MADDIE'S®
MILLION PET CHALLENGE

April 2022

Shelter and Field Consultation
Rochester Animal Services, New York

CONTENTS

Introduction 4

Capacity for care and fear free sheltering 7

Key Performance Indicators and trends 9

Public Policy -state 12

Public Policy~City of Rochester Ordinance 13

Community Programs, outreach and Safety Net 15

Targeted community Spay/Neuter 17

Community Cat Programming 19

Field Services 22

Triage and Population Management 25

Feline Housing, Husbandry and Enrichment 28

Canine Housing, Husbandry and Enrichment 29

Shelter Medicine and surgery 30

Return to Owner (RTO) 32

Foster Care 33

Adoptions 35

Rescue/Transfer 36

StaffinG 38

Volunteers 40

Budget 41

Facility 42

Moving Forward 43

Summary~Director's action step checklist 44

Selected Resources 50

INTRODUCTION

Rochester Animal Services (RAS) and Lollypop Farm, Humane Society of Greater Rochester were awarded pro bono consults by Maddie's Million Pet Challenge. Maddie's Million Pet Challenge is a partnership between the University of California at Davis, Koret Shelter Medicine Program, the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida, Open Door Veterinary Collective and Team Shelter USA with the ultimate goal of creating support systems for pets and people in need in every community.

Research was done prior to the onsite visit the week of April 11 that included the review of New York State statutes pertaining to animals, local ordinances and proposed revisions, shelter, outreach and field statistics and programming in addition to a variety of interviews with key leadership. During the onsite visit, time was spent with program leads and supervisors individually.

Core recommendations in this report are in line with all national reputable animal welfare organizations to include the Humane Animal Support Services (HASS), the Association of Shelter Veterinarians *Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters* and *Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay Neuter Programs,* the National Animal Control Association, Fear Free Sheltering and the Humane Society of the United States. These recommendations revolve around serving more pets in the community, limiting shelter intake to those pets who have no other alternatives and short lengths of stay in the shelter if they do enter.

The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters (the playbook), written by the onsite consultant is a summary of these key recommendations that has been utilized by the RAS director since it was published in 2019. These standard recommendations are the basis for the HASS model of a compassionate animal welfare system that serves both pets and people. This report should be viewed as an addendum to the playbook specific to RAS but it should be noted that tremendous progress has been made over the last decade, in particular, and the organization is already considered a national model for other animal welfare organizations.

The traditional, antiquated animal control and sheltering system was created 150 years ago with the intent of removing aggressive and/or rabies-infected dogs from the street for the purpose of euthanasia. But for the last several decades there has been a major shift in the

animal welfare industry away from the intake bias and unfair judgement and prejudice around pet owners. Unfortunately, many state statutes remain outdated as laws were passed without supporting data and there is much work to be done around public policy using current research, studies and data. RAS has been involved in the New York State Animal Protection Federation and for many years has been working on updating the state statute.

This shift from a shelter-centric system to a community/foster-based animal welfare system has been met with some confusion and misunderstandings. However, the RAS website content is excellent, very thorough and describes the purpose and meaning behind this crucial transition that speaks to the inherent bias and prejudice woven into the antiquated animal welfare system that disproportionately effects pet owners of color and other marginalized groups like those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged (https://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=21474844701).

Addressing the root issues especially around lack of access to care has and will continue to prove that punitive enforcement is not only ineffective in providing sustainable solutions but a waste of resources. Strong collaborative public~private partnerships, like those that RAS is continuing to build, are imperative. This positions the organization more as a community animal resource center with the ability to serve more pets and people in need.

Some critics are of the opinion that socioeconomically disadvantaged individuals should not have pets. However, in the Access to Care Coalition Report research reveals that not only are 29 million pet owners are on government assistance, 80% of all American workers live pay check to pay check and 20% of even high-income earners cannot pay an unexpected $2,000 emergency veterinary bill within a month (Attachment 1).

The inability to provide veterinary care is not just an issue affecting those living in poverty but as the cost of veterinary care has escalated far faster and higher than inflation with no effective insurance coverage for pets comparable to people, many pet owners are struggling. The American Veterinary Medical Association has stated that access to care may be the most substantial animal welfare crisis affecting pets in the U.S. (https://www.avma.org/javma-

news/2020-10-01/access-care-conversations-continue). This knowledge is crucial as the shift from punitive measures and a shelter intake bias as the only way to 'help' a pet is replaced with helping to keep pets in their loving homes, supportive rehoming and expanding access to care. The intent of this consult was to identify areas and processes that can be improved but there are many positive attributes that must be acknowledged and celebrated first. At RAS, these include but are not limited to:

- A mission statement with the intent to address inequity, inequality and bias: *Serving Rochester's people and animals to create safe neighborhoods, support the human-animal bond, and save and enhance lives.*
- Mission and values that align with Mayor Evans' administration
- Organizational goals in line with Mayor Evans' initiatives that include violence prevention, youth services and mental health services
- City and shelter leaders, staff, volunteers and community advocates care deeply about pets in need and serving the community
- Excellent and thorough website content with information about supportive self-rehoming and access to veterinary care and assistance
- The non-profit Verona Street Animal Society (VSAS) supports RAS and shelter pets in a wide variety of ways
- Grants available from the New York State Animal Population Control Program for spay/neuter
- Member of the Greater Rochester Animal Coalition
- Pet Supplies Plus supplies all food and litter for the shelter
- One of the first HASS pilot shelters in the U.S.
- Pets for Life program since 2016
- Outreach/support coordinator and specialist are under field services to address the lack of access to care
- Safety Net Foster Care program to prevent shelter surrender when pet owners need short term assistance
- In FY 20/21, more pets were helped through outreach and community programs compared to admission to the shelter (2,984 and 2,077, respectively), which is the ultimate goal of a community-based animal welfare system

- Live release rate for shelter pets steadily increasing since 2010 and RAS has only euthanized pets for severe behavior or medical conditions in years
- Detailed work plan for each staff person linking them to functional areas and programs with Key Performance Indicators

CAPACITY FOR CARE AND FEAR FREE SHELTERING

Positives

- Extensive Safety Net and proactive community programs that decrease the need for shelter intake
- Animal Services Officers (ASOs) answer only high priority calls during the evening and overnight hours
- RAS is open Saturdays from 10am to 3pm for reunification, adoption, foster release and transfers
- If pets enter RAS, there is a short length of stay for dogs (7-8 days) and cats (7-10 days) which is a key variable to operate within Capacity for Care and minimize stress for pets and people
- Several staff are Fear Free Shelter certified
- Odor-neutralizing disinfectant used that is recommended by Fear Free to reduce fear, anxiety and stress in a shelter setting for dogs and cats

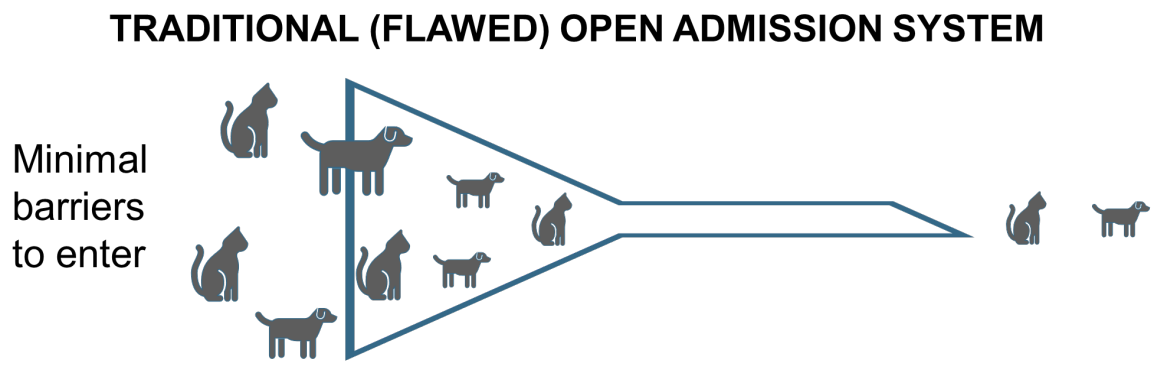


Figure 1: Depicts a schematic of the traditional sheltering system with minimal barriers to enter but multiple barriers to outcome that bottleneck a lifesaving shelter system.

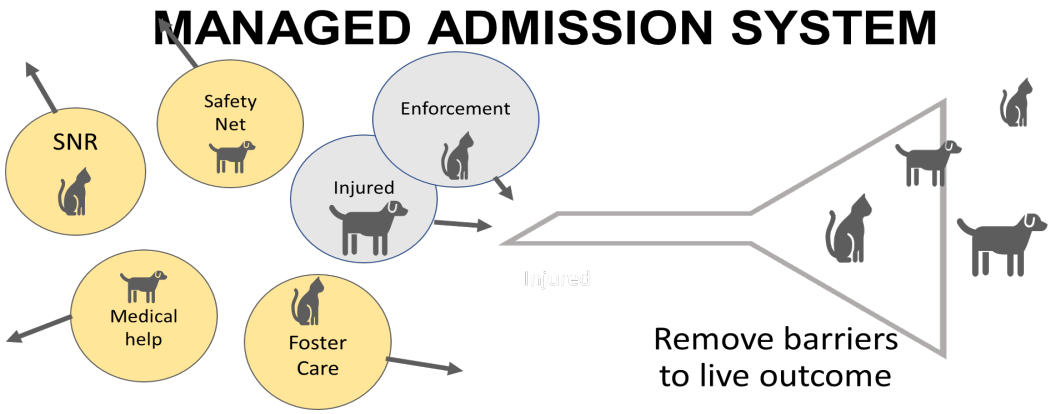


Figure 2: Depicts a schematic of the desirable animal welfare system that shows multiple alternative pathways in lieu of shelter intake that results in fewer pets entering the shelter put more pets and people helped in the community. RAS now has a managed admission system but community cat programs should be streamlined (see **Community Cat Programs**).

Opportunities

RAS does an exemplary job at exhausting alternatives to shelter intake and helping pets stay in their homes and neighborhoods. In order for the shelter to remain within Capacity for Care and to utilize city and donor resources most efficiently, the formula for intake and outcome must be designed to remain balanced.

However, 2 processes are in conflict with that progress. ASOs are answering non-emergency service calls 7 days a week from 9am to 5pm and the public can admit pets to the shelter 6 days a week from 10am to 3pm. Alternatively, the shelter is only open from 10am to 3pm 6 days a week for reunification, adoption, foster pick up or transfer. Therefore, there are 230 hours a week for potential intake (5 ASOs x 40 hours each + 5 hours x 6 days a week for the public) but only 30 hours for live outcome. This, by definition, poses great risk of an unbalanced formula. RAS has 3 Client Specialists who among their varied customer service duties are responsible for answering phone calls. As a city department with the ultimate goal of providing service for constituents and pet owners, the shelter should be open convenient hours. Most people are working while the shelter is open from 10am to 3pm so in order to appropriately serve the

community, the shelter should be open until 7pm during the week to address the bottleneck for live outcome and provide basic customer service. Intake hours for non-emergency owner surrenders should be less than live outcome hours and done only when there are no other viable alternatives and there is capacity. Some shelters schedule non-emergency owner surrenders only 2 days a week for a span of a few hours. RAS leadership is continuing to look at opening convenient hours for live outcome 7 days a week as staff allows (see **Staffing** for recommendations).

In basic terms, Capacity for Care means the organization has the shelter space, the appropriate number of staff to care for pets as well as resources to address their medical and surgical needs. But the availability of all of those resources does not take into account that a shelter stay for any pet evokes fear, anxiety, stress, frustration and confusion as they are forced into an unnatural environment where everything they are faced with is unfamiliar. This includes even well-meaning staff and volunteers, other animals and smells and sounds that cause them alarm. This is why it is imperative to exhaust all other viable options in lieu of shelter intake for the pet.

Fear Free Sheltering is part of a movement that began in private practice veterinary clinics in an effort to mitigate fear, anxiety and stress. The certification training is online, self-paced and no charge for RAS staff and volunteers who should be required to complete the training.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TRENDS

Positives

- Detailed outreach, shelter and field statistics are available for public viewing on the RAS website at https://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589964894
- RAS leadership is tracking over 100 Key Performance Indicators for outreach, field services, community care and sheltering to measure impact so programs and protocols can be adjusted and resourced accordingly. This is in line with the City of Rochester Office of Innovation goals.

- Data support staff person is provided by HASS to assist with data capture and trend analysis when needed
- In FY 20/21, more pets were helped through outreach and community programs compared to admission to the shelter (2,984 and 2,077, respectively), which is the ultimate goal of a community-based animal welfare system (intentionally repeated)
- Utilizing PetPoint shelter software
- Emergency Safety Net foster care and community veterinary care is tracked in PetPoint
- Shelter statistics tracked with appropriate categories which is crucial since strategic solutions vary between species and intake types
- Since 2000, shelter intake has decreased from 7,000 pets a year to 2,000 while outreach efforts continue to increase
- Live release rate steadily increasing since 2010
- Despite an increased live release rate over the last decade, the number of bite cases in the community has decreased
- Short lengths of stay in the shelter for dogs (7-8 days) and cats (7-10 days) is below 14 days, now considered a long length of stay

Opportunities

It is a common challenge for municipal shelters like RAS to struggle with a variety of software systems that do not communicate. At RAS, PetPoint, the city Emergency Communication Department-911, the dog licensing program and Pets for Life programs all operate under separate systems making the tracking, management and compilation of data more cumbersome.

The extensive spreadsheet developed by the RAS director with all Key Performance Indicators is an excellent way to visualize and compare cause and effect amongst these different programs. For example, increasing an outreach program can positively affect another metric, such as decreasing shelter intake because pets were provided with the help they needed.

This leads to the conversation about the definition of success for an animal welfare organization. The metric of decreasing intake is intended to be a desirable trend because (1) pets are helped in ways other than a shelter intake or (2) not born because of effective targeted spay/neuter

programs. The intent is *not* to turn pets away without assistance or *not* pursue perpetrators of animal cruelty, neglect or true abandonment and remove pets in harm's way.

Another metric that requires explanation is the percentage of pets saved out of all the pets entering the shelter, often referred to as the live release rate or the save rate. An arbitrary measure of success that exceeds 90% has historically been the goal. However, as all shelters, municipal and private continue to do better, implement pro-active programs to keep pets in their loving homes and out of the shelter and therefore decrease shelter intake, that percentage can be under 90% but yet, the shelter is still considered successful. That is because the reason for euthanasia is more important than the percentage of the overall animals saved.

When only dangerous, large dogs who cannot safely be rehabilitated and medical cases beyond hope with reasonable resources are euthanized, the shelter is euthanizing pets only when appropriate. As such, the percent saved can fall even well below 90%. Best Friends Animal Society explains this metric here: https://bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025/what-does-no-kill-mean. Important Key Performance Indicators that are now being tracked are the number of people offered assistance by an ASO in the field. This will no doubt show that what has previously been perceived as enforcement issues were actually lack of access to care issues. The fact that RAS offers such a significant and wide array of community assistance and tracks all of it is exemplary and leadership is always considering what data measures impact best.

As discussed throughout this report, the limited hours the shelter is open to the public during the week is an area of customer service that should be improved. Even though callers can leave a voicemail, no staff is available between 3pm and 5pm when other city departments are open. RAS leadership will now be tracking the number of missed calls as well as voice mails left and returned.

The next step in data management would be to design the current Key Performance Indicators spreadsheet so that it automatically compares data year over year. Detailed data is already available on the RAS website but key data points that could be summarized in a monthly snapshot for city leadership and the community include the:

⇒ Total number of pets assisted through outreach
⇒ Total number of people assisted through Safety Net and supportive self-rehoming who did not surrender to the shelter
⇒ Number of subsidized spay/neuters for the community and/or provided with medical assistance
⇒ Number of pets reunited in the field by ASOs
⇒ Number of people provided with links to services from ASOs
⇒ Shelter intakes by category (dog, cat, puppy, kitten)
⇒ Outcome by category
⇒ Length of stay by category
⇒ Volunteer hours

PUBLIC POLICY -STATE

Positives

- RAS director has served on the New York State Animal Protection Federation board and remains active
- New York Senator Thomas is interested in animal welfare revisions to the state statute
- In November of 2021, Governor Hochul passed legislation to prevent insurers from discriminating against home owners based on breed
- State statute allows for a municipality to determine their own stray hold timeline so the stray hold for dogs without identification is 3 days, which is ample time for reunification
- Proceeds from dog licensing can be used to subsidize spay/neuter programs for dogs
- New York State Animal Control Population Program for spay/neuter is used to subsidize surgery for shelter pets, income qualified pet owners or for pet owners in municipalities with spay/neuter mandates

Opportunities

While the City of Rochester is not directly responsible for New York State statute revisions pertaining to animals, it benefits RAS to be involved in order to educate and encourage

legislators to pass laws in line with Best Practices. Several sections of the statute are in need of updating:

1. Article 7, Section 117 states a dog must be impounded at the shelter if the dog is not licensed, even if the dog is on the owner's property. This mandate is considered over-enforcement especially when the owner may not be aware of the licensing mandate, does not have transportation to purchase a license or be aware the license can be purchased by mail. Similarly, the dog may have a license on a collar that is not worn while on the owner's property. All efforts should be made to prevent the intake of non-emergency/non-enforcement cases when there is no direct threat to public and animal safety. A more appropriate action would be to issue a warning for the owner to purchase the license.

2. Chapter 69; Article 26; Section 373; Seizure of animals lost, strayed, homeless, abandoned or improperly confined or kept. The intent of this section is to protect pets who are not cared for. But the purpose of having Animal Services Officers reunite dogs in the field is based on the premise that the dog is close to their home and if taken to a shelter outside of their neighborhood, there chance of reunification decreases to 22% nationally (see **Return to Owner**).

   Less than 2% of cats entering U.S. shelters in the stray category are reunited with their families so there should be no stray hold period for cats. Instead, cats should be sterilized, ear tipped, rabies vaccinated and returned to their home location

PUBLIC POLICY~CITY OF ROCHESTER ORDINANCE

Positives

- RAS director has worked extensively on revision recommendations in line with Best Practices for Chapter 31-Animals-Dog, which are currently in review with the city attorney and there are no further suggestions

- RAS director has worked extensively on revision recommendations in line with Best Practices including verbiage around access to care and community programs for Chapter 30-Animals, currently in review with the city attorney

Opportunities

Since there has already been a very thorough review of both Chapter 30 and 31 with appropriate revision recommendations, there are only minor additional suggestions for Chapter 30.

1. SS30-42 Sterilization of Adopted Cats Required
   Recommendation: Omit 'Given the large and growing number of unwanted cats…'.

   Reason: The number of 'unwanted' cats entering shelters has been dramatically decreasing over many years, however, cats are incredibly productive reproducers. More positive messaging would include focusing on spay/neuter of cats allowed outside.

2. SS 30.43 Definitions
   Recommendation: Under Community Cat replace the word 'feral' with 'socialized or unsocialized to people' and omit 'living in the wild'

   Reason: The term 'feral' is a trigger for people to think of colonies of cats in a negative way, when the reality is that only a few percent of all free roaming cats live in colonies. Most colonies of cats are fed by people so not actually living in the wild.

   Recommendation: Define Feral as 'unsocialized'

   Reason: as above

For other general ordinance revision recommendations see *The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters,* beginning on page 57 (Attachment 2).

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, OUTREACH AND SAFETY NET

Positives

- Community outreach activity reported in detail on the RAS website (https://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589964894)
- RAS goals include building partnerships to leverage resources, addressing inequity and resource barriers and to serve as a community animal resource center
- RAS received a Pets for Life grant from The Baker Foundation, has been a mentorship community since 2016 and has been providing pet support and resources to increase pet retention and recently expanded into a second zip code
- Provide owner requested euthanasia services through the Pets for Life program so the owner can be present with their pet
- The RAS Community Pet Care Clinic helps pets in need with diagnostics, medical and surgical help which is highly impressive based on the limited space, staff and hours of operation at the shelter
- Between July 1 and March 31, RAS has helped 2,376 pets with preventive and/or medical care in 1,638 households which is on track to exceed the number of pets helped in previous years
- 3 designated lines for outreach (2 outreach staff and 1 spay/neuter line)
- Active outreach team hosting drive-up vaccine clinics, pet transportation, food/supplies deliveries, a food pantry and participating in frequent community events
- Received a Maddie's Fund grant through HASS that will be used for a much needed modular that will house pet food and supplies
- Recent grants from Petco Love for vaccinations
- Host vaccine clinics that include rabies, licensing, microchipping and deworming when have veterinary help
- Provide help with medical emergencies on a case by case basis when able to avoid financial euthanasia
- Animal Services Officers may participate in outreach depending on their call volume

- The Safety Net foster program created in 2021 is part of a study with Virginia Tech and Arizona State and Dr. Sheila Segurson from Maddie's Fund, with many volunteers who have and are interested in fostering
- Streamlined Foster Finder program and provide supplies, vaccines, spay/neuter, etc. for finders
- Supportive self-rehoming information is prominent on the home page of the website that includes the requirement to post on home-home.org
- Clear instructions and resources on the RAS website including the description and intent of HASS, a Found Pet Resource Packet and Pet FBI information (Found by Internet)
- Microchip scanners are provided throughout the community at Neighborhood Service Centers, Recreation Centers and pet stores, with address and phone numbers listed on the RAS website
- A Maddie's Fund HASS Implementation grant was used to purchase 50 additional microchip scanners for advocates and interested community members. Training classes will be scheduled for interested advocates who will also receive written materials and a lawn sign that says 'I help lost pets get home!'

Opportunities

The focus on proactive community-based programs has been exceptionally impactful and in line with the mutual goals of RAS and HASS that include reducing intake, serving more pets in the community, saving more lives and shortening the length of stay in the shelter for pets who had no other alternative.

Like so many shelters, RAS needs to improve communication with the public so animal advocates are aware of all the great work provided by the department. Helping more pets in the community than the shelter is a major accomplishment and should be acknowledged and celebrated. Unfortunately, there may always be some critics who do not agree with a community minded approach. Website content is crucial for communicating effectively with all stakeholders and service recipients. There were several minor edits recommended for the website that have been shared with the RAS director.

The addition of a modular for outreach pet food and supplies is desperately needed. In the past, RAS had to decline donations of supplies due to lack of space and though the modular may not have superfluous storage, it will be an improvement from the current shelter that has no adequate storage. Staff have great ideas about offering dog training classes and regular vaccine clinics at the new modular. Both are key strategies not only to keep more pets in homes and healthy but vaccinating against deadly infectious diseases will minimize the incidence at the shelter as community immunity improves in high risk populations.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, door to door services have understandably been put on hold. Staff may find that there are more effective ways to reach more people such as neighborhood events or offering more frequent vaccine clinics.

As the City of Rochester plans for a new facility and animal resource center, consideration should be given to an Open Door-model community clinic. Lollypop Farm is considering this model as well and there is ample room and need for 2 clinics in Monroe County.

Open Door Veterinary Collective, a Maddie's Million Pet Challenge partner is a national training program teaching non-profit and for-profit veterinary clinics to be sustainable/profitable and expand access to care. This is accomplished by designing or redesigning a veterinary clinic that is highly efficient with regards to financial management, use of staff, scheduling and inventory control. But most importantly this model offers financial support options for clients. By charging clients and requesting they pay what they can at the time of the visit or over time, donor and municipal dollars can be stretched and therefore more pets and people can be helped. To learn more see opendoorconsults.org.

TARGETED COMMUNITY SPAY/NEUTER

Positives

- Subsidized spay/neuter funded by the New York State Animal Population Control Program, Best Friends grant and Pets for Life grant through Lollypop Farm

- Since 2017, received $207,600 from the New York State Animal Control Program for spay/neuter
- In the FY 20/21 there were 719 no or low-cost community spay/neuters done through outreach, 78 spay/neuters for the community and 135 community cat surgeries done at the shelter along with 1,426 spay/neuter vouchers provided

Opportunities

The goal of a targeted spay/neuter program is to heavily subsidize groups of pets or pet owners at greatest risk of entering the shelter. These groups include community cats, large breed dogs, pets from high intake areas and pets belonging to owners who are socioeconomically disadvantaged.

As per Peter Marsh's research showed that is published in the book *Replacing Myth with Math*, subsidizing 5 to 10 spay/neuter surgeries for a targeted group per 1,000 residents in a community correlates to decreasing shelter intake. For a city like Rochester with a high poverty rate of 31.3%, the goal should be 10 or higher per year. At 10/1,000 that would mean 1,050 dogs and 1,050 cats (excluding community cats which are in addition to this number), which for the City of Rochester residents/pets in a target group should be done each year. If all the spay/neuter vouchers provided were used, then RAS would have exceeded that goal. However, the use of the vouchers would need to be confirmed to know for sure.

There have been 2 service providers for the current program, 1 private practice veterinarian and Lollypop Farm. Unfortunately, the private practice veterinarian has been unable to provide high volume surgeries recently so capacity is now a serious issue. The veterinary care issue is a national crisis and though RAS leadership has attempted to engage more private practices as spay/neuter providers and to help with rabies clinics, no others have committed.

Less than 1% of all veterinarians devote their careers to shelter medicine and surgery but the current crisis within the private practice industry has created more of a hardship for pet owners. RAS is exceptionally fortunate to have hired a veterinarian to fill the upcoming vacancy

so quickly through networking as most shelters wait many months and years to find a veterinarian willing to work full time and do high volume spay/neuter.

RAS is encouraged to continue to collaborate with the Greater Rochester Animal Welfare Coalition to identify spay/neuter funding but also consider charging a co-pay to extend any grant funding and donations. The exception would be un-socialized community cats as caregivers are often overwhelmed by the need and unable to afford even a small co-pay so those should remain fully subsidized.

The spay/neuter page on the RAS website should be updated. To clarify some of the content, spay/neuter of pets does have health benefits but also prevents the birth of unintentional litters. Shelter intake has dramatically decreased with an all-time low nationally last year of 4.3 million of which 347,000 were euthanized for a save rate of 83% (bestfriends.org/dashboard).

Also, as discussed in **Community Cat Programs**, most cats who are allowed access to the outdoors or who prefer to live outdoors are healthy and not suffering. Pets in shelters who are suffering at the hands of the shelter staff are the rare exception and not the norm and some may argue there are enough homes for shelter pets when barriers to placement are removed. These and other minor updates will be made to the website.

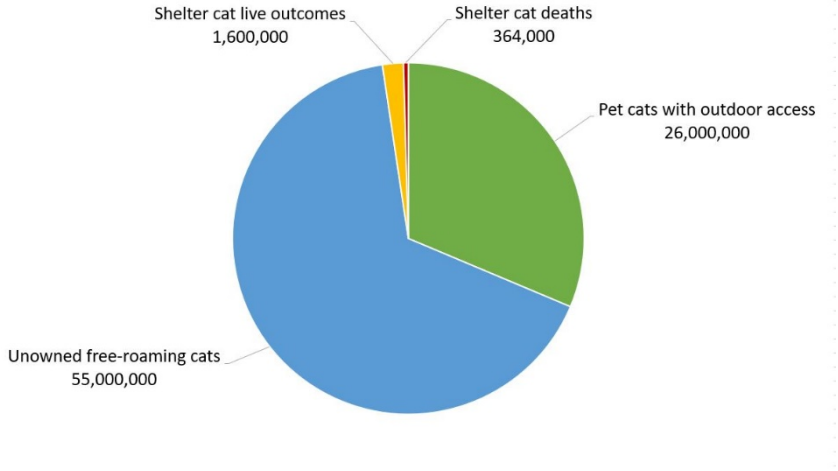
COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAMMING

Positives

- Staff has been triaging calls regarding community cats in an attempt to determine if the cat is in need of assistance
- If constituents do return sterilized cats, they are scanned for a microchip first and vaccinated against rabies
- Article 26, Section 355 Abandonment of animals does not apply to returning community cats to their original home location or to an alternate location with a known caregiver

- RAS website has excellent content from other organizations such as Don't Cap-Nap the Kittens from the Humane Society of the United States and Kitten Lady with extensive resources
- In the last 3 years, the number of community cats entering the shelter has decreased from 490 to 229 per year

Opportunities



- *Figure 3: Compares the estimated number of free-roaming cats (unowned and owned) compared to the number of cats entering and dying in shelters in the U.S. (Source:* Front. Vet. Sci., 08 March 2022 | https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.847081)

In the traditional animal control and sheltering system, cats outside were considered 'stray' and the public was trained to take the cats to an animal shelter for the purpose of reunification. These cats are often called 'community cats' and may be socialized or unsocialized. Unfortunately, this flawed intake system did not take into account that approximately half of American cat owners allow their cats access to the outside and were not actually lost. In addition, this foundational practice has resulted in a reunification rate of less than 2% nationally. In 2021, RAS reunited 6.8% of the cats entering the shelter as 'stray' and while that

is higher than the national average, it still means 93.2% of the time this practice failed to achieve the intended goal of reunification. Laws, such as the New York State statute requiring a stray hold for cats were put in place with the best intentions but with no data and hopefully that stray hold can be eliminated at some point in the future.

In the meantime, the only effective plan for healthy community cats is to link owners and caregivers with subsidized spay/neuter, rabies vaccination and ear tip to identify the cat as sterilized and return them to their original home location. A healthy body weight and coat are evidence that the cat has adequate food sources. Community cats should only be admitted to the shelter if they are sick, injured or part of an enforcement case.

Ensuring healthy community cats are sterilized and staying in their original home location benefits all stakeholders since it:

- Decreases the number of unwanted births and overall number of community cats
- Simultaneously increases community immunity against rabies as there are less cats but a higher percentage who are vaccinated
- Decreases the negative impact on wildlife
- Decreases shelter intake of cats and waste of resources for a cat not in need of assistance beyond spay/neuter/rabies vaccination
- Eliminates nuisance behaviors associated with mating
- Prevents the formation of colonies of cats

RAS along with cat rescue groups like Keller Cats have done an outstanding job transferring cats from the shelter. But a more efficient plan would be for the community cat to go directly to a spay/neuter appointment and bypass the shelter intake where they are subject to an unnecessary 3-day stray hold which is a waste of city resources. In 2021, 229 cats entered the shelter in the 'stray' category so one possibility would be to work those surgeries into the shelter surgery since it would only add 1 cat per day. Those cats would be categorized as a public spay and not a shelter intake so they would not be subject to the 3-day stray hold. This is not to insinuate that the public should be encouraged to bring community cats to RAS for surgery but rather other subsidized programs should be advertised and recommended.

For constituents who say they do not want the cats returned to their neighborhood, a conversation regarding the specifics of what is happening is warranted so assistance can be offered. At least one person, but most likely, several neighbors, are feeding cats outside so removing one cat will not resolve the issue the complainant has. It may be that there are too many intact cats congregating so a targeted spay/neuter effort is needed. In other situations, there may be a simple solution or steps the constituent may take so cats are not attracted to their house.

An overwhelming amount of evidence supports the practice of keeping healthy sterilized community cats in their original home location as the most effective cat management program for all stakeholders. Some examples are:

- An article summarizing the latest research by Dr. Kate Hurley and Dr. Julie Levy (Front. Vet. Sci., 08 March 2022 | https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.847081)
- A webinar by the Million Cat Challenge team: https://youtu.be/9FVHcYTXrgI
- Best Friends Animal Society (https://resources.bestfriends.org/advocacy/community-cats)
- The National Animal Control Association(https://www.nacanet.org/animal-control-intake-of-free-roaming-cats/)
- The Humane Society of the United States (https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/community-cat-program)
- Human Animal Support Services (https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/?s=community+cats)

FIELD SERVICES

Positives

- Tracking pertinent information in particular regarding outreach intervention resolving complaints/issues
- Calls for service for an Animal Services Officer (ASO) are answered by the city Emergency Communication Department (911)

- Goals to address root causes of animal control issues and practice discretionary enforcement and avoid a punitive approach that disproportionately and negatively impacts communities of color and other marginalized people
- The RAS approach to discretionary enforcement is in line with Best Practices around community-minded field services (Attachment 3)
- Regular calls 9am to 5pm Monday through Friday so evenings and overnights are reserved for high priority calls for the on-call ASO
- Enforcement vans are temperature controlled with interior retrofitted cages
- Appropriate equipment, tools and Safety Net info in vans
- Outreach and Support Specialists part of field services team
- ASOs may be involved in proactive outreach
- ASOs return approximately 30% of the dogs from the field to their home thus preventing an unnecessary shelter intake
- ASOs vaccinate pets on intake and provide food and water
- There are appropriate sanitation protocols for vehicles in place

Opportunities

Having a central call center, such as the city 911, is very helpful for a small department like RAS. However, the 911 calls are tracked only by high or low priority (a or b, respectively). RAS leadership must then spend additional time to track and categorize service calls manually, which is a waste of time. It is crucial that calls for ASOs are automatically categorized and tracked as the strategies to address root issues vary between calls. For example, many enforcement related calls are actually access to care issues and calls for a non-enforcement dog at large are typically not found by the ASO. The assumption is that these dogs return home on their own.

The traditional animal control and sheltering system created more than a century ago was centered around the capture of free roaming dogs. Most ASOs at RAS and other shelters report they are unable to locate the dog running at large when they respond to the call. Emerging data from Dallas, Texas and Memphis, Tennessee is supporting that theory by showing that the vast majority of dogs are close to their home when picked up by an animal control officer (Attachment 4 and 5).

At Memphis Animal Services, when a constituent calls about a dog at large, the call is routed to The Pet Resource Center so the team can ask the caller if they can speak to neighbors and walk the dog around the neighborhood in an effort to identify their home. It is important to remember that pets are reunited daily as neighbors help neighbors and communicate via apps like NextDoor, all without intervention from a shelter. RAS may consider the same service pathway and already has a Foster Finder program in place.

Each staff person, including ASOs, must be laser focused on processes that are productive and lead to intended goals. Responding to a non-emergency call, meaning there is no threat to public or animal safety, does not qualify. Taking the time to trap healthy wildlife only to relocate them a short (or long) distance from the caller's property does not provide a solution.

Often, something is attracting wildlife to an area or there are housing opportunities when they have access to a crawl space, etc. Responding to wildlife calls should only include those that are true enforcement calls such as injured wildlife in need of humane euthanasia or rabies suspects, for example. In light of the veterinary crisis, RAS leadership may consider requiring ASOs become euthanasia certified in the event there is an emergency overnight and no veterinarian available or willing to euthanize wildlife.

ASOs do have access to lap tops that they can use in the field but there is questionable Wifi connectivity. Another issue is the resistance of staff to be responsible for a lap top so some elect not to carry them in their vehicles. Without access to the internet or a computer, ASOs cannot look up microchip numbers so they call the shelter using their personal cell phones. And if they do not have a lap top they are unable to create the pet's record in PetPoint and enter pertinent information.

In the City of Port St. Lucie, Florida, animal control officers are instructed to stay in the neighborhood when they have found a dog at large in order to create the pet's record. This intentional act keeps the officers in the dog's neighborhood for a longer period of time and contributes to their very high return to owner rate at almost 70%. RAS leadership may consider this protocol as well. If a pet is admitted to the shelter by an ASO, then a client specialist has to

take the time to create the record in PetPoint that could have been done in the field. When posted in real time, owners have found their pets sooner because they were already online. ASOs should be part of the 'one touch' system so pets get whatever they need at once as opposed to staff worrying about a service that is needed at a later time such as a photo, dewormer, etc.

ASOs are scheduled from 9am to 5pm so it has been a customer service challenge for some of the team when the public need assistance at the shelter between 3pm and 5pm. Constituents needing assistance can be understandably upset when they see staff in the shelter or entering the shelter and this has reportedly generated complaints and is uncomfortable for the ASOs (see **Staffing**).

RAS leadership should begin to budget and plan on replacing the aging fleet. Currently, even minor issues with the vans may take weeks to repair. The vans and interior cages, like those already in use, are recommended to provide more humane housing than the traditional trucks.

TRIAGE AND POPULATION MANAGEMENT

Positives

- Scheduling appointments for non-emergency owner surrenders whenever possible and all alternatives are exhausted
- Triage and Safety Net services in place
- Appropriate preventive care provided on intake for dogs and cats
- Separate intake rooms for felines and canines
- Short lengths of stay in the shelter for dogs (7-8 days) and cats (7-10 days) is below 14 days, now considered a long length of stay

Opportunities

In the last decade, the animal welfare industry has recognized the importance of providing Safety Net services as alternatives to the traditional shelter intake bias. But at the beginning of

the pandemic, Safety Net and triage intake became a necessity and shelters across the country, like RAS, had no choice but to depend on their communities for help. This has changed the industry for the better and means that the shelter intake is used as the last option not the first or only choice when a pet or person needs help.

This idea has many names to include Managed Intake, Managed Admission, Coordinated Intake, Appointment-Based Intake, Triage, etc. and the intent is to *help pets and people,* not to turn them away without assistance or links to the resources they need. The most current information around this recommendation can be found here:

Position statement by the National Animal Control Association: https://www.nacanet.org/naca-guideline-on-appointment-based-pet-intake-into-shelters/
Recommendation by Best Friends Animal Society: https://network.bestfriends.org/education/manuals-handbooks-playbooks/managed-intake-or-admissions-training-playbook
Recently published article by Dr. Kate Hurley; The Evolving Role of Triage and Appointment-Based Admission to Improve Service, Care and Outcomes in Animal Shelters Front. Vet. Sci., 04 March 2022 | https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2022.809340

RAS is housed in an older building designed around the traditional, antiquated animal control system. There is only one entrance to the building so those bringing their pets to the shelter for humane euthanasia, those adopting, those relinquishing a pet or constituents involved in an enforcement case are all co-mingling in the same small lobby space.

In a modern shelter, there are separate doors for intake and outcome and areas where staff can have private conversations with visitors if needed. In the meantime, there is very little the staff can do to proactively mitigate services of a sensitive nature within the confines of space and minimal hours of service open to the public but this should all be considered in the design of the new resource center.

Currently, heartworm tests for dogs are not done until after the stray hold period. More than 60% of the time, however, dogs entering the shelter in the stray category will not be reunited with their original owner and will need to be rehomed. With such a small staff, the intake team should think in terms of a 'one touch' system meaning that while the pet is in front of them they do as much as possible to avoid having to complete a task at a later time. Heartworm tests should be done at the point of intake so the pathway plan can be established.

Alternatively, the recommendations to screen cats for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus and Leukemia Virus (FIV/FeLV) have changed. It is estimated that less than 5% of cats are infected, the screening test is not consistently valid and when cats are sterilized there is little risk of transmission. For these reasons, many experts now recommend that shelters use their resources in other ways. The 2020 American Association of Feline Practitioners Guidelines can be found here: Download - 2020 Feline Retrovirus Guidelines and a helpful summary webinar regarding the recommendations by Dr. Julie Levy from the Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program at the University of Florida can be found here: https://youtu.be/KdsMiZjwdpo.

It is very important to note that if RAS discontinues testing for FIV/FeLV, the local veterinarians must be educated and informed of the change first. When FIV/FeLV were discovered, it was thought to be far more serious than it turned out to be for adults who test positive. RAS must put private practice veterinarians in a position to defend or at least understand the change to avoid confusion for the adopters. Private veterinarians can certainly recommend testing and the adopter can choose to have their new cat or kitten tested but the difference is the testing would not be included with an adoption at the shelter. This would generate a cost savings for a test that has an exceptionally low incidence rate.

Staff from the medical team check patients on the vet check list regularly and other staff may be doing cage checks as well. Staff then communicate with one another independently when a pet is in need of foster or rescue, for example. Shelter leadership should consider daily population management rounds to ensure each pet has a plan of action to the shortest length of stay. This can be done by one or multiple staff with the intention that action steps are assigned and shared. Staff must ask themselves the following questions for each pet:

- Do we have a flattering picture of you online?
- Did you receive your preventive care on intake?
- Have we already started advocating for you?
- Are you where you need to be?
- Is there something special about you that we can highlight in your bio?
- Do I need to schedule anything for you or follow up on an appointment for you?
- Are you comfortable?
- Are you showing signs of emotional or physical stress and if so, what can I do to help you?
- Have you been with us longer than 14 days? If so, what extra advocacy can we plan for you?

It is important to note that remaining under the Capacity for Care with regards to physical space should be only part of the overarching goals of the department. Helping pets and people in proactive ways so there are no pets in the shelter is the ultimate goal that benefits all. When pets do enter the shelter, all efforts must be made to find the best placement and RAS is accomplishing that in a very short period of time.

FELINE HOUSING, HUSBANDRY AND ENRICHMENT

Positives

- On one day of onsite visit, only 2 felines were housed in the cat section
- Most cat enclosures are portalized
- There is a free roam room for one cat or a bonded pair
- Staff is spot cleaning cat cages when housing cats and doing a deep disinfection once the cat leaves enclosure for good
- Upper respiratory infections and other feline diseases are now rare
- Staff is feeding canned and dry food
- Cats have kuranda beds/towers, blankets and toys
- Cat and dog intake rooms, visiting rooms and kitchens are all separate

Opportunities

As a municipal shelter, RAS is responsible for public and animal safety and of course, lifesaving. Reserving the shelter spaces only for pets with no other options helps the shelter operate under the Capacity for Care which in turn keeps pets healthier and minimizes stress for pets and people. Empty cages at a municipal shelter saving pets quickly, like RAS, is the ultimate goal and not a sign that more animals should enter the shelter. In the best of circumstances with caring staff and volunteers, a shelter stay evokes varying levels of fear, stress, anxiety and frustration for all pets.

Avoiding a shelter stay is in the best interest of both pets and people. Proactive services like self-rehoming, outreach and Safety Net have proven successful in identifying alternatives to a shelter intake. These practices are crucial to have in place prior to the design of a new 'right-sized' facility. Once the direct spay/neuter pathway is established for community cats, there will be even less cats housed at the shelter.

For cat spaces, natural light is crucial, as is ample space between cage banks. A variety of housing types is recommended that include free roam rooms, catios and double-compartment housing so individual preferences can be met. The basis of a Fear Free Shelter is for completely separate pathways for felines and canines so cats cannot see, hear or smell dogs and must be the driving force behind the design of a new facility.

CANINE HOUSING, HUSBANDRY AND ENRICHMENT

Positives

- Double-compartment kennels
- Cleaning occurs during play group times unless dogs do not like play groups then used opposite sides of kennels
- Appropriate sanitation practices in place with accelerated hydrogen peroxide (Rescue) which is the only disinfectant that neutralizes odors that cause stress in shelter pets
- Feeding canned and dry food

- Created play yards in property a block away from the shelter owned by Kodak and doing play groups 7 days a week with volunteer runners. The motto is 'every dog, every day' and dogs have 2 to 2 ½ hours in play groups each morning.
- Breakfast is provided after play groups
- A dog trainer is on contract 12 hours a week

Opportunities

There are many shelters with ample space who have not yet created appropriate play yards or trained staff and volunteers for the crucial enrichment outlet of play groups for shelter dogs. RAS is highly commended for finding and developing a location for play yards despite the zero-lot line of the property.

For special cases, puppies, etc. the medical team may recommend more frequent feedings than once a day and in special cases up to 3 times a day. But all canines should be fed twice daily so the mixture of canned and dry food given in the morning and at the end of the day. When hours are extended these meals will not be so close together.

Staff described the appropriate dilution for Rescue but test strips are recommended for supervisors to spot check accuracy on a weekly basis.

SHELTER MEDICINE AND SURGERY

Positives

- Shelter medical team responsible for the Community Pet Clinic and offers diagnostic, medical and surgical assistance
- 2 veterinary technicians are under the veterinarian
- Already replaced the veterinarian who is retiring with no gap in shelter medicine and surgery, a vacancy that can typically take years to fill
- Digital x-ray machine added in 2019 through the capital cash fund and donations

- In house blood machine that is a cost savings over time and can potentially generate revenue
- Provide treatment for heartworm positive dogs
- Occasional TNR surgery
- Onsite surgery suite
- Remarkable productivity of veterinary team, despite lack of space, with 900-1,170 surgeries done onsite per year
- Keeping up with pre-adoption surgery

Opportunities

The veterinary team is providing an impressive and wide array of services for community and shelter pets. Though most of these services can be scheduled ahead of time, obvious emergencies cannot or when pet owners bring their pet to surrender for a medical or surgical issue without calling. This makes time management very challenging for this team.

For shelters veterinarians, it is recommended that each veterinarian have at least 3 support staff, 2 of whom are veterinary technicians. This is so the veterinarian can concentrate on tasks only they can do such as diagnose and prescribe treatments and surgery. Assistants and volunteers can help alleviate the balance of the workload but the more focused the veterinarian can be, the more productive the team can be. This ratio of staff is especially important to streamline anesthesia/surgery and in a time where few or no private practices are able to partner with the shelter.

In the last few years, the veterinarian reports that the rate of heartworm positive dogs has increased. The budget to treat heartworm disease should be constantly updated so the need can be appropriately messaged to donors and supporters. RAS should continue to cover the cost of treatment for adopters and rescue partners as this can otherwise increase the length of stay for the dog and therefore increase the cost of care that exceeds the cost of the heartworm treatment. As mentioned, testing on intake will help the team establish the pathway plan and messaging without waiting until after the stray hold period.

RAS is commended for all the Safety Net work being accomplished and for the commitment of the medical team. It is not unreasonable to ask for a donation for services so pet owners can contribute to their pet's care and donor/grant dollars can be extended.

RETURN TO OWNER (RTO)

Positives

- Found Pet Resource packet on website with education, directions and step by step guidance for a constituent who found a dog at large. This includes locations of microchip scanner services throughout the community at Neighborhood Service Centers, Recreation Centers and pet stores, with address and phone information included.
- Lost Pet Reports can be emailed with a picture to RAS for staff to enter in PetPoint so they are highlighted in the 'Found Animal' section and printed for viewing in a notebook in the lobby
- Using Petco Love Lost (formerly Finding Rover) that does facial recognition from pictures
- 67.8% of dogs at large are returned to their owner either in the field or from the shelter
- RTO of dogs from the shelter is ~37% which is above the national average of 22%
- RAS staff posts found pets on the City Found A Pet Facebook page as well as on PetPoint Lost/Found reports that autouploads to the website
- VSAS posts all stray pets on social media
- Customer Service staff try to check Lost and Found community pages to increase reunification of stray shelter pets
- Spay/neuter is offered with reunification but not required since it was resulting in owners leaving their pets in the shelter

Opportunities

Although the return to owner rate for cats categorized as 'stray' from RAS last year was an all-time high of 6.8% which is above the 2% national average, it still means that 93.2% of the time

those cats are not reunited with their owners. The Community Cat Program, discussed on page 18, reunites all the cats with their families and should be considered the RTO program for cats. Each year, the percent of dogs reunited with their owners has increased but at this time, it still means that 63% of the time, RAS will have to rehome a dog who entered the shelter as a stray. This makes it crucial to establish the pathway plan, test for heartworm disease and begin advocating for them at the point of intake.

Other considerations, also discussed, is to consider the Memphis Animal Services model and work with finders so dogs stay in their neighborhoods. RAS is encouraging callers to join the Foster Finder program and has been successful in recruiting so these calls should be routed to an ASO only when the finder is not willing to foster.

Sending an ASO to a location where there is a report of a non-enforcement, non-emergency dog at large has not yielded the intended result of finding the dog most of the time. Granted, when the dog is found, ASOs are locating the owners 30% of the time which suggests the dogs were close to home and would likely return home on their own. This questions the use of the ASO to respond to a dog at large when this could simply be a discussion with a customer service staff or like some shelters, responding only to dogs at large when they are in distress or it is a public or animal safety issue.

FOSTER CARE

Positives

- Organization goal of community/foster-centric as opposed to shelter-centric
- Coordinator (who also coordinates rescue transfers)
- 2 Volunteer Team Leaders for canines and 2 Volunteer Team Leaders for felines who help the coordinator place pets in the appropriate foster homes
- In the spring of 2020 began sending all categories of shelter pets to foster care
- Many people in the community willing to do Safety Net foster care

Opportunities

When a finder is unable to foster (Foster Finder), RAS should and is attempting to find fosters for all pets entering the shelter unless part of an enforcement case or an unsocialized community cat, for example. This is the preferred pathway as the industry continues to navigate away from a shelter-centric to a community/foster-centric model no different than child welfare. This foster pathway is proving to be a very successful adoption plan as many foster volunteers either adopt their foster pets or find permanent homes for them so they do not return to the shelter.

RAS is no different than most shelters who struggle to communicate with stakeholders. Currently group and individual emails between the coordinator, team leaders and foster volunteers are cumbersome and overwhelming. Though there are already several software systems in place, RAS leadership could consider 1 of 2 tools to streamline communication.

The foster coordinator reports that they did educate foster volunteers about Maddie's Pet Assistant (available as an app and website) but said few registered. Maddie's Pet Assistant has several features. One is available for foster volunteers to get on-demand basic medical advice helping them differentiate between an emergency or non-emergency situation. The second is a scheduling section whereby the Foster Coordinator can make appointments and send reminders for appointments for vaccines, rechecks or surgery. The foster coordinator may consider trying the scheduling feature.

Another tool that may work better for RAS is FosterSpace, a foster care communication platform from Doobert.com. Through this platform, all team leaders and the coordinator can communicate and share information with one or more or groups of foster volunteers via text or email, whichever they prefer.

Either way, the foster coordinator is responsible for the Safety Net foster care program, the post-intake foster program as well as the rescue transfers. While these tasks keep 1 full time person busy, there is nobody covering those responsibilities when the Foster Coordinator is off.

Union restrictions around job duties further complicate things as other staff are not allowed to cover so another part time position, at minimum, is needed so there is coverage 7 days a week.

Providing supplies for foster volunteers remove barriers and motivates community members to help since they have no out of pocket expenses. Staff report that supplies are sometimes limited or there are not enough to provide. Leadership may have a better handle on inventory and needs once the outreach modular is in place so foster volunteers have the supplies they need.

ADOPTIONS

Positives

- VSAS posts a Pet of the Week twice a week
- Visitors are allowed to walk through the adoption kennels and cattery
- RAS is open on Saturdays for adoption from 10am to 2pm
- Petco Love, VSAS, and other foundation and corporate partners have sponsored adoption events
- Adoption events and specials have been successful in increasing adoption numbers
- More than 50 local veterinary practices offer new adopters the first visit for free
- Pet Supplies Plus (formerly PetSaver Healthy Pet Superstore) provides a coupon and free pet food voucher for each adopter
- Several adoption discount programs
- Animal Care Technicians are part of adoption process which is recommended as they know the shelter pets the best
- The cost to treat heartworm disease is covered
- May do Foster to Adopt, if needed
- Began using Adopets virtual adoption process in May of 2020

Opportunities

The idea of open adoptions means that shelters are removing inherent bias and barriers to placement while making the right match. *Adopters Welcome* guidelines by the Humane Society

of the United States is considered the Gold Standard and can be found here: https://humanepro.org/page/adopters-welcome-manual. These guidelines should be part of the staff training and required reading for all volunteers.

The shelter should be accessible for potential adopters but the limited hours at RAS from Monday through Friday, 10am to 2pm, are not at all convenient. Prior to the pandemic, the shelter did have slightly longer hours but they were still not considered accessible either. Welcoming hours for adopters means day, evening and weekend hours so those working bankers hours have an opportunity to visit. This should be part of the equity plan as few potential adopters are in the enviable position of not having to work with free time during the day.

RAS leadership should consider shifting the front desk staff schedule to end at 7pm so live outcome opportunities would be available until 6:30pm, for example. Since the shelter is already open on Saturdays, 3 weekday evenings could be added. This would require 2 staff per day working the evening shift to help with spot cleaning, the second meal and adoptions so their shift would end at 7pm as well. 2 additional part time staff, each working 20 hours could cover those 3 days (see **Staffing**).

Another barrier is adoption fees and we now know that the cost of an adoption does not correlate with responsible pet ownership. Low and no-fee adoptions is recommended especially when the goal is a short length of stay as those do actually correlate. As a life-saving shelter, public or private, adoption fees should not be viewed as revenue for that reason.

RESCUE/TRANSFER

Positives

- Cordinator (who is also responsible for foster care)
- Majority of felines pulled by Keller Cats
- 52 approved rescue partners groups that include 4-5 shelters

Opportunities

Historically, municipal shelters housed pets but did little to save their lives Non-profit animal welfare organizations, such as rescue groups and humane societies, were created to focus exclusively on lifesaving and transferring pets from public shelters. RAS is now a highly evolved shelter with extensive community programs that help pets stay in their loving homes, a decrease in intake and less need for transfers to rescue groups or other shelters because pets are getting adopted so quickly.

But like all animal welfare organizations, pets with advanced medical needs or behavior challenges are harder to place so outreach to other organizations is still happening. This has caused conflict since from the perspective of the rescue groups, as they know they can place pets without medical or behavior issues quickly but those with issues will take longer. But if RAS can adopt pets quickly, there is no need for a transfer.

Hopefully the answer lies somewhere in the middle when those pets can be proactively helped before coming to the shelter. But with a stray pet and the owner unknown, there is no opportunity to do that. Supporting shelter pets with medical or behavior issues may be something that RAS can consider on a case by case basis when those pets are transferred to a rescue group. RAS has been looking to contract with trainers and has information on the website https://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=21474847017.

The HASS model and goals of RAS are very clearly defined on the website (https://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=21474844701) so the issue may not be that advocates do not understand the model it is that they fundamentally disagree with the model. Whichever the case, RAS leadership wants to understand the issues and have collaborative working relationships with all rescue groups so a survey is recommended whereby rescue partners can ask questions and share their opinions all in an effort to improve the working relationship with the shelter. If rescue groups are unable to transfer pets in need, they can almost always advocate and network for their placement.

STAFFING

Positives

- Written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in place
- Goal is to open evenings and weekends
- Many long-term staff, in particular full-time
- All staff have email addresses
- Quarterly training scheduled for staff
- Licensing sales for the general public are done through city hall so Client Specialists can focus on licensing shelter dogs
- VSAS
    - Sponsors 2 RAS positions and provides the volunteer coordinator
    - handles all social media so saves staff time and contributes to shorter lengths of stay
    - helps with advertising and marketing, adoption promotions, foster care, pet owner support, volunteers and more

Opportunities

Attempting to create and operate a progressive animal welfare system in a community is inherently challenging. But when that system exists within a municipality and a plethora of union restrictions, the barriers to success are exponential.

At RAS, all staff fall under the union with the exception of the veterinarian and the director. All staff meetings are scheduled quarterly but since there is insufficient overtime allocated in the budget, the staff cannot be mandated to attend. Prior to a schedule change, the department must have an MOA with the union and even if staff wanted to volunteer for different or additional duties, it is not permitted by the union. While most full-time staff are long term, the part-time positions often turn over staff frequently. This is likely because they are not eligible for benefits but worth looking into in an effort to identify ways to keep part time staff longer term.

Standard Operating Procedures must be kept up to date so staff understand their roles and how they are intertwined with the entire operation. Most of the SOPs are in place but for newer programs and policies, are in need of updating. This can be very challenging for the RAS leaders to accomplish but crucial not only to update but to communicate changes and final policies with the entire staff and volunteer teams.

SOPs should be kept simple and high level so processes are clear and easy to understand. Key staff should be asked to review drafts before finalized for 2 reasons. One, staff may think of additions, deletions or edits that create a more effective SOP and 2, when staff are asked their opinion it is empowering and they feel valued. In this day and age, there is an overwhelming amount of information online and it is impossible to read and absorb all of it. Staff can be provided with a resource page, common links or websites where they can learn more about specific programs if they so desire but this should not be mandatory.

The shelter, outreach and field teams are geographically in different places at different days and times so communication with the entire team simultaneously is challenging. RAS leadership may consider a once a week all staff email on the same day each week to provide an update on any major successes, news or challenges. That same information can be posted on a bulletin board in the breakroom. Staff would be responsible for reading either.

As a City of Rochester department, RAS is responsible to provide the very basic customer service. The website has extensive information regarding assistance options and how the shelter, outreach and field teams work but many people elect to call the shelter without looking at the website. An analysis of the number and types of calls should be done during the hours the shelter is open but equally important is the number of missed calls between 3pm and 5pm since it is standard for municipal offices to be open until 5pm. These numbers and types can inform any other proactive measures that may be taken and therefore if any more Customer Service staff are needed.

As discussed, for the Capacity for Care formula to be balanced and to provide a welcoming shelter with minimal barriers to outcome and services, the shelter should be open weekdays

until 7pm and Sundays for at least part of the day. In order to create a schedule with the least impact to staffing needs, the Client Specialists can shift their hours until 7pm and 2 additional part-time Animal Care Technicians, each working 20 hours per week can work the later shifts 3 evenings to start. That would allow each to work 2-7 hour days and 1-6 hour day. Alternately, if any full-time staff preferred to work the later shift that would be offered to them first based in seniority. It should be noted that 2 additional full-time Animal Care Technicians would enable RAS to open appropriate hours 7 days a week and include evenings on weekdays.

Other positions needed include 1 veterinary technician or assistant and a part-time foster/rescue coordinator so the 2 coordinators could cover 7 days. These recommended positions are in addition to the Community Relations and Engagement Coordinator and the Animal Services Program Specialist already requested.

VOLUNTEERS

Positives

- Volunteer coordinator added to and funded by VSAS in 2019
- Volgistics used to track volunteers and hours with approximately 12,000 hours donated in 2021
- Many volunteer opportunities to help virtually, in the shelter and community
- Volunteers are indispensable in ensuring that every dog, every day has time in play groups
- Freeze Kongs
- Work with youth groups

Opportunities

A volunteer force is a crucial part of a successful shelter and the coordinator is highly engaged and motivated to continue to grow the program. RAS is under-staffed and while volunteers can help supplement the good work of the organization, care must be taken not to burn out willing volunteers.

BUDGET

Positives

- RAS actively pursues grant opportunities
- Animal Services Trust Fund in place to accept donations
- Decreasing shelter intake over the years allows for cost of care to be reallocated for more proactive programs
- Awarded a $50,000 Maddie's/HASS Implementation Grant in 2021
- Awarded a $50,000 Maddie's/HASS Infusion Grant in 2022
- Received a Petco Love grant for vaccinations
- Recently awared a $10,000 Petco Love grant
- VSAS raises funds for the shelter to help in a variety of ways that includes staffing, purchasing clinic supplies, enrichment supplies, pet owner support and more

Opportunities

The staffing and budget section are intentionally left for the end of the report so the importance of proactive programs and basic customer service are clear. Community outreach assistance and targeted spay/neuter are 2 excellent examples that have proven to decrease shelter intake over the years. That in turn, decreases the cost of care for shelter pets and those associated resources invested in proactive programs.

Unfortunately, there are no standard formulas for municipal or private animal shelter budgets since there are so many variables that include but are not limited to state law and local mandates, field services and intake policies, level of medical care and surgery, etc. The important thing is for the organization to establish and then support a mission, just as RAS has done with providing accessible and equitable services for both pets and people.

RAS has been exceptionally successful at acquiring grant funding and very fortunate to have VSAS financially supplement so much of the good work of the organization, including staff positions. Besides the obvious need for a new facility, the recommendation for a higher budget allocation is for additional staff to provide baseline services, discussed above.

FACILITY

Positives

- Animal Arts, a premiere shelter designer and architect, was recently selected through the RFP process to provide insight regarding a new facility
- Current facility centrally located in the city where there is a high need for services
- Use of Kodak property for play yards for dogs
- Double-sided dog runs
- Portalized cat cages
- Recent grant award that will be used for a modular for the outreach staff and supplies
- Opportunity to expand the Community Pet Clinic and consider the Open Door model

Opportunities

The entire RAS team is applauded for the tremendous progress, depth of services and lifesaving despite the inadequate facility spaces. Animal Arts will provide initial design, size and cost estimations for a new facility and will also be discussing current and future programming plans. Some basic principles to be considered include:

1. Animal shelters have unique plumbing and HVAC systems so budgets cannot be compared to human hospitals or other city buildings. In animal areas, cost per square feet will be higher than a standard build.
2. The facility should be designed with the Fear Free Sheltering principles in mind.
3. Natural light throughout the building is important to the well-being of both people and pets.
4. A welcoming lobby with user-friendly pathways for services are essential.
5. A Community Animal Resource Center will be designed weighted towards outreach and services for people with a smaller percentage of the facility designated for sheltering when compared to an older shelter.
6. Public facing spaces, such as community clinics must be decided ahead of time so access is appropriate.

7. Canines and feline must have separate pathways physically, audibly and visually throughout the facility.
8. Canine runs must be larger than the current runs, double-sided with one side with access to fresh air.
9. Outdoor play yards for play groups are essential.
10. A variety of feline enclosures should include double-compartment cages, free roam rooms and a separate, quiet room for community cats recovering from surgery.
11. Pathways for visitors allow them to view all pets in the shelter with the exception of enforcement cases, surgery patients or pets with zoonotic diseases.
12. Ample holding spaces in the surgery suite to separate shelter and community pets.
13. Ample storage is needed for donations and supplies.

MOVING FORWARD

Rochester Animal Services is on the forefront of transforming the traditional, flawed animal welfare system from a shelter-centric to a community/foster-centric model. With the vision unfolding of being the Community Animal Resource Center where pet owners and constituents look for assistance, RAS has made remarkable progress particularly in the last decade and despite the endless challenges as the result of a global pandemic.

RAS is consistently searching for ways to improve and just implemented survey cards with QR codes for constituents to provide feedback that includes suggestions to improve, positive stories about interactions with the department, adoptions and more. Meetings with stakeholders, rescue partners and a Best Practice presentation for the entire community will be planned for the near future to continue these important conversations.

The Maddie's Million Pet Challenge team is grateful to RAS leadership for being so open to feedback during this consult and for continuously striving to get and do better on behalf of pets, the community and the animal welfare industry. The pro bono consult includes an ongoing mentorship and assistance for one year and looks forward to helping the city of Rochester improve and expand the reach of much needed services.

SUMMARY~DIRECTOR'S ACTION STEP CHECKLIST

RECOMMENDATION	PROGRESS
INTRODUCTION	
Read The Access to Care Coalition Report (attachment 1)	
Update website (items discussed separately)	In progress 4/20
CAPACITY FOR CARE AND FREE FREE	
Balance live outcome and intake hours	
Require all staff and volunteers are Fear Free Shelter certified	
KPIs and TRENDS	
Track the number of missed calls per day, in particular between 3pm and 5pm	
Track the number of voicemails per day	
Set up KPI spreadsheet to compare year or year data so annual trends can be easily compared	
PUBLIC POLICY	
Continue working on state statute revisions	

Consider additional city ordinance revisions (page 13)	
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, OUTREACH AND SAFETY NET	
Inventory all supplies when moving into the modular space	
Organize dog training classes at the new modular	
Offer regular vaccine hours at the modular	
Research Open Door model veterinary clinic to consider at new facility	
TARGETED COMMUNITY SPAY/NEUTER	
Determine the number of vouchers used and track moving forward	
Ensure 1,050 cat surgeries done per year for targeted groups	
Ensure 1,050 dog surgeries done per year for targeted groups	
Determine the number of requests for community cat surgeries and budget accordingly	
Continue to network with private practice veterinarians and ask what they need to participate as a Service Provider	

Consider a co-pay for all spay/neuters with the exception of community cats	
COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAMMING	
Discontinue intake of healthy community cats unless admitted as 'community surgery' day 1, surgery day 2 and returned day 3	
Continue to network and collaborate to identify spay/neuter funding for community cats	
FIELD SERVICES	
Continue to work with 911 to categorize calls by type	
Consider routing all calls about a dog at large to customer service instead of an ASO	
Consider responding to dogs at large only if a public/animal safety risk	
Discontinue responding to calls regarding healthy wildlife	
Require that ASOs have lap tops in the field and create PetPoint records in real time	
Consider certifying ASOs for euthanasia	

Require that ASOs provide all preventive care and picture on intake as part of 'one touch' system	
Begin research on replacing aging fleet	
TRIAGE AND POPULATION MANAGEMENT	
Test dogs for heartworm disease at the point of intake	
Read the 2020 Feline Retrovirus Guidelines and consider discontinue screening for FIV/FeLV AFTER communitcating with local veterinarians	
Watch Dr. Levy video regarding FIV/FeLV: https://youtu.be/KdsMiZjwdpo.	
Consider group population management rounds to ensure each pet has a plan of action	
FELINE HOUSING, HUSBANDRY AND ENRICHMENT	
Implement the community cat program	
CANINE HOUSING, HUSBANDRY AND ENRICHMENT	
Feed a mixture of canned and dry twice daily so add dinner	
Use Rescue test strips to ensure dilution remains accurate	

SHELTER MEDICINE AND SURGERY	
Request donations for any clients of the Community Pet Clinic services	
See staffing	
RETURN TO OWNER	
See Field Services	
FOSTER CARE	
Research using Maddie's Pet Assistant to schedule appointments and send reminders OR	
Research Doobert.com/FosterSpace to communicate with foster volunteers and team leaders	
Ensure all fosters have needed supplies	
See Staffing	
ADOPTIONS	
Require all staff and volunteers read *Adopters Welcome* guidelines	
Open convenient hours for the public	Ongoing goal
Consider low and no fee adoptions consistently	
Discontinue having potential adopters fill out a form ahead of time	
RESCUE/TRANSFER	

Schedule meeting with rescue partners to discuss their challenges and improve relations	
Create system to support pets with medical or behavior issue who are transferred to rescue partner	Already done to some extent such as providing heartworm treatment
STAFFING	
Staff appropriately so can open 3 days per week until 7pm	Goal has been to open 7 days, convenient hours but dependent on adding staff
Update SOPs and review with staff	Ongoing
Add 1 outreach specialist	Already in budget proposal
Add 1 part time foster/rescue coordinator	
Add 2 part time Animal Care Technicians	
Add 1 veterinary technician or 1 technician assistant	
Create schedule to communicate with staff on a weekly basis through group email and posting on bulletin board, for example	

SELECTED RESOURCES

NATIONAL ANIMAL WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS

Association of Shelter Veterinarians (sheltervet.org)
Best Friends (bestfriends.org)
Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity (careawo.org)
Fear Free Shelters (fearfreeshelters.com)
Human Animal Support Services (humaneanimalsupportservices.org)
Humane Society of the United States (hsus.org and animalsheltering.org)
Jessica Dolce Compassion Fatigue (jessicadolce.com)
Maddie's Fund (maddiesfund.org)
Maddie's Million Pet Challenge team (maddiesmillionpetchallenge.org)
National Animal Control Association (naca.net)

NATIONAL STATISTICS

Best Friend Dashboards: https://bestfriends.org/no-kill-2025/animal-shelter-statistics

American Pet Products Association Survey 2021-2022: https://humanepro.org/page/pets-by-the-numbers accessed 3/29/22

GUIDELINES

2020 American Association of Feline Practitioners guidelines (Informational webinar by Dr. Julie Levy, Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program, University of Florida, https://youtu.be/KdsMiZjwdpo)

Humananimalsupportservices.org
https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/toolkits/)

Shelter Care Checklists: Putting ASV Guidelines Into Action

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians' 2016 Veterinary Medical Care Guidelines for Spay-Neuter Programs

The Association of Shelter Veterinarians Guidelines for Standards of Care in Animal Shelters

EDUCATION AND CERTIFICATION

Compassion in Balance Program

Fear Free Shelter Certification (fearfreeshelters.com)

National Animal Control Association (naca.net)

Maddie's University (maddiesfund.org)

ADOPTIONS

Adopter's Welcome, by the Humane Society of the United States:
https://humanepro.org/page/adopters-welcome-manual

The 2021-022 American Pet Products Association Survey
https://humanepro.org/page/pets-by-the-numbers

https://moderndogmagazine.com/articles/best-friends-animal-society-survey-exposes-why-people-opt-adopt-or-not/108382.

Conversations from the Field: Journey to Open Adoptions by Chrissy Sedgley
https://youtu.be/TAYAoqjDH4o

Is Your Adoption Process Really Working by Sue Cosby
https://aspca.zoom.us/recording/play/NAvZ9CltEOsAAhmE-V_TcWq1TSn5kAa6n4HgPJMixYyMKBSINpAuxfWSlWPxfnm6?continueMode=true

CANINES

https://maddiesmillionpetchallenge.org/big-dog-master-class/#1648138892891-049ac83b-f195

COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAMMING

Informational webinar by the Million Cat Challenge team: https://youtu.be/9FVHcYTXrgI by Dr.'s Kate Hurley and Julie Levy entitled Rethinking the Animal Shelter's Role in Free Roaming Cat Management

Best Friends Animal Society (https://resources.bestfriends.org/advocacy/community-cats)

The National Animal Control Association(https://www.nacanet.org/animal-control-intake-of-free-roaming-cats/)

The Humane Society of the United States (https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/community-cat-program)

Humane Animal Support Services (https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/?s=community+cats)

FOSTER CARE

https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/toolkit/intake-to-placement/

Doobert/FosterSpace (doobert.com)

SAFETY NET

Those surrendering needed temporary help:
https://www.aspca.org/about-us/press-releases/more-1-million-households-forced-give-their-beloved-pet-each-year-aspca
Home-home.org
Rehome.adoptapet.com

Rehoming Comparison Tool

ShelterLuv.com, Points of Care for tracking Safety Net data

RECOMMENDED READING

The Best Practice Playbook for Animal Shelters

Animal Behavior for Shelter Veterinarians and Staff

BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Shelter Medicine: Principles of Health and Welfare in a Multi-animal Environment

Every Nose Counts: Using Metrics in Animal Shelters

Field Manual for Small Animal Medicine

High-Quality, High-Volume Spay and Neuter and Other Shelter Surgeries

Infectious Disease Management in Animal Shelters

Infectious Disease Control https://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/shelter-services/disease-management/

Shelter Medicine for Veterinarians and Staff

Replacing Myth with Math, Peter Marsh

STAFFING

Field
https://www.nacanet.org/determining-field-staffing-needs/

Kennel cleaning and feeding
https://www.nacanet.org/determining-kennel-staffing-needs/

VOLUNTEERS

https://www.humananimalsupportservices.org/toolkit/volunteer-integration/

NETWORKING AND OTHER HELPFUL INFORMATION

ASPCApro Newsletter and Blog

Association of Shelter Veterinarians Private Facebook Group

Greater Good

Humananimalsupportservices.org (weekly Zoom calls and working groups)

HSUS Animal Sheltering Blog

Maddie's Fund Chew on This Blog

Maddie's Pet Forum

Shelter Medicine Veterinarians Private Facebook Group

UF Shelter Medicine Newsletter