

Search Engine Seeks to Raise \$1 Million for Pets

Dogpile.com campaign to help ASPCA cope with homeless cats and dogs, decrease in donations.

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A search engine hopes to raise at least \$1 million for the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals through 2009 in an effort to help animal shelters deal with increasing homeless animal populations and declining charitable donations spurred by housing and economic woes.

Foreclosures and other economic issues may be causing more animals to be relinquished to shelters (as people are forced to move from existing homes to homes that may not allow pets), fewer animals to be adopted (as people avoid incurring additional expenses) and a decline in donations to shelters, said Stacy Ybarra, senior director of corporate giving for Bellevue, Wash.-based InfoSpace Inc.

DogPile.com, InfoSpace's flagship business, plans to donate a set but undisclosed percentage of revenues from its Internet search operations to the ASPCA.

Its Search & Rescue program will donate money each time a sponsored site from a DogPile search is clicked on by a search-engine user. DogPile, which searches 12 search engines including Google and Yahoo, earns its revenues when sponsored sites are selected, and has established a percentage of those revenues for the program.

DogPile hopes to raise at least \$1 million for the charity through the program, but would love to raise double or triple that amount, Ybarra said. The program will run through 2009 no matter how much is raised, she said.

DogPile has developed a downloadable Search & Rescue toolbar to bolster the program. Although the proceed rate will be the same whether someone searches from the Dogpile.com site or the toolbar, the toolbar makes it more likely that someone will use DogPile rather than another search engine.

Although DogPile has helped raise funds for animal causes in the past and currently works actively with Petfinder.com, this is the first time the company has based its giving on a percentage of proceeds. Previous programs had the company match donations given by its users.

"Most Americans have their hearts in the right place when it comes to animal welfare, but many don't have the means to give at this time," Ybarra said. "Programs like Search & Rescue can change the way corporations and consumers approach charitable giving. You search, and together we rescue."

Due to the shaky economy, people are currently curtailing their charitable giving, and animal-welfare causes are being especially hard hit, according to a national survey of 1,001 people conducted for DogPile.

That survey, conducted by Kelton Research in late October, found that 34 percent of Americans who donated to charity in the past year plan to donate an average of 41 percent less in the coming year due to the economy.

That survey found that 52 percent of Americans believe animal welfare organizations will be harder hit by this trend than other charitable causes this year. Although the survey did not explain why, Ybarra said people during difficult times may be more inclined to give to charities that directly help other people.