Million Cat Challenge Receives $2.5 Million Grant to Continue Revolutionizing Animal Sheltering, Thanks to Maddie

One Million Cats Saved One Year Early

PLEASANTON, Calif., June 26, 2018 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) - Maddie’s Fund®, a national family foundation established by Dave and Cheryl Duffield to revolutionize the status and well-being of companion animals, is granting $2,580,741 to support the Million Cat Challenge as it expands to into its next phase of animal lifesaving in shelters across North America.

Annual Report

2017-2018
#AllTheCats say #ThanksToMaddie!

In many ways, this report is all about gratitude to Maddie, the feisty little dog whose spirit has saved more cats than any other living being on the planet. Maddie’s Fund®, established in her honor, provided us with the means to connect shelters across North America in a movement to save feline lives at an unprecedented scale.

How many lives?

**More than 1,000 North American animal shelters came together to save a total of **1,148,129 cats as of Dec. 31, 2017.**

Stop and let that sink in. One full year ahead of schedule, the Million Cat Challenge shelters saved more than one million cats.

If that wasn’t breathtakingly wonderful enough, when we came together in a standing room-only celebration with our cat-lifesaving community at Expo in Kansas City, the joy and the inspiration were enough to let most of us fly home without an airplane. (What did you think those capes were for?)

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“**That’s not just a million cats, but a million more cats saved than ever before.**

What started as a seemingly audacious goal has snowballed into a movement that can change the face of animal sheltering forever.

– Dr. Julie Levy”
We just can't stop looking at the numbers. We thought you might like to look at them, too:

- 1,148,129 LIVES SAVED through end of CY 2017
- ~860,000 felines are euthanized annually in the U.S.
- MCC shelters have reduced their euthanasia by nearly 450,000.
- 45% of estimated U.S. cat intake passes through MCC shelters

1,800,000 included in the challenge

1,425,787
As much as we’d like to revel in what the Challengers accomplished, we’re firmly committed to moving on to Million Cat 2.0. What’s that? We call it #AllTheCats, and it’s quite simply a plan to provide the right outcome and the right care for every cat in every shelter, and making sure every person who works or volunteers in a shelter has the opportunity to provide that right outcome and right care.

That means:

- We want lost cats to go back home to their families.
- We want cats who have lost their homes, to be adopted into new ones.
- We want cats who were thriving in the community to go right on thriving (minus their reproductive parts).
- For cats whose suffering can’t be remedied any other way, we want euthanasia to be available with the most kindness and comfort that can possibly be provided.
- And for a great many cats, we want them to stay safe in the community rather than ever having to come in to a shelter at all.

How will we do that?

We polled 131 Challengers whose shelters dropped feline euthanasia the most between 2012 and 2017, then took those findings and used them to develop tools that will benefit shelters both through the end of the Challenge and afterward. Our focus is on keeping cats out of shelters whenever possible, and improving the care they receive while in shelters.

That includes the development of scalable, online, interactive teaching methods to spread these lifesaving strategies to other shelters. This educational program is being managed by the team at UC Davis, and will allow shelter staffers to learn both from the shelter medicine programs at both universities as well as from their peers in other shelters.

Because education sometimes has to come to you, the team at UF is working one-on-one with large animal shelters. Shelter consultants are traveling to high-risk shelters and providing full-scale assessments and blueprints for saving more cats.

We’re also implementing bootcamp educational experiences as well as a series of short webinars aimed squarely at supporting feline lifesaving. The online bootcamps combine videos and written materials with videoconferencing so shelters can get the information they need, share their experiences with other shelters, and consult in real-time with shelter veterinarians. The bootcamps and webinars allow us to engage ever more shelters as they work toward providing the best care and finding the right outcomes for #AllTheCats.

“The cats deserve nothing less. The people who work in shelters deserve nothing less. The communities we serve deserve nothing less. And the very best name we could come up with for that is #AllTheCats.

– Dr. Kate Hurley
The fear and stress cats feel when they come into a shelter is only made worse when they’re crammed into a small space, forced to lie in or next to their litter pan. It’s like being locked into the tiniest of hotel bathrooms, and being expected to eat and sleep next to the toilet. That stress can make cats sick and reduce their chances of adoption, improving cat housing – specifically, giving them more space – is a critical component of the Million Cat Challenge key initiatives. That’s why, when Dr. Hurley was named a Maddie’s Hero and awarded a $10,000 grant in the category of “Big Picture Thinking,” she decided to create more space for shelter cats and “Portal it Forward.”

After inviting Challenge shelters to submit descriptions of why they needed portals in their cat housing, and how it would help save more cats’ lives, she was overwhelmed with the response. It was powerful, it was awe-inspiring – and it was beyond the resources of even the Hero Award money to cover. So she asked the community to help.

And they did, coming forward with another $10,000 from 212 donors, topped off with an additional small grant from the ASPCA. We were able to provide (drumroll, please) a total of 697 portals to 39 shelters! Assuming each portalized cage will last ten years, and that in a year, 30 cats pass through an average shelter cage, this one effort will impact the lives of more than a quarter million cats. For many, that will be the difference between life and death.

Because of the Hero Award and the whole animal-loving community, the following shelters got portalized:

- Oconee County Animal Services
- Chautauqua County Humane Society
- Bellweather Harbor
- City of Oshawa Animal Shelter
- Blue Moon Cat Sanctuary
- Animal Rescue League of Berks County
- Pawsibilities Animal Rescue
- Lowell Humane Society
- Allen County Animal Rescue Facility
- Helping Paws Animal Shelter
- Community Humane Shelter of Steuben County
- Humane Society of the Treasure Coast
- Brevard Humane Society
- Louisa County Animal Shelter
- Ten Lives Club Cat Rescue
- Alexander County Animal Services
- Safe Animal Shelter
- Suwannee County Animal Shelter
- Kern County

- Yuba County Animal Services Shelter
- Bakersfield SOCA
- Independent Cat Society
- Cat Depot
- PAWS of Bainbridge & North Kitsap
- Halifax Humane Society
- Sand Springs Animal Welfare
- Caddo Parish Animal Services & Mosquito Control
- Kenton County
- Ledyard Animal Control
- Morris Animal Refuge
- Petaluma Animal Shelter
- Saving Grace
- Maury County/City of Columbia Animal Services
- Lake City Humane Society
- Baltimore County Animal Services
- Vanderburgh Humane Society
- Escambia County

...this one effort will impact the lives of more than a quarter million cats
Discussion

The YahooGroup has continued to be a vibrant place for collaboration and peer support. Not a week goes by that a Challenger old or new doesn’t reach out to the group for help, advice, and support. However, in response to changes in our industry and limitations of the Yahoo platform, we were considering making a move to Facebook Groups to facilitate more engagement with our community.

Instead, after an inspiring presentation and series of conversations with the team at Maddie’s Fund, we are now working to move our community to the Maddie’s Pet Forum. This is a robust platform specifically designed for the animal welfare community, and we know that this transition will help move our community engagement to the next level, and last beyond the Challenge!
Four years ago, we came together at HSUS Expo and challenged ourselves and animal shelters to do something no one thought possible: Save the lives of 1 million shelter cats in just five years.

We honestly weren't sure it could be done, but we knew it was an idea whose time had come. Maddie’s Fund shared the vision, saw the potential, and took the risk of funding the Million Cat Challenge.

Now, just four years later, the data is in. The cats win.

And #ThanksToMaddie, we all have more than a million reasons to celebrate!
Appendix

Shelter Consultations and Mentoring

- Humane Society of Silicon Valley, Milpitas, CA
- City of Live Oak Animal Control, Live Oak, FL
- Villa Michelle Albergue de Animales, Mayaguez, PR
- Oklahoma City Animal Welfare, Oklahoma City, OK
- Suwannee County Animal Services, McAlpin, FL
- Arizona Humane Society, Phoenix, AZ
- Nate’s Honor Animal Rescue, Bradenton, FL
- NYC Animal Care and Control, New York, NY
- Citrus County Animal Services, Inverness, FL
- Humane Society of Puerto Rico, Guanabo, PR
- Flathead County Animal Shelter, Kalispell, MT
- Southeast Volusia Humane Society, New Smyrna Beach, FL
- Escambia County Animal Services, Escambia County, FL
- Edmonton Humane Society, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
- Marion County Animal Services, Ocala, FL
- Cat Depot, Sarasota, FL

Conference Presentations & Exhibits

- National Council on Pet Population’s Issue Illumination Forum, Chicago, IL
- HSUS Animal Care Expo, Kansas City, MO
- California Animal Care Conference, CA
- Broward County Animal Control, Fort Lauderdale, FL
- FAWWO/Best Friends Animal Society Workshop, Orlando, FL
- Veterinarian to Leader Emancipet Workshop, Gainesville, FL
- Humane Society of Vero Beach and Indian River, Vero Beach, FL
- Florida Animal Control Association, Orlando, FL
- Cat Depot, Sarasota, FL
- National Animal Care and Control Association, Virginia Beach, VA
- Society of Animal Welfare Administration, Miami, FL
- Beacon College, Community Cat Presentation, Leesburg, FL
- Community Cat Podcast – Lessons Learned While Facing Hurricane Irma

“... The Million Cat consultation team made two trips to Escambia County, Florida. As a result, RTF started at the Escambia County, Florida, municipal shelter and open adoptions at the Humane Society! These are major turning points for these two organizations, which are now committed to collaborating.
– Dr. Sara Pizano

Media Coverage

The Million Cat Challenge Has Reached Its Five-Year Goal of Saving a Million Cats a Year Early
US Weekly, May 21, 2018

Challenge helps cut cat euthanasia rate
Brantford Expositor, May 28, 2018

Bryant Animal Control vastly reduces cat euthanasia
THV11.com, KTHV-TV, CBS Bryant, AR, May 9, 2018

Oshawa Animal Services wins cat portals
April 25, 2018

Kitty curtain call: Winnipeg Humane Society asks for kennel covers to give cats alone time
CBC.ca, Aug. 23, 2017

Cats’ lives being saved locally
Brantford Expositor, Nov. 19, 2017

More Than 1 Million Cats Saved By Cutting Euthanasia Rates
KOVR-TV, CBS Sacramento, May 17, 2018

Saving a Million Cats — One at a Time
CCAH Update, Spring 2018