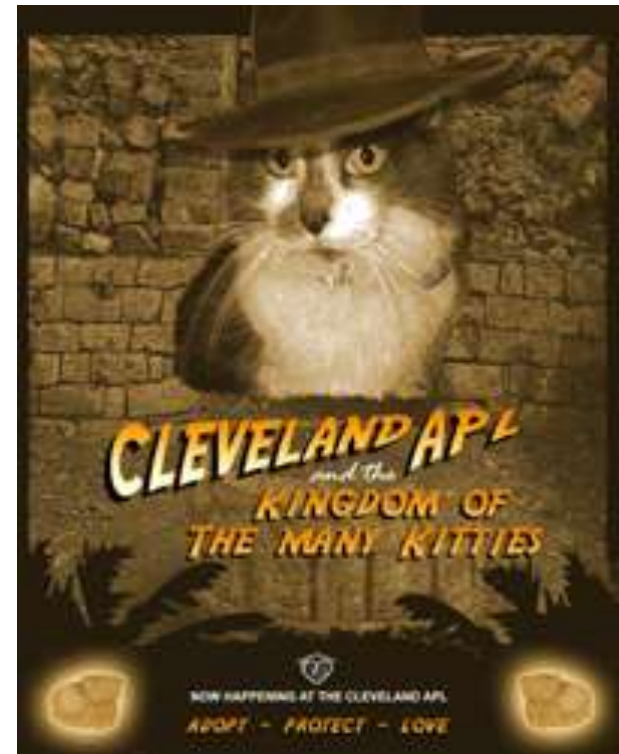
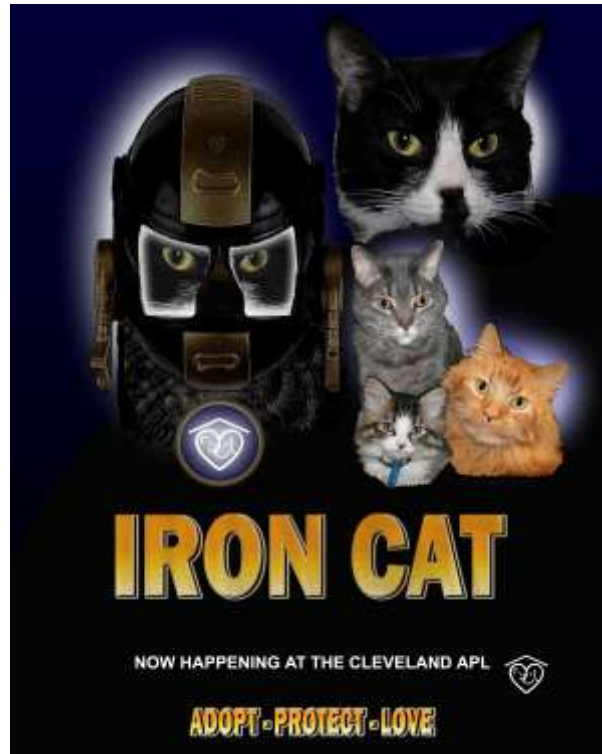


# PURR-miere Month



Adopt • Protect • Love

# A.K.A. ... The A-CAT-emy Awards



Adopt • Protect • Love

# Cinco de Meow



# Get the BUZZ *(aka your message)* Out!

- Press Releases
- Cultivate media relationships (x10!!!)
- Website, blogs, social networking sites
- Speaking engagements
- Tabling events

**Create top of mind awareness!!!**

# Collect Data!!!

- ❑ Measure the before and after...
  - Increased adoption of species promoted?
  - Increase in other adoptions?
  - Increase in donations?
  - Increase in foot traffic?
  - Residual increases post promotion?
  
- ❑ Learn from what worked and what didn't work

# Feline Navidad

## GREAT media coverage!!!

- Five days, Mon-Fri, 2nd week of Dec
- Cats (5 months and older) - \$25
- 20% off holiday merchandise



	Wk Prior	Wk of	Wk After	Tot	Adopt Rev
07	29	42	57	128	\$14,929 <sup>1</sup>
08	41	80	35	156	\$15,280
		+ 90%		+22%	+2%

<sup>1</sup> Revenue for entire month, no promotion

Dear Santa Paws:

As always, we were purr-fect kitties this year. We kept the "cat-itude" to a minimum, and were even told that we have great purr-sonalities. We didn't climb on too many things, we always use our litter boxes, and we love to keep laps warm during the cold winter months! So, in exchange for our good behavior, all we're asking for this holiday season is a fur-ever home and a family to love and who will love us. That's not too much, is it?

Much love,  
The Cats at the APL

P.S. Oh, and please don't forget our doggie friends. We may not like all of them but that doesn't mean they don't deserve a wonderful home for the holidays, too ...

# Fast & Furriest

## *Black, White and Black & White Cats*

- In response to a huge number of black and white cats!
- June 1-30
- Black, White, and BW cats/kittens \$35/\$15
- Free cat bed, \$10 microchips

	Mo pre	Mo of	Mo post	Total	Adopt Rev	Retail Rev
08	270 <sup>1</sup>	329 <sup>2</sup>	275	874	\$10,615	\$1,599
09	314 <sup>3</sup>	329	340	983	\$10,733	\$1,875
		+0%		+12%	+1%	+17%

<sup>1</sup> No promotion

<sup>2</sup> PURR-miere month promo (\$25 cats, \$95 or \$50 kittens)

<sup>3</sup> May 4-7 Cinco de Meow (cats/kittens \$30/\$75)





# We needed more ...

We needed more effective promos and more adoptions!

BUT, we were ...

- ❑ Concerned about reduced fees – not good homes, can't really afford, etc.
- ❑ So we ...
  - Made a gradual entry into reduced rates to test waters
  - Gave other animal welfare, rescue colleagues a head's up and explained need
  - Messaged events as “promotions” rather than “sales”
  - Reminded staff that adoption standards remained unchanged
  - Provided education about the % of “free” cats already in homes and their value
  - Maintained follow-up call process & return rate tracking

AND, reinforced that ...

- ❑ It's NOT OK to over-crowd!
  - Overcrowding causes increased disease and decreased quality of life
  - Overcrowding decreases capacity to save new lives



# Feline Independence Day

GREAT Media Coverage again!!! (the media loves it when cats write notes!)

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all animals are created equal, that they are endowed with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, humane societies are instituted among men, using their just powers to serve those unable to serve themselves. There comes a time, however, when it is the right, the duty, of the cat to seek new guards for their future security.*

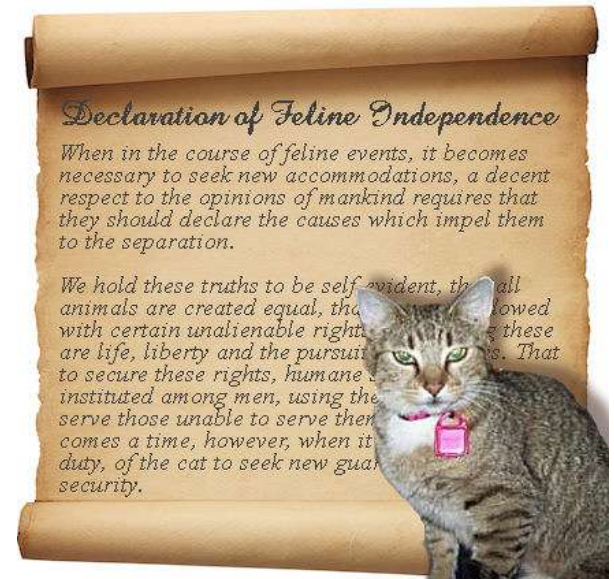
- Five days, Monday-Friday, ALL cats and kittens - \$17.76

	Wk Prior	Wk of	Wk After	Total	Adopt Rev
08	83 <sup>1</sup>	56 <sup>1</sup>	36	175	\$1,215
09	48 <sup>2</sup>	151 <sup>3</sup>	38	237	\$2,364
		+167%		+35%	+95%

<sup>1</sup> Part of PURR-miere month promo (\$25 cats)

<sup>2</sup> End of another promo (cats/kits \$30/\$55, BW cats/kits \$35/\$15)  
\$1,550 adoption revenue, \$185 retail revenue

<sup>3</sup> July 3 2009 vs. July 3, 2008 - 52 vs. 13 adoptions



# Kitty Kristmas in July

- July 25th and 26<sup>th</sup>
- ALL cats/kittens \$25
- \$10 microchips, holiday gift while supplies lasted

	Wkend Prior	Wkend of	Wkend After	Total	Adopt Rev
08	29 <sup>1</sup>	26 <sup>1</sup>	19 <sup>1</sup>	74	\$965
09	16 <sup>2</sup>	67	22 <sup>3</sup>	105	\$1,600
		+158%		+42%	+69%

<sup>1</sup> \$25 cats and \$50 kittens all summer

<sup>2</sup> \$1,150 adoption revenue, \$60 feline retail revenue

<sup>3</sup> \$1,130 adoption revenue, \$153 feline retail revenue



# July Comparisons

<u>Cleveland APL</u>	<u>July 2008</u>	<u>July 2009</u>	▲
Total cats adopted	216	299	+38.4%
Revenue - cat adoptions	\$8,748.99	\$12,581.00	+43.8%
Revenue - cat supplies	\$1,607.60	\$2,395.07	+49%



# Want this line?



# Five. Five Dollar. Five Dollar Felines!

## GREAT media coverage!

- \$5 Adoption fee for first cat adopted (5 months or older)
- \$20 Adoption fee for kittens & additional adult cats up to two
- Adoptions \$0 for “super-sizing” & adopting adult mentor cat with a kitten
- Ran it for a 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday due to a media error in reporting the date!

	Sat Prior	1 <sup>st</sup> Sat	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sat	Sat After	Total	Adopt Rev
08	16 <sup>1</sup>	17 <sup>1</sup>	26 <sup>1</sup>	6	65	\$620
09	11 <sup>2</sup>	117	63	19	210	\$1,942
		+588%	+142%		+223%	+213%

<sup>1</sup> \$25 cats and \$50 all month

<sup>2</sup> \$680 adoption revenue, \$71 feline retail revenue



# Certified Pre-Owned Cats

- Sat, Nov 14<sup>th</sup> – adult cats \$5 down, 0% financing, \$0 monthly payments, kittens \$25
- Regular maintenance at home and with a veterinarian
- All come with standard 4-paw drive and a 100,000-purr warranty.
- Multi-point inspection: s/n, FeLV/FIV test, vaccinations, treatment for worms/fleas.

	Sat Prior	Sat of	Sat After	Tot	Sat Adopt Rev	Nov Adopt Rev
<b>08</b>	24	13	11	48	\$1,170	\$12,584
<b>09</b>	15	44	9	68	\$711	\$11,311
		+238%		+42%	-39%	-10%

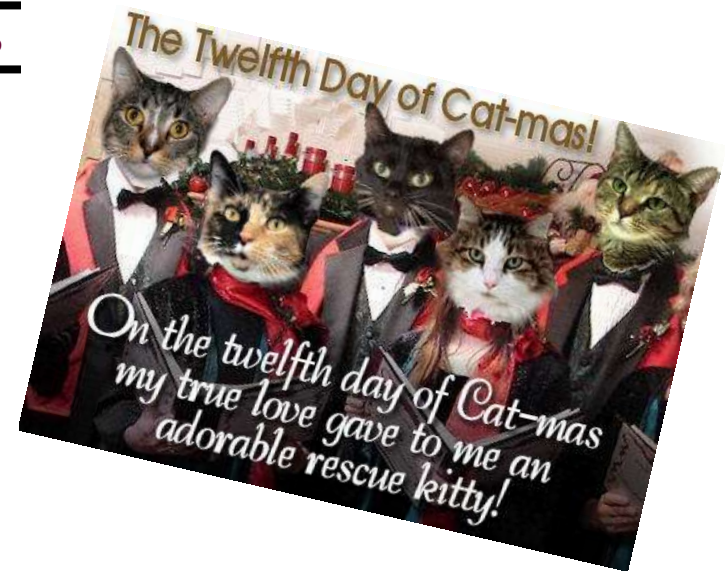


# Twelfth Day of Cat-mas

- Saturday & Sunday, December 12 & 13
- All cats and kittens - \$20

	Wkend Prior	Wkend of	Wkend After	Tot	Adopt Rev
08	19	28 <sup>1</sup>	31	78	\$1,465 <sup>2</sup>
09	40	51	30	121	\$960 <sup>2</sup>
		+82%		+55%	-34%

<sup>1</sup> 2008 – Feline Navidad was M-F between wkend prior and wkend of





# March Madness!

- Saturday, March 20<sup>th</sup>: 1<sup>st</sup> 16 cats - \$10, then \$20 for adults & \$50 for kittens
- Saturday, March 27<sup>th</sup>: 1<sup>st</sup> 8 cats - \$5, then \$20 for adults & \$50 for kittens
- So, they don't always work ... but we learned!!!

	Sat Prior	Sat of	Sat of	Sat After	Tot	Sat Adopt Rev	Mar Adopt Rev <sup>1</sup>
09	14	20	17	9	60	\$2,875	\$8,588
10	4	18	12	7	41	\$900	\$8,155
		-10%	-29%		-32%	-69%	-5%

<sup>1</sup> \$1,305 in discounts in 2010 vs. \$690 in 2009



# Some ideas may be controversial...

## The Free Cat Story...



# Homeless Animal Day

- Matched the “adoption fee” of “free” cats from family, friends & the streets
- Cats 1 yr and up - \$0
- Kittens - \$25

	Sat Prior	Sat of	Sat After	Total	Adopt Rev
08	18 <sup>1</sup>	13 <sup>1</sup>	12 <sup>1</sup>	43	\$540
09	9 <sup>2</sup>	62	18 <sup>3</sup>	89	\$550
		+377%		+107%	+2%

<sup>1</sup> \$25 cats and \$50 all month

<sup>2</sup> \$505 adoption revenue, \$148 feline retail revenue

<sup>3</sup> \$745 adoption revenue, \$103 feline retail revenue



# “Free Cat” Data

And the numbers say ...

- No increase in returns
- Large increases in adoptions
- No difference in the bond

*Emily Weiss, Ph.D., CAAB  
Senior Director, Shelter Research and Development  
ASPCA*

NOTE:

Check out Dr. Weiss' blog on [ASPCApr.org](http://www.aspcapro.org) about adoption processes:

**“I was them”** <http://www.aspcapro.org/blog/2010/04/i-was-them/>



# Feline Adoption Comparisons

## ☐ 2008

- \$119,600 feline adoption revenue after discounts
- \$11,100 in discounts

## ☐ 2009

- \$138,003 feline adoption revenue after discounts
- \$15,800 in discounts
- No increase in adoption donations ... working on this!
- 10% inc. in feline adoptions with 15% inc. in revenue



# Bring the Mountain to Them



**Mobile Adoption Events**

**“You Stay. We’ll Roll Over!”**



**Adopt • Protect • Love**

# Cats on Tour



- Book “tour dates” for Rover, our mobile adoption unit ... like a purring Springsteen tour!
- Prioritize locations with good foot traffic, new audiences, and good adoption and donation potential
- Prioritize offsite adoption events with partners who will help us with advance PR
- Sell “tour” t-shirt with tour dates and locations on back ... it sells like crazy!
- Adoption fees and donations cover all expenses

# Cats on Tour Data

	<b>Adoptions</b>	<b>Donations</b>
2008 (1 <sup>st</sup> yr)	75	\$3,332
2009	105	\$5,224
	+40%	+57%





# In Summary ...

**CREATE TOP OF MIND AWARENESS!!!**



# Formula for Success

**Catchy idea**

**+**

**Good preparation, buy-in, & buzz**

**+**

**Good measurement of results**

---

**MORE LIVES SAVED!!!**

