



CENTER PIECE

The Official Newsletter of the National Child Protection Training Center

American Humane Launches Pets and Women's Shelters (PAWS)TM Program

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UP COMING conferences

*When Words Matter:
Emerging Issues in
Forensic Interviewing*

May 4-7, 2009 • St. Louis, MO

When Words Matter is ideal for child protection professionals who conduct forensic interviews or who defend them in court. *When Words Matter* will feature nationally recognized experts on forensic interviewing including Mark Everson, Tom Lyon, Allison DeFelice, Chris Newlin, Mike Johnson, Mindy Mitnick and Victor Vieth. In addition to a review of the latest research impacting the forensic interview, there will be presentations on interviewing children who make "fantastic statements", on cross examining defense "experts", conducting interviews in cases with repeated allegations, and on the potential impact on the forensic interview of a child's immigration status. For a full agenda, or to register for the course, call the National Child Protection Training Center at 507-457-2890 or visit our website at www.ncptc.org Register soon - this course fills up early and our space is limited.

 National Child Protection
TRAINING CENTER
NCPTC is a training program of NAPSAC

OJJDP

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Upon joining American Humane, it became clear to me that the time was right to create a national initiative that would encourage battered women and children to leave abusive homes sooner, by allowing them to bring their family pets with them to domestic violence shelters. As we saw in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, countless people stayed behind in harm's way so they could care for their pets. This same dynamic of remaining in a dangerous situation to protect a pet also can be present in an abusive home. Providing a method for family pets to be safely housed with other family members works toward keeping families and communities safe. Currently, only eight family violence shelters in the country are known to provide on-site housing of pets with their families.³ Another three family violence shelters are in the process of establishing on-site housing of pets.⁴

Introduction

In the mid-1990s, as a new assistant prosecutor in Michigan assigned to District Court, much of my misdemeanor criminal trial docket was filled with domestic violence cases. Most of those cases never proceeded to trial or resulted in a guilty plea because the victims often failed to appear in court — due to fear of retaliation by the batterer. A frequent concern I heard from victims was, "If I testify or if I don't go back to him, he'll kill my pet." In fact, studies have shown that up to 48 percent of women delay leaving an abusive home out of fear that their pets will be harmed if left behind.²

Years of battering take a toll on victims, their children and their pets, often making it difficult for them to leave their home and find a safe place to live. And even when women do decide to leave abusive situations and seek safety at domestic violence shelters, who will care for and protect their pets?

Maintaining the Human-Animal Bond in Times of Crisis

In February 2008, American Humane launched the Pets and Women's Shelter (PAWS) Program. The PAWS Program was created specifically to maintain the human-animal bond between women, children and family pets — all of whom face the trauma of losing their home, and their hope, and therefore need each other for comfort more than ever when they leave an abusive situation. At the time, there were only five shelters known to house pets on site and the number has more than doubled in a year.



In December 2008, Paula Abdul (singer, songwriter, dancer, and most notably a judge on *American Idol*) signed on to be the spokesperson for PAWS. “The relationship I have with my dogs is not only very special to me, but also a great source of comfort and peace of mind,” said Abdul. “The PAWS Program is a critical way of providing a transition for abused women and children into a safer and better life. I feel privileged to be involved with this extremely important and necessary program.”

American Humane is distributing to domestic violence shelters the *PAWS Program Startup Guide*, which covers all aspects of establishing on-site housing for pets. In an effort to make it as uncomplicated as possible for shelters to implement the program, the PAWS Program asks that the family members — not the domestic violence shelter staff — care for their own pets during their stay. Maintaining close contact with their pets also helps the victims and their families maintain a sense of normalcy and routine during a time of crisis. When families have lost nearly everything, sometimes walking the dog or brushing the cat can bring some much-needed comfort and peace of mind.

‘PAWS Program Startup Guide’

Through my experiences first-hand with women returning to abusive homes to save their pets, I wrote American Humane’s *PAWS Program Startup Guide*. The *Guide* was reviewed by two national experts in The Link³, two domestic violence shelters that house pets on-site, as well as two national domestic violence prevention organizations. The guide helps in determining whether a community needs a PAWS Program and provides shelters guidance on establishing one. Contents of the guide include: advice on the types of pets to accept, options for housing animals on-site, how to address issues of noise and allergies, safety considerations, and how to handle stressed or abused pets through working relationships with local animal shelters. It also advises on seeking funding and publicity, establishing a relationship with a local veterinarian to obtain the types of services required, addressing the duration and cost (if any) for housing pets, recognizing the need for counseling for those who witnessed animal cruelty, addressing issues that may arise when a family leaves the shelter, and considering common legal issues that may arise (such as custody disputes, insurance and liability, licenses and special permits). The guide includes numerous sample forms that can be modified to accommodate any shelter.



Contact Us for Assistance

The PAWS Program Startup Guide is intended to be a helpful tool to encourage domestic violence shelters to consider housing their residents’ pets on-site. For a complimentary copy, or to receive free technical assistance in setting up a PAWS Program, please contact Allie Phillips at American Humane’s Office of Public Policy at (703) 836-7387 or email PAWSprogram@americanhumane.org. American Humane also has \$2,500 one-time start-up grants available for shelters that are screened and approved by American Humane.



To download the grant application and learn more about PAWS, please visit www.americanhumane.org/paws

¹ Prior to joining American Humane as director of public policy, Allie Phillips, J.D., was an assistant prosecutor on many cases involving battered women who owned pets, which also were at risk for harm. As she describes in this article, she was inspired by her experiences to develop American Humane's PAWS Program to help both the human and the animal victims of abuse.

² Ascione, F. R. (2007). Emerging research on animal risk as a risk factor for intimate partner violence. In K. Kendall-Tackett & S. Giacomoni (Eds.), *Intimate partner violence* (pp. 3-1-3-17). Kingston, NJ: Civic Research Institute.

³ Shelter for Abuse Women & Children (Naples, FL); LACASA Emergency Shelter (Howell, MD); Noah's Animal House at The Shade Tree Shelter for Homeless

Abused Women and Children (Las Vegas, NV); Mitchell County Safe Place (Spruce Pine, NC); My Sister's House (Rocky Mount, NC); Helping Hands Against Violence (Hood River, OR); Family Renewal Shelter (Tacoma, WA) and YWCA Pierce County Women's Support Shelter (Tacoma, WA).

⁴ HRC Calaveras Crisis Center (San Andreas, CA); Crossroads Safehouse (Fort Collins, CO); and Doorways for Women and Families Shelter (Arlington, VA).

⁵ The Link is a reference to the correlation between animal abuse and human violence.

INSIDE the next issue

The next issue of CenterPiece will discuss the art and science of delivering effective opening statements and closing arguments in cases of child abuse.

For More Information

The National Child Protection Training Center (NCPTC) at Winona State University is a training program of the National Association to Prevent Sexual Abuse of Children (NAPSAC). NCPTC provides training, technical assistance and publications to child protection professionals throughout the United States. In addition, NCPTC assists undergraduate and graduate programs seeking to improve the education provided to future child protection professionals. In partnership with CornerHouse, NCPTC also assists in the development and maintenance of forensic interview training programs utilizing the RATA[®] forensic interviewing protocol. For further information, contact NCPTC at 507-457-2890 or visit our website at www.ncptc.org. For further information about NAPSAC, call 651-340-0537 or visit our website at www.napsac.us.

