Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)®: A Global Initiative that Saves Lives

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Work Experience:
• Assistant Prosecuting Attorney
• National District Attorneys Association
  • Founder/Director, National Center for Prosecution of Animal Abuse
  • Deputy Director/Interim Director, National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse
• American Humane Association
  • Vice President of Public Policy and Human-Animal Strategic Initiatives
• University of Denver, Institute for Human-Animal Connection
  • Sheltering Animals & Families Together (SAF-T)
  • Founder & CEO

International public speaker at over 500 conferences
Publications: 5 books, 3 federal monographs, 8 book chapters, over 50 articles

Companion Animals in Tribal Communities
• Native American Humane Society 2015 survey
  • 88% identified as pet owners
  • 95.8% listed animals as companions
  • 34.32% listed animals as “guarding/protection”
• Concerns:
  • (1) overpopulation; (2) lack of community resources; (3) lack of knowledge and code enforcement; and (4) lack of awareness

Predictors & Indicators
Violence towards animals can be BOTH a predictor and indicator of violence towards people
**Women & Pets**

- Women with strong bonds to pets had abusers use control tactics to threaten pets
- Pets helped women in recovery
- Women wanted to be asked about pets at intake
- Women felt lack of control over the decision to leave their pet and wanted safe options for their pet
  - They wanted their vet to offer safe affordable housing
  - They were critical of shelters not providing options


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**What we know …**

- Individuals who witnessed animal cruelty were 8.14 times more likely to be perpetrators
- Witnessing animal cruelty was the biggest predictor of later violence by the witness
- Witnessing animal cruelty with child abuse or exposure to domestic violence increases the risk of animal cruelty


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**What we know …**

- Shelter women are nearly 11 times more likely to report their partner had hurt/killed their pet
- Shelter women are more than 4 times higher to report their pet was threatened
- 66.7% of children observe animal abuse
  - 37.5% of shelter children harmed or killed pets
- 22.8% of shelter women delay leaving home due to concerns of the pets


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**What we know …**

“Batterers who also abuse their pets are both more controlling and use more dangerous forms of violence [sexual violence, marital rape, emotional violence and stalking] than batterers who do not.”


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**The Link in Rural Communities**

“Pets and/or farm animals are often threatened, harmed or neglected as a means of controlling an abused woman, and it is common for women to delay seeking help out of fear for their animals.”

Forty-five percent of the women in the study said that their pets and/or farm animals were deliberately threatened with harm, and in 41% of cases the pets actually were deliberately harmed or killed.

The Link in Tribal Communities

- Native American Humane Society 2015 survey
  - 43.31% said threats/physical harm to animals was to control victims
  - 38.1% said animals were used to prevent victims from leaving
  - 37.9% said animals were hurt in front of victims to intimidate
- Lack of veterinarians in tribal communities
- Need more sheltering services
- Is law enforcement and tribal prosecutors educated in the Link?


Tribal Community Animals

"Native people are not more violent against people and/or animals than non-Native people, and in fact have many customs, traditions and practices that show a profound respect for animals. Overall, indigenous people traditionally respect and care for all living things … and any animal abuse committed in connection with violent/abusive acts against people is a result of colonization, disruption of indigenous life, ways, customs, traditions and lack of availability or accessibility to animal control services."

- From the Native American Humane Society

Barriers to Safety

- 18% to 65% of female victims of violence delay moving to a shelter because of concerns regarding their pet's welfare (Allen et al., 2006; Ascione, 1996; Ascione et al., 2007; Faver and Strand, 2003; Flynn, 2000b; Hartman et al., 2015; Strand and Faver, 2005; Travers et al., 2009; Volant et al., 2008).
- Up to 48% of families remain with the abuser due to shelters being unable or unwilling to accommodate pets (Ascione, 2007).
- Are tribal shelters asking about pets?

A greater understanding of the dynamics of pet abuse and women’s decisions about their pets when seeking shelter would inform professionals’ efforts to facilitate women’s departures from violent relationships and their recovery process.”


Harsh Reality

- Abusers may exploit or target pets to:
  - Coerce compliance with present and future abuse
  - Threaten silence regarding abuse
  - Maintain terror and fright
  - Eliminate source of support/comfort
  - Force the family to return home
  - Reinforces there is no safe place
  - Gain more power and control

- "If I can kill the dog, I can kill you!"

The Solution!

First and only global initiative working with domestic violence shelters
Free download to DV shelters at www.SAFTProgram.org

First written guidelines launched in 2008
SAF-T Shelters

- International:
  - Australia
  - Canada
  - Netherlands
  - Spain

SAF-T is Safety

- The creation of SAF-T
- Human-Animal Bond
  - HAB is critical in times of stress
  - Aids in healing and recovery
  - Kids and pets go together
- Reduces a barrier to safety
- A solution to Link crimes

Assessing Need

- Consult with SAF-T
- Ask about pets during calls for help
  - How many pets
  - Welfare of pets
  - Housing with friends/family
  - Have families delayed getting to safety?
  - Hotline workers prepared with resources
- Consult with staff
- Pet safety planning

Initial Implementation Phase

- Garner support
  - Shelter Staff
  - Board of Directors
  - Community leaders
  - Animal protection community
  - Veterinary community
  - Work as a team
- Select SAF-T Director
### Identify Housing Options

- Types of pets
- Onsite Housing Style
  - Option 1 = Housing within rooms
  - Option 2 = Separate room within shelter
  - Option 3 = Housing in outside shelter
  - Option 4 = Transitional housing
- Offsite Housing
  - Foster homes
  - Boarding facilities
  - Animal shelters
  - Veterinary clinics

### Four Important Policies

- MOU with animal shelter
- Excess pets
- Noisy pets
- Large/exotic animals
- Farm animals
  - Local barns
  - Aggressive/stressed pets
- Partner with Veterinarian
- Partner with Homeless Agency
- Families care for pets

### Resolving Concerns

- Aggressive/Stressed Pets
- Breed Restrictions
- Allergies/Odors
- Fear of Animals and Injuries
- Objections from staff/residents

### Financial Planning

- Set-up
- Supplies
- Outdoor areas
- Security
- Veterinary care
- Duration and Cost of Housing Pets
- Insurance

### Financial Preparation Phase

- Underground Railroad (Saginaw, MI)

### Fundraising

- Fundraising
  - Public awareness raises donations
  - Coordinate with animal shelter fundraisers
Funding Options

- AKC Humane Fund
  - akchumanefund.org/forms/womens_shelters_grant
- Banfield Charitable Trust Pet Advocacy Grants
  - banfield.com/banfield-foundation/programs
- Jackson Galaxy Project/Greater Good Foundation
  - thejacksongalaxyproject.org/About-Us/Programs/Safe-Haven
  - Can help to design a SAF-T shelter
- Red Rover DV Safe Escape Grants
  - redrover.org/rede kv-saf escape-grants/
- Red Rover Safe Housing Grants
  - redrover.org/rede kv-safe-housing-startup-grants/

Welcoming Pets

- Intake and Assessment
- Pet Supplies
- Caring for Pets
- Enrichment
- Noises
- Safety and Security
- Abandoned Pets
- Leaving the Shelter
- Pet Grief Counseling
- Assessing SAF-T

Meet the shelters:

Housing Option 1
Pets in the resident’s room

Cost = None
Set-Up Time = Immediate
Comfort = Greatest
Allergies/Fear of Pets = Controllable

Victorville, CA
High Desert Domestic Violence Program

Caldwell, ID
Advocates Against Family Violence

“We recognized several years ago the need for families and pets to stay together during the healing process and the journey to safety.

Over the years we have had dogs, cats, birds, fish, turtles, guinea pigs and hamsters”
Tacoma, WA
YWCA Women’s Support Shelter

- Opened doors to pets in 2002
- House pets in individual rooms

Meet the shelters:
Housing Option 2
Indoor Kennel

Cost = Low ($100-$500)
Set-Up Time = A few days
Comfort = Some
Allergies/Fear of Pets = Controlled

Bailey, CO
Mountain Peace Shelter

Ft. Walton Beach, FL
Shelter House

Naples, FL
Shelter for Abused Women & Children

Sarasota, FL
Safe Place
Meet the shelters:
Housing Option 3
Outdoor/Backyard Kennel

Cost = Potentially thousands of dollars
Set-Up Time = Several months/years
Comfort = Least
Allergies/Fear of Pets = None

Whiteville, NC
Families First

Kenai, AK
The LeeShore Center

Kelseyville, CA
Lake County Resource Center

Aurora CO
Gateway
- The Bailey Project
- Started in 2009
- Accept cats, dogs, birds
- Housing options 1, 2 and 3
  - All rooms have hard flooring to be pet optional
  - Basement with 2 pet friendly rooms
  - Outdoor kennel with fenced in area
- Families responsible for pet care
- MOU with Aurora Animal Control and Denver Dumb Friends League

Fort Collins, CO
Crossroads
AWARE’s program was one that touched the hearts of everyone who heard about it. We told our story to anyone that would listen, which got us invitations to speak at various civic organizations. Through these presentations came monetary donations from the groups as well as from private individuals. AWARE also had fundraisers which included candy bar sales, a Zumba class, and pizza sales. A local church did a drive for dishes, beds, and animal toys and Dad’s Pet Food, of Meadville, PA, donated coupons for dog and cat food.
Greenwood, SC
Meg’s House

Brigham, UT
New Hope Crisis Center

Jackson, WY
Community Safety Network

Meet the shelters:

**Housing Option 4**
**Transitional Housing**

- Cost = Varies (often rental housing)
- Set-Up Time = Depends on landlord
- Comfort = Greatest
- Allergies/Fear of Pets = Controllable

Transitional Housing

- Housing people and their pets must continue throughout the process.
- A break in the housing program creates a barrier to safety and can result in people and pets returning to an abusive environment or living homeless.

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Transitional Housing

**Issues**
- No transitional housing program
- Lack of affordable housing
- Renters
  - Landlord consent
  - Pet deposits
  - Pet damage

**Solutions**
- Find pet-friendly rentals
- Pay pet deposit
- Pay rent
- Supply a pet reference letter
Pet-Safe Transitional Housing Programs

- Domestic Violence Intervention Program (Iowa City, IA) uses Rapid Rehousing and utility assistance funds
- Quanada (Quincy, IL) uses HUD Emergency Services Grant
- My Sister’s Place (Athens, OH) provides pet supplies
- Mitchell County SafePlace (Spruce Pine, NC) and YWCA of Clark County (Port Townsend, WA) pay pet deposits

Help for Shelters

- SAF-T Technical Assistance Center
- SAF-T Start-Up Manual (3rd edition)
- Sample Forms, Policies and Procedures
  - MOU between animal shelter and DV shelter
  - Pet supply checklist
  - Pet Intake Form
  - Pet Housing Agreement between resident and DV shelter
  - Procedures for residents with pets
  - Consent and Release for boarding at animal shelter
  - Pet Extended care contract
  - Resident evaluation form

Within the first few days of our SAF-T program being open to participants, the program proved to play a key part in keeping families together and safe. One of our first participants arrived in our shelter with her son from an abusive home where her boyfriend was very controlling and wouldn’t let them leave. During the (animal) checkups, it was discovered that the abuser did not feed the animals for five days.

- Alle-Kiski Hope Shelter (Tarentum, PA)

Getting Help

- Daily requests for help
  “I am a 32 year old single mother, 7 months pregnant and I have a puppy. My current living situation has become increasingly difficult. I would like to know my options of where I could go for safety.”

For more information and free technical assistance, please email allie@alliephillips.com or visit www.SAFTProgram.org