
2017 Service to Customers Award

Pets for Life

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Nomination submitted by Alice Nightengale

The Human Society of the United States wanted to bring their national Pets for Life (PFL) program to Denver for years but they faced several barriers. After working closely with Denver Animal Protection and Community Partnerships Manager, Jill Brown, they were able to make this a reality and launch the program in April 2016 (during one of the biggest blizzards in Denver). The Denver Pets for Life team (which includes Jill Brown, Emily Caldwell and Julian Wolff), rallied to deliver vaccinations to 304 pets during the severe weather — a true testament from the community that the needs for free pet wellness resources is high in the Westwood/Barnum neighborhoods that PFL serves (two areas with high poverty rates).

Over the next 12 months, the PFL team would provide bilingual services with a proactive, “meet people where they are” approach and go on to connect with 743 residents and serve 1,216 pets (dogs and cats). To put this in perspective, that means connecting with at least 14 new residents each week (all while keeping ongoing conversations and relationship building going with all our clients) and serving over 100 animals each month! These services include free wellness packages (spay/neuter, vaccinations, licenses, and microchips – also confirming that the pets comply with Denver ordinances) as well as client support to keep pets in their homes. This support ranged from providing pet deposits for rentals, dog/cat food, and crates and leigh weight tethers to move chained outdoor dogs into a romping, happier indoor/outdoor pup.

The work of the PFL program is so much bigger than just helping pets though. The team meets clients where they live and connect with people that may otherwise never know about or access Denver Animal Protection services – as well as services across the City and County of Denver. The PFL team focuses on building trusting relationships in the community, listening to clients’ needs, and becoming a community resources for veterinary services, pet supplies, and a variety of other services that helped our clients and their families. The PFL team recognizes that to help improve the quality of life for pets, they must focus on providing support and assistance to the families that care for them. Ultimately, this means that PFL improves the quality of life of Denver residents and their pets. With that in mind, the PFL team has developed an extensive coalition of partners to provide these services, including: Denver Human Services, Colorado Pet Food Pantry, Denver Housing Authority, Denver Metro CAT, PetAid, Dumb Friends League, and so many others. Additionally, in just the first year, Denver Animal Shelter has already seen a 9% decrease in the number of animal intakes from Westwood and Barnum.

The PFL team makes strong, long-lasting relationships in the community with their clients. These connections positively impact Denver pets and residents, but also strengthens the bond between residents and City and County of Denver programs and services. Denver Animal Protection has also already seen a true shift with pet owners in the Westwood/Barnum communities where PFL works. DAP staff are warmly welcomed by clients, and clients confidently refer their friends and family to the PFL program, as well as to other DAP services. By meeting people where they are and by making personal connections, the community is now approaching DAP as a resource (for pets and as a City agency). This is truly testament to the PFL team’s work in community engagement. The PFL team exemplifies what it means to listen to constituents, respond to fulfill their needs (for not just pets, but people), and collaborate with partners toward a larger goal and therefore a larger, positive impact in the community.