



*Integrating Volunteers into Your Animal
Shelter Programs and Culture*

Webcast Transcript
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[Beginning of Audio]

Lynne Fridley: Good evening everyone. Thank you for being here for this exciting informative webcast, *Integrating Volunteers into Your Animal Shelter Programs and Culture*. I'm Lynne Fridley, Assistant Director of Education for Maddie's Fund. Our speaker is Paula Fasseas, founder of PAWS Chicago.

With her business background, Paula developed a solutions-based plan to address the plight of homeless pets and raise public awareness in Chicago. The robust volunteer program at PAWS Chicago has enabled the organization to expand their reach and touch the lives of the people of the community and the pets that they love.

Before we start let's talk about a few housekeeping items. Please take a look at the left side of your screen where you'll see a Q and A window. That's where you'll ask questions during the presentation, but don't hold them until then. Questions asked in the last few minutes will probably not be processed in time for a response. If you need help with your connection during the presentation, you can click the help widget at the bottom of your screen. The green file widget contains a printable certificate of attendance for people attending this live event along with other useful resources.

Tonight's webcast will be in interview format without a formal presentation. If you feel that you have missed some information, don't worry. The free on-demand version will be available for review within one day. So welcome, Paula. We're going to jump right in and ask our audience a pole question. So people out there in virtual webcast land, you should answer this pole question on your screen.

Does your organization have volunteers? Yes, it is completely volunteer run. Yes, we have staff and volunteers. No, or not applicable. Please answer on your screen and we're going to show you the results and then we'll get a good sense of everybody that's in our audience. And here are the results. Wow. That's pretty astounding. Eighty percent of you actually have staff and volunteers and Paula is going to be talking about that a little later and almost 17 percent of you are actually an all-volunteer organization. So very,

very good.

We're going to jump right in here. I want to tell you a little about PAWS Chicago because I was impressed with this number. PAWS Chicago has a core of 5,000 people in their volunteer program. In 2015 alone, volunteers logged over 117,000 hours. That's equivalent to 56 full-time employees. That's a lot. So Paula –

Paula Fasseas: Hi.

Lynne Fridley: – why is the volunteer program important?

Paula Fasseas: Wow. It is the essence of no kill and I will tell you we're very strong in the no-kill movement. We really believe in saving the lives of animals and that we feel that's our mission. And if you really, really want to save their lives we know how costly it is to do the right thing for these guys, and there's no way you can really do it by having all staff. You would either have to be much, much smaller and save many less lives or you'd probably have to be running more of a traditional shelter where animals would be euthanized heavily. That's not acceptable to us, and we love our no-kill mission.

We love saving the lives. We love growing our programs and the only way financially you can sustain yourselves and really do this kind of work is by having a very robust volunteer program. So for us we started out as an all-volunteer group. And I was basically, you know, kind of got into this in a funny way. We wanted to save lives and raise awareness in the Chicago community. And we kind of just put on a little city-wide event and invited the local rescues and shelters. And the next day I had like 55 people calling me going we want to volunteer. What's the name of your organization?

So the community kind of got us to start the organization. It was really initially meant to be an event. And we realized there were so many people in the community that wanted to help, that wanted to change the status quo for animals. So we literally it was the community that got us to start saying okay, let's do something. Besides just an event let's run a little adoption program. So we started out with all volunteers. And as we got bigger and bigger we realized of course, you need to have staff. It's critical to have quality staff, but the most important thing is that the staff you have really buy into the volunteer culture because without that it's never going to be successful, you know. Really it's so critical.

So much of what we do is dependent on our volunteers because we could not possibly pay people to do all the work. I mean it would be financially impossible. We spend an average of about \$1,000.00 an animal at PAWS when we add up the costs, and that's with all the volunteers. You can only imagine. So in the life-saving work we do you really, the volunteers play a huge role in every facet of the organization.

Lynne Fridley: Can you discuss the areas where these volunteers have played an important role and their impact? Obviously it's monetarily-wise as you just mentioned.

Paula Fasseas: I would say that every aspect. The only aspect we don't have volunteers right now and we've had occasionally is in our veterinarian staff because our spay-neuter clinic is very high volume. I mean a volunteer vet would come in and would just be overwhelmed. They can occasionally help and assist, but usually that is pretty much a staff-run program is our high-volume spay-neuter and our shelter medicine. Although we do have thanks to Maddie's Fund we've had a lot of residents and support that way.

But really as far as PAWS, every department of PAWS Chicago has volunteers very actively involved in either managing things or in implementing. And so starting out, I mean I could start off with our adoption program. About 90 percent of our adoptions – and we did close to 6,000 adoptions last year – were all done by trained volunteers. So follow-up calls we have a part-time staff person but a lot of volunteer involvement in the follow ups. And we're always looking to grow the volunteer staff aspect so we can do more for the animals and more for the community. So that's the adoption program alone.

We also have in our dog walking all of the dog walks except for some of our level three dogs, which are our dogs that are a little more at risk, we have to have specially trained volunteers or staff handle the level three dogs for walking. But all of the other dog walking is done with volunteers. Helping with cleaning, feeding, we have incorporated them in our medical facility. We have a separate medical facility from our adoption center so we have isolation and quarantine areas in which volunteers are trained to work with our vet tech staff and they're specially trained and certified to be able to go into these areas. They gown up and work with animals that have highly contagious illnesses.

So you know, that again, it comes down to a lot of really good training and of course having the staff understand and have the buy in. I think that's probably the most challenging yet most rewarding area is when the two integrate beautifully and there's this wonderful symbiotic relationship between our volunteers and our staff. And I think at PAWS that's what really makes our program so successful.

Lynne Fridley: So as a follow up to that, Paula, are there instances where your staff and volunteers really don't see eye-to-eye and how do you solve that issue?

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. Basically we have had and we do get occasionally people – and a lot of it is communication. So we had a meeting recently and one of the employees said you know, isn't it, you keep talking about more volunteer programs and is that going to put our jobs at risk. And I thought wow, I never – I said no, actually that's going to ensure your job because what ensures your job is the fact we have more volunteers so we can continue growing. Because we can't grow, we can't raise more money and we can't save more lives if we don't have volunteer support. So the staff that we have, a good way for them to look at this is it ensures your position rather than jeopardizes it.

And we do often times hire from our volunteer staff. So if we have a volunteer staff position open and volunteers apply, we always like to hire people that we know their work ethic because let's face it; this is hard work. This takes passion. This takes love of animals. This is not 9:00 – 5:00. It is work. It is a labor of love and people – I mean we

have people that come and volunteer after work hours because they love it so much, you know. We have volunteers that work all week and they spend their weekends at PAWS. It's a labor of love and passion and that's the kind of culture we want to maintain.

So I think when we do have a few staff people in the past or have had that kind of roll their eyes about this and oh, it would be so much easier if we didn't have to deal with volunteers, they really don't understand the culture. They don't understand the big picture. They don't understand the financials. We're doing a bad job communicating with them. And so as, you know, leadership in PAWS, our job is to communicate that. And if they still don't get it then you know what; they're just not a fit for this organization. So not everybody is always the perfect fit so they have to embrace that.

And sometimes when you have staff that come from large organizations that don't have a volunteer culture, some of these bigger organizations especially the nationals, they have a lot more staff and then they do volunteers because they're not doing as much hands-on work with animals then I think, you know, it's a disconnect. So basically you really have to find people, employees and staff that really embrace the culture and that's why lots of time hiring from the volunteer is great because they are volunteers. They know the value. They know the passion and they have great respect for the volunteers too.

Lynne Fridley: Well that's great. I was really impressed, Paula, about PAWS Chicago volunteer opportunities which cover everything from A to Z. I mean the list was very, very long and this includes helping with medical care, Paws for Life outreach, helping outdoor cats, volunteer training and mentorship, adoption centers and events, working with dogs, working with cats, humane education, operational support and of course foster homes who took in almost 3,000 pets in 2015. What lessons have you learned over the years about recruiting and retaining volunteers? What worked and what didn't?

Paula Fasseas: Well, I will say as far as recruiting we're constantly recruiting. Now, we are very fortunate because our adoption center is located in a wonderful area in Chicago called Lincoln Park. And there are so many young professionals and young people that are passionate about animals in Chicago. We have literally hundreds of people at our orientation sessions. So we are so lucky that we are a great feeder for volunteers by our location. But other ways we've done it because we also have a North Shore adoption, which has been very successful in attracting volunteers and we're constantly growing that program.

But I would suggest for people to think just out of the box. I clearly remember when I was in grad school and I was just about ready to get my MBA I saw an ad in our school newspaper. I was at the University of Chicago and it said we're recruiting board members for a cat shelter. And I remember at the time thinking oh, I love animals. Wouldn't I love to do something for animals, you know, as a volunteer?

And I thought had that not been – go to your universities, your graduate schools and put little ads in their newspapers. Put flyers everywhere whether it's a Starbucks or – we are looking for volunteers because you just never know who is going to see that and call you

up and walk in your door and be amazing. We have volunteers still with us that have been with us since the day we opened our doors at PAWS, and that's pretty amazing. So it's going on 20 years.

Lynne Fridley: That's great. As far as retaining volunteers, Paula, are there some specific ways that PAWS Chicago acknowledges and thanks its volunteers and are particularly unusual or effective?

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. You know that's an interesting point. We do it, but I will tell you what the volunteers tell us is you don't need to thank us. We thank you for having this organization here that we can do this work. We do a volunteer appreciation party every year. We do a barbeque. We're giving awards out. We do, you know, it's probably the least of what the volunteers care about. What they really like and I think the most important thing we do is that we give them meaningful work. We don't say – first of all you won't see signs at PAWS. And when you do I tear them down if they say staff only because we don't believe – there isn't anything, you know, that volunteers can't do. It's just training.

So if only volunteers I mean only staff can handle a level three dog, well it just means that we need a volunteer to be trained the same way. In fact we have had in the past we've had some situations where our volunteers were better trained than our staff because we had a lot of new staff. So until the new staff gets trained up it's the level three volunteers that actually help the staff. So we do have really good training programs and integration of volunteers in every aspect of the organization.

So I think one of the areas that is most astounding is our training program. So as a no-kill shelter we have a full-time director of training who is fantastic and she has – so we have two full-time trainers, Joan, who is our director and her assistant. And they are full-time just working with our internal animals, our adopters. You know, some may have adopted five years ago experiencing issues. They can always call. We offer the support.

But our existing animal population we divide up our dogs into three levels, level one, twos and threes. And Joan our trainer works with volunteers to the level two and three level. So level ones come in and it's basically they can handle. It's easy. They handle puppies and dogs that are no brainers. The level twos are maybe the more, you know, rambunctious dogs that, you know, we want to be careful that they don't knock someone over. So we have level two volunteers that are trained by Joan, our trainer.

And then level threes are the dogs that probably a lot of shelters would be putting down because maybe they've bitten. They need some behavior modification. They need some extra work. They're fearful. We want to build confidence. We have a large volume of level three volunteers. I'm going to say it's probably right now around 35 to 40, and those volunteers are highly trained. They come in. They do play groups. They work with these dogs. These dogs are very successfully adopted. They do follow up. They do a lot of the meet and greets so that we make sure they're set up for success. And they are all trained by Joan, our trainer.

And then they in turn will also train others. So it's kind of like you know, you have one or two amazing employees that run that training department, but we've got about 60 volunteers that are working daily in play groups whether it's at our medical center or at our adoption center and working with the dogs. So it's really the trainers that are training our volunteers. And they all have levels. They have different apron colors. So it's very much an organization that really engages teaching, training, improvement and integration at every level. So our volunteers will stay. We retain them because they are constantly learning and growing.

Lynne Fridley: Excellent, Paula. We have another poll question. Before we jump into this poll question I'd like to remind the audience that we'd like to get questions from you on volunteer programs. So if you have any questions for Paula on volunteer programs please submit them in the Q and A box.

So this second poll is do you experience conflicts between staff and volunteers? That would be yes, no or not applicable. So please answer on your screen and we'll take a look at the results in just a second, give you a chance to get your answer in. Do you experience conflicts between staff and volunteers?

Well it's a good thing you went over that, Paula, because 73 percent of all of the audience has experienced conflicts.

Paula Fasseas: Okay.

Lynne Fridley: And almost 14 percent have not. So hopefully your advice will help the people here.

Paula Fasseas: Yeah.

Lynne Fridley: Great. Okay.

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. It's common and it's communication for sure. I mean that is so important. And really you're not going to convince everybody. Not everybody is a fit for an organization that's very volunteer-driven. You need to recruit the people that get it. And when they get it, they can see the big picture. And it's usually people that are growth-oriented, that are positive. There's that positive attitude and are confident in themselves.

And one more thing that I do want to mention that I think is really important is that every one of our staff part of their job description is integration of volunteers. So at every level of the organization everyone has to understand their role is integrating volunteers. And I think when that expectation is right up front and they understand that's part of what they have to do and then I think it makes it a lot easier.

Lynne Fridley: Thanks, Paula. I had a question from the audience and actually they wanted to know – and this is kind of funny because we always talk about lengths of stay in a shelter

and usually we're talking about the animals, but what is the average length of stay for your volunteers? I know you said you have some long term ones that have been there ever since you started the program, but what is the average length of stay?

Paula Fasseas: You know, I don't know that I have that number. I do know that we do constantly recruit new ones. When we lose some of our long-term it's usually because they've moved away. And what's really great is that they stay in touch with us. Whatever shelters they're volunteering where they move to they try to bring a lot of the culture and a lot of the things they've learned through PAWS to their shelter.

And we often will have them calling us or some of the volunteers will bring some of the staff over. We'll give them tours. We'll talk about it. We'll share materials for them because those volunteers want to see the shelters in the towns they've moved to do the same thing where they came from, from PAWS.

Lynne Fridley: And what kind of training do your volunteers go through when they just walk in the door at PAWS Chicago and want to be a volunteer?

Paula Fasseas: Yep. Okay. So the first thing they do is they have an orientation. And that's done by volunteers. Our volunteers run all of our orientations. They see a video. They learn about no-kill. We want them to know from day one our mission, why we're here, why we started, why it's so important that our program is successful for the sake of the animals and why we have to sustain what we're doing and continually grow because the animal's lives are at stake. So I think getting that whole mission and getting that focus is number one. The volunteers become very motivated from day one.

And then they choose. They're given a whole selection of opportunities whether it's cats, dogs or both, adoption counseling, working at the medical center. They get a whole list and then they sign up. They then go depending on what they've chosen to do they will work directly and be mentored by other volunteers. So for example if they choose to be a level one dog volunteer, they would go and they would be mentored and they would go through some training sessions.

And we actually, we have a full-time employee who does training by profession. And what she does is videos and training she works on helping our staff improve all of their training programs. So we're constantly improving our training programs and getting better and better because you know in every business and especially animal welfare, it's always a work in progress. Nothing is ever done; you're always improving. So we're constantly improving these programs and getting a lot of feedback from our volunteers.

After they've gone through their training they do some mentoring sessions with volunteers and then they're kind of like certified. The volunteer will say like you know, I think this person is ready to be a level two volunteer. And then they're able to become that and then once they're there if they're happy they can stay there. If they want to move on to a level three then they can request that and they will get additional training.

So it's kind of each department has a different way of training. For example in our medical center in isolation area there will be a couple of volunteers that work with them, you know, and train them on how to gown up and you know, how to not spread disease because that's a really critical component. In our medical center we have a lot of contagious disease there and we have quarantine areas and we have our isolation areas so volunteers will get one-on-one training.

We have a full-time volunteer manager at every one of our locations and their job is to make sure to constantly be recruiting, scheduling volunteers. We have a volunteer that drives volunteers from our adoption center, which is a very, very nice location. Lots of volunteers live around there, but our medical center is in a harder to get to place. The parking isn't great. It's not as safe a neighborhood. We're where we need to be. We do a lot of outreach from there. So we do have transportation available every day for volunteers for three to four hour segments. They get driven there and go back, and that has helped a lot doing that because we're constantly trying to grow our volunteer program in the medical center.

Lynne Fridley: Thanks for that, Paula. This question just popped up. How do you fire a volunteer?

Paula Fasseas: Ah.

Lynne Fridley: If you have to.

Paula Fasseas: You know I could count on my right – yes, we have. On one hand I could count how many times we've had to do that. It's so few and far between, but we have. And usually it's again, I'm not communicating, listening, understanding to what their situation is. When we realize they're just not really the right fit what we usually do is ask them to take a leave of absence for a while and that we'll consider them coming back. Take some time off. They're obviously overstressed. Usually it kind of solves itself. You know, solves. They don't come back. They realize. They move on.

Lynne Fridley: Okay.

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. We have never had – I would say in 20 years I can recall and I can only think of three, maybe four volunteers we've had to do this with, which it pretty remarkable.

Lynne Fridley: Excellent. Yes, it is very remarkable. So let's do one more poll question and get this one out of the way. Please answer on your screen. In what areas of your organization do you use volunteers? And this is a click all that applies. So check off everything that you use volunteers in and we'll go to the results in just a few seconds. Adoption counseling, animal care, community outreach, dog training, dog play groups, dog walking and submit your answers. Let's see what the audience said.

Well, they're using all of those categories, Paula. That's pretty impressive. Community

outreach, animal care are the top ones. Dog walking is next and that kind of brings up something that I've noticed about PAWS Chicago and your volunteer program. And you touched on this a minute ago, Paula, with the dog town level one, level, level three. It seems to me like these are real opportunities to progress and to gain skills instead of just showing up to do insignificant jobs which happens in a lot of cases at other shelters.

Paula Fasseas: Right. We don't want to give the volunteers the jobs we don't want to do.

Lynne Fridley: Right. Right. So by having these different levels and these opportunities to grow in their job, even though its volunteer seems to be pretty important.

Paula Fasseas: Absolutely. It's critical because it engages them. And engagement is what it's all about, engaging them in the movement, engaging them in the cause, engaging them in the work and their volunteer roles. And you know, they just are so – they're always thanking us and we're like thanking them. We have these events to thank the volunteers, and they're like no, no; we want to thank you. My life is so different. I look forward all week to volunteering at PAWS. You know, it's the best part of what I do. And that's what we love hearing because it's such a win-win for the animals.

And we don't want to forget about our cats. We have levels for cat volunteers too. So we do have specialized training. The gal that runs our adoption center cat program is fantastic, Erin, and she works one-on-one with volunteers and she actually certifies the people to become level twos for cats and can work with them. Almost all of our cat adoptions are done by volunteers.

The cleaning, you go in – everybody – see our volunteers all wear aprons. And we want them to so people know. The staff wear Polo shirts and the volunteers wear the aprons. And depending on the color of the apron is basically the status of the volunteer whether they're an adoption counselor, a level one, two or three and it's really nice because you know who everybody is. And when they're new volunteers they wear a little tag so that we want everyone to welcome them. Because part of it is, you know, we don't want a volunteer to come in and just kind of feel lost. We want them to feel very welcomed and a part of the culture.

That picture – is that the picture that you have up right now? That gentleman, he's got a group of about seven or eight men. Every morning they're there at 7:00 AM and they're walking all the dogs and it's pretty remarkable. They're level threes and they're this whole group of guys. They all met each other through PAWS and now they've all become great friends and it's really cute. They all buy a fur ball table together and they come to our events. But it's created a lifestyle for people. They meet people in the community. They meet their best friends. People will always say that. At PAWS they've met their best friends because they're like minded people who love animals and have that passion.

Lynne Fridley: What insights, Paula, would you want to share with other organizations who may be struggling with their own volunteer programs?

Paula Fasseas: I think it's top down. I think the one thing that's been helpful is the fact that I've been the founder, the CEO. I am now the executive chair and we have a staff. We have a CEO person who is an employee who is wonderful, but I will say that because it's top down I think the top has to embrace it. If you're struggling with the volunteer culture than it's probably not being embraced from the top because they've got to bring it everywhere.

And people will say to us, you know, volunteers are more difficult. It would be easier if we could just hire people. I just say look, I'm a volunteer. PAWS wouldn't be here. And my daughter is a volunteer. She used to run our communications department and now that's mostly done by staff, but she still helps a great deal with strategy. So volunteers are critical, life-saving and critical.

This picture that's up there right now is from our black tie event. On our black tie event we have 200 volunteers that night that we deploy, and those are homeless animals that we bring and we get most of them adopted that night. And it's great. So at every event we use opportunities to get those little animals' faces in front of the public and the volunteers do – I mean we could not put on these events without our volunteers.

Lynne Fridley: You can see the people in that picture that are wearing the lighter colored clothing. I guess they realize that animal hair shows up on black, right?

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. Right.

Lynne Fridley: But when they're animal people, who cares?

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. There's a group of all of our volunteers. Now we do a run every year, a run-walk, and we have a huge marathon team. We have one of the largest, local, Chicago Team PAWS marathon teams, but it's not just local. We're doing the New York Marathon this year. Next year we're doing London. Actually next week is the New York. We're doing Berlin. So people from all over the country can sign on for Team PAWS and run in the marathon and raise money for homeless animals.

Lynne Fridley: That's great. Would you like to take some questions from the audience, Paula, because we have a lot of them.

Paula Fasseas: Sure. Wonderful.

Lynne Fridley: Let's start with our audience Q and A. Do you have any suggestions on how to recruit men?

Paula Fasseas: That's interesting. The one phenomena we have found out between men and women we have more women than men; however, we find that when men do get involved they become level threes. We're laughing. We're like oh, my gosh. The men when they get involved they really want to move up, you know. They're like not

satisfied with level one or level two. They want to be a level three and also because they're big and strong and can handle the bigger dogs.

But I think we're getting more and more men and I think again, offering people really important, meaningful work you will get more men and women involved. And I think men coming and seeing other men helps because, you know, they don't want to be obviously one guy there with you know, 200 women. So I think the fact we do have a lot of men as you can see, a lot of men in our volunteer cadre that helps in and of itself recruit. So it's kind of a self-fulfilling thing. The more you have the more you get.

Lynne Fridley: That's wonderful. So can you give some specifics on recruitment? What are some specific things that you do to recruit volunteers?

Paula Fasseas: Everything we do whether it's our magazine, we always ask people to come and volunteer or foster. So if we're doing a little TV thing with an adoptable dog we always encourage the public to come and volunteer. It just jogs them because people don't always think about it. Wow, I'd love to do that. So every kind of materials we have, if we do events in the Petcos or PetSmarts, we always have flyers inviting people, inviting them and asking them. Our website has a huge area about volunteering.

We make it easy for them. They can sign up. They can come. We make it very easy for people. You don't make it hard, you know. I know it's been really tough for some of the city shelters, the government shelters because they have to require fingerprinting and what have you. That really is an obstacle. But the easier you can make it for people to get engaged and to come and then also to do follow up to see how they're doing. We're actually improving that too, making sure that we send out surveys and that we make sure the mentoring is done so that when they come back they're greeted and we hear what they have to say about it so that they can really have a great, successful experience and invite, you know, their friends to come.

And we always say it's always helpful like we have a wonderful volunteer development board and they actually really help us with all of our special events. And you know, they can become a member, bring their husband or their daughter, their son and that makes it fun because then they don't come alone to the meetings and then all of a sudden the ice is broken and they get to meet people. And engaging people is everything at any level of volunteering. It's getting them engaged and that what they're doing is meaningful.

Lynne Fridley: It's interesting that you brought up development board because our next question is about your development board which appears very large and this audience member says that sounds like a volunteer position. Can you better describe it?

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. So we have two. We have three boards that are volunteer. We have the board of directors. We have the development board and we have the professional board. So our professional board is our young professionals, a little younger. They put on a couple – they're very active in the Team PAWS and they're very active in our run-walk and our animal magnetism, which is more of a young, fun kind of event, social event. So

they help us with that fundraising. They're an amazing, robust group of young professionals.

Our development board, not always older, but sometimes the financial commitment is a little higher. They put on our Fur Ball which is our black tie event and our beach party which is our summer event. So you know, we have to do a lot of events because as we all know in animals we don't get any base funding. We get zero, nothing from the government. It really is pure philanthropy. So special events help us a lot in, you know, helping our budget and enabling us to do the great things we do for animals. So our development board puts on those events.

We have meetings in the city. We're starting to develop more development boards in the suburbs because as Chicago is growing and traffic gets worse a lot of our suburban development board members struggle coming down to the city for meetings. So we're starting to go out to them. So we have a North Shore development board we go twice a year to, and then the city development board is three times a year, the meetings. And now we are actually looking at, we have some wonderful, very active donors and supporters that are looking at us increasing and adding a development board out in the Barrington, Inverness area. So we're excited about that because that's again reaching people.

Our adopters are from all over and everywhere we go people say they've adopted from us. So we want to get them engaged more. You know, we want them to not only adopt from us. We want them to think about fostering. We want to think about development board, helping us fundraise, helping us grow to save more and more animals every year.

Lynne Fridley: What do you mean by financial commitment from your volunteers?

Paula Fasseas: From those from the development board, the minimum annual is about \$1,000.00 a year. From the professional board I think it's about \$250.00. So that's the minimum. Now if you don't want to; if you're not in a financial position to do that you can just volunteer as a volunteer which is no financial commitment at all. It's your time.

Lynne Fridley: Right.

Paula Fasseas: So we have different levels, yeah.

Lynne Fridley: Okay. Thanks. Here's our next question. Do you have resources on training, conflict resolution, documentation, videos, et cetera that you can share with other organizations?

Paula Fasseas: We are working on training videos. We are working on a lot of things like that. We have right now manuals that when we do some one-on-one training that we could share. We are going to be starting to do more and more videos with our adoption counselors, for example. They have basically a booklet they read to learn everything and then they will do one-on-one mentoring. And then once they feel comfortable then they

do the adoption counseling themselves and they're watched by a mentor and then given the final approval that they're able to go out on their own if they're comfortable with it.

So we do have some materials. We are constantly adding more and really growing the area. We would eventually love to be able to do some of this on line where people could volunteer and do some of the initial training just on the website, and that would be a goal down the road for us because any way, you know, whether we're training someone for PAWS or if they're living somewhere else they could be learning about anything we teach people they learn more about animals, communication is a win-win for the animals.

Lynne Fridley: Excellent. Here's our next question. We're exploring the various volunteer management systems. Do you use one that you would recommend?

Paula Fasseas: The one we use right now, the Logistics, it's okay. I think we're going to be probably changing as we're moving into our new sales force. We're considering moving into sales force. They actually have software available that is connected with sales force and it's free. So we're probably maybe, we may be moving in that direction this next year.

We're going to be doing that kind of after our event season is over. January, February, March is our slow time we call it, and that's when we can start implementing new programs and things and getting everyone trained up. So I don't think – I mean we are using Logistics. It works. It's not something we'd highly recommend.

Lynne Fridley: Thank you. Here's the next one.

Paula Fasseas: Yeah.

Lynne Fridley: Our shelter is getting ready to implement customer service positions for volunteers. Any advice on training?

Paula Fasseas: Oh, yeah. That is great. Really wonderful. First of all, it's selecting. Not all volunteers are good at customer service. And that's an area we found – we have volunteers that are just amazing with the animals and amazing working with the animals. And we have volunteers that are just great with people. You cannot put people – let's face it. A lot of people in our field love animals and they're not always, they don't have quite those same communication skills with people.

So you have to make sure that when you have people in customer service that they like to smile and they love people as much as they love animals. And I think that's probably one of the biggest challenges in animal shelters because we tend to find a lot of people that love animals, but people aren't always on the same level. So you've got to find those people and those are the people you've got to put at your customer service desk that are really understanding and happy and love people and want to help them. And so not everybody that wants to do it is a good fit, and sometimes really understanding and a

good fit and making sure that we direct them into where they're going to succeed is really important.

Lynne Fridley: That's great. What is your training program for adoption counselors? We're revamping ours but I'm new to the animal rescue sector and I feel lost.

Paula Fasseas: Okay. Well what adoption counselors do is we have this new kind of booklet that we put out that they kind of read through and understand everything about what we're looking for and a lot of the processes. And then they really do a lot of mentoring with an adoption counselor. They just sit with them and they watch them. They observe and they have to go through a dog and a cat if they're going to do both. You know, they do several adoptions.

And then when they're ready on their own and they feel comfortable – because it's a big, responsible position, you know, and you have to really – you don't want that then they are going to be, they'll be, their mentor will watch and observe them and let them handle a few adoptions until they feel they're really ready to do it on their own.

And then we of course always have meetings, constant meetings with our volunteer, with our adoption counselors and Melissa Dragovan, who heads our whole adoption counseling, and for their input, things that work, ideas for constantly improving. So nothing ever stays the same in a robust organization. You're constantly improving.

Lynne Fridley: Other than volunteer manager at each location, are there any other staff members utilized solely for coordination of volunteers?

Paula Fasseas: Well we have our director of volunteer services and we also have two volunteer managers. But that's just where they're dealing solely with volunteers. But everyone in every department is dealing with volunteers. So even in our database we have volunteers that come in and help us in database. There isn't anyone that doesn't, you know, work with volunteers in their selected areas. But the actual managers and director, their job is, you know, really for staffing the large volumes of volunteers that are being recruited and overseeing the whole program at large.

Lynne Fridley: How do you address compassion fatigue situations with volunteers?

Paula Fasseas: Fortunately because we're a no-kill, we probably have a lot less of that. The stories are really good. I think the problems we have with some of the compassion fatigue are some of our volunteers volunteer for us and animal care and control, and I think that that emotion gets them. And I mean I'm the first to admit it. I went to the city pound and I saw.

Back when I went the first time they were in gas chambers. And I went in the back and literally took pictures and blew them up and showed. I mean the gas chambers were removed about a year later, but I could never be in that. I just can't. I know myself. I know my limitations, and so I understand and I know that it's a very difficult situation.

And I would say probably that they should probably balance that, maybe do less, maybe one or two days a week and not so much. And couple that with good things.

It's very difficult especially if it's a city agency that's not no-kill or a private shelter. I would say in a private shelter, you know, they have the choice of being no-kill. They don't have to be, you know, taking in more animals than they can save. That's kind of what we do. We have a managed admission which means we have so many resources. We use our resources for life saving. I always couple it to an orphanage. Would you support an orphanage that could save 1,000 a year that took in 5,000 and killed the excess? Of course not, you know. So private shelters have that choice.

A government agency I understand they don't always have that choice. They have to take them all in and until the sheltering community around works hard enough to, you know, bring those numbers down – I know our focus always was spay-neuter. We focus much more on spay-neuter than we did on adoption because we knew we were not going to adopt our way out of the problem. So the first thing we opened, before we opened an adoption center was our spay-neuter clinic.

And we do about 18,000 spay-neuter surgeries a year. Most of them are done free or very low costs, subsidized. We are located in a very poor community because the under-resourced neighborhoods are where the problem is and that's why we are there. We have lots of volunteers that go door-to-door. We have a wonderful Paws for Life program where we go door-to-door in some of the most under-resourced communities. We help people's animals. You know, we get them fixed, medical care and I think by addressing the problem head on like that, we're really able to reduce the number of animals.

So when we started PAWS, there were 29,000 animals entering our City of Chicago city pound. They had 14,000 animals entering last year. They were euthanizing when we started from 29,000 entering they were euthanizing 26,000. Last year they had 14,000 enter and they euthanized 5,000. Still too many, but you know what, the direction is great. They have a 90 percent save rate for cats and we're working harder on the dogs.

We've had a lot of problems in our city pound with our CIV, the influenza. But we're working really hard at PAWS. We're working to triple our medical isolation and quarantine so we can take more CIV dogs into our program because you have to hold them for about 30 days, which has really put a huge financial burden on all the rescues and shelters in the Chicago area. And so we're working to expand our medical center so we can take more of those animals in.

Lynne Fridley: That's great.

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. It is tough. You know, I would say if it's a challenge, go to a no-kill shelter that's progressive. I think you'll feel much more, you know, positive about the life-saving work.

Lynne Fridley: Very good. So this next one is about liability issues and how do you handle that. This person says my finance department will nix some programs if they're concerned about the danger to volunteers, i.e., play groups, working with very sick animals, working with bite cases, et cetera.

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. Well I would say that we've had hardly zero liability issues with volunteers probably more with staff. So I think it really comes down to training and I think liability is often times an excuse for people not wanting to. You know when you hear oh, we can't do that or this or that. You work with your insurance company.

If you have good training for your volunteers and your staff – in fact it was funny. At one point we had so much new staff we were saying our volunteers were better trained. We had to really start focusing on better training for our staff because there were so many new ones. So I think it really does come down to working with sick animals there's not liability if you have the right processes and protocols.

Bite cases, we only let our level threes and sometimes if the dog is, you know, highly concerning it will be only certain staff members or certain volunteer level threes that are able, the dog is receptive to. And we work very closely. But I don't think that you ever have to nix a program because you're not managing it well. It really comes down to managing it better.

Lynne Fridley: That's a great answer.

Paula Fasseas: Yeah.

Lynne Fridley: Paula, does PAWS accept any court-ordered community service, school community service or do you focus all your efforts on more likely regular volunteers?

Paula Fasseas: We do the school community service. So what we have which is really great because with the young children we just aren't in a position right now. We'd love to have children's programs, but it's just like on our list of things with the life-saving work and you know what we have to do. So what we did is we started what we call family service. So kids can come in if they're under 18 with their parents.

So we get a lot of 10, 11, 12 year olds that come in with their mom or dad. They sign a waiver. They're working with them. They either greeters at the front door or they'll help with cleaning or they'll help with the kits or they'll help with the dog areas, but they're under the parents' supervision. And they do sign a waiver. And that's a nice way of incorporating kids into it. As far as community service like high school, we do have a lot of things on our website.

We have a list of things we ask them to do. We ask them to do, you know, they can sell things. They can do promotions. They can do fundraisers. We have "Create Your Own Fundraisers" that we offer. We get a lot of Bar Mitzvahs. People just do wonderful

things for the animals. And we offer them lots of suggestions and ideas so that they can go out and become our ambassadors in the community.

Lynne Fridley: That's great. Here's another question. I'm having difficulty between senior-founder type staff and volunteers often conflicting over issues of protectiveness, the right way to do it. I want volunteers to feel valued. It's difficult with important staff members criticizing their every move.

Paula Fasseas: Okay. Difficulty between senior-founder staff and volunteers. So it's kind of like old school versus new school, right? They want to change things and do things differently. I would say obviously it has to come from the leadership at the top, the direction and the strategy. And the way it's going and maybe the founding staff and volunteers have a lot of experience. Maybe it sounds like a communication issue. I think that, you know, we've had the same problem with lots of young people that come to work here and want to do things differently and what they don't have is the years of experience knowing why those things aren't working and why we've done them and haven't.

And often times it's we're just so busy we don't have the time to explain it to them. And you know, yeah, we've tried all that and this is why we've gone in this direction. Look, not everybody is always going to agree, but the idea is I think communication is critical and I think we ourselves are guilty of not even having the time sometimes to communicate that. And I do think some of the younger, newer staff that come on board don't understand why we're doing things a certain way. We just need to really up our communications and do a better job. So I think the criticizing that's coming out of frustration and it really comes down to communication.

Lynne Fridley: It does. Yes, it does. So do you have a hard time recruiting volunteers for the door-to-door program? I think that's yours Paws for Life? We're looking into starting –

Paula Fasseas: You know, we don't and I'll tell you –

Lynne Fridley: You don't? Okay.

Paula Fasseas: And the reason we don't is the woman that runs the program is the most amazing woman who truly is a life force of goodness and love and I mean when you're with her you just feel like, you know, you can fly into anywhere and do anything because she is so positive. She's a social worker, trained social worker. She loves people equally. She is so kind. She has no judgment. You can't get into being judgmental. Not everybody is the same with animals, you know.

We all started differently. Let's go back and look at the way our parents were, our grandparents were. Always there's a progression in life. And we have to be understanding of different people and the culture and what they've been experiencing. You know I always think of my grandparents were from Greece. They thought dogs should be outside. They were horrified that I would let my dogs on my bed, you know. These are the – this is just the progression, but they ended up loving my dogs so much

they let them on their bed. It was an education and whenever we go to some of these communities I'll say you know what, you'll teach your parents, you know. I taught my parents, and it really is the children that teach us.

It was my daughter that got me to start PAWS because she was volunteering at a kill shelter and I didn't even know shelters killed. And she kept saying mom, you know, if you love animals you got to help them. I did love animals. I'd never volunteered. I'd never been in a shelter and you know, she opened my eyes. So I think when you believe in people and you understand and you're not judgmental and you work with them and you help them – you know, we don't walk in and go you got to spay and neuter your dogs because they're going to be turned off immediately.

What we do is we go in and how can we help you. Oh, you need some training. We give them some training tips. We give them food. These are really, really poor communities. People are giving their food stamps and their food for their animals. They love their animals. Laurie always says, you know, resources doesn't mean lack of love. A lack of resources doesn't mean a lack of love. These people love their animals. And if we see there's some negligence we work with them on that too and help them alleviate their burden so that those animals are not in harm's way.

So it's really people will come back and go all right, Laurie, I want to fix my animals now. She doesn't try and you know, criticize and condone. She really works with the community and they follow here like the Pied Piper. They bake cakes for her. I mean when we pull up literally I will walk into my building and my doorman will come up to me and he goes I'm from Englewood and I love the program you're doing there. I hear all about it from all my friends.

So that's the kind of messaging you want and they trust you. They trust us. They trust PAWS. They know we're there to help them and help their animals. So I would say you know, you're free to come out and visit us in Chicago and just work with Laurie and see the magic she does.

Lynne Fridley: Excellent. So how many volunteers participate in the Paws for Life program?

Paula Fasseas: She has about 30 active ones.

Lynne Fridley: Okay.

Paula Fasseas: And what they do is they go around – I mean they're there like three or four days a week going door-to-door, signing people up, getting them set up. We work with churches. We bring our spay-neuter van in. First we do vaccination clinics. We do free vaccines because you get everybody engaged with that. Then we'll work with them on spaying and neutering. And we'll set up appointments. We'll either drive them or sometimes they'll come on their own.

We'll set their appointments up at the spay-neuter clinic. And then we'll also bring our

spay-neuter van out to the community and work with the church. We'll use the church basement for setting up all the crates so that when the animals are done – the actual spay-neuter van is just used as a surgical room, and then the animals are brought down to recover with volunteers and then the guardians come back and pick up their pets at the end of the day.

Lynne Fridley: She sounds like a fantastic person. Here's the next question. Paula, we have a hard time getting volunteers to commit to a schedule although they spend a lot of time and they're very good. Do you have any suggestions?

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. I think if you explain to them that we can't run the program without knowing. You know, it's okay if you want to volunteer once a month or twice a month or three times a month, but just let us know what you absolutely can do because that's how we can run a program. And I think they really understand the value of that and how important that is. They will – again, it's communicating that, how important. You can't just walk in and say I'm going to volunteer.

We have to know on Mondays we have a hard time getting volunteers so a whole group come in on Mondays and they've become a really great, close-knit group. They're the Monday group, you know. And so I think it's really communicating also communicating to the volunteers when we're really short, what we really need. We really needed to ramp up our medical center volunteers and we've got so many more going there. They'll say to me oh, I love going down there. It's really like ground zero because that's where the animals first come in.

So you'll see the abuse cases. You'll see the police. A lot of police will bring us animals. And you know, you'll see really sad situations, but then you'll see them leaving there and going to the adoption center looking great, you know. So it's where a lot of the miracles happen and the more they go down there, the more they feel yeah, they want to go there. We used to have a hard time getting volunteers. We're really growing that because it's important.

Lynne Fridley: How long are the orientations, the first intro session into volunteering?

Paula Fasseas: And I'm going to say about an hour, but what we usually do at the orientation is we have people signing up at that point. So at the end of that they're signing up because we don't want to wait for them to come back and sign up. We want to always give them something. And you know things do move. It could be possibly that they do sign up and get started in their area the first night. We don't want to lose that momentum. You don't want them to come back for this and come back for that. You know, you're going to lose them. You've got to get them engaged. You got to get them a job. You got to show them how exciting it is right from the get go and that way you want to keep them so that they come back.

Lynne Fridley: Do you conduct an on-going or periodical evaluation of volunteers?

Paula Fasseas: Each like for example Joan, who does probably one of the most critical areas, working with the dogs in the training and the behavior modification, she does. She works one-on-one with the volunteers, and basically she will not promote someone to a level three until they've done hands-on work with them and she's observed them. And then to get to a level three they've done the training. She might, you know, keep them longer, but yeah, she will work one-on-one for sure with those volunteers.

With adoption counseling no, I don't think – I think if there are issues Melissa would just handle it one-on-one if there's any problems. But we don't have like one standard. I think depending on the areas of where they're working, you know, we constantly, the people that are in charge will be working with them and if someone's needing a little more work we'll spend some time helping them get up to speed. But we don't have like a blanket evaluation thing, no.

Lynne Fridley: How do you engage one-time volunteers, for example corporate groups or service clubs who want to volunteer as a group?

Paula Fasseas: Right. We don't want to turn them away because that brings a lot of – we have a lot of corporate volunteers. We'll have corporate day. So we actually have one person who is a volunteer who runs that and she does a lot of it from her home. And she schedules it and we have, you know, set things in our adoption center that they can do. So if it's school groups they might be putting those cones together and doing some stuffing. We give them a variety of things so they're not totally bored. And they get to do different things.

If it's a corporate group, sometimes like if we need some painting done we'll buy the paint. We'll have our maintenance guy there and he'll kind of work with them and we'll give people different things. And we had an investment bank group came and painted our whole deck area last summer. And so we'll give special projects depending. But we do like them to come and first they get the video. They learn a little bit about PAWS, about no-kill, about what we're about to get them engaged and then they'll do a work together as a group.

Sometimes we'll split them up if it's a large group and some will go cats; some will go dogs, and they'll work with our existing volunteers and they'll have aprons on. They have a special apron so we know that they're just there for the day so everybody knows they don't know everything. You can kind of help them out. And I think that that positive engagement and then many of them come back and volunteer after that.

Lynne Fridley: We have several more questions. We can go on for a few more minutes. If the audience would like to stay with us we'll get Paula to try to answer more of your questions. This next one says we are a small, rural area, total volunteer. Suggestions to recruit volunteers, please. I like your college recruiting and I feel that we need to tap into this some more.

Paula Fasseas: Yeah, definitely. Just constantly go down there. Get to know the people at the school. Talk about the need. Get them engaged. They'll help you. They'll put the signs in the right places. They'll make sure they're up there. They'll put them in the newspaper, you know, their little paper. I think that's really important because people that love animals want to help. And it's really finding them in these areas.

Grocery stores are another great place. You can ask the grocery store and put a table out front, a little table and just have your materials. Maybe if they let you have a little puppy or a little kitten there and you can talk to people when they come up. This is a lot of people that have excess time and even if it's one day a week what a wonderful thing. So think about your grocery stores. Think about places where, you know, the community are always going to really have – we still do a lot of work in grocery stores in our North Shore. We get our young people, you know, high school. We tell them, Why don't you go to the grocery stores and table? We'll get you a puppy that day and start recruiting people. And they love doing that.

Lynne Fridley: Here's a good question. Do you have volunteers that work with social media? If so what do you have them do and how do you regulate that?

Paula Fasseas: We do. We actually have a wonderful volunteer who has helped us a lot. Our staff that's involved in our communications work with the few volunteers that are very good at social media. They're super smart. They understand our messaging which is really critical, and so I think that they work, the volunteers that do that are basically interns. So once they do an internship they're there.

They really learn all of our protocols. They learn, you know, what's important. And it's all directed by the staff person as far as how many we do, you know, so that we're not overwhelming people with that. But it's been really helpful having interns and having volunteers help the staff. It's also good because you get some outside perspective, you know.

Lynne Fridley: Yes. Okay. So could you share if you have any process in place for volunteers if they're inactive for a certain period? If you do what steps do you take?

Paula Fasseas: Yeah. I think usually when volunteers become inactive it's usually sometimes look they may have things come up. They have family issues. They have to be inactive for a while which is fine. We certainly understand. They're always welcome to come back. You know, life gets in the way of many things. You know, we've all had that happen to us so that is not a problem. We don't – I mean we're scheduling. We're constantly recruiting so we know who the active ones are and usually if they're not they'll tell us.

A lot of our volunteers go away in the winter in Chicago. So we have volunteers that are gone for three, four months in the winter and then they come back and we know that. We're very flexible. Same with our development board. I'll tell people we may have three, four meetings a year, but if you come to one or two we're happy. We don't have

these rules that you have to do this, this and this. We really want to be engaging and make it available because people will do what they can and every little bit helps.

Lynne Fridley: Great. Well, let's take one more question, Paula, and then we'll finish up for the evening. This one is referring to my comments at the beginning. Do the 17,000 volunteer hours include foster hours?

Paula Fasseas: I don't think they do. No, I don't think we've included our foster hours. That would be – that is actually just volunteering at our locations and our special events. So some of those volunteers might be just – we do a lot of adoption events because we really want to get the awareness out there. So we'll have volunteers that will just volunteer once or twice a year at our adoption events, but you know, they've been doing it for years. So no, the fosters are not included in that.

Lynne Fridley: Then you have a lot more than 17,000 hours then.

Paula Fasseas: We have it all timed. We do.

Lynne Fridley: Yes, indeed.

Paula Fasseas: We have all times we have close to 200 - 250 animals in foster care at all times.

Lynne Fridley: Wow.

Paula Fasseas: So if you look at our inventory list, our city pound has about 400 animals. PAWS has in its program at all times anywhere between 450 and 600 animals in it. Two hundred fifty of those animals are in foster homes.

Lynne Fridley: That's amazing, Paula. You are doing such wonderful work there, you, your staff and all of your volunteers. And Chicago is lucky to have someone of your caliber to lead the way.

Paula Fasseas: Well thank you so much. As you know it's a labor of love for all of us and we do have a great, great staff and an amazing volunteer group and it's worked out really well for these thousands of animals.

Lynne Fridley: Well that's great. Okay. So that's the end of our event tonight. We want to thank Paula and all of you for your time. We invite you to take a few minutes to complete our survey. Your feedback is important to us. Click on the link on your screen and if for some reason you don't see the link it is also in the resource file at the bottom of your screen. The link will also be emailed to you in a few days. And this webcast will be available on demand shortly. And we hope you will share this presentation on your social sites.

Please take advantage of our free on demand webcasts available on our website at MaddiesFund.org and plan to join us on December 7th for a [webcast](#) with America's

veterinarian, Dr. Marty Becker, who will be talking about fear free, a certification program for veterinarians, vet techs and clinic managers taking the pet out of petrified. Thanks again for being here with us this evening. Good night.

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