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# SAVE LIVES UNITE OKLAHOMA



Curriculum  
Written by:



NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION  
THE OKLAHOMAN



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In 2017, approximately 60,000 adoptable pets were euthanized in the state of Oklahoma. **The Save Lives - Unite Oklahoma** initiative – a project convened by the Kirkpatrick Foundation, is a push to increase the live release rate in Oklahoma to 90% by 2025 – this is an endeavor to dramatically improve outcomes for cats and dogs in the state of Oklahoma. This effort will require citizens of all ages and backgrounds to become knowledgeable about current practices, learn ways that they can support and encourage change within their own communities and for everyone involved to become civically engaged. The focus will be on promoting engagement through a Collective Impact Model, a framework for solving special social problems.



## The Five Freedoms

Science has proven that animals have feelings and emotions. Cats, dogs, horses and other animals with a central nervous system are considered sentient and have attachments, distinct personalities, habits and needs just like we do. It is everyone's job to ensure that all animals have access to a safe and healthy environment. In 1965, Professor Roger Brambell served on a committee that came together to write the Five Freedoms meant to protect the physical and mental health of animals everywhere. Those five freedoms are as follows:

# 1

Freedom from hunger and thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor.

# 2

Freedom from discomfort by providing a suitable environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.

# 3

Freedom from pain, injury or disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.

# 4

Freedom to express normal behaviors by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.

# 5

Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions that avoid mental suffering.

# Responsible Pet Ownership



Being a responsible pet owner goes beyond ensuring that your pet has food and water. There are many things to consider when adopting an animal into your family. Pets require a lot of the same things that humans do. They have physical needs, safety needs and emotional needs.



**An animal's physical needs are often the most obvious but it is still important to identify and meet these needs consistently:**



**Pet owners should take the time to understand their pet's dietary needs.**

Pets should always have access to foods that support their basic bodily functions.

**Clean water is vital to an animal's health.**

It is important to change the water in your pet's bowl regularly. Stagnant water not only attracts insects such as mosquitos (which are known for spreading diseases) but it also provides a breeding environment for various types of bacteria and disease. Dirty or stagnant water can make your pet very sick.

**Other physical needs include access to a suitable environment.**

A pet's environment should allow them the opportunity to express normal behaviors and allow them to take shelter when necessary. For example, dogs need open spaces to run and will require a place to take shelter from extremely hot or cold temperatures.

**Pets need access to medical care.**

Animals, like people, can contract diseases, illnesses and parasites that can be fatal. Veterinarians can provide our beloved pets with vaccinations and medications that can help them to fight off diseases and illnesses. Veterinarians can also provide medications that can protect our pets from fleas and ticks.

**Pets should be spayed or neutered.**

This is a medical procedure that is carried out by a veterinarian to ensure that your pet does not become pregnant or impregnate another animal. Cats and dogs, unlike humans, are more likely to give birth to multiple babies. On average a dog will give birth to five to six babies in one litter.



It is also our responsibility as pet owners to ensure our pet's general safety. Think about all the ways that your parents protect you from harm. They hold your hand and teach you to look both ways before crossing the street. They teach you not to interact with strangers so you don't end up in dangerous situations. When you were a baby, they kept you from eating things you shouldn't eat and playing with sharp or dangerous objects. Your parents also make sure you know your address and your phone number in case you are ever lost, so that you have a way to find your way back home. We need to do the same things for our pets.



**Keeping dogs on a leash when we take them for walks is like our parents holding our hands when we cross the street.**

Dogs can get excited and see other dogs or people that they want to play with and may take off running across the street without realizing they are in danger. Keeping a dog on a leash can help protect them from getting hit by a car or getting lost.



**Animals, unlike humans, can't learn to recite their phone number and their address.**

It is important that we provide our pets with a collar that has tags with both pieces of information. Those tags will help others to know where our pets live and how to contact us if they get out of the yard. Pet owners can even go a step further by having their pets microchipped. A microchip is a little computer chip that can help us to locate our pets if they ever become lost.



**It is important to know what foods are dangerous for our pets.**

Things that taste delicious to humans can be very dangerous for a dog or a cat. Chocolate is a great example of a food that tastes great to humans but is highly poisonous for cats and dogs. Raw meats, dairy products and grapes are also bad for pets to consume.



**Bones that can splinter (such as chicken bones) are dangerous to give to pets.**

If a piece of the bone breaks off it can become lodged in the pet's throat causing them to choke. Even chew treats like rawhide that are made for pets should only be given to them when their owners are nearby as they can still be a choking hazard.



**Emergency preparedness is also important to ensure the safety of our pets.**

Just like we do for ourselves, humans need to plan on behalf of their pets in the event of an emergency. This includes preparing an emergency kit for our pets. Kits should contain food, water, vet records, food dishes and any medications that your pet needs. Keeping your pet's emergency kit with the human emergency kit will make it easier to grab everything you need if an emergency should occur.



## Oklahoma Students Making A Difference



### Jacob Arnold - Enid, Oklahoma

Jacob is a volunteer with the Enid Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). Jacob volunteers his time, carries out fundraising campaigns in support of Enid SPCA and hosts a weekly podcast titled, "Wednesdays with Jacob." Jacob interviews employees of different organizations to help people to understand their organization's needs, their struggles and the good they are doing in the community. He also highlights pets that need help or are up for adoption and uses his show to raise money to support animal relief efforts.

**Figure 1 – Here is a photo of Jacob hard at work volunteering at the Enid SPCA.**



*"My favorite part of volunteering is making an impact on the community and animals by educating people on proper pet care and providing animals with a safe, healthy environment to become adoptable family members. My advice to other students looking to get involved is, go for it; there is never too young an age to start. Whatever your interest is, pursue it. I believe one dedicated individual can make a tremendous impact on their community. I had to start my training with entry level tasks such as folding laundry, sweeping floors and scrubbing kennels. Once I showed initiative and mastered those tasks I was able to spend more time pursuing my interest in socializing dogs and representing the Enid SPCA in a weekly podcast." – Jacob Arnold*

Consistently meeting an animal's physical and safety needs requires an investment both financially and physically. Providing food and water, tending to your pet's environment to ensure that it is clean and meets their needs, visiting the groomers, taking our pets to the vet – these things take time and cost money. When you take an animal in as your pet you are making a commitment to a living being to invest the time and money needed to ensure that their physical and safety needs are consistently being met. Let's do some math to help us understand what it will cost to meet a dog's physical and safety needs:



# Why is spaying and neutering so important?

When pets have too many babies for pet owners to take care of, it becomes important to rehome those babies. If we aren't careful about how we rehome those babies, we risk them becoming unwanted pets. When someone takes in an animal that they are not prepared to care for, they may find themselves in a situation where they need to surrender their pet to an animal shelter. Animal shelters do their best to care for and rehome as many animals as they can through adoption, but many shelters are underfunded, overpopulated and often struggle to meet an animal's emotional needs.



Expense	Cost	Per	# of	Cost Per Year
Annual Wellness Plan (monthly payment plan)	\$25.95	Month	12	\$25.95 x 12 = \$311.40
Dog Food	\$38.94	2 months	6	
Treats/Chew Toys	\$20.00	Month	12	
Groomers	\$35.00	6 Weeks	8	
Flea & Tick Medicine	\$89.88	3 Months	4	
Leash	\$11.49	life-time	1	\$11.49
Collar	\$12.99	life-time	1	\$12.99
<b>TOTAL ANNUALLY</b>				
One Time Expenses	Cost	Per	#of	Total
Spaying or Neutering	\$125.00	life-time	1	\$125.00
Dog House	\$75.00	life-time	1	\$75.00
Dog Bed	\$45.00	life-time	1	\$45.00
Crate	\$65.00	life-time	1	\$65.00
<b>TOTAL ONE-TIME</b>				<b>\$310.00</b>

**Assume that your dog lives to be 12 years old, calculate the estimated expense for caring for your pet over their entire lifetime:**

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \text{Total Annually} & \times & 12 \text{ years} & = & \text{Total On-Going Expenses} \\
 \text{Total On-Going} & + & \text{Total One-Time} & = & \text{Estimated Life Time Expense}
 \end{array}$$

**We did some math to understand how much it costs to take care of a dog over their lifetime. Now imagine that your dog has a litter of six puppies. How much would it cost to take care of all six puppies, plus their mom for their entire lifetime?**

$$\text{Estimated Life Time Expense} \times (6 \text{ puppies} + 1 \text{ mom}) = \text{Total Expense to Care for all 7 Pets}$$



Sometimes people adopt a pet without fully understanding the commitment they are making, or they fail to spay or neuter their pets and end up with litters they can't take care of. The result is unwanted pets being surrendered.

There are many reasons that people come up with for surrendering their pets:

**Behavior problems**

**Allergies**

**Growing families**

**Medical expenses**

**Moving**

**Over population** too many babies in a litter



## Professionals Making a Difference



**Name:** Misty Wilson

**Title:** Registered Veterinary Technician // Bella SPCA Veterinary Assistance Coordinator

**Education:** AAS in Veterinary Science, Bel Rea Institute of Veterinary Sciences // B.S. in Biology from Metropolitan State College of Denver. (Secondary Certifications in Veterinary Dentistry and Emergency Critical Care)

Currently Works at Woodlake Animal Hospital.

*"Veterinary medicine and animal rescue is life to me. It is what I am made to do and I cannot imagine doing anything else. I became a Registered Veterinary Technician in June of 2001. In 2004 I enlisted in the Army Veterinary Corps and developed an intense passion for bettering the relationship between animals and humans through education. The relationship between humans and animals is amazing, and often therapeutic. From day to day, my life is filled with animals in need. Being a Registered Technician during the day while also serving Bella SPCA as their Veterinary Assistance Coordinator is extremely fulfilling and allows me to put my passion into practice on a daily basis. There is not a day that goes by that I do not have an animal in need in tow. Whether it is transporting an injured, sick, or abandoned animal to the hospital, or tiny neonates to my home to provide around clock care, being a part of rescue is extremely rewarding. To also be able to assist humans in need with the care of their animals around the world is humbling and something for which I am always grateful. Animal medicine is my passion and I am excited to see the next generation of leaders who will make a difference for the animals." – Misty Wilson*

**Figure 2 -** This is a picture of Misty with a kitten named "Thor". He was crushed in a truck engine, and Bella SPCA took him in to repair two broken legs and other injuries. He is now doing great and runs everywhere.

Everyone should understand and think through these things before adopting a pet. It is important to remember the DO's and DON'TS of unwanted pets:



### **DON'T DUMP**

unwanted pets in rural areas where they can be injured or killed by wildlife, roaming packs of dogs, hit by cars or preyed upon by feral hogs, etc. It is unfair to families in rural communities or farms and is especially unfair to the animals.

### **DON'T RELY**

on backyard euthanasia which can be traumatic for the animal and the entire human family. Consequences of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) is real and can cause problems in later development.

### **DON'T PARTICIPATE**

in or encourage animal fighting as a sport. (It's against the law and includes cock fighting and dog fighting). Don't allow dogs to be injured knowingly while hunting. There is a link between animal cruelty and human violence, so be aware.

### **DON'T SUPPORT PUPPY MILLS**

that engage in irresponsible breeding practices. Instead, encourage adoption of available animals.

### **DO SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL SHELTER**

or animal control officer. Find out what they need. Help when and where you can through donations or volunteering.

### **DO KNOW THE VETERINARIANS**

closest in your community or nearest community. Learn the importance of vaccinations and dangers of picking up strays.

### **DO GET YOUR**

own pet spayed or neutered.

### **DO ENCOURAGE**

animal transport to other states.

### **DO KNOW WHO TO CALL**

Find out what to do if you come across unwanted or abandoned kittens or puppies – who can safely handle them?

### **DO CALL THE COMMUNITY CAT PROGRAM**

in your town or county and participate in a trap/neuter/release program (TNR) if you see a cat colony where a dozen cats may be gathering.

### **DO PREPARE FOR NATURAL DISASTERS**

Know how to help animals that may be separated from their owners.

### **DO TAKE A PLEDGE**

to take your pets with you in case of a disaster:  
<https://secure.aspca.org/take-action/disaster-prep-pledge>



**Our pet's emotional needs are important, too. Cats and dogs require very different types of social interactions to be fulfilled emotionally – but meeting these needs is every bit as important as meeting their physical and safety needs. Dogs and cats also react differently when their emotional needs are not being met.**



## Typical Behavior for Cats

Cats that experience extensive interaction with humans as kittens are more likely to engage in playful behaviors as a means of social interaction. They may chase, pounce or bat at toys provided for them.

Cats instinctively love to hunt. A cat does not need to be hungry to want to hunt. Cats that can roam around outside will engage in hunting mice, reptiles and even birds despite being well fed.

Cats prefer to groom themselves and will do so regularly. They will also engage in grooming behaviors with other cats that they have relationships with and may even try to groom their owners.

Cats can be social when they are introduced to social situations at a young age, but they are also very independent.

## Typical Behavior for Dogs

Dogs are naturally very social animals. Even in the wild, they travel in packs and thrive in group social settings. They naturally enjoy social interactions both with humans and other dogs and they do not do well in isolation over long periods of time.

Dogs are very expressive and will offer cues using various types of body language to indicate how they are feeling. Dogs will wag their tails as an expression of happiness, or tuck their tails between their legs to signal fear or nervousness.

Dogs are good at interpreting human emotions by reading body language and interpreting tones. They can tell when humans are sad, happy and even angry.

Dogs also enjoy running, fetching and wide-open spaces. Being consistently tethered on a leash or left in small spaces can be hard on a dog emotionally.



# Animal Shelters

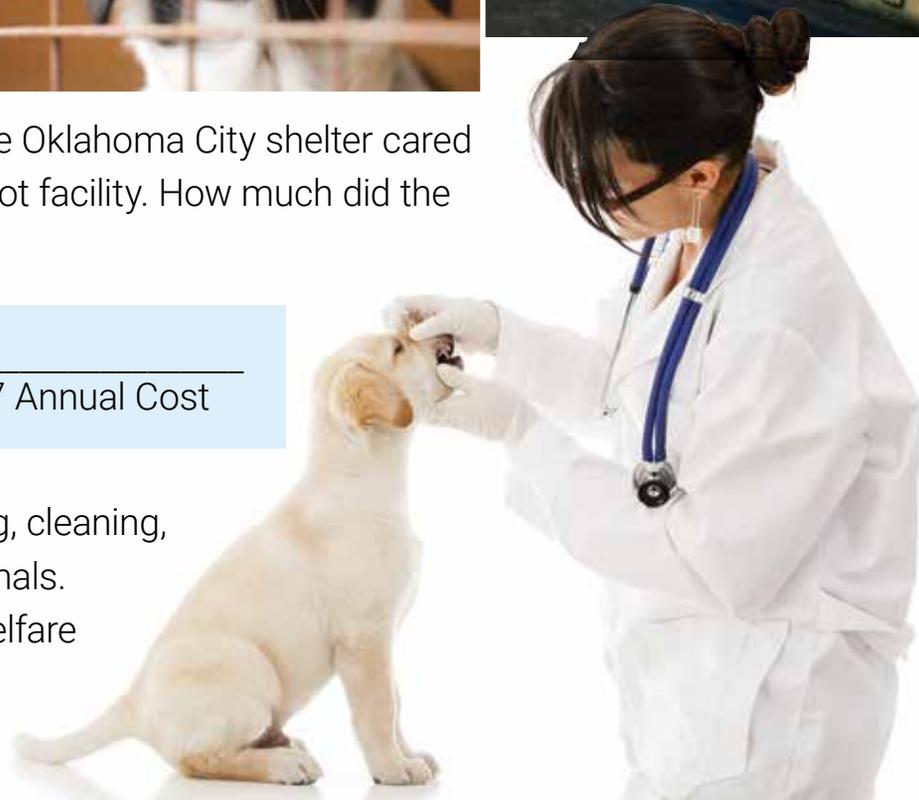
When pet owners do not engage in responsible pet ownership, the impact is tremendous to both their pet and to the community. When pets are neglected, abandoned, abused or lost, they end up in animal shelters.



In Oklahoma City, the cost to care for an animal in a shelter is approximately \$137 per animal. In 2017, the Oklahoma City shelter cared for approximately 22,000 animals in its 47,000 square foot facility. How much did the shelter spend to provide 22,000 animals care in 2017?

$$\frac{22,000}{\# \text{ of animals}} \times \frac{\$137.00}{\text{Cost per Animal}} = \$ \frac{\quad}{2017 \text{ Annual Cost}}$$

This number only includes the cost of staffing, sheltering, cleaning, feeding and providing veterinarian services to these animals. It does not include any expense incurred if an Animal Welfare Officer brings the animal in.





As you can see, caring for too many animals for a long period of time in a shelter is expensive and unsustainable. These shelters must seek funding from a variety of individuals and organizations to keep their doors open. Shelters can recoup some of their expenses by charging adoption fees when the animals in their care are adopted by a new (and hopefully responsible) owner – but it isn't enough.



In addition to being expensive, a shelter can be a stressful environment for an animal to be placed in. For their safety, animals in shelters are often forced into smaller kennel like spaces for long periods of time. The individuals that work at the shelters will do their best to provide one on one attention to each of

the animals and take them for walks outside of their small space, but it can be very challenging as there are so few employees in comparison to the number of animals. A shelter is not a good long-term home for any animal.

The hope is that all the animals living in shelters will be adopted – but sadly, some animals never find a new family.

Every shelter is forced to look at their available finances and resources and make decisions regarding how many pets they can sustain. If a shelter becomes over populated, tough decisions must be made. If overpopulation and a lack of resources become an issue, shelters will explore relocating animals to other shelters (if possible) or euthanasia. The ability to transport animals to



shelters with more available resources can literally save lives. Euthanasia is carried out through an injection. A drug is administered into the animal that is meant to painlessly end the animal's life – but even a painless death is a tragedy. Animals in a shelter may be euthanized if the shelter is overpopulated, if an animal becomes sick or if an animal shows signs of aggression towards humans or other animals. In 2017, approximately 60,000 adoptable pets were euthanized in the state of Oklahoma.

Responsible pet ownership is the first defense against the euthanizing of animals. Volunteering at your local shelter to help care for animals can help to reduce staffing needs and can mean significant financial savings for the shelter. Offering financial gifts to your local shelter is another way to help defend against the euthanizing of animals.

Fostering pets that are awaiting formal adoption is another way to help reduce the number of animals that are euthanized. Even aiding with pet relocation is a great way to defend against euthanizing animals.



## Professionals Making a Difference



**Name:** Crissia Bullock

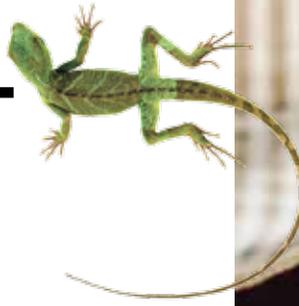
**Title:** Medical Coordinator / K9 Intake Coordinator

**Education:** Some College, Information Technology

Currently works at Enid SPCA.

My favorite part of my job is taking in and working with the animals that have behavior and medical conditions and turning them around, then seeing them adopted into new homes. Working hands on with these animals is therapeutic for me. Working here at the Enid SPCA is my dream job!

*"When I started here, I was just a kennel tech cleaning up after the dogs and keeping them fed, watered and making sure they were provided with daily enrichment. My role expanded to include working in the office, handling adoptions and assisting customers. My role expanded again when I was promoted to kennel manager which is much less hands on and more of a supervisory role. Somehow, I began assisting in the medical department with intake and surgery and from there moved into the role of medical coordinator." – Crissia Bullock*



# Word Bank

Draw a line to connect the word with the correct definition.

Word	Definition
Adoption	A framework for solving specific social problems.
Animal Shelter	A surgery carried out by a veterinarian to keep cats and dogs from having puppies or kittens.
Collective Impact	An establishment that provides a temporary home for dogs, cats and other animals.
Cruelty	Inhumane treatment, to cause mental or physical suffering.
Euthanize	The condition of having a population so dense it cannot be sustained.
Litter	The group of young animals born to an animal at one time.
Live Release Rate	The percentage of animals that leave a shelter alive.
Overpopulation	To be perceptive or have feelings.
Rehome	To end a life.
Sentient	To find a new place to live.
Spay & Neuter	To give up completely.
Surrender	To take by choice into a relationship.