

## CatChannel Exclusive: How to Turn an Animal Shelter into a No-Kill Facility

**Nathan Winograd, director of the No Kill Advocacy Center of San Clemente, Calif., explains how he made the dream come true and how you can too.**

*By Anthony Hall*

Nathan Winograd, director of the No Kill Advocacy Center, holds Bailey. (Photo courtesy of Nathan Winograd) When Animal Shelter Director Nathan Winograd ended the use of euthanasia as a population control method, he knew that was just the beginning. He could spread no-kill strategies around the country and potentially save millions of lives.

In June 2001, Winograd gave up the life of a high-powered attorney, which included a posh office, a luxury home and a fancy, new car to follow his dream job: saving animals.

Fortunately, he had some experience. Besides rescuing a stray cat (whom he named "Guido") on his way home from school when he was 12, Winograd worked as an attorney in Marin County, Calif., where one of his clients was the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). His work for the San Francisco SPCA overlapped with the time when that agency dropped its animal control contract with the city and declared its intention to save every healthy stray pet.

When Winograd accepted the position of executive director at the SPCA in Tompkins County, N.Y., one of his goals was to prove that a large rural shelter could save every health stray cat and dog just as the more affluent, urban San Francisco SPCA had done.

One of Winograd's first actions at the Tompkins County SPCA was to accept a box of kittens in the shelter's parking lot. The kittens were in addition to 70 cats that arrived within a month, which was above the shelter's normal intake. A week after that, 30 sick cats were confiscated from one home and delivered to the shelter. Winograd was determined to save them all and eventually, all the cats and kittens were placed with new families.

In one year, the Tompkins County SPCA became a completely no-kill shelter and even found homes for injured and mildly aggressive animals.

### A New Model

Winograd threw out the old way of doing business, he says, because he didn't know any better.

"There should be a plan B, C, D and E, and so on until the goal is met," he says.

Two years later, Winograd moved back to California, where the weather is more to his liking. In 2003, he began No-Kill Solutions, which is now called the No Kill Advocacy Center. The No Kill Advocacy Center is a consulting business with a tough philosophy. In a nutshell, he says, make the decision to run a no-kill animal shelter, and then stick to the plan. Winograd has consulted for shelters around the country, including Philadelphia; Ivan City, Utah; Gilford, Miss.; and Houston.

When Susanne Kogut, executive director of the Charlottesville-Albemarle SPCA in Virginia called in 2005, for example, Winograd says he waved her off. “Talk to your employees. Then fire anyone who won’t commit to working in a no-kill shelter. Then get back to me.”

Kogut says she did not fire anyone at Winograd’s bequest. But, she says, it took several months for her staff to fully align with the no-kill mission. She called Winograd back and a year after his visit to her shelter, its 53 percent euthanasia rate for the feral cats had dropped to 8 percent.

#### Winograd’s Basic Steps to Achieving a No-Kill Shelter

Decide that it’s achievable and commit to it.

Collaborate whenever possible.

Ignore conventional wisdom.

Keep the animals visible any way you can.

Define problems in detail before choosing a plan: “Different problems need different solutions,” he says.

Cultivate volunteers.

Adjust the shelter’s hours to accommodate the community.

Take the shelter on the road: Set up adoption booths at busy shopping districts or events.

Implement foster care programs.

Spay and neuter animals before letting them back into the community.

Ask for help.

“The biggest idea I got from his visit,” Kogut says, “is to stop making excuses. Find solutions, instead.”

Anthony Hall is a freelance writer from Dryden, New York.

In May 2007’s CAT FANCY:

Read more about Advocate in Action Nathan Winograd and how he followed his dreams of helping pets.