

2016

BEST FRIENDS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

PLAYBOOK



**NO-KILL COMMUNITY:
WHAT WORKED, WHAT DIDN'T,
WHAT'S NEXT**

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



NKLA[®]
A BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY INITIATIVE

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This playbook is one in a series meant to be used as guides as you explore how you can save more lives in your community. Getting to no-kill isn't a one-size-fits-all proposition. Each community is unique, with its own challenges and resources, so the playbooks highlight a variety of communities and detail the various ways that leaders in those communities progressed to no-kill or have their communities firmly on that path. Of course, there are some common denominators: Collaboration, commitment, hard work and data-driven approaches to problem-solving are some of the factors that have taken these communities to lifesaving levels once believed to be unreachable. We hope that you will find the information in the playbooks helpful and inspirational as your community works to **Save Them All®**.

KEY PARTICIPANTS IN HELPING THE COMMUNITY TO BECOME NO-KILL:

- One major municipal shelter system (six facilities): City of Los Angeles Animal Services
- Two major nonprofits: Best Friends Animal Society and Found Animals Foundation
- Six founding partner organizations: Found Animals Foundation, Stray Cat Alliance, Downtown Dog Rescue, Kitten Rescue, Karma Rescue, FixNation
- More than 100 rescue partners and service providers (NKLA Coalition)

SOME KEYS TO SUCCESS IN LOS ANGELES:

- Building a strong coalition comprising organizations with the same no-kill goal
- Offering subsidies as incentive to increase the number of adoptions
- Conducting an assessment of the community to find out which areas to target for spay/neuter
- Building community awareness and engagement through a comprehensive marketing campaign
- Creating a shelter surrender-intervention program to keep pets with their people
- Opening a kitten nursery to save some of the pets most at-risk
- Opening welcoming, state-of-the-art adoption centers



INTRODUCTION

Best Friends started cultivating relationships with Los Angeles area rescue groups in 1991, and began collaborating with Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) in 1999 on adoption promotions and special events. The programs involved not only municipal agencies and local animal groups, but also celebrities and local volunteers. Over time, the city saw a boom in the number of local rescue groups working to save shelter pets, but it was clear that a far more cohesive and strategic plan — indeed, a whole movement — was needed. And that movement would have to bring about measurable results and finally win the attention of the general public.

In 2010, Brenda Barnette, a no-kill advocate and experienced manager of a no-kill shelter, was hired as general manager of LAAS, providing the perfect context for rolling out a new no-kill campaign in Los Angeles.

The basic idea of No-Kill Los Angeles (NKLA), inspired by Best Friends' pioneering statewide campaign in Utah, had been germinating for years: an initiative of Best Friends, a community-wide strategy to end the killing, a high-profile and comprehensive marketing campaign, and an ever-growing coalition of organizations and individuals passionate about putting an end to the killing of homeless pets in Los Angeles shelters.

With LAAS as the first and most important partner, Best Friends began assembling a coalition steering committee whose members represented a cross-section of the L.A. animal welfare community. The first NKLA Steering Committee meeting was held in December 2010, and the fully formed initiative was launched in early 2012, with the participation of about 35 NKLA Coalition partners.

In 2011, the baseline year for evaluating the coalition's progress, more than 18,000 dogs and cats were killed in Los Angeles city animal shelters. This number represented a save rate of only 57.7 percent of the animals who entered the city's six shelters.

One of the first undertakings was an in-depth, city-wide analysis of shelter data overlaid with zip code by zip code economic and demographic data, along with information such as access to veterinary and other services. This data provided an impartial basis for allocating resources and targeting low-cost spay/neuter efforts toward the pets of people who could not otherwise afford to have their pets fixed.

Also in 2011, Best Friends submitted a proposal to the City of Los Angeles to turn the Northeast Valley Shelter into a high-volume spay/neuter and adoption center. Located in Mission Hills, the Northeast Valley Shelter had been completed in 2007 but was never opened to the public because of budget shortfalls.

When the proposal was approved, Best Friends walked into an essentially brand-new building in January 2012. This was a critical boon to the newly launched NKLA initiative. The city’s six other shelters would continue to provide animal control services to the community, and, by contract, the new Best Friends Pet Adoption and Spay/Neuter Center would only take in animals from the six LAAS animal control shelters and provide low-cost and free spay/neuter services to low-income city residents. The new adoption center enabled Best Friends to directly facilitate high-volume adoptions.

Although the importance of a Best Friends–run facility could not be underestimated, the scope of NKLA extends far beyond shelters. “The task of NKLA is to help multiply the effectiveness of the rescue groups,” says Gregory Castle, Best Friends co-founder and CEO, “to leverage strengths, identify and shore up weaknesses, and build out projects and programs that either don’t exist or don’t exist on a scale sufficient to make a difference.” Through the NKLA initiative, Best Friends provides adoption incentives, staffing grants and funding for economically targeted spay/neuter projects.

NKLA is a five-year initiative to make L.A. a no-kill city by 2017. To do that, Best Friends and coalition members (including LAAS) will need to get the save rate up to 90 percent, which is the generally accepted threshold for no-kill status in a community. Reaching a 90 percent save rate requires not only strengthening existing efforts and resources, but also increasing the number of targeted (low-income) spay/neuter surgeries; decreasing shelter intake; increasing the number of adoptions; supporting existing TNR programs to reduce the numbers of community cats entering the shelters; raising public awareness; and starting new programs, such as a nursery for newborn kittens and shelter surrender intervention and client service programs to help families find alternatives to surrendering their pets or find shelter pets.

All of these efforts are aimed at reducing shelter deaths in L.A., but success in Los Angeles also means that NKLA can serve as a guide for other communities striving to get to no-kill, and particularly for those that share the profile of Los Angeles. “We are going to turn Los Angeles into No-Kill Los Angeles,” says Best Friends co-founder Francis Battista, “and demonstrate that no-kill can work everywhere.”

Great progress has been made in L.A. so far. As mentioned above, in 2011, the year before NKLA launched, more than 18,000 cats and dogs were killed in L.A. city shelters. By the end of 2015, that number had decreased to about 6,100. At the end of 2015, L.A.’s save rate had climbed to 76.7 percent for cats and dogs combined. The save rate for dogs (87.4 percent) was closing in on the 90 percent no-kill threshold (up from 71.3 percent in 2011) and the save rate for cats in 2015 rose to 62.3 percent (up from 36.3 percent in 2011).

City of Los Angeles	
2011 save rate:	57.7%
2015 save rate:	76.7%



WHAT WORKED

CREATING A COALITION

NKLA was designed to strengthen and capitalize on the ongoing collaboration between Best Friends and stakeholders in L.A.'s rescue community, including LAAS and various rescue groups. The idea was simple, but the effect would be powerful: With Best Friends leading the way, the organizations would join together in a concerted and targeted effort to increase the number of animal lives saved.

Judah Battista, director of local programs at Best Friends, was instrumental in helping to bring NKLA Coalition partners together. He explains that while each organization is functionally autonomous, their work is strongly connected to the coalition, and they share a common understanding of the problem and a common goal. Every partner contributes in some way to the effort and is an important part of the NKLA work.

When NKLA launched in 2012, there were about 35 coalition members. By the end of 2015, that number had grown to more than 100. And the coalition will continue growing as success generates more success and NKLA catches on throughout the rest of the rescue community and the city.

FORMING A STEERING COMMITTEE

A core group of people was needed to organize and guide early coalition and initiative efforts, and to develop theory and best practices for NKLA. In December 2010, a steering committee was formed and began meeting regularly to take on that task. Besides representatives of LAAS and Best Friends, the committee comprised representatives of coalition members, including Found Animals Foundation, Kitten Rescue, Stray Cat Alliance, Downtown Dog Rescue, FixNation, Karma Rescue and the Board of Animal Services Commissioners.

While the steering committee helped to hammer out the initial strategy of the coalition, it also served another important function. The committee helped to inform what needed to be done in L.A. and gave Best Friends' partners a voice in the strategic direction of the work. Francis says that the steering committee members were "intricately involved in helping us frame our programs to meet and match the realities of that world." Because of the representatives on the steering committee, positive changes and improvements have come about, such as restructuring grants to aid coalition members in providing more service to the community, and helping Best Friends to understand common challenges faced by smaller organizations and to tailor programs accordingly.

SIMPLIFYING DATA REPORTING

Fortunately, there was no need to reinvent the wheel in order to create a data reporting structure, since all of the participating groups were already reporting data to Los Angeles Animal Services as part of their New Hope partner relationship with the city. The NKLA Steering Committee made New Hope partner status a condition of coalition membership. So, joining the NKLA Coalition did not require groups to duplicate their efforts, which meant that they could devote more time to their lifesaving work.

OFFERING SUBSIDIES TO INCREASE ADOPTIONS

One of the core strategies of NKLA was building an incentive program to increase the number of animals adopted to new homes by coalition partners. This strategy grew from the understanding that most animal welfare groups have limited resources, which reduces the number of rescued animals that they can afford to make available for adoption. Best Friends' primary concern was ensuring that coalition partners would have the financial resources to facilitate more adoptions than they had done in the past. Francis says, "We knew we had to build a high-volume adoption program and encourage our partners to do the same."

In granting the subsidies, Best Friends used coalition partners' 2010 adoption statistics as a baseline. In 2012, the first year of the program, rescue organizations received \$150 for each completed adoption of a LAAS dog or cat over the number of such adoptions they completed during the same month in 2010.

The goal in year one of the NKLA initiative was to increase by 3,000 the total number of shelter dogs and cats adopted out by coalition organizations (including Best Friends and LAAS). The actual number of animals (over the 2010 baseline) adopted out by coalition members that first year was more than 3,500, meaning that the coalition exceeded the goal by helping an additional 500 animals find homes. In total, NKLA Coalition members adopted out 22,738 pets in 2012; 23,778 in 2013; 24,287 in 2014; and more than 27,000 in 2015. In that first year, Best Friends provided nearly \$243,000 in adoption subsidies for increased adoptions by coalition members. In 2013, the second year of NKLA, Best Friends began offering staffing grants and spay/neuter grants in order to build capacity and further increase adoptions.

SIZING UP DEMOGRAPHICS

Best Friends knew that a comprehensive assessment of community needs had to be done before the launch of NKLA. It was important, for example, to figure out where most shelter animals were coming from, and what strategies or programs would be most effective at slowing the flow of those animals into shelters. Francis also points out that knowing a community's demographics is crucial for assessing that community's needs. Otherwise, resources, such as free spay/neuter, are randomly applied instead of being targeted in places where they might be most effective.

Gregory Castle agrees, noting that "in a city of four million people that is this economically and ethnically diverse, it is imperative that data drive the decisions on where to place resources." For example, to provide spay/neuter services in a particular community, Best Friends needed to determine supply and demand: what type of services (mobile, fixed location, etc.) that community really needed, how many spay/neuter surgeries might be performed in that location, and approximately how many people actually needed free or low-cost services. Judah says that the vast majority of people in middle-income brackets ultimately do the responsible thing and get their pets spayed or neutered. However, low-income families often lack the resources to take the same initiative.

In addition to cost, factors such as lack of transportation and language barriers are obstacles to getting pets spayed or neutered. Families with such challenges have difficulty taking advantage of free services even if they want to. Clearly, lower-income areas had to be identi-

fied and targeted to give residents the means to be responsible about their pets, and for the NKLA Coalition to make program services convenient and accessible to them. As a result of the community assessment, people in 12 underserved zip codes (seven with populations consistently below the poverty line) were selected as NKLA's initial recipients of spay/neuter programming.

Best Friends, however, did not take a blanket approach to solving the problem in these underserved communities, but instead looked for gaps in services and explored various ways to fill them. For example, in some communities, fixed spay/neuter facilities in appropriate locations might be the best solution, whereas in others mobile spay/neuter services would be a more effective method.

TARGETING SPECIFIC AREAS FOR SPAY/NEUTER

To reduce shelter intake, the NKLA initiative specifically targets low-income areas for spay/neuter programs. Coalition partners are given incentives, through NKLA funding, to develop projects in their respective areas to increase the number of spay/neuter surgeries. Some resources are already in place in L.A. to help reach low-income families, including several fixed clinics and mobile units. In addition, Best Friends operates a spay/neuter center at its Mission Hills location. With these combined efforts, more than 20,000 sterilizations were planned for year one of the initiative, and a minimum of 20,000 to 25,000 each subsequent year.

In 2015, Best Friends funded nearly 8,000 of these surgeries through NKLA Coalition partners. In addition, because the Mission Hills facility is in a unique position to provide free or low-cost spay/neuter services to underserved areas of the city, where such services are in particular demand, Best Friends performed an additional 6,800 surgeries at the center.

Spay/neuter is a critical part of the lifesaving equation because it has been proven to decrease the number of animals going into shelters, while adoptions increase the number going out. When you put the two together, a larger number of animals are being saved.

BUILDING COMMUNITY AWARENESS AND ENGAGEMENT

Building the brand and identity of NKLA was a critical part of the overall strategy. After all, every good idea needs a marketing campaign to spread the word. But to really get people to hear the message, it has to be something comprehensive and compelling. Best Friends already had the support of the animal rescue community; now it needed to reach average citizens, most of whom had little or no involvement in animal welfare and were unaware of the plight of L.A.'s homeless pets. The ad campaign needed to stand out, to shake up the community and create a sense of urgency, and to get Los Angeles residents to embrace and own the NKLA concept as "a matter of civic pride," as Gregory puts it.

To make that happen, Best Friends got help from advertising genius Lee Clow, one of the most widely respected advertising creatives in the world. With nearly 40 years in the industry, Lee has a clear grasp of what it takes to catch consumer attention. He is known for building the Apple brand, as well as ad campaigns for the Energizer bunny, Pepsi, Adidas and Pedigree's Dogs Rule campaign. Along with the Let There Be Dragons team at TBWA\Chiat\Day, Lee helped to create the unique look and feel of the NKLA brand and target it to the urban L.A. community.

The pro bono NKLA media campaign is full of edgy and sometimes funny content, ranging from a streamlined website that propels viewers into action with stunning black-and-white visuals and a straightforward message, to attention-grabbing billboards throughout the city and PSAs by Kristin Bauer van Straten of HBO's *True Blood* and *Saturday Night Live*'s Kevin Nealon. And in October 2014, Best Friends featured a different adoptable dog every day on the Hallmark Channel for national Adopt a Shelter Dog Month. This media blitz has indeed hit the mark.

Another thing that has proven very beneficial for the communities surrounding the Best Friends and NKLA adoption centers is holding educational classes open to the public, volunteers and staff. The “bottle baby” classes are some of the most popular and help to raise awareness about how people in local communities can contribute to saving homeless pets.

Gaining and maintaining a public identity is a very important piece of NKLA. It took a little while to catch on, but with the ad campaign, and events like “meet your neighbor day” (to introduce the public to the new adoption and spay/neuter center), the people of L.A. have begun to embrace NKLA as their own.

CREATING A SHELTER SURRENDER INTERVENTION PROGRAM AND A SHELTER CLIENT SERVICE PROGRAM

A shelter surrender intervention program, funded in large part by NKLA charter member Found Animals Foundation and run by another partner, Downtown Dog Rescue, began in April 2013 at the South Los Angeles shelter. Volunteers sit at a table inside the shelter and initiate face-to-face interactions with people who come in to surrender their pets.

Additionally, to help reduce the number of underage kittens entering the Chesterfield Square shelter, Best Friends funds a kitten intervention specialist at that facility. The Chesterfield Square shelter kills or euthanizes more than double the number of cats and dogs that the other five L.A. city shelters do.

The primary goals of the intervention program are to provide families with resources that will allow them to keep their pets and to train people who want to surrender kittens to act as foster families for the kittens until they are old enough for adoption, so they don’t add to shelter intake numbers. Downtown Dog Rescue has identified and continues to track the main reasons why people surrender their pets, such as pet restrictions with housing, behavioral issues, medical conditions, and inability to pay for pet care and services like spay/neuter.

Best Friends also recognizes the importance of providing more hands-on client support in city shelters. In 2015, Best Friends added three client service specialists (two general and one kitten-focused) who work with L.A. Animal Services staff and volunteers to support community members and visitors to the shelters.

CREATING A KITTEN NURSERY

The high mortality rate for newborn kittens in shelters (which is significantly greater than that of dogs and adult cats) is a major focal point for Best Friends. “Kitten season” typically begins in late March and continues through the fall. A bottle baby program and kitten nursery were planned in the early days of NKLA.

At its Mission Hills location, Best Friends operates a 24-hour nursery that can accommodate from 100 to 200 kittens (depending on litter size), ranging in age from just a day old to eight weeks old. Caring for such young kittens is a round-the-clock, labor-intensive undertaking. During peak kitten season, a large group of dedicated volunteers and staff members coordinate their schedules to ensure that someone is always on-site, providing direct care for the kittens.

In 2013, Best Friends enhanced the bottle baby program at the kitten nursery and also expanded its kitten foster program, in which volunteers foster and bottle-feed unweaned kittens until they can be spayed or neutered and adopted out through the adoption center in Mission Hills. Placing kittens in foster care opens up space at the nursery for other kittens pulled from city shelters. In fact, most of the foster homes that Best Friends has in L.A. are dedicated to these kittens (though there are also foster homes for dogs with behavioral issues and animals in medical recovery).

The allocation of the majority of foster homes to newborn kittens reflects Best Friends’ focus

on getting the animals most at risk of dying out of the shelters, and eventually into permanent homes. The 2015 year goal for the bottle baby program was to pull 2,100 kittens from LAAS shelters, giving these fragile pets an excellent chance of surviving and finding families to call their own. The total number of kittens pulled ended up being 2,300.

OPENING A SECOND ADOPTION CENTER

One of the biggest obstacles to increasing pet adoptions is getting people in the door at city shelters. Municipal shelters are often stigmatized as being sad, dirty, loud places. The unfortunate consequence of this widely held view is that the animals within the city shelter system are judged as inferior to those who come from breeders, pet stores or other retail venues. To combat this stereotype, there has been a push within the animal welfare world to bring animals out of the shelters and into more conveniently located, comfortable and/or upscale retail locations. For example, many pet stores are now partnering with local shelters and rescue groups to offer homeless pets for adoption.

Another way to bring adoptable animals to the public is through modern, welcoming adoption centers. On August 1, 2013, the new NKLA Pet Adoption Center, housed in an 11,000-square-foot Cape Cod-style building, opened in West Los Angeles. In keeping with the brand of the NKLA campaign, striking black-and-white images adorn the walls inside. Operations are funded by Best Friends, with support from the Ronald and Catherine Gershan Foundation, which designed and remodeled the building to provide a positive, customer-friendly experience for prospective adopters. The center is conveniently located and equipped with the latest interactive touch-screen technology and personalized pet match-making services.

The NKLA Pet Adoption Center is managed by Best Friends and includes coalition partner animals in a 50/50 split of kennel and cattery space. It is a brick-and-mortar metaphor of the coalition and its dedication to the no-kill mission. The comfortable, aesthetically pleasing facility showcases animals in a place where they don't have to battle the "shelter stigma." The people who have turned out to support the new center are not only adopters, but also people who want to learn about no-kill or donate to the cause. And that's the kind of community support that will turn L.A. into NKLA.

The success of the NKLA Pet Adoption Center is a perfect example of the great collaborative work being done by Best Friends and its coalition members. In 2015, 2,720 dogs and cats were adopted out of the center. Of this number, 1,189 were Best Friends adoptions and 1,531 were coalition partner adoptions.



WHAT DIDN'T WORK

LIMITS ON THE CITY'S AND BEST FRIENDS' TNR EFFORTS

Trap-neuter-return (TNR) programs have become a staple of communities across the country for their ability to reduce community cat populations through spay/neuter and colony management, rather than the trap-and-kill method. While no-kill advocates champion the spread of TNR, others concerned about the impact of community cats upon urban wildlife work hard to thwart its progress.

Currently, a court injunction prohibits LAAS from supporting or promoting TNR, a ruling prompted by a lawsuit by bird conservancy groups opposed to TNR programs, based on a question of compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. As a tenant in a building owned by the city of Los Angeles, Best Friends is prevented from supporting TNR from the Best Friends Pet Adoption and Spay/Neuter Center that it operates out of the Northeast Valley Shelter in Mission Hills. In fact, as Gregory notes, "No advice, references or resources can be given regarding TNR to members of the public who contact the center with community cat problems or questions."

It is important to note that the injunction does not interfere with local TNR work conducted outside of operations under city shelter jurisdiction, such as Free Fix L.A., a program run by Best Friends that has no operational connection with the Northeast Valley Shelter. The injunction also does not prevent other groups or private citizens from continuing TNR efforts, including other NKLA Coalition members.

However, the net effect of the injunction has been to hinder progress in reducing the killing of cats in shelters. It also prevents the implementation of return-to-field programs, which have greatly reduced shelter cat deaths wherever they have been implemented.

GETTING THE CAT SAVE RATE ON PAR WITH THE DOG SAVE RATE

In 2011, the overall save rate for both dogs and cats in Los Angeles city shelters was 57.7 percent. In 2012, it rose to 63.8 percent. In 2015, the save rate climbed to 76.7 percent.

Clearly, the needle is moving in the right direction and NKLA programs are working. But a close look at the numbers reveals a large discrepancy between the number of dogs saved and the number of cats saved. The save rate for dogs in 2011 was 71.3 percent; for cats it was only 36.3 percent. In 2015, the save rate for dogs was 87.4 percent, compared to 62.3 percent for cats. Because the goal of NKLA is to get the overall save rate to 90 percent by 2017, getting the cat save rate up is essential and remains one of the biggest challenges.



WHAT'S NEXT

FINDING INNOVATIVE WAYS TO SAVE MORE CATS

Because many of the newborn kittens entering the bottle baby program are likely the offspring of community cats, Best Friends will continue the Free Fix L.A. program and keep supporting coalition partners' TNR efforts. Together with LAAS and the other coalition partners, Best Friends will concentrate on finding innovative ways to save more cats. As Marc Peralta, executive director of Best Friends–Los Angeles, puts it, “We are really zeroing in on that cat save rate, and figuring out how to maximize lifesaving for cats, both noses in and noses out.”

Annually reviewing the intake numbers by zip code gives Best Friends specifics on which areas of L.A. have the greatest need for subsidized spay/neuter programs. By linking higher-intake areas to incentives for coalition members to perform spay/neuter surgeries, Best Friends hopes to decrease the number of cats and kittens entering L.A. city shelters.

Best Friends is also helping coalition members to develop facilities and programs designed to support city cats, including at least two new kitten nurseries, an adoption center and a “working cat program,” through which feral and undersocialized cats are promoted to adopters who have enclosed warehouses, garages or offices where the cats can live comfortably and serve as natural pest deterrents.

In addition, Best Friends and Found Animals are expanding their kitten nurseries to save more cats in L.A. Best Friends is doing this by expanding foster care efforts to save an additional 795 kittens and cats. Found Animals is turning their focus to city cats and plans to save an additional 1,000 cats from L.A. Animal Services this year.

With these new strategies, Best Friends expects to bring the overall save rate up to 85 percent in 2016, putting L.A. on track to reach the goal of a 90 percent save rate in 2017.

EXPANDING THE COALITION

Though NKLA was created specifically for the city of L.A., and operates exclusively as a local initiative, it maintains — and expands upon — Best Friends' brand and identity. The edgy marketing campaign has been successful in reaching people in the community and helping them to understand the problem and ways that they can be part of the solution. Every day, more people want to get involved and engaged, which further increases the initiative's momentum. As NKLA's support base expands, making L.A. a no-kill city by 2017 is closer to becoming a reality.

To increase NKLA's impact, Best Friends, LAAS and other rescue partners are collaborat-

ing on possible ways to broaden the coalition to include organizations outside of the animal welfare world. This would give NKLA more exposure and take the initiative to the next level.

OTHER PLANNED AREAS OF FOCUS

With 2016 well underway, Best Friends is focusing on what's next in an effort to stay ahead of the curve.

In addition to the increased focus on cats, Best Friends is turning its attention to the problem of rental housing restrictions on large-breed dogs. Many landlords in L.A. don't allow tenants to have dogs who weigh more than 30 pounds, and even if they do allow them, they charge additional pet fees. These factors discourage people from adopting and keeping larger dogs. Best Friends plans to work with the city and landlords to change these policies in order to increase adoptions of big dogs.

Best Friends will continue its marketing efforts to attract more visitors and prospective adopters to the L.A. adoption centers. In 2015, these efforts included an increase in print and radio ads and adoption campaigns offering low- or no-fee adoptions. These marketing strategies and campaigns not only help place more animals in homes, they provide opportunities to educate more people in the community about Best Friends' work at both the local and national levels.



Marc Peralta



Francis Battista

PRESENTERS

MARC PERALTA is the executive director for Best Friends Animal Society–Los Angeles. He leads the Best Friends NKLA (No-Kill Los Angeles) initiative, with the goal to make L.A. no-kill by 2017, as well as operations for the Best Friends Pet Adoption and Spay/Neuter Center and the NKLA Pet Adoption Center.

Previously, Marc served as vice president and chief operating officer at the Pennsylvania SPCA (PSPCA) headquartered in Philadelphia, overseeing the operations of six facilities, including animal control for the City of Philadelphia and the PSPCA's Humane Law Enforcement Department. During his tenure, Marc was appointed by the mayor of Philadelphia as a member of the board of directors for the Animal Care and Control Team. Marc has also worked in animal care managerial roles at the Nevada Humane Society in Reno, Nevada, and the Humane Society of the Pikes Peak Region in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Before focusing on animal welfare, Marc ran his own music promotion business and served in managerial roles in both the food and beverage and retail industries, bringing 20 years of customer service experience to the no-kill movement.

FRANCIS BATTISTA is one of the founders of Best Friends Animal Society. He has served as director of animal care, outreach programs and Los Angeles programs. Francis managed the Best Friends rescue shelter in Tylertown, Mississippi, for four months following Hurricane Katrina and was involved in the negotiations with federal agencies and courts that brought 22 of Michael Vick's dogs to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary.

Francis was instrumental in launching NKLA. He currently serves on the board of directors of Best Friends, advises its community programs and services division, and works with the development division.

BRENDA F. BARNETTE has been general manager of Los Angeles Animal Services (LAAS) since August 2010. LAAS is one of the largest municipal shelter systems in the U.S., with six shelters serving approximately 60,000 animals annually and responding to 20,000 emergency calls each year involving animals or people in danger.

Brenda F. Barnette



Aimee Gilbreath



With over 20 years of success developing resources and programs to save animals' lives, Brenda has earned a reputation as a positive change manager. In Los Angeles, she collaborated with Best Friends to develop NKLA.

Brenda previously served as CEO of the Seattle Humane Society, increasing the save rate from 77 percent to 92 percent in four years. She has also been the CEO of Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation, the executive director of Pets In Need and the development director at the San Francisco SPCA.

AIMEE GILBREATH is the executive director of Dr. Gary Michelson's Found Animals Foundation, an innovation-focused pet nonprofit. She is responsible for all foundation programs, including the \$75 million Michelson Prize and grants program, Adopt & Shop retail adoption centers, spay/neuter programs, the Found Animals Microchip Registry, and the Saving Pets Challenge. Found Animals is unique in its diversity of program models, which range from local to national and from traditional philanthropy to social enterprise.

Aimee is a former management consultant with experience in leading teams to solve business problems for Fortune 500 clients. She holds a B.S. in molecular biology and an M.B.A. Aimee lives in Santa Monica, California, with her husband and their beloved pit bull, Rufus.