



Sessions & Breakouts

Below is the current full agenda. Check back often for updates to speakers and sessions!

You'll leave inspired, energized, and equipped with cutting-edge knowledge and practical strategies to bring lifesaving home to more dogs and cats in your community.

All Dates
2/20-2/22

Thursday
2/20

Friday
2/21

Saturday
2/22

Filters



Q Search

February 20, 2025

8:30 AM PT

General Session

Julie Castle

Chief Executive Officer

Best Friends Animal Society

9:35 AM PT

Advancements in Neonatal Kitten Care

Neonatal kitten care has seen significant advancements over the past decade. That's the great news. At the same time, social media has created thousands of influencers sharing information on the best ways to save thes...

 [view more](#)

Marnie Russ

Founder, Executive Director

National Kitten College

Julie Levy

Director, Shelter Medicine Program

University of Florida

Check Yourself: Catch Biases That Block Potential Adop...

Don't have a 6-foot fence? You must be a bad dog owner. Don't have a full-time job? You must not be able to afford vet care, so you can't adopt from us. Don't own your own home? There's no way you can take care of one of our ...

 [view more](#)

Amanda Roos

Placement Manager

Belleville Area Humane Society

Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions: Funding Challenges

In this session, we will be building on the idea of working through shared challenges together as a group with the hope of arriving at shared solutions that can benefit all. No PowerPoint, no presentations, just facilitated

 [view more](#)

Sarah Goldberg

Philanthropy Advisor

Best Friends Animal Society

Shifting the Paradigm: From Enforcement to Engagement

This session addresses a powerful trend: getting your community engaged with animal welfare. Where the traditional enforcement approach focuses on imposing rules and regulations to ensure compliance, communities ...

 [view more](#)

Christina Avila

Animal Control Supervisor

City of Perris Animal Control

Storytelling Chops: Turn Ordinary Into Extraordinary W...

Tell more stories and save more lives — we'll help you do it with this presentation. In 2022, Kendall Jenner took the world by storm by cutting a cucumber in an unusual manner. One year later, interest remained so high ...

[view more](#)

Arin Greenwood

Director of Philanthropy Communicati...
Austin Pets Alive!

Kristen Peralta

Founder and Executive Director
Vintage Pet Rescue

Thinking Like an Entrepreneur: Strategies for Animal S...

Through entrepreneurial thinking, shelters and rescue groups can adopt innovative strategies, achieve their goals, and save more lives. A proactive, entrepreneurial approach analyzes others in the market, identifies unique

[view more](#)

Gina Knepp

National Shelter Engagement Director
Michelson Found Animals

Winning Community Buy-In to Increase Lifesaving

Change is hard. Getting support for change can be even harder. Communities that resist animal welfare improvements deserve your best shot to bring them along. It's how you approach creating community buy-in...

[view more](#)

Mirah Horowitz
CEO
Lucky Dog Animal Rescue

Heidi Marston
Director, Pet Placement Initiatives
PetSmart Charities

10:45 AM PT

Homeward Bound: A Data-Driven Approach to Return-t...

Has your organization tried return-to-home (RTH) programming but hasn't seen an increase in its save rate? This workshop offers proven strategies for getting pets back to their families, explores case studies and step by step

[view more](#)

Alisha Vianello
Executive Director
Gateway Pet Guardians

Jill Henke
Operations Director
Gateway Pet Guardians

Lifesaving in the Face of Crisis: Community Partnership...

In 2022, Pasco County Animal Services faced an outbreak of canine pneumovirus among its dogs. The organization was able to proactively quarantine animals, communicate with the shelter veterinary community, ...

[view more](#)

Spencer Conover
Assistant Director
Pasco County Animal Services

Move Mountains: How to Effect Change Without Having...

Ready to change the status quo in a big way? You can craft policies within the bounds of current legislation that have a huge impact on lifesaving at your shelter. Join Best Friends' legislative attorneys for a presentation on law

 [view more](#)

Reghan Lynch

Legislative Attorney
Best Friends Animal Society

Kelsey Gilmore-Futeral

Senior Manager, Legislative Attorne
Best Friends Animal Society

Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions: Pathway Planning...

In this session, we will be building on the idea of working through shared challenges together as a group with the hope of arriving at shared solutions that can benefit all. No PowerPoints, no presentations, just facilitated

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Erin Katribe

Director, National Veterinary Programs
Best Friends Animal Society

Using Crisis Communication Skills to Build Momentum ...

How do we communicate the urgency of our no-kill goals while avoiding despair, fatigue, and panic? Crisis management offers strategies that help communities step up lifesaving by focusing on success and momentum. ...

 [view more](#)

David Hatch

Assistant Professor; Director, Master o...
Southern Utah University

Valeena Wood

MIS Student, Interim University Reg
Southern Utah University

Watch Your Tone! How Compassionate Communication...

Why is our intake department always getting yelled at? At the Lynchburg Humane Society, I asked this question in the summer of 2023, and boy did I get some answers! Our intake staff were acting like bouncers, guarding the ...

 [view more](#)

Kristen Brown

Behavior and Training Manager
Lynchburg Humane Society

Where Human and Animal Welfare Meet: Risk Assessm...

This session explores the profound connection between human and animal welfare. With two decades of dedicated service to social work and community service, the founder of Justice for Paws Animal Rescue will share innovative ...

 [view more](#)

Colette Junod

President
Justice for Paws Animal Rescue

Elizabeth Young

Licensed Professional Counselor/Vc
Justice for Paws Animal Rescue

1:45 PM PT

Best Frenemies: How to Turn Critics Into Advocates

This session addresses three approaches to managing the critics in your social media comments, and in your community, while also educating and mobilizing your allies. ...

 [view more](#)

Stephanie Adams-Hawkins
Pet Adoption Coordinator
City of Norman Animal Welfare

Kellee Robertson
Animal Welfare Center Manager
City of Norman Animal Welfare

Embracing the Realities of Running an Animal Shelter: ...

I entered the field of animal welfare driven by a passion for making a difference and saving lives. While my motivations were crucial, the day-to-day realities of running an animal shelter often presented me with unforeseen ...

 [view more](#)

Sarah Hock
Executive Director
Joint Animal Services

Get Them Home and Keep Them Home: Data-Driven Sol...

Informed post-adoption and surrender diversion strategies can keep pets in homes. Come learn the most common reasons adopters and community members surrender their pets — and the root causes that are often behind...

 [view more](#)

Anamarie Johnson
Research Scientist and Behavior Consu...
Petcademy

Jordan Craig
Executive Director
Spay Neuter Network

Rural Sheltering Basics: Right-Sized Approaches to Our ...

Rural areas constitute a significant portion of the United States, encompassing 90% of the country's landmass yet home to approximately 20% of the population. Small, under-resourced organizations in these areas...

 [view more](#)

Cole Wakefield

Executive Director

Good Shepherd Humane Society

Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions: DEIB in Animal W...

In this session, we will be building on the idea of working through shared challenges together as a group with the hope of arriving at shared solutions that can benefit all. No PowerPoints, no presentations, just facilitated

 [view more](#)

Dawn Binion-Stewart

Director, DEIB

Best Friends Animal Society

Social Media for Good: Elevating Your Animal Welfare O...

A compelling and strategic social media presence is no longer optional in today's world — it's essential. For animal welfare organizations, social media offers a unique opportunity to connect with supporters, tell powerful storie...

 [view more](#)

Kayla Mullen

Marketing & PR Manager

Faithful Friends Animal Society

Tipping the Scales: How to Get 2/3 of Your Animals Into ...

Leaders in our industry have long encouraged shelters to shift to a foster-centric model in an effort to increase shelter capacity and save more lives. As we work to achieve no-kill around the country in 2025 and beyond, this

[view more](#)

Josh Fisher

Director

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care & ...

Julie Hollifield

Shelter Veterinarian

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Care

2:55 PM PT

Core Principles of Lifesaving 101: Navigating Lifesaving ...

This session will explore the vital role of gap analysis in enhancing animal shelter operations and field services. Performing this type of data analysis can be intimidating and even overwhelming, so we'll break down this proce...

[view more](#)

April Moore

Senior Manager, Learning Advanceme...
Best Friends Animal Society

Lee Ann Shenefiel

Executive Advisor and Hays County
Austin Pets Alive!

Keeping Track: Strategies for Big Dog Intake and Place...

Sometimes big dogs get overlooked and fall through the cracks at busy shelters. We want to help you build systems to monitor dogs from the time they enter your shelter to the time they leave to make sure no dog goes ...

[view more](#)

Tori Fugate

Director of Communications
Shelter Animals Count

Tabitha Urban

Director of Canine Operations
KC Pet Project

Medical Triage for Veterinarians and Non-Medical Staff ...

Triage skills can make all the difference in your animal shelter. Animal services officers and admissions teams are often the first to interact with animals in need, making initial assessments and triage calls that are pivotal ...

[👁 view more](#)

Becca Boronat

Veterinarian, National Shelter Medicine
Best Friends Animal Society

Alexander "AJ" Caldwell

Senior Specialist, National Shelter S
Best Friends Animal Society

Pick Me! Tips From South Carolina's Successful Statewi...

Every summer, animal lovers in South Carolina get together in July for a popular adoption event. The Pick Me! SC project has two key components: One is the marketing and media toolkit that includes assets for English and

[👁 view more](#)

Abigail Appleton

Chief Project Officer, No Kill South Carolina
Charleston Animal Society

Recruiting and Engaging Your Dream Board

A high-performing board is the backbone of any successful nonprofit, providing critical leadership, governance, and strategic oversight. But how do you attract and retain board members who align with your mission and bri...

 [view more](#)

Shelly Moore

CEO

Humane Society of Charlotte

Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions: Getting the Com...

In this session, we will be building on the idea of working through shared challenges together as a group with the hope of arriving at shared solutions that can benefit all. No PowerPoints, no presentations, just facilitated

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Gina Burrows

Senior Manager, Pacific Region

Best Friends Animal Society

4:05 PM PT

Bilingual Resources to Engage the Spanish-Speaking Co...

With the U.S. Spanish-speaking population rapidly growing, organizations that don't adjust their messaging risk missing out on a significant, engaged audience. This session will explore how leveraging bilingual resources can ...

 [view more](#)

Marisa Sutherland

Senior Strategist, Marketing - Community
Best Friends Animal Society

First Choice: Making Your Shelter the Logical Place for ...

Take a deep dive into the world of pet acquisition from the eyes of community members looking to find a pet. Learn about the factors that influence them, including what marketing tactics are deployed by pet ...

 [view more](#)

Audrey Lodato

Director, Regional Programs
Best Friends Animal Society

From Grassroots to Grasstops: How to Build Your No-Kil...

Over 70% of animal shelters in America are either government run or privately run with a government contract, and they are an integral part of our animal welfare communities. Saving lives is a challenge for the entire ...

 [view more](#)

Kaitlyn Simmons

Director of Grassroots Advocacy
Best Friends Animal Society

Eric Swafford

Director, Legislation and Campaign
Best Friends Animal Society

Help Me Help You: Shelter-Supported Rehoming and Pe...

For years, animal shelters and rescue groups have heroically tried to be the primary housing resource for animals in transition. If a pet needs a new home, our organizations play a major role, and all too often, we're the only ...

[!\[\]\(d0a1791f26d167e866e44ebbf83efebe_img.jpg\) view more](#)

Mandy Evans

Executive Director
Home To Home

Laura Van Wagner

Strategic Relationships Manager
Home To Home

Managing Canine and Feline Parvovirus in Shelters

With advances in veterinary medicine, what used to be a death sentence is no longer. However, managing canine parvovirus and feline parvovirus (aka panleukopenia virus) in shelters can still be scary and pose very real ...

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Amber Alu

Chief Medical Officer
SPCA of Texas

Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions: Community Cats

In this session, we will be building on the idea of working through shared challenges together as a group with the hope of arriving at shared solutions that can benefit all. No PowerPoints, no presentations, just facilitated

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David Owens

Senior Strategist, Shelter Collaborative
Best Friends Animal Society

The Journey to No-Kill: How a Municipal Shelter Used N...

Becoming a lifesaving shelter takes a conscientious decision to make a change, to treat every animal as an individual, and to recognize that support from your community is paramount to being successful. But it doesn't stop

 [view more](#)

Kaitlyn Pappas

Pet Resource Manager

Pima Animal Care Center

February 21, 2025

8:30 AM PT

Foster Care: Creating a Robust and Sustainable Progra...

The beauty of implementing a foster program for the first time is that so much has already been mapped out for you. This session will provide a complete guide to all things related to foster programming. We'll cover

 [view more](#)

Liz Stamper

Senior Regional Manager, Central Region

Best Friends Animal Society

From Passion to Progress: How to Run Your Rescue Gro...

Are you ready to elevate your rescue organization to new heights and increase your lifesaving potential? Dallas Pets Alive! (DPA) started from humble but strategically driven beginnings — with just five volunteers and ...

 [view more](#)

Leslie Sans

Founder & Executive Director
Dallas Pets Alive!

Love at First Click: The Science Behind Pet Photos and A...

How do you take photographs that make cats and dogs utterly captivating? This session will reveal all: the perfect pose, the ideal setting, the secrets to capturing hearts and driving engagement. By examining factors such as the...

 [view more](#)

April Huntsman

Senior Director, Animal Welfare
Adopt a Pet

Jen Zhao

Staff Product Designer
Adopt a Pet

Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions: Placing Big Dogs

In this session, we will be building on the idea of working through shared challenges together as a group with the hope of arriving at shared solutions that can benefit all. No PowerPoints, no presentations, just facilitated

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Brittany Thorn

Executive Director, LA Lifesaving Center
Best Friends Animal Society

Stress-Free Fundraising That Will Save More Lives Today

Say hello to your new best friend: an easy-to-follow plan that takes the stress out of fundraising. By utilizing our calendar with helpful templates for emails, social media, and the occasional phone call, you will compellingly tell your ...

 [view more](#)

Nicole Hardesty

Executive Director
SPCA of Brazoria County

Sarah Goldberg

Philanthropy Advisor
Best Friends Animal Society

Successful Returns: Communicating How Returning Cat...

Want to make the "R" in your trap-neuter-return (TNR) and return-to-field (RTF) efforts truly successful? Returning cats to their outdoor homes can create public confusion and even stir up criticism. Your knowledge and

 [view more](#)

Erica Roewade

Outreach Director
Cats in Action

Liz Houtz

Programs Director
Cats in Action

Your Starting Line: Actionable Steps to Accelerate Lives...

Where do you start when faced with the many challenges lifesaving throws at you? The Best Friends embed team will answer that question by sharing expertise from years of experience entering shelters to quickly help put

 [view more](#)

Taylor Lefebvre

Senior Manager, Eastern Region
Best Friends Animal Society

Ramon Villatoro

Dogtown Director
Best Friends Animal Society

Homeward Hounds: How Volunteers Can Help Get The...

Join us for an engaging session on Homeward Hounds, a return-to-home program that showcases the power of community-driven volunteer efforts in getting lost pets back to the people who love them — all while increasing

[view more](#)

David Maldonado

Senior Manager of Lifesaving Partners...
Operation Kindness

Anastasia Ramsey

Code Compliance Superintendent -
Fort Worth Animal Care and Contro

Mayors and Directors: Positive Results With Mutual Be...

Have you ever wondered about the positive effect animal services has beyond the walls of the animal shelter? Mayors and directors working hand in hand can help save lives while creating an economic impact on the entire...

[view more](#)

Mike Wheeler

Director
Cabot Animal Support Services

Ken Kincade

Mayor
City of Cabot

Public Relations 101: Leveraging the Media to Help You ...

Public relations can be daunting for those without a background in the field, but it doesn't have to be. In reality, PR can be a crucial factor in increasing pet lifesaving. In this session, we'll share the basics of communicating with the ...

[view more](#)

Natalie Perkins

PR Strategist

Best Friends Animal Society

Michelle Sathe

PR & Marketing Strategist

Best Friends Animal Society

Resourceful and Resilient: Building High-Impact Transf...

If you are looking to build a high-impact transfer program, either locally or beyond, this session is for you. We'll share low-cost, accessible strategies to improve transfer partnerships — locally and across state lines — and provi...

[!\[\]\(3e2231b1ad3ca8da8658228c00dd08e0_img.jpg\) view more](#)**Clare Callison**

Senior Director of Care Operations

Austin Pets Alive!

Heather Hall

Director

One Tail at a Time - West Texas

Shared Challenges, Shared Solutions: Overcoming Fears...

In this session, we will be building on the idea of working through shared challenges together as a group with the hope of arriving at shared solutions that can benefit all. No PowerPoints, no presentations, just facilitated ...

[!\[\]\(84f47badaad7772cd95667a7c387a639_img.jpg\) view more](#)**John Graves**

Strategist, East Region

Best Friends Animal Society

Makena Yarbrough

Senior Director, Lifesaving Centers

Best Friends Animal Society

The Lighthouse Method: Stoicism Can Save Lives in You...

Did you know that rationality and moral responsibility are key principles of stoicism? Learn to turn animal shelters into lighthouses staffed with compassionate, levelheaded individuals using the stoic philosophers as ...

 [view more](#)

Robert Bremer

Director

St. Tammany Parish Department of Animal Services

The Ultimate ROI: Major Gift Fundraising

Develop and bolster your major-gift fundraising programs by attending this session. You'll learn practical applications for organizations of all sizes and staffs with all levels of experience. We'll focus on best practices for donor

 [view more](#)

Brittany Eslary

Chief of Development

Paws for a Cause Vet Care

10:50 AM PT

General Session

Marc Peralta

Chief Program Officer

Best Friends Animal Society

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