

Seeking a Pet This Holiday Season? Try Adoption

Back in the '90s, conventional wisdom among animal sheltering experts held that pet adoption during the holiday season was not a good idea. It might, they assumed, be stressful for pets or perhaps someone would give a pet as a gift. This policy of discouraging pet adoptions meant that many dogs and cats did not get out of animal shelters alive.



By Bonney Brown

Then along came Mike Arms, the director of Helen Woodward Animal Center. Arms is not one to let convention go unexamined. Why not, he thought, promote the adoption of the dogs and cats waiting in shelters during the holidays? Why allow the puppy mill industry to benefit from the natural desire to add a new pet to the family during the holiday? So, Arms created the *Home 4 the Holidays* campaign.

“Nobody wants to think about an orphaned pet waking up behind bars on a holiday morning,” said Arms. “Knowing that more families invite pets into their homes during the holidays than any other time of year, the best thing shelters can do is help match people with a pet that best fits their lifestyle.”

Twenty years ago, Arms organized the first holiday pet adoption drive, rallying 14 San Diego area shelters to participate. By the end of the campaign, 2,563 dogs and cats were waking up each morning with their new families. Word of this success spread and, the next year, more than 130 animal shelters in five states participated.

Not only did the Home 4 the Holidays adoption drive demonstrate that old fears were unfounded, studies have shown that pet adoption during the holiday season is truly the lifesaver for dogs and cats that Arms predicted it would be.

Since 1999, 16 million pets have been saved through Home 4 the Holidays. It is now the world's largest pet adoption drive with more than 4,000 animal shelters around the globe participating, including 35 shelters in Nevada. (You can find a shelter or rescue group near you doing adoptions this holiday season at maddiespetprojectnevada.org/adopt.)

Want to give the joy of a pet to someone outside your immediate family? Many animal shelters offer adoption gift certificates that allow the recipient to select a pet that meets their preferences and fits their lifestyle. You can even come to the adoption center together for what promises to be one of life's genuinely rewarding experiences: finding a new four-legged best buddy.

“There's no place like home for the holidays.” This love of home and the comfort it brings are something that the animals share with us. Giving that gift of a loving home to a new four-legged friend is sure to warm your heart this season.

Bonney Brown is Co-Founder and President of Humane Network. She created and sustained a 94% communitywide save rate as Executive Director for Nevada Humane



Society, which had more than 10,000 annual animal admissions. And she was National No More Homeless Pets Director, COO and Communications Director for Best Friends Animal Society.

