

EVERY NUMBER TELLS A STORY

Suggested Grade Level: 4-6

Character: Responsibility

Relative Subject(s): Math

Objective: To help students understand the work being done by local animal shelters on behalf of the pet overpopulation problem and the importance of community involvement in the work to combat pet overpopulation.

Materials:

- Phone directory
- Telephone
- Paper and pencils
- List of questions (those provide and those developed by the students)

Method: The teacher will review details regarding the pet overpopulation problem in their community and throughout the entire United States.

There are thousands of companion animals in shelters throughout the state of Nebraska. Each animal is identified by a number, but behind that number is a story of a real life. Why did they get lost? Why were they unwanted? Do they have a name? Why was the bond between the owner and animal broken? Did anyone ever love and care for them? Do they know what it is like to be loved and happy? Why were some abused and neglected? How do they feel in a shelter or animal control facility? If they could talk, what would they say?

Help students to explore these questions and to realize that animals are not just statistics or numbers, but living, feeling, breathing creatures – just like we are. Each one deserves to have a full life, and the reason that the numbers are so high at shelters is a direct relation to the pet overpopulation problem until the number of animals being born is lowered, shelters will be full of unwanted animals – but behind each number is the story of a life.

Instruct the children to consult the telephone directory for a listing of animal welfare and animal shelters in your local community. After compiling the list, help students to identify pertinent questions regarding animals in your community. The attached list of questions can be used as a starting point:

- What different kinds of animals are brought into the shelter?
- How many animals are brought in every day?
- Why do you call it “adopting” animals instead of “buying” an animal?
- What is the most unique “story” that accompanied an animal to your shelter?
- What kinds of jobs do the employees and volunteers do for the shelter and animals?

Create additional questions to give you insight into the unique and necessary work that animal shelters provide for the community.

Call to Action: Ask the animal shelter personnel (workers) what children your age can do to make the community a safe, more happy and healthy environment for animals. If the shelter could have a “Wish List” for the animals, what might it include? Do they need

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toys, chew bones or food? How about cleaning supplies, towels or blankets? Make a list of the items that would help your shelter in their work for the animals and post it at your school. Put a decorated box or canister to collect the items and deliver them to the animals as a gift from your school.

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Information adapted from the Humane Society of Missouri