

Media Contact: Kathy Covey
(503) 710-8373
(503) 925-8903 ext. 228
kathyc@catadoptionteam.org

Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland

Animal Welfare Organizations of Portland Unite with Goal to End Euthanasia of Shelter Animals

Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland (ASAP)

(Feb. 26, 2008) — Emphasizing the importance of spay/neutering as a solution to the growing pet overpopulation problem in the Portland Metro area, leaders from Portland's largest animal welfare organizations and the veterinary community choose 'Spay Day USA' to announce the formation of the 'Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland'. The group's mission is to end the euthanasia of healthy, social, and treatable cats and dogs in Portland-area shelters.

The Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland's (ASAP) ten founding organizations include: Alliance for Contraception in Cats and Dogs; Cat Adoption Team; Clackamas County Dog Services; Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon; Humane Society for Southwest Washington; Multnomah County Animal Services; Oregon Humane Society; Portland Veterinary Medical Association; Southwest Washington Veterinary Medical Association; Washington County Animal Services/Bonnie L. Hayes Small Animal Shelter.

"This is an unprecedented gathering of animal welfare organizations and the veterinary community in the greater Portland area," comments Joyce Briggs, Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland's spokesperson. "These founding organizations care for 90 percent of the unwanted animals in the greater Portland metro area which amounts to close to 43,000 cats and dogs annually. They look into the eyes of the problem everyday. Now as they come together, they are empowered to find solutions." All ASAP members are committed to working together to save lives.

The first solution ASAP is working on is reducing the number of cats entering and ultimately being euthanized in shelters. Last year, 26,478 cats and kittens were taken in by Portland metro area shelters. However, 13,074 of them lost their lives due to lack of homes, space, and resources.

ASAP launched a targeted pilot subsidized spay/neuter project for low-income residents, CatNIP (cat neuter incentive program), in order to reduce these numbers. This program was funded with \$40,000 in grants that will subsidize 800 surgeries with a co-pay of \$10. Today over 500 subsidized spay/neuter surgeries have been performed in two targeted zip codes, and ASAP estimates that beginning in 2009, shelters should see a drop in cats from those SE Portland neighborhoods. ASAP sees, however, a need to create a broader program to assist cat owners in financial need as well as homeless pets and feral cats throughout the greater Portland area.

While all the Portland area shelters are striving to maximize and share resources to find homes for as many cats and dogs as possible, “we can’t adopt our way out of this problem,” remarks Britta Bavaresco, Executive Director of the Cat Adoption Team in Sherwood; a sentiment echoed by all members of ASAP. “The only way to make any impact on the numbers of unwanted cats coming into shelters is to reduce the numbers out there in the community. For that we need to offer targeted, subsidized spay and neuter surgeries for cat owners of fertile cats, who understand the importance of spaying and neutering, yet are in need of financial assistance,” continues Bavaresco.

One of ASAP’s future community projects will focus on pet identification to increase the numbers of lost pets returned to their owner. Nationally around 16 percent of lost dogs and only 2 percent of lost cats are found and returned to their original owners.

ASAP will also collaborate on ways to improve the adoptability of power breed dogs such as pit bulls. These are usually the first dogs euthanized in shelters, yet as a breed can be loving companions.

Finally, ASAP will adopt a community-wide standard of collecting and reporting animal shelter data, thereby streamlining reporting, transparency, and consistency among the shelters.

The Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland’s acronym is no accident. “With so many lives at stake, today, the sense of urgency is quite real, and the founding organizations of the Animal Shelter Alliance of Portland are committed to acting ASAP,” comments Briggs. “We hope the community will join us because we cannot do it alone.”