

Want to help your community reach no-kill?

It starts with advocacy! If you want to help your community reach no-kill but don't know where to begin, explore the following resources compiled from Best Friends' National Action Week for Animals (NAWA). Email action2025@bestfriends.org with any questions. Let's go!

Step one

Start with understanding what no-kill is:

- WATCH: "Unite and inspire: Where YOU fit in the no-kill equation"
 - youtu.be/3j6ldweCavA (57:57)
- DO: Sign and share the no-kill pledge (bfas.org/nokillpledge) and this short video (youtu.be/Z514pH8bED4) on what no-kill means.

Step two

Share what you've learned about no-kill:

- WATCH: "Communicate for change: When and how to talk to people about animals"
 - youtu.be/xALEFTdx0fc (24:29)
- WATCH: "Canvassing your neighborhood"
 - (English) youtu.be/ZIZG8h9q3PA (13:27)
 - (Spanish) youtu.be/p3c42L_3ipI (10:45)
- WATCH: "How to write an op-ed"
 - youtu.be/rmDQSJqXA00 (16:53)
- WATCH: "Making public comment"
 - youtu.be/pYQJZEgkHJU (15:34)
- READ: "Write on (how to message elected officials)" (pages 2-3)
- READ: "Let's talk engagement (how to get the word out)" (pages 4-6)
- READ: "Op-eds" (pages 7-9)
- READ: "Public comment" (pages 10-11)
- DO: Share no-kill knowledge using one or more of the tactics you just learned!

Step three

Learn the power of a no-kill resolution:

- WATCH: "Put it in writing: Why your community needs a no-kill resolution (and how to start one)"
 - youtu.be/uKDjwOOKUeQ (26:07)
- READ: "No-kill resolutions" (pages 12-15)
- DO: Find out if your community has a no-kill resolution. If not, start the groundwork to get one.

Tips and best practices for messaging elected officials:

Be polite.

- Decision-makers are more likely to respond to friendly messages that offer collaboration, not criticism. Stay cordial!

Be proactive.

- Start building a relationship with your local elected official by simply letting them know who you are, what local issues you care about, and that you appreciate their service to your community. Your message doesn't need to come with an ask! In fact, starting a conversation without a particular ask can be a great way to get their attention.

Be patient.

- Elected officials have a lot of issues on their plate and may be unaware of the issues that are most important to you. Give them time to learn and understand why this particular issue matters to you and to the community.

Be specific.

- Think about what motivates elected officials and draft your message accordingly. Communicate using reasons like data, taxpayer savings, and community health benefits as opposed to purely emotional-based appeals (e.g., "these programs are cost-effective" rather than "these programs help fur babies!"). Share policy resources where applicable. <https://network.bestfriends.org/proven-strategies/advocacy/policy-resources>

Stay local.

- Local animal welfare programs are approved at the city and county levels; focus your advocacy messages accordingly! Search your city council and/or county commission for decision-makers to contact (e.g., your mayor, the council member for your district, etc.). Often, this information is found on your local government website. Emphasize that you are a member of the community, a constituent, and a voter. Use this sample letter form to identify and message your local and county officials now: bfas.org/writeon.

Grease the wheels!

- Make a personal connection. Congratulate the official for something they've done or that you've seen about them in the local paper, thank them for working and securing funding for a recent community project, etc. Everyone likes to feel appreciated, and this is a great opener when you're introducing yourself.

Sample message:

Dear [ELECTED OFFICIAL],

As your constituent in [COMMUNITY], I wanted to introduce myself and let you know that I care about our community, including the cats and dogs who live here. I appreciate your service to our community and wanted to share that this is an issue I am passionate about.

I am writing today to ask your support for advancing “no-kill” solutions in our local animal shelter. No-kill is defined as when 90% of the animals who enter a shelter leave alive, but it is also much more than that.

No-kill is a philosophy and community commitment to saves the lives of all healthy and treatable dogs and cats. As little as 20 years ago, the concept of achieving a 90% save rate was virtually unheard of. Today, 62% of shelters in America have hit this benchmark. If it is possible elsewhere, it is possible here.

[Include a personal story, anecdote, or relevant local information/context]

While you work to improve the quality of life for the people of [COMMUNITY], I am asking you to remember the animals we love in the decisions you make. There are many ways you can help get us to no-kill. Please consider sponsoring a no-kill resolution, visiting a local shelter to see what they are facing day to day, or meeting with local animal advocates like me to learn more about what is happening in our community.

I look forward to talking with you more about this important issue.

Thank you for your time and service,
[YOUR NAME AND LOCAL ADDRESS]

Questions?

Reach the Best Friends grassroots advocacy team at action2025@bestfriends.org for support with your letter-writing effort.

Share your stories and/or ask for peer advice in the 2025 Action Team Facebook group (facebook.com/groups/2025ActionTeam).

2025 Action Team

Let's talk engagement

Canvass your community:

Canvassing is a traditional form of community engagement that involves meeting the community at their doorstep. This involves going door-to-door, neighborhood-to-neighborhood, and distributing information and resources. Canvassing is one of the simplest but most effective forms of building awareness. It can be an incredibly rewarding experience, too, enabling you to build new connections in your community! Review the list below to ensure your canvassing goes as smoothly as possible. Print the final page (checklist and sample script) to take along with you.

Be prepared!

- Have talking points listed out and/or a canvassing script ready before heading out; this will streamline your experience. Introduce yourself first then present the facts/information you want to share about your effort and what you are asking the people are meeting to do. A script will always be helpful in navigating the conversation, but it's important to sound natural as well. (Put provided talking points in your own words!)
- Not sure what to share? Ask people to sign the no-kill pledge: bfas.org/nokillpledge

Respect the space.

- As you meet people at their homes, keep in mind that you are venturing into their personal space. Be respectful of their property by using sidewalks and driveways and avoid stepping on the person's lawn or garden. Look out for and abide by any "No Trespassing" and "No Soliciting" signs. (Scan the entryway for these signs before you approach the door!)

Be courteous.

- When canvassing, general etiquette is to knock at most two times (this includes ringing a doorbell). Wait several seconds between each knock or ring. Take a few steps back to allow for ample space when someone steps out and to create a comfortable speaking distance that won't overwhelm or intimidate the listener.

Leave information, when and where appropriate.

- Leave any relevant literature/flyers you have with the listener, or in a secure spot if no one answered the door. Flyers can be left via door slot, wedged in a door, or tucked into a fence, but do not use people's mailboxes as it is a federal offense for anyone except an official postal service employee or the mailbox owner to do so.

Safety first!

- Work in pairs whenever possible, especially in unfamiliar areas. Set a specific time and place to meet if you and your canvassing team/partner decide to split up to cover more area. Trust your gut in unknown situations! For example, avoid canvassing homes with unsupervised outdoor dogs; do not enter any property that looks physically unsafe; and avoid wandering out of your agreed-upon canvassing block without letting your team know.

Let's talk engagement

Get dressed.

- Canvassing an entire block can take up to an hour to cover, make sure to wear comfortable clothing and closed-toe walking shoes. Bonus points if you can wear a shirt that identifies what you will be talking about (for example, a Best Friends or 2025 Action Team shirt, or swag from your local shelter).

Get ready.

- Weather conditions can change at any moment. Stay prepared for any kind of weather by checking your local forecast before you begin canvassing. Wear sun-protective gear to keep you safe and cool if you're canvassing during warmer days. Remember to pack water and snacks and take breaks!

Gather supplies.

- Print our Canvassing Checklist (on the next page) to help you remember all the essential supplies (including script) you'll need.

Go! Be friendly and remain positive — you got this.

- Canvassing and talking to strangers can seem daunting if you're doing it for the first time. More often than not, people are interested in learning what you want to share, especially when it comes to connecting them to resources and information that could directly help their community. You will be surprised how many people are excited to chat with you when they learn you aren't trying to sell them anything! There may be individuals who will not be interested in supporting your effort and that's okay! Kindly thank them for their time and stay motivated, you will find people who want to support you and the animals.

Questions?

Reach the Best Friends grassroots advocacy team at action2025@bestfriends.org with any questions about how to make your canvassing effort a success.

Please share your stories/successes in the 2025 Action Team Facebook group (facebook.com/groups/2025ActionTeam).



2025 Action Team

Let's talk engagement

Canvassing checklist:

- Clipboards
- Pledge link, petitions/flyers, literature, etc.
- Talking points/script
- Pens/highlighters
- Hand sanitizer
- Sunscreen
- Sun protection gear (sunglasses, hat, lightweight long sleeve, etc.)
- Water/electrolyte packets
- Snacks
- Portable phone charger/power bank

Sample script:

Hi, I'm [FIRST NAME] and I'm out here today to support Best Friends Animal Society. Do you know that dogs and cats are needlessly dying in local shelters when there are solutions being implemented all over the country that could save them? Oftentimes we hear that it's because people don't care. We want to show our elected officials that this community cares about its pets.

Today, we are simply asking for our neighbors and community to sign a pledge saying that we agree that cats and dogs shouldn't be needlessly killed and that you support solutions aimed at saving their lives and becoming a no-kill community.

Thank you so much for your time and have a great rest of your day!

Structure:

- Who you are and what group/cause you are supporting
- What the issue is
- What you would like the listener to do



2025 Action Team

Why write an “op-ed”?

Local media can be used to get the word out about your cause. Op-eds are short, opinion-based articles submitted by readers. [Watch our “How to write an op-ed” video \(bfas.org/OpEdvid\)](https://www.bfas.org/OpEdvid) for more information on how to get yours published!

By sharing your stance and the latest information, you can help shape and inform your community's knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about best practices in the ever-evolving industry of animal welfare. The following information is provided to help you craft an op-ed that is effective in delivering your opinion with data-backed information to make your point clear and persuasive, and to create a call to action.

One

Think through the purpose and audience of your op-ed:

- Why are you writing this?
 - Is it to convince, change, share or update, celebrate, influence or sway, or change public policy?
- What’s the purpose or intent of your piece?
 - Is it a legislative opportunity? Are you asking your local representative for something?
 - Issue(s) that you want to change or improve?
 - Change you want to see in your city or a new behavior you want to promote?
 - Who is your audience? Who are you asking to do something?
- Is there a way to make this topic relevant to other recent news stories?
 - Is there an activity coming up that would make your op-ed more timely/relevant?
- What’s the word limit? Word limits depend on the publication; check each website or call for specifics. Usually, they’re anywhere between 250–750 words max. (Tip: You can check your word count at the bottom left of a draft Word document.)

Two

Key facts and information to consider including or conveying in your op-ed:

- How are the ways of “traditional” thinking not working? How do new solutions provide results in alignment with current values or possibilities?
- How would what you are recommending/advocating for be advantageous? What’s the benefit to the community/individual residents?
 - Define key phrasing or terms
 - Remember that others may not be familiar with animal welfare terms, so stay away from insider lingo and define terms that may seem obvious to you, e.g., “no-kill” or “TNR.”

Three

Tools, suggestions, and timely examples of op-eds on animal welfare topics:

- [Writing Effective Op-Eds — Duke Communicator Toolkit](#)

Below are some recent editorials & op-eds from Best Friends employees.

** If any of these topics pertain to your community, please feel free to use them as thought starters but do NOT copy/paste these editorials. If you'd like to write about the same topic, feel free to reuse the ideas, but put it into your own words. **

- [Saving pets is a community issue where everyone can have a role – Lee Ann Shenefiel](#)
- [Cat gulags a misguided, counter-productive idea – Richard Angelo](#)
- [Dispelling myths about 'no-kill' animal shelters – Michelle Dossou](#)

Four

Submitting your op-ed:

- Sometimes, you'll be able to submit your op-ed through the paper's website. Check the Opinion section for directions.
- If you don't see that option, check your paper's staff directory for the Opinion Editor. If you can't find that person, call or email the paper and ask who is best to receive your submission.

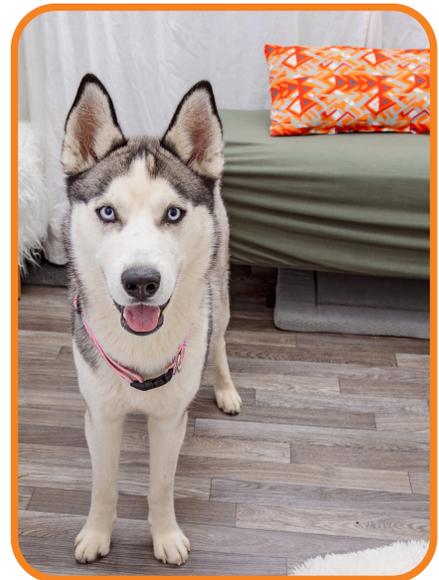
Five

See the next page for definitions of general terms Best Friends uses that may come in handy while writing your op-ed.

Questions?

Reach the Best Friends grassroots advocacy team at action2025@bestfriends.org with any questions about how to make your op-ed effort a success.

Get one published? Nice! Please share your op-ed, or ask for peer advice on a work in progress, in the 2025 Action Team Facebook group (facebook.com/groups/2025ActionTeam).



2025 Action Team

Op-ed terminology

Guide: Here are definitions of general terms Best Friends uses that may come in handy

No-kill: No-kill, as a philosophical principle, means saving every dog or cat in a shelter who can be saved. But it's helpful to have a way to clearly measure lifesaving progress as we move forward together, and that's where the 90% benchmark comes in. Typically, the number of pets who are suffering from irreparable medical or behavioral issues that compromise their quality of life and prevent them from being rehomed is not more than 10% of all dogs and cats entering shelters. Therefore, we designate shelters that meet the 90% save-rate benchmark as no-kill.

Save rate: The percentage of animals who enter a shelter and are not killed.

Community-supported sheltering: This new term encapsulates the future of sheltering — having communities more actively involved in the lifesaving process through comprehensive fostering, adoption and outreach programs. “Community-driven sheltering” may be appropriate in some situations, but not for general use.

Trap-neuter-return: In trap-neuter-return (TNR) or trap-neuter-vaccinate-return (TNVR) programs, community cats are trapped and transported directly to a spay/neuter clinic, where they are sterilized, vaccinated, and ear-tipped for identification. Following recovery, the cats are returned to the location where they were trapped to live out their lives without producing any more kittens.

Breed-specific legislation: BSL stands for breed-specific legislation. It refers to laws that ban or restrict certain types of dogs based simply on their appearance, usually because they are perceived as dangerous. BSL is a misnomer in that BSL laws are anything but specific. These laws target dogs not because they are a specific breed, but because someone thinks they may look like a certain breed. And even if dogs may look alike, it doesn't mean they will behave the same way.

Dog breed restrictions: Dog breed bans and other forms of breed restrictive legislation force many people to give up their beloved pets. In America, responsible people should be allowed to love and care for any breed of dog they choose. Working together, we can ensure that every loving pet — no matter the breed — receives a loving home.

Pet-inclusive housing: Housing is the number two most cited reason people give for surrendering a pet, so it is imperative that people have access to pet-inclusive housing. Many rentals and government-subsidized housing make it difficult to own a pet. Even properties that are “pet-friendly” might have pet weight limits, such as “no dogs over 25 pounds” or breed restrictions. When families are forced to choose between securing a place to live and keeping their family pets, they may see surrender as a last resort.

What is “public comment”?

The public (that’s you!) has a legal right to provide input on various government actions. Public comment is input given by members of the public to governmental bodies about proposed legislation, regulations, policies, or operating procedures.

Special qualifications are not necessary — anyone can comment! If you or your community may be impacted by a proposed regulation, for example, you should have a voice in the matter.

Key points:

Do your research.

- Public comment is usually allowed during a specified time, via specific means. Before you plan to make public comment, research your local government’s policies. Do they allow public comment at council/board/commission meetings? Does it need to be related to something already on the agenda? What is the deadline for signing up? If you can’t find this information online, call the council/board/commission office and they can guide you through the process.

Confirm that you’re signed up and take note of any time limits.

- Meeting time is tight; officials will appreciate you keeping your comment brief and to the point!

Remember — this will be a statement, not a conversation.

- Making public comment is not a question/answer session. Elected officials will not be responding to you or questioning you. Once you’ve finished speaking, you can take a seat.

Help elected officials understand the issue AND how it can be resolved.

- Frame your concerns in a way that your representatives can help solve for. Be constructive.

Additional tips:

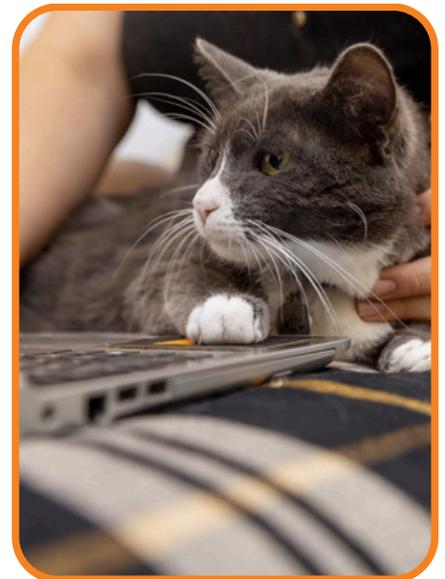
A good rule of thumb is to concentrate on the realities of the situation without ostracizing or excluding the shelter.

Remember, this is a group effort best served with collaboration!

Example: Like many shelters across the country, we understand the hard work and difficult decisions the shelter has to make on a daily basis.

Helping the animals of this community shouldn't fall solely on one person or one group. By embracing the [X] program, we can focus on lifesaving and cost-effective solutions for animals, our community, and the shelter.

Explain any animal welfare terms and acronyms you might use and offer to provide more info at a future date. Don’t assume elected officials will recognize internal terms and rescue lingo.



Build your public comment:

Open your statement with a brief introduction. Include relevant background on yourself AND that you are a resident of the city or county they represent: “Good evening mayor and council, my name is [first and last name]. I live at [local address]. I’ve lived in [insert city] and have been involved in [relevant activity] for [X] number of years.”

Share why you are there early in your comment: “I am here today because I care about my community, including the cats and dogs who live here. I believe our community and our animal services should focus on providing lifesaving options for the dogs and cats who enter our animal services’ care. With that in mind, I am asking for your support for advancing what is often referred to as ‘no-kill’ solutions.”

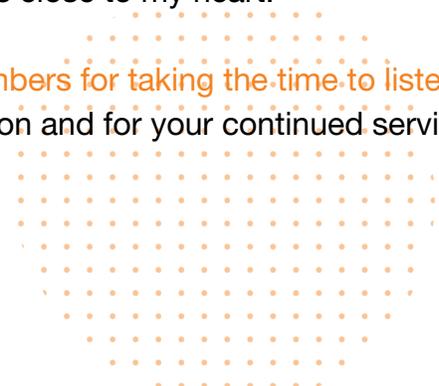
Make it personal. Share your own story as a resident/pet owner/animal advocate. This helps add a human face to an animal issue.

Define the issue: “No-kill is defined as when 90% of animals who enter a shelter leave alive, but it is more than that. No-kill is a philosophy and community commitment to save the lives of all healthy and treatable dogs and cats. As little as 20 years ago, the concept of achieving a 90% save rate was virtually unheard of. Today, 62% of U.S. shelters have hit this benchmark. If it is possible elsewhere, it is possible here. A commitment to no-kill benefits our community members as much as it does our animals. Best practices and programs used to achieve no-kill lead to a healthier, happier community, often saving tax dollars in the process.”

Add data. Round out your personal story with how the issue has a direct impact on other individuals and the community: “Our community is currently saving [XX%] of the animals who enter the shelter, but no-kill is attainable.”

Share the ask: “There are many ways you can help and one of those is by sponsoring and passing a no-kill resolution. A no-kill resolution would be a statement and commitment by our [insert community] leaders that we care about our cats and dogs and are committed to finding lifesaving options for them. I would love to talk with any of you further about this issue that is close to my heart.”

End your statement by thanking council/board/commission members for taking the time to listen and for their consideration: “Thank you for your time and consideration and for your continued service to our community!”



What is a no-kill resolution?

You can help save cats and dogs in your community by working with your city council or other legislative body to pass a no-kill resolution. Resolutions officially confirm a government body's support of a particular issue — no-kill resolutions are a great way to garner political support for saving animals' lives! Best Friends Animal Society believes that no-kill resolutions are one way to help achieve no-kill nationwide in 2025.

Implementing effective resolutions and ordinances at the local level is an important part of creating and sustaining community-wide no-kill. Taking time to assess existing legislation and identifying areas of improvement is a critical first step. The following guidelines will help you develop an understanding of no-kill and offer you a road map for passing a no-kill resolution.

Look up your community's data on the [Best Friends pet lifesaving dashboard](https://bestfriends.org/2025) (bestfriends.org/2025). Maybe your community is already no-kill and it's time to celebrate! If so, head to our proclamation guide (bfas.org/uj7x).

Steps to passing a no-kill resolution:

Prep: Call your city or county secretary and find out if a no-kill resolution has been passed before.

Step 1: Identify and meet your elected officials

- Find your local elected officials on your city or county's website.
- Contact the council member who represents you (i.e., covers your district) first.

Step 2: Discuss no-kill resolutions with elected officials

- Watch the NAWA 2024 session "Communicate for Change" (bfas.org/mh8y) for tips on this topic.
- Start by emailing or calling officials to request a short meeting. Do your research to determine where they currently stand on animal issues.
- Before meeting with officials, prepare a simple, clear set of talking points for yourself.
- Consider presenting them with the current lifesaving rate of your shelter, information on what it means to be a no-kill community, and the reasons you believe that the city council should go on record supporting saving animals' lives.

No-kill resolutions

Step 3: Provide language for your elected official to file the resolution.

- Public officials are often incredibly busy, and they're approached frequently with great ideas about a huge range of issues. So, it's best to be prepared with proposed language for a no-kill resolution.
- Best Friends has drafted a model no-kill resolution that is concise and positive. You can use it as a starting point, and then customize it for your city. (See next page.)

Step 4: Engage the community to advocate for no-kill

- Once the city council member has agreed and filed the resolution, make sure to provide them with support by calling and emailing the other city council members to encourage them to vote in support of the resolution.
- Make sure communications to elected officials include:
 - The name, title, or identification number of the resolution
 - A short soundbite of what the resolution does or means
 - How you would like them to vote
 - Your contact information including local address
- Encourage fellow community members and like-minded organizations to contact officials as well. Community outreach can have a huge impact on the decisions made by public officials. You might even distribute flyers: include basic information about the proposed no-kill resolution, along with relevant contact information of elected officials.
- Find out when the resolution will be voted on and if there is a public hearing before that date. As a community member and stakeholder, you have the right to speak at public meetings.

Step 5: Celebrate passage!

- Make sure to follow up after the vote and thank the elected officials who supported the resolution.

No-kill resolutions

Draft no-kill resolution language:

WHEREAS, a recent national survey revealed that 85% of adults feel it is very important to have no-kill shelters in their community; and

WHEREAS a no-kill community is generally considered as saving 90% or more of the cats and dogs coming through the sheltering system; and

WHEREAS, the percentage of U.S. animal shelters that are known to be no-kill (saving at least 90% of the dogs and cats that enter the shelter) has more than doubled in the past seven years from 24% in 2016 to 62% in 2023; and

WHEREAS [fill in jurisdiction] hereby declares its goal to save the lives of all healthy and treatable dogs and cats in the possession of the [fill in name of municipal shelter and/or municipal agency] such that it is a no-kill shelter; and

WHEREAS the residents of [fill in jurisdiction] want to help bring about positive change for the dogs and cats in the care and possession of the [fill in name of municipal shelter and/or municipal agency]; and

WHEREAS positive changes can be made to increase lifesaving at the [fill in name of municipal shelter and/or municipal agency] to save all the healthy and treatable dogs and cats in its possession; and

WHEREAS the residents of [fill in jurisdiction] deserve an animal shelter that succeeds at saving the lives of dogs and cats at a level that is consistent with the most successful animal shelters in the country; and

WHEREAS [fill in jurisdiction] and its citizens deserve transparency and accountability from animal care and control services and animal shelters in their pursuit of being no-kill.

No-kill resolutions

Draft language continued:

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE [city council or other legislative body]:

1. That the [fill in jurisdiction] saves the lives of all healthy and treatable dogs and cats at the [fill in name of municipal shelter and/or municipal agency] no later than [December 31, 2025, or earlier]; and
2. That the [city/town/county/other manager/administrator/other] works, in collaboration with individuals and organizations in the area, to develop a comprehensive plan to reach this goal and present that plan to the [fill in with name of legislative body] no later than [fill in date: no more than 90 days after the date of enacting this resolution]; and
3. That the [fill in name of municipal shelter and/or municipal agency] shall report on the progress, including transparent data, successes, needs, and challenges successes at each regularly scheduled meeting of the [fill in jurisdiction] council/commission and post the report on the shelter's website.

Questions?

Reach the Best Friends grassroots advocacy team at action2025@bestfriends.org with any questions about your no-kill resolution/proclamation effort. We look forward to hearing about it!

Please also share your efforts and/or ask for peer advice in the 2025 Action Team Facebook group (facebook.com/groups/2025ActionTeam).

2025 Action Team

bestfriends.org/actionteam