

Kids' Holiday Activities Designed to Benefit Pets

Children encouraged to help raise money for homeless cats and dogs.

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One way children can help homeless cats is by setting up pet-food banks. Two cats rescued by Cathy Grace of Santa Fe, N.M., served as an inspiration for a new campaign to encourage children to help homeless pets this holiday season.

"Twenty Ways Kids Can Share the Holidays With Homeless Pets" was a way for Grace to offer ideas for parents and shelters to engage children in caring for animals. The economic downturn has elevated the need for donations throughout U.S. shelters, and her website offers ways to do something to contribute.

For example, Grace says, parents can help children set up pet-food banks to feed hungry pets in the community. This can be done by teaming with schools, churches or local youth groups and programs in the area, such as Meals on Wheels, to deliver food to pets.

Other options are: Include kids in programs in which animals are taken to nursing homes, assisted living facilities or homebound citizens' homes to provide companionship and therapy. As a special holiday touch, kids can include treats for the pets and those they're visiting. Coordinate a book sale at a library, school or church to help raise funds for animal shelters. Sources to tap for donated kids' books, cookbooks, art books and landscape books include bookstores or discount stores. Children can sponsor a pet at the local animal shelter by partnering with local schools. One approach might be a Christmas tree with photos of pets hanging from the branches. A note for each photo to describe the pet is one way to seek donations. A competition between classes takes the sponsorship idea one step further. Contest ideas range from which class can collect the most food to which can donate the most money to a local shelter.