

How to Set Up a Community Education Booth

Many of the challenges that animal care and control workers face inside the shelter are brought about by problems outside the shelter. And more often than not, that's where you'll find the solutions as well. Incorporating a community education booth into your outreach program is a great way to teach people about animal issues and your shelter's programs.

By attending conventions and other local gatherings you can help ensure people associate friendly faces with their local animal shelter. When you come out from behind the shelter's front counter and take your place behind an exhibit booth, follow these steps to get the community behind your shelter.

Whether your shelter uses a simple tabletop display, a portable plywood booth, or a professionally designed showcase, make sure the display can be easily transported and quickly assembled by a few people.

1: Take it to 'Em

Before you spend too much time planning your exhibit and the presentation of your materials, consider the events you'll be attending. Contact your local chamber of commerce for information on exhibiting at malls, libraries, colleges, festivals, and fairs. Look beyond the traditional public events you may have attended in the past: Exhibit at domestic violence conferences to discuss the connection between animal cruelty and violence committed against people. Attend senior citizens' events to highlight volunteer opportunities at your shelter. And remember that just as important as where you present your issues is who presents your issues. Select staff members who make ideal community spokespersons—informed advocates who will enjoy telling people about your organization's programs and policies.



2: Find the Right Words

Make sure you have a calling card—a basic flier that provides people with information on your shelter's services, a map with directions to the shelter, hours of operation, and important phone numbers. Gather information on everything from "exotic" pets and feral cats to litter box training and the importance of ID tags. Create a storage system using milk crates or portable cardboard filing cabinets to hold the hundreds of pamphlets and fliers that you might take to public gatherings. Bring all your materials whenever you hit the road, but display only those items that seem most pertinent to your audience. Consider purchasing brochure racks or laminating a few educational flyers so they can be displayed vertically, inviting passers-by to take a closer look.

