



July 23, 2007

Lorri Michel
Central Texas Animal Alliance
P.O. Box 41491
Austin, Texas 78704

Re: Proposed Relocation of Town Lake Animal Center

Dear Ms. Michel,

Thank you for offering me the opportunity to comment on the City of Austin's proposed shelter relocation and the arguments advanced by proponents of the effort to justify the move. For the reasons that follow, it is clear that the relocation is not in the best interests of saving the lives of animals. I have no doubt that due to the surrounding publicity, there will be a momentary spike in adoptions regardless of where the new shelter is built. But that spike can only be maintained by rebuilding the animal shelter on its existing location. In my opinion, relocating Austin's animal shelter would be a death sentence for dogs and cats who would otherwise find loving homes.

I do not make these claims lightly and without experience. As Director of Operations for the San Francisco SPCA, I oversaw a shelter with an \$8 million annual budget, over 150 staff members, a spay/neuter clinic which altered over 8,000 dogs and cats per year, and a full service animal hospital which saw approximately 35,000 patients annually. At the time, San Francisco was the only city and county in the nation saving all healthy homeless dogs and cats, a guarantee that extended to the city pound.

As Executive Director of a full service, open admission animal control shelter in New York State, I oversaw the creation of the nation's first—and at the time only—No Kill community in 2002, saving 93% of all impounded dogs and cats, all but animals who were hopelessly ill or injured, and truly vicious dogs who posed a direct and immediate threat to public safety.

Since then, I have consulted with some of the largest and best known public and private shelters in the United States including Philadelphia Animal Care & Control Association, the Nevada Humane Society, and others. This involvement, and the resulting follow through of my recommendations, has resulted in these shelters achieving double digit declines in killing, without corresponding budget increases, utilizing a programs-based model that is both cost-efficient and effective at lifesaving.

Historically, for example, the open admission animal control sheltering facility in Charlottesville, VA was the subject of relentless public criticism for what many in the rescue community saw as

poor customer service, inadequate care of animals, and unnecessary killing. In 2005, all that changed. A new director embraced not only my philosophy and programs, but allowed me to help train their staff and make recommendations on policies. One year later, the shelter achieved unprecedented success, saving 92 percent of *all* impounded dogs and cats at an open admission animal control facility, better than any other community in the nation that year.

By way of another example, after only a few months of launching an ambitious No Kill initiative which I created, Washoe County (Reno) Nevada under the leadership of the Nevada Humane Society (NHS) is saving over nine out of ten dogs and almost eight out of ten cats in one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Since January 1, compared to the same time frame for 2006:

- The kill rate for dogs has dropped 54%
- The kill rate for cats has dropped 46%

At the same time:

- The adoption rate for dogs has increased 97%
- The adoption rate for cats has increased 88%

Year to date, the county-wide save rate (including animal control) for dogs is 91% and the save rate for cats is 78%, despite taking in approximately 15,000 dogs and cats annually.

How were all these results—in San Francisco, Philadelphia, Tompkins County, Charlottesville, Washoe County, and elsewhere—achieved? As you will see, they have nothing to do with the model advocated by Ms. Karen Medicus and other proponents of the shelter relocation. In fact, following the advice of Ms. Medicus as articulated in her letters and position papers would prevent lifesaving success, and would take Austin further from its goal of a No Kill city.

The No Kill Model

In order to achieve No Kill, a community's shelters must be saving all healthy and treatable (sick, injured, traumatized, unweaned, feral, behaviorally challenged) dogs and cats. To do so, it must put in place a series of programs and services to lower birthrates, keep animals with their responsible caregivers, improve rates of redemption, keep animals healthy, well-socialized, and—above all things—alive while in the shelter's care, while vastly increasing adoptions. These programs are summarized in the enclosed attachment and are collectively called the "No Kill Equation." The No Kill Equation is the only model that has created a No Kill community, and consequently the model that must be followed if a city is sincere in its desire to replicate No Kill success.

The No Kill Equation is what allowed San Francisco to become the first city and county to end the killing of healthy homeless dogs and cats. Ms. Medicus, by contrast, argued in a circulated but unpublished letter to the editor that "collaboration involving all the agencies in the community" is the key to saving lives, and she says that this is "what made the San Francisco model work." In actuality, she is wrong. She claims that "it's helping improve save rates in Philadelphia" which is also wrong, since neither of the two other Philadelphia shelters are full partners in the initiative. And she says "[i]t's what's driving New York City's Mayor's Alliance to achieve its no-kill goals." She is correct that the Mayor's Alliance is *focusing* on collaboration but, not surprisingly, it is very far from achieving No Kill as a result.

Ms. Medicus is not alone in her lack of knowledge about the necessary prerequisites to achieving a No Kill community. Many in the sheltering industry misunderstand the San Francisco model, or offer various excuses for their inability to replicate its success. While shelters continue to kill large numbers of animals in the face of lifesaving alternatives, the primary reason for the failure to emulate San Francisco's success is the fundamental misinterpretation of what actually allowed San Francisco to succeed in its efforts. It was not—as Ms. Medicus would have you believe—a collaboration effort. Most agencies mistakenly assume that No Kill is not possible without collaboration, a point of view which has even been adopted by former administrators of the San Francisco SPCA. They focus on the “partnership” aspect between the private SPCA and the public pound. As such, they tend to emphasize collaboration at the expense of programs, even though it is actually the latter which accounted for San Francisco's success. Indeed, the San Francisco Department of Animal Care & Control had to be forced to participate and never fully embraced the effort, choosing to spend its resources denigrating No Kill and building a quasi-police department of code enforcement agents, rather than expand its own adoption efforts.

The San Francisco model is a *programs* model, and chief among these is having the animals available for adoption where people live, work, and play, not by relocating them to more remote or industrial parts of the city. In 2001, this package of programs and services was exported to Tompkins County, NY where it was implemented at a shelter that served as the animal control authority for the county. The agency took in all dogs and cats (including vicious and feral animals), and was staffed with New York State peace officers charged with enforcing local animal control ordinances and State anti-cruelty laws. These efforts resulted in a dramatic 75% decline in the shelter death rate. In 2005, the animal control authority for the City of Philadelphia endorsed and took measures consistent with the “San Francisco model” and also realized its benefits. After an implementation and transition phase, this has resulted in a better than 30% decline in shelter killing in the first eight months. Prior to implementation, the shelter was killing roughly 88% of all impounded animals. In Charlottesville, the local animal control authority saved 92% of dogs and cats using the same model. And despite taking in approximately 15,000 dogs and cats per year, deaths have declined by better than 50% in Washoe County, NV, where the county's two shelters are currently saving over 90% of dogs and nearly 80% of cats year-to-date, despite significant growth in both the human and animal population. In other words, a focus on programs trumps a need for collaboration.

As a result, any model that reverses them—that elevates consensus and collaboration over programs as Ms. Medicus is trying to do—will fail, as aptly demonstrated in the last few years of several nationwide No Kill attempts and coalitions—including Austin's Millennium Plan—that were long on promise and short on results.

If Austin is to succeed at creating a No Kill community, it needs to take actions that are strategic responses to the actual problems hindering the achievement of No Kill, and not phantoms of Ms. Medicus' wishful thinking. In other words, since there is only one model which has achieved success at creating No Kill time and time again in every community in which it has been implemented comprehensively, with rigor, and with integrity, Austin must follow *that* model. Among these programs—perhaps the most important of them all—is an intense, almost laser-like focus on maximizing adoptions, and eliminating the hurdles (bureaucratic and otherwise) that reduce them.

Maximizing Adoptions

Nationwide, based on the number of existing households with pets who have a pet die or run away, more homes potentially become available each year for cats than the number of cats who

enter shelters, while more than twice as many homes potentially become available each year for dogs than the number of dogs who enter shelters. In other words, based on the average lifespan of existing pet dogs and cats, every year more families are potentially looking to bring a new dog or cat into their home than currently enter shelters. According to one commentator, “since the inventory of pet-owning homes is growing, not just holding even, adoption could in theory replace all population control killing right now—if the animals and potential adopters were better introduced.” In other words, if shelters did a better job at adoptions, they could eliminate all population control killing today, a fact that has been shown to be true in No Kill communities which have replaced killing with adoptions. This does not include the fact that the market of homes (the number of homes which do not currently have a dog or cat but will acquire one) is expanding rapidly. If shelters increased market share by just a few percentage points, we could be a No Kill nation right now.*

Rather than follow the model which has proven to be successful, I was disappointed to read that in her February 22 circulated but unpublished letter to the editor, Ms. Medicus claims that “the problem is not getting adopters to the shelter, but rather, having enough desirable and placeable animals to choose from.” In other words, to justify high kill rates at Town Lake Animal Center (TLAC) and its failure to save more lives, she argues that the animals are being killed because they are not “desirable” or “placeable.” To argue that the animals are not desirable enough to fit her highly restrictive and unfair definition of what constitutes an “adoptable” animal would be ludicrous, if the end result—the killing of homeless animals who can and should be saved—were not the tragic result. In short, she blames the animal victims—a view that is not only unfair, it is not supported by the facts, antithetical to No Kill, and by its overly restrictive and unfair definition of which animals are considered “placeable,” inherently prohibits it.

As the experiences in San Francisco, Tompkins County, Charlottesville, Washoe County, and other more progressive shelters prove, over 90% of incoming shelter animals are safe to place in homes with children and other animals, and are possible to find homes for regardless of age or subjective notions of beauty or desirability. But it is up to shelters to promote their pets effectively so they find their way into those homes. Adopting an animal means a shelter does not kill that animal. Instead of adopting their way to No Kill, however, too many shelters continue to make excuses for their own failures and rely on meaningless platitudes to justify their refusal to change. In reality, lifesaving is directly in shelter management’s hands. And this finds no better example than in the misguided attempt to relocate the Austin shelter away from its current location—away from prime retail, residential, and commercial corridors, with plenty of “human traffic”—to a less affluent, more industrial part of the city.

As it stands, people only get their pets from shelters fifteen percent of the time because shelters have historically done a poor job of getting good homes to adopt animals. These barriers include poor customer service, cost, and unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles to adoption, particularly in the face of other, more convenient, avenues for adopting animals. One of the primary inhibitors to maximizing adoptions is the location of the shelter. Shelters tend to be placed in outlying parts of a city such as in industrial areas, away from the centers of commerce, retail and prime residential neighborhoods. In other words, away from where the vast majority of adopters, volunteers, and other members of the community work, live, and play. Combined, this results in

* As discussed in the conclusion to this letter, that Town Lake Animal Center is far from No Kill given the prime location of the current shelter, a nearly doubling of its budget, and a very progressive community of citizens committed to No Kill, is indicative of shelter leadership’s failure to fully embrace a rigorous implementation of all the programs and services of the No Kill Equation.

failing to meet the community's adoption potential—resulting in missed opportunities and lives needlessly lost.

In addition to her superficial understanding of the San Francisco model, Ms. Medicus has not been personally involved in any of the other cities she describes for her proposition of what is required to achieve No Kill in her February letter (i.e., New York City and Philadelphia) and betrays an ignorance as to what is actually occurring there. Ms. Medicus states that “collaboration involving all the agencies in the community” is what is “helping improve save rates” in New York City, and “in Philadelphia, another ASPCA Mission: Orange community where the ASPCA has provided funding and program-building to organizations like Philadelphia Animal Care and Control (PACCA) and the University of Pennsylvania vet school [sic].” Again, she is simply wrong.

First, New York City was plagued by an animal control shelter director, since terminated, who manipulated data in order to create the impression of progress toward No Kill goals. As an example of No Kill success, New York City is a bad comparison. And while Philadelphia has had better success, it was my analysis, recommendations and road map which is directly responsible for the renaissance in lifesaving occurring there. And this renaissance was based on an adoption focus utilizing the programs and services of the No Kill Equation, not a collaborative model where shelter leadership remained silent in the face of inaction or lack of effective focus by other shelters.

While I am grateful that the ASPCA is funding initiatives at PACCA and the University Of Pennsylvania College Of Veterinary Medicine, they are funding initiatives that I either developed or was intimately involved in developing, without ASPCA assistance. In other words, their involvement has been funding initiatives “after-the-fact.” I do not in any way mean to downplay their assistance, it has been valuable. And their generosity of funding continues to support lifesaving programs. But it is misleading and stretching the truth to the point of breaking to create the impression that the ASPCA was involved in program development on any significant scale or scope. (To be sure, Ms. Medicus has not been personally involved.)

In fact, Ms. Medicus' ignorance about Philadelphia is underscored by the fact that agency leadership there is struggling to overcome the primary hurdle in continued double digit growth in save rates—their location in an industrial part of the city. PACCA's primary initiative for 2008 is to locate and staff a downtown Philadelphia (Center City) pet adoption center. In other words, to push even closer to their No Kill goal, PACCA is desperately trying to achieve what TLAC already has: a centrally located facility in the vibrant mixed use community of Philadelphia's Center City. By contrast, Ms. Medicus is urging the city of Austin to give that up and take a giant step backward to a remote part of the city.

Poor location (in an industrial part of the city) was also a drawback that the San Francisco SPCA had to work to overcome. Like Philadelphia, it was the shelter's poor location in an industrial part of San Francisco that forced leadership there to put into place a program where the animals were taken to as many as seven different locations throughout the city each and every day to maximize adoptions—locations central to downtown and the city's primary corridors of retail and commercial traffic. Once again, Ms. Medicus shockingly advocates the opposite—taking the shelter from a prime location and placing it in a more remote location, exactly the opposite of what was and is key for San Francisco and Philadelphia, and an action which is contrary to the prescription for a No Kill Austin.

Failure is the New Success

Ms. Medicus' lack of awareness of the basic prerequisites of shelter location and a rigorous adoption focus given her position in the humane community is certainly surprising, but her claims to know how to achieve No Kill are not. How would she know? She has never succeeded in creating one herself despite her opportunity to do so in Austin as the Executive Director of the local humane society, nor has she ever been personally involved in creating one in her positions with either the Humane Society of the United States or the ASPCA.

In fact, the Humane Society of the United States was (and remains) an agency openly hostile and derisive of the No Kill paradigm during her tenure there, while the ASPCA has never created a No Kill community, and has—until very recently—historically been hostile to No Kill, once calling it a “hoax,” “misleading,” “inflammatory,” and “smoke and mirrors.” The point of all this is that neither the ASPCA, nor any of the signatories to the February 22 letter have expertise in creating a No Kill community. Indeed, Karen Medicus was the director of the Austin Humane Society at the time that TLAC was killing over 10,000 dogs and cats annually, and the resulting No Kill Millennium plan to end this tragedy was a resounding failure—a failure which has as its roots not in a growing human population or an inadequate physical facility, but a deeply flawed plan, evidencing a lack of knowledge as to what is necessary to create a No Kill community. According to press releases, Ms. Medicus was one of the architects of the plan.

Not surprisingly, Ms. Medicus dismisses the fact that the new shelter plans do not call for increases in available animal holding space. She claims that doing this is simply “warehousing animals.” Such claims further underscore her lack of expertise and knowledge about No Kill sheltering principles. First, No Kill has nothing to do with “warehousing animals.” To imply that increasing shelter capacity by definition means warehousing, therefore, is a cynicism which has only one purpose: to defend those who are failing at saving lives from public criticism and public accountability by painting a picture of the alternative as even darker.

More importantly, this claim flies in the face of others made by TLAC leaders and supporters. If the City's population is growing, and they blame this fact on the failure of their previous lifesaving claims—a fact, by the way, which is at odds with the success of Washoe County's in one of the fastest growing counties in Nevada at the same time they are seeing double-digit declines in shelter killing—shouldn't they be asking for increases in shelter capacity to handle that? Shelter staff routinely claims that they have no choice but to kill because they lack space at the shelter. Now, they are claiming they do not want additional space. It is a contradiction that cannot be reconciled.

Third, Ms. Medicus claims that the ASPCA has committed \$600,000 over a three year period to help achieve No Kill in Austin; and by dangling this carrot in front of the city, she is suggesting that such funding will make a lifesaving difference. Yet the Austin Humane Society secured a \$3.9 million dollar grant from Maddie's Fund to make Austin a No Kill city under the plan advanced by Medicus. What happened? Ignoring existing models for No Kill success, it failed after one year. As a result, the funder pulled its commitment. If Ms. Medicus and her supporters could not succeed with \$3.9 million, why should we believe that they can make significant headway with a fraction of that?

Fourth, to bolster their credibility, shelter relocation proponents trump out the same “old players” who have a history of opposing progressive programs to save lives. Kim Intino, an official with the Humane Society of the United States, who recently argued (albeit unsuccessfully) against implementation of a No Kill goal in King County, WA, adds that locating

a shelter in areas where the shelter is likely to see the most adoptions should not be the primary factor in considering a shelter's location. Kim Intino is wrong. When considering the location of the shelter, the primary focus *should be on maximizing adoptions* if the agency is sincere in its desire to achieve No Kill success.

It should be noted that HSUS has never run an animal shelter and does not do so today, nor do they officially speak for humane societies or animal shelters or set policy for any of them. Nor are we aware that Kim Intino has ever run an animal shelter and certainly not one that has achieved No Kill success. It is time that the humane community and city governments cease relying on the advice of agencies and individuals which have never achieved No Kill community success. In fact, it is irresponsible for individuals and organizations with absolutely no experience achieving No Kill cities to be offering themselves as experts to city governments, especially in light of the evidence that it is a concept to which they have been historically opposed and that they have at best, only a superficial understanding (and an erroneous one at that) of the dynamic and exciting changes occurring in the field of animal sheltering as a result of the No Kill movement, and the models which have proven successful in those communities which have implemented them.

In other words, the City of Austin should not be following the recommendations of people who have been given nearly a decade to achieve No Kill success and have utterly failed to do so. It has been said by various observers that the definition of insanity is “doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.” Keep in mind that some of the proponents of the shelter move are individuals who have argued in the past that they needed more money to do a better job and overseen the growth of TLAC's budget from \$2.9 to \$4.8 million, while the number of dogs and cats killed has also increased despite the additional budgetary allocations.

After-The-Fact Justifications

City staff justifications for relocating the shelter offer little added value. First, city staff admit that the new “[l]ocation [is] not as ‘central’ as [the] existing site.” In order to rationalize the move, they are claiming that it “is more ‘central’ for the customers we are serving.” This is misleading. To the extent that they are moving the shelter away from prime retail, commercial, and residential corridors, they are undermining their ability to save lives, increase adoptions, improve volunteerism and keep the shelter in the public eye. The “customers” of TLAC—the animals who face life and death at the shelter, the adopters, taxpayers, and animal lovers—who want No Kill success will certainly not be served.*

Second, city staff claims that intakes occur predominantly in the areas surrounding the proposed location and by relocating the shelter there, it will be easier for people to abandon their animals at the shelter, even if it makes it more difficult for other people to adopt them. This is a clear admission that the priority is not on lifesaving, not even in a balanced way. Since the shelter can pick up animals, or people can take them to the shelter, the current location offers the best of both worlds. By contrast, the shelter is not going to drive animals to their new homes. Making it easy to surrender and hard to adopt will not result in a No Kill community. The city, if it wishes, can do both, but only if it retains the shelter in the most vibrant part of the community, at the

* The notion of “build it and they will come”—a phrase used by Ms. Medicus at a public meeting where the shelter relocation was discussed—is not only an overused cliché which has no basis in principles of sheltering or sound government, but decisions about life and death for tens of thousands of animals and the expenditure of some 12 million dollars in public funds should not be based on a Kevin Costner movie about the ghosts of dead baseball players who come to life if the fictional character will only chop down his corn field and build a baseball stadium for them to play in.

center of its residential, retail, and commercial corridors. Nor does moving to a location where more intakes occur necessarily “better serve” people who want to surrender their pets. The number of intakes at the current location shows that this is not really a problem.

But more importantly, this isn’t even true. According to the data I reviewed, as you accurately indicated, “None of the zip codes surrounding the City’s proposed site—near the intersection of Airport Road and East 7th Street—is even among the top 7 highest-intake zip codes.” The current site is located where adoptions and intakes are highest, making the current location the preferred one. As you so correctly state:

The current site is also closer to the areas of Austin where most strays come from and where most adopters come from. It is closer to the city’s geographic and population centers. And it is in an area that is a daily destination for thousands of Austinites.

Third, the city further claims that the new location will allow *new* people to volunteer, who have not historically done so because of the shelter’s current location. If these people are not willing to go to the current location to volunteer, doesn’t that underscore the point that if the shelter is not centrally located, it will reduce volunteerism? In other words, the city itself is admitting the move will lead to fewer volunteers. And, by logical extension, fewer adoptions. In the battle of clichés, “out of sight, out of mind” trumps “build it and they will come” time and time again.

Finally, the city argues that the move is necessary because the current shelter is in the floodplains. Several points undermine this as a viable reason to proceed with the relocation:

- As you indicated, the site has never flooded from rising water from the Colorado River.
- The cost to raise the site entirely above the floodplain is under \$450,000.
- According to a news report, the City has already offered the site for redevelopment.

It is unfortunate that city staff would use photographs of rising waters caused by their own incompetence in sub par construction of drainage systems and failure to subsequently correct this deficiency, and then try to capitalize on their own mismanagement and incompetence to justify their land grab of this prime real estate at the expense of the animals. Undermining future adoption prospects for homeless pets who rely on city staff for their very lives is a violation of their fiduciary duty to the animals who have been entrusted to the care of TLAC staff.

A Time for Change

Since Austin first announced a No Kill goal in the 1990s, several progressive communities have swept past your city and achieved it, or are systematically on their way to achieving it, while Austin is killing more dogs and cats than it did in 2000, the year by when it promised No Kill success. This is not an attack against Austin. Austin itself is a very progressive city with citizens who clearly want No Kill. The problem is not the fault of Austinites, although shelter leadership is quick to assign blame to them. It is the fault of shelter leadership and other advocates who are promoting old models which have failed—both in Austin and elsewhere—to achieve No Kill success.

Why is Austin failing, when other communities are not? The answer is simple. The approach advocated by Ms. Medicus and others shows a profound lack of understanding of how to achieve success primarily because it does not address shelter practices which are contrary to saving lives. Chief among these practices are underplaying the value of adoptions and how to increase them.

As you so tragically put it, since the grand promises of the No Kill Millennium plan:

[t]he amount of killing [has been] staggering: 80,659 pets have been killed at the shelter since October 2000. That's 12,381 each year, 1,032 each month, 34 each day. The pound has put an animal to death every 12 minutes it has been open to the public this decade. Faced with the fact that cities like San Francisco and Ithaca, N.Y., no longer kill healthy, adoptable pets at their shelters, the systematic killing at the Austin facility is nothing short of tragic. Change is needed.

You are correct, change is needed. But that change is not a relocation of the shelter and it is not more “expertise” from people who have failed to achieve No Kill time and time again, have failed to learn from their own mistakes, and have failed to learn from the success of others. At some point, Austinites are going to grow weary of false promises of flawed No Kill messages which have no hope for success because they are based on faulty reasoning and after-the-fact justifications, and are reliant on leaders who do not know what is necessary to stop the killing because they have never been able to do so, and do not appear interested in following the lead of those who have. As a result, Austinites are going to erroneously conclude that No Kill is not achievable.

In fact, it would not be surprising if shelter leaders ultimately tell them that to avoid taking responsibility for their own failures. Instead of comparing Austin to cities which are performing more poorly, as the current shelter director does to avoid accountability, the people of Austin should compare their shelter to those saving the vast majority of animals. If Austin is a first rate city, as I believe it is, it deserves a shelter with a first rate level of lifesaving, something it currently does not have (not even close). The people of Travis County—and most especially, the animals—deserve it.

As a result, I have no choice but to conclude that the real impediment to success in Austin is not public irresponsibility, it is not lack of money, it is not the shelter facility itself, it is a failure of leadership to put forth a roadmap which learns from history, rejects the failures of the past, and embraces those programs, services, and policy decisions consistent with communities which not only claim to be seeking No Kill success, but have or are actually achieving it.

It has been over a decade since communities with compassionate animal directors have achieved success at saving lives. Most shelter directors have chosen to ignore that success, while digging in their heels and disparaging the No Kill philosophy. In others, they have responded to public pressure by putting forth bold claims and promising success in five years in order to silence their critics, yet failing to implement the programs to make such promises a reality, while the business of killing in their shelters continues as usual.

Animal control directors have already had more than enough time to embrace No Kill and make it a reality. And yet No Kill exists in only a handful of communities. The energy and resources to achieve success have instead been squandered on fighting and denigrating it or—like the \$3.9 million dollar Maddie’s Fund grant and the No Kill Millennium plan—promising success which has not been forthcoming. And ultimately, these shelters are doing what they are doing in our name: they are doing it with our taxes, with our donations, as agencies representing us, and they are even blaming us (and our neighbors) for doing it by claiming they have no choice because of the public’s irresponsibility. And although we are picking up the tab, we are not paying the ultimate price. That is being paid by the animals who are unfortunate enough to enter U.S.

shelters and lose their lives as a result. And it will not end until we put the blame directly where it belongs: *on the shelters themselves*.

That TLAC is killing an inordinate number of dogs and cats is testament to the need for more accountability on—or more accurately, change in—its leadership and staff. With a prime location, a community hungry for No Kill, a nearly doubling of the budget in the last ten years, the failure is theirs and theirs alone.

Imagine this: if every shelter did as well as communities who have embraced No Kill, we would save 4.1 million of the five million dogs and cats who are scheduled to be killed in U.S. shelters this year. It is not an impossible dream. And Austin can—and should—help lead the way. For, at the end of the day, the power to change the status quo is in our hands.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Nathan J. Winograd". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nathan" being more prominent and the last name "Winograd" following in a similar style.

Nathan J. Winograd

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