



**Danville - Boyle County Humane Society**



# Strategic Plan

2021-2024



## Executive Summary

The Danville Boyle County Humane Society (DBCCHS) has had a successful history of advocating for the humane treatment of animals in Boyle County. Since 1972, DBCCHS has provided sheltering, adoption, education, and health services for the canine and feline residents of the county.

To usher in the second 50 years of service to Danville and Boyle County, the board embarked on a comprehensive strategic planning process to have a greater community impact on the ever-changing animal welfare environment. That process resulted in a living document, with ever increasing outcomes and impacts for pet owners and the pets they love.

The planning process included conversations with the board, staff, stakeholders, and the community at large to learn about common challenges; discuss programmatic responses to those

challenges; and develop responses to help us better serve the animals, humans, and communities of Boyle County.

## Mission, Vision, and Core Principles

### Mission

*The Danville Boyle County Humane Society promotes the humane treatment of animals through compassionate care, engagement, and support.*

### Vision

*We envision a community that values animal welfare, making Danville and Boyle County the most compassionate and kind community for animals in all of Kentucky.*

### Core Principles

*The Danville Boyle County Humane Society believes that pets make humans' quality of life better; all animals deserve humane treatment; and that communities are stronger when all respect the presence of animals in their environment as a natural and even important component of a healthy community.*

# THE PLANNING PROCESS

## Introduction

The Danville Boyle County Humane Society has all the right ingredients for a great future.

- We have 50 years of successful operation.
- The board is strong, committed, and well-connected.
- The organization is financially strong.
- DBCHS has a beautiful facility to serve our needs for many years to come.
- We have the gift of a new executive leader to take us into the future.

With all that going for us, there is no better time to think about and plan for the future of this organization we love so much.

Over the first three months of 2021, the board and staff focused on our mission, reaffirmed our priorities, and set new goals and objectives in response to an ever changing environment\*. Through the process, we intended to:

- Set a clear future direction;
- More fully engage customers, stakeholders, Board and staff members in our work;
- Connect strategic goals to the operational and program activities of the organization;
- Set clear measures for each of those goals;
- Provide the framework for ongoing operational decision making; and
- Align our budget with our priorities and needs.

We identified and affirmed our core principles. We examined our current environment and how it could affect our future. We talked to the community through one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders and through a community-wide survey. We imagined a future where we are operating at our very best and we discussed how to respond to various threats that may arise. From the data we collected, we uncovered several themes and opportunities that will guide us over the next three years as we carry out the mission of the Danville-Boyle County Humane Society.

\* The 2021 strategic planning process was led by a consultant with experience in both nonprofits and the strategic planning process.

## Key Findings

The planning process resulted in these key findings:

- The Danville Boyle County Humane Society is well-respected throughout the community.
- The primary interaction residents have with DBCHS is through pet adoptions, with an overwhelming majority expressing the experience as positive.
- While the Humane Society has a positive reputation, there is not widespread knowledge throughout the community of the range of services the organization provides.
- Frustration in the community about changes in DBCHS practices regarding stray cats could be ameliorated through increased education, messaging, and outreach.
- DBCHS has many strategic partnerships in the community, each of which would benefit from additional nurturing and attention.

## Board of Directors Planning Session

We held a board planning session in February 2021 with 7 of 8 Board members and 2 staff attending. The key take-away from this discussion was the deep commitment the board members have for DBCHS. Board members are engaged, contribute financially, pitch in regularly as shelter volunteers, and provide access to their own networks to advance the work of the Humane Society. Board members are committed to implementing best practices in animal care, such as assuring that euthanasia rates remain low and adoption rates remain high. And they collectively and individually advocate for animal welfare, including the need for better laws, more local regulations, and improved human knowledge and behavior.

The organization had never before had a Vision Statement, but during the course of the discussions, a natural vision emerged: ***We envision a community that values animal welfare, making Danville and Boyle County the most compassionate and kind community for animals in all of Kentucky.***

The board members considered the current mission statement, ***The Danville Boyle County Humane Society promotes the humane treatment of companion animals through sheltering, adoptions, community education, and spay/neuter programs***, and whether it continues to adequately describe the work of the organization. Without exception, the members expressed a fondness for the statement, but recognized that it was somewhat limiting. Discussion around simplifying the statement to be more memorable and focused resulted in an agreement to revise the statement as part of the strategic planning process and plan.

The new mission statement is, ***The Danville Boyle County Humane Society promotes the humane treatment of animals through compassionate care, engagement, and support.***

Throughout the board's planning session, several core principles, or values, emerged that guide the work of the Danville Boyle County Humane Society. Namely, that ***pets make humans' quality of life better; all animals deserve humane treatment; and that communities are stronger when all respect the presence of animals in their environment as a natural and even important component of a healthy community.***

## Services

The Danville Boyle County Humane Society has several complementary programs and services that advance animal health, advocacy, and pet owner support. Pet Adoption was mentioned by board members as its most basic and important service, followed closely by Engagement, Advocacy, and Dogs Playing for Life. Other key services with strong support among board members include, in no particular order, Community Cats; Home to Home; Fostering; Happy Paws Spay/Neuter Clinic; and the Pet Food Pantry. The tertiary services were viewed as less favored, while still supporting the key imperatives of the organization.

Discussion about engaging the community on animal welfare issues centered around expanding the Humane Society's outreach efforts to include schools, civic groups, and the media; combating negative social media posts; dispelling myths shared on social media; and developing partnerships with other organizations to both engage consumer groups and expand services. The difficulty of reaching target audiences was discussed, with Board members agreeing that the challenges for "reaching the unreachable" are significant but must be addressed. The stakeholder interviews, discussed below, revealed that one reliable avenue of reaching more potential consumers is through the loose but committed animal rights and rescue advocates that exist throughout the community.

## Environmental Scan

The DBCHS board and staff engaged in an environmental scan (or SWOT analysis) to celebrate our strengths while we identified issues we must tackle, and opportunities we can capitalize on to make the Humane Society better, as shown in the chart below:

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring and committed staff</li> <li>• Dedicated Board of Directors</li> <li>• Purpose that resonates</li> <li>• Financial strength</li> <li>• Excellent facility</li> <li>• Community awareness</li> <li>• Strong partnerships</li> <li>• Best Practice orientation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of available foster homes</li> <li>• Clinics not serving community well</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Staff turnover</li> <li>• Customer service issues</li> <li>• Confusion with Animal Control</li> <li>• Marketing; Community Engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community Outreach</li> <li>• School programs</li> <li>• Volunteer program</li> <li>• Animal welfare in spotlight</li> <li>• Board development</li> <li>• Foster program growth</li> <li>• Space for more services in building</li> <li>• Philanthropic community</li> <li>• New shelter software</li> <li>• New leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low number of adoptable animals</li> <li>• COVID-19</li> <li>• Social media misinformation</li> <li>• Fear of change</li> <li>• KY's poor animal welfare laws</li> <li>• Phone/Internet access</li> <li>• Community Cats misunderstandings</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Environmental Scan

## Community Survey

DBCCHS conducted a community survey during February and March 2021 with 165 responses. The results of the survey will be used for many years to guide the organization's work, but some important conclusions and findings are worth sharing here. The full results can be found in the Appendix.

Overall, the Humane Society has a positive reputation in the community. In the online survey DBCCHS received a rating of 4.3 on a 5 point scale on this metric. Reinforcing the fact that adoption is highly regarded, several respondents called out their experience with their own pet adoptions in the comments. One respondent commented, "I am so thankful for the humane society! We adopted both of our 'puppers' from here and love our little family. I couldn't imagine a day without them!"

Pet Adoption is the most widely known and utilized service DBCCHS provides, with more than 70% of survey respondents commenting that they had utilized this core service. Besides being well-utilized, virtually without exception, commenters expressed their love for their adopted pet(s) and conveyed their appreciation to the Humane Society for the service.

"I AM ALWAYS IMPRESSED AT THE AMOUNT OF ANIMALS YOU HAVE AVAILABLE AT THE SHELTER COMPARED TO NEARBY COUNTIES. NOT HAVING ANY DOGS TO ADOPT OUT IS A GREAT THING!! HOW DO YOU DO IT!!?"

On the other hand, the availability of adoptable pets has been an issue in recent years (during COVID, especially), and survey respondents gave this the lowest of its rankings, at a 4.0 out of 5. Others appreciate this trend, however, with one respondent summing it up perfectly. "I am always impressed at the amount of animals you have available at the shelter compared to nearby counties. NOT having any dogs to adopt out is a GREAT thing!! How do you do it?!?" At least two respondents commented that the shelter must be vigilant about disease transmission among animals, blaming overcrowding as a key factor. One person

"IT WAS A GREAT ADOPTION EXPERIENCE. WILL DEFINITELY GO BACK THERE AGAIN."

commented that the Humane Society has worked hard to eliminate overcrowding, which has practically eliminated this worry. Adoption fees were mentioned both as too high and as reasonable by survey respondents.

DBCCHS' popular Happy Paws Spay/Neuter program was the second most utilized service among survey respondents. The program has been run for approximately 13 years by a volunteer director, a paid veterinarian, a technician, and approximately 30 volunteers. The results are impressive: more than 14,000 surgeries during the past 13 years. Some respondents expressed a disconnect between the volunteers of the Happy Paws Spay/Neuter Clinic service and other Humane Society operations, pointing to the need for more interaction with both volunteers and recipients of the service. Due to the popularity of the program, many

residents of surrounding counties bring their pets for vaccinations and surgeries, creating a waiting list for Boyle County pets that should be addressed.

Beyond Pet Adoption and the Happy Paws Spay/Neuter Clinic, other services are not as well known, pointing to the need for the Humane Society to provide more outreach about our services. Awareness of several services was particularly low, including Home to Home; Dogs Playing for Life; and the Pet Food Pantry. Respondents were more familiar with Mutts with Manners, which works in partnership with the NorthPoint Training Center to train shelter animals. This is an opportunity for DBCHS staff to promote these additional services to Pet Adoption and Happy Paws Spay/Neuter Clinic customers to expand the impact of these services specifically and the Humane Society in general. Wider community outreach about lesser utilized programs are likely to show results as well.

DBCHS HAS "ANIMALS' BEST INTEREST AT HEART. THEY DO ALL THEY CAN AND STRIVE TO DO EVEN MORE. I AM PROUD OF OUR BOYLE COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY AND ANIMAL CONTROL."

Some respondents expressed confusion about the Humane Society's services regarding cats. Best practices in animal welfare recommend that outdoor cats remain in their environments rather than being gathered and adopted or, worse, euthanized. One commenter expressed this dichotomy well, stating "Bad comments on helping with taking in cats . . . Good comment on getting cats spayed through grant." We recognize that

"A VERY GOOD PLACE. THE PEOPLE ARE VERY LOVING WITH THE ANIMALS. THEY REALLY CARE IF THE ANIMALS ARE A GOOD FIT AND GOING TO A GOOD HOME."

this is a controversial topic and not everyone will agree on DBCHS' stance regarding community cats. The Board and staff will continue discussions with community members on the benefit of the policy for animal welfare and the real-life outcomes being achieved – healthier animals, lower populations, fewer euthanized animals. For example, in just the first year of the Community Cats program, DBCHS has

spayed/neutered about 1,000 cats that otherwise may have been euthanized. (For more information, see the National Animal Care and Control Association publication, Best Friends Humane Animal Control Manual; and Best Friends Animal Society's publication, Community Cat Programs Handbook.)

Regarding the Humane Society's staffing and infrastructure, comments and ratings were generally positive. Respondents rated the facility's cleanliness as 4.5 on a 5 point scale, with helpfulness of staff receiving a rating of 4.4. Written comments were equally positive. Such comments as, "DBCHS leadership is outstanding, especially Fizzy" and "The people are very loving with the animals. They really care if the animals are a good fit and going to a good home," were typical and common.



## Stakeholder Interviews

We completed one-on-one interviews with 12 stakeholders in the community to get additional, specific feedback into our services, facility, and staff. Interviewees were chosen for their connection to the Humane Society, past advocacy for animal welfare, or professional and volunteer work with companion animals.

Interviewees included community and business leaders, government officials, donors, past board members, recipients of Humane Society services, animal rescue advocates, and animal lovers. Positive responses represented the majority but were not universally held. One interviewee who volunteers with the Humane Society, for example, expressed dismay that volunteers did not receive enough recognition for their efforts.

A continuing challenge for the Humane Society is differentiating between the different roles of DBCHS and the county's Animal Control office (ACO). The two organizations work hand in hand to assure the humane and safe treatment of animals but accomplish that in different ways, sharing the same space but not the same mission. Animal Control deals with nuisance reports, court orders, and stray animals while DBCHS manages the shelter, pet adoptions, and various related programs. Some misunderstanding is expected, but all agreed that the relationship is symbiotic. One animal care professional interviewed commented that having the two organizations co-located in one facility is ideal, and not the norm across Kentucky. While county government employees interviewed expressed some frustration with navigating the different roles for the two organizations, all agreed that the relationship was valuable to both and worth continuing.

Several stakeholders mentioned the value of the Community Cats program for the community, with one respondent mentioning that she has seen fewer stray cats in her neighborhood as a result. Still there is much confusion about that program, with the general (mistaken) impression that DBCHS no longer handles cats in the shelter.

“LOVE MY SWEET HEYWARD WHO I ADOPTED LAST YEAR 🐾”

“I ADOPTED HERE AND HOW GREAT AN EXPERIENCE. LOVE LOVE MY BABY.”

“THANK YOU FOR WHAT YOU DO!”

The community is interested in keeping the Humane Society active and strong. One respondent even called it a “passion.” To that end, there was interest in board and staff succession planning, including expanding board membership to get the benefit of additional animal welfare perspectives. One respondent mentioned how important board succession is to competitiveness for grant funding. Even as stakeholders mentioned the need to pay attention to the board's continuity and succession, almost everyone commented about the value of the Board's president to the organization's success. “The biggest asset is Fizzy,” was the common sentiment among the individuals interviewed. In fact, the entire leadership team of the Humane Society is well-respected based on both the interviews and the online survey.

## OUR KEY RESULT AREAS

Based on the survey, stakeholder interviews, and planning sessions with the board and the planning committee, the Danville Boyle County Humane Society has determined that we can have the greatest impact on animal health and welfare by focusing our efforts on the Key Result Areas of Healthy Animals, Engagement, Support, and People.



### Healthy Animals

The Danville-Boyle County Humane Society will provide services that will promote the health and well-being of companion animals in the community.



### Engagement

The Danville-Boyle County Humane Society will develop and deliver consistent and timely messages regarding animal care and safety and advocate for humane animal welfare practices.



### Support

The Danville-Boyle County Humane Society will expand its supportive services for pet owners who may need assistance to provide appropriate care and feeding for their companion animals.



### People

The Danville-Boyle County Humane Society will embrace high performance by focusing on best practices for services, operations, and administration.

## Alignment

All of the Danville Boyle County Humane Society's current and future programs will be evaluated for their alignment with both our Mission and these Key Result Areas.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Based on the input from stakeholders, survey respondents, board members, and staff, DBCHS has settled on four goals and their associated objectives. The goals are designed to improve performance; specifically impact our three Key Result Areas and strengthen our administration and infrastructure.

GOALS	OBJECTIVES
<p><b>Goal 1 Healthy Animals</b> The Danville Boyle County Humane Society will provide services that will promote the health and well-being of companion animals in the community.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. DBCHS will expand and more fully integrate its services designed to improve the health and safety of animals and their human companions.</li> <li>2. DBCHS will provide information for adopters and fostering families on proper care of their animals including any behavior issues observed or typical from sheltered animals.</li> <li>3. DBCHS will expand its Community Cats program to have greater impact on reducing outdoor cat populations in the county.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Goal 2 Engagement</b> The Danville Boyle County Humane Society will develop and deliver consistent and timely messages regarding animal care and safety and advocate for humane animal welfare practices.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. DBCHS will work with educators in the community to develop and deliver an animal care curriculum that meets Kentucky's Core Academic Standards for elementary and middle school students.</li> <li>2. DBCHS will develop and implement a volunteer training program to communicate Humane Society policies, animal welfare best practices, and foster better integration among the various programs and initiatives.</li> <li>3. DBCHS will organize a speakers' bureau to expand outreach and provide information about services to civic, educational, government, business, and volunteer organizations within Boyle County.</li> <li>4. DBCHS will be proactive in educating the public on animal welfare issues and the Humane Society's services designed to improve animal care and safety in the community.</li> <li>5. DBCHS will sponsor forums in the community to discuss animal welfare best practices; engage with the rescue community to better collaborate with their efforts; and provide information about Humane Society services for families considering surrendering their pets and for those who cannot afford spay/neuter or vaccination services.</li> <li>6. DBCHS will develop and implement training about the key messages for Humane Society staff, Animal Control staff, and volunteers to use for various sensitive topics, consumer complaints, or misinformation.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Goal 3 Support</b> The Danville Boyle County Humane Society will expand its supportive services for pet owners who may need assistance to provide appropriate care and feeding for their companion animals.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. DBCHS will publicize its pet food pantry program for residents who have trouble affording the costs of pet ownership.</li> <li>2. DBCHS will assist low income residents who surrender pets or stray animals to Humane Society care by seeking sponsorship support to lower or eliminate costs.</li> <li>3. DBCHS will expand its spay, neuter, vaccination services to better meet the need throughout the county, including low income pet owners.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Goal 4 Administration</b> The Danville Boyle County Humane Society will embrace high performance by focusing on best practices for</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. DBCHS will implement a volunteer orientation and appreciation program to expand its volunteer pool and improve volunteer retention and thus shelter operations.</li> <li>2. DBCHS and Boyle County Animal Control will strengthen their relationship by increasing communication between the two entities and to the general public</li> </ol>

services, operations, and administration.

about the separate but complementary services the two organizations provide.

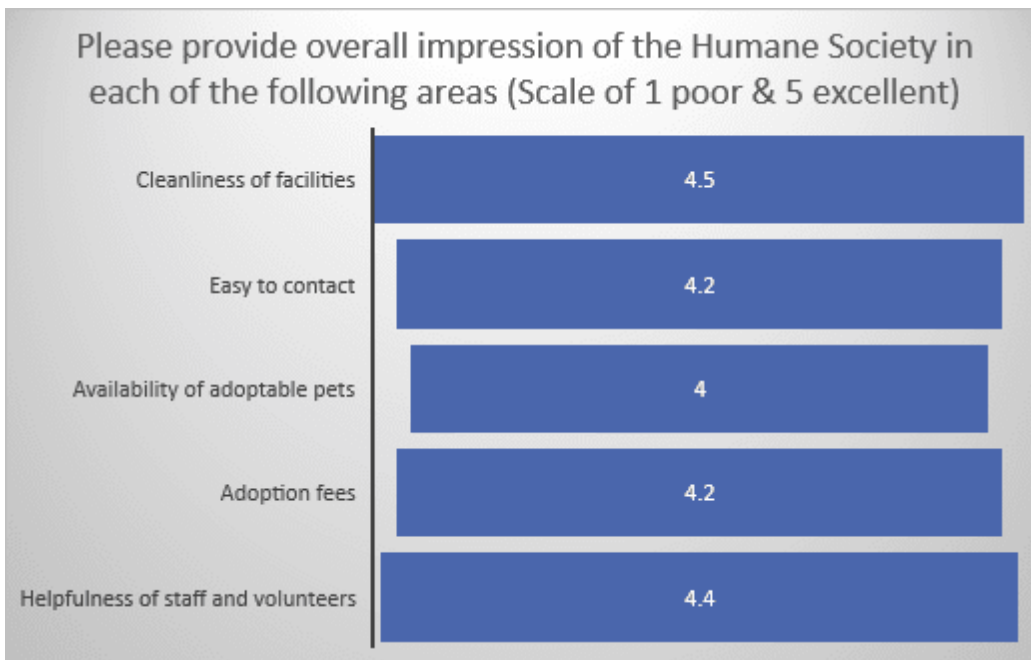
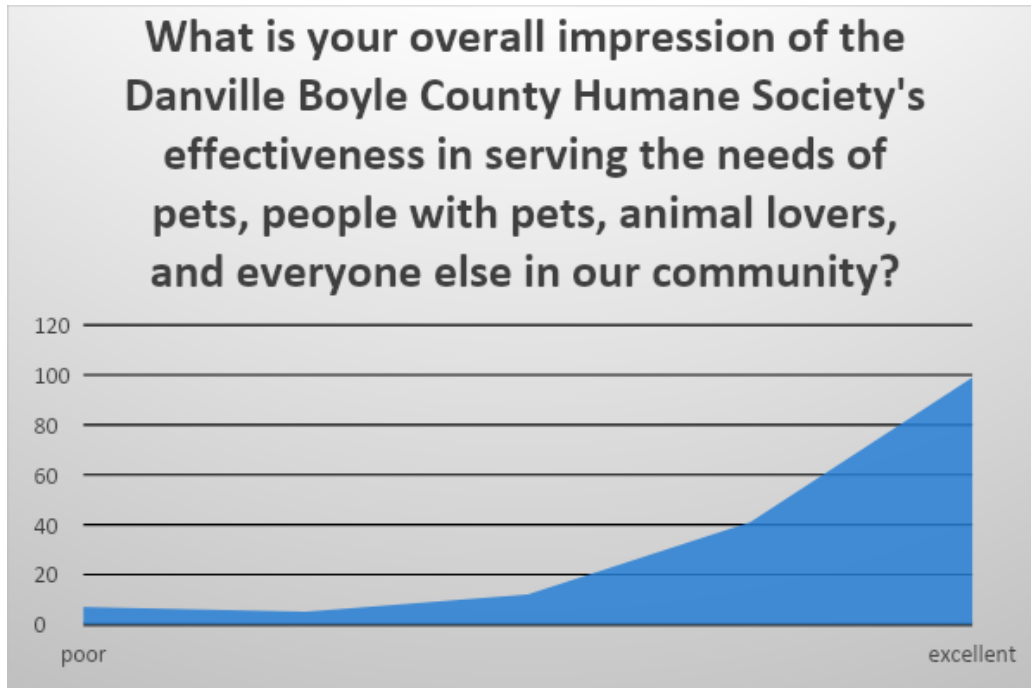
3. The DBCHS board of directors will plan for the long term success of the organization by proactive succession planning for key staff and directors; building of a reserve fund for facility and equipment replacements; and formalizing key partnerships.
4. DBCHS will invest in its staff to provide adequate wages, benefits, and staff development needs to foster high performance and retention.
5. DBCHS will assure effective and efficient technology and facilities to support mission-critical programs and services delivery.
6. The DBCHS staff and Board will research opportunities to diversify funding to include sponsorships for specific services or customer assistance; planned giving options, additional earned income solutions, and an expanded donor pool.

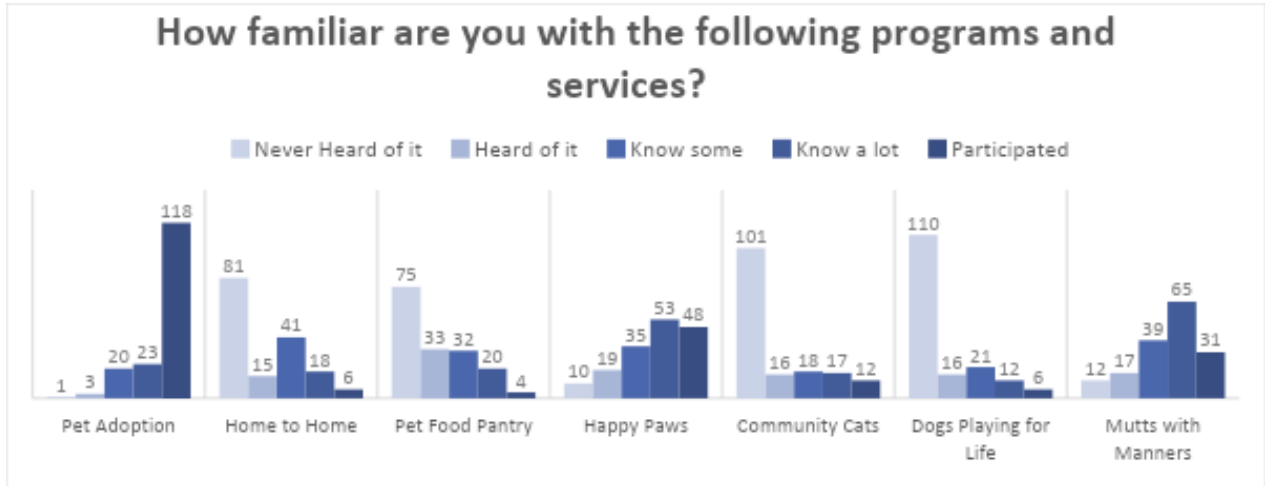
## NEXT STEPS

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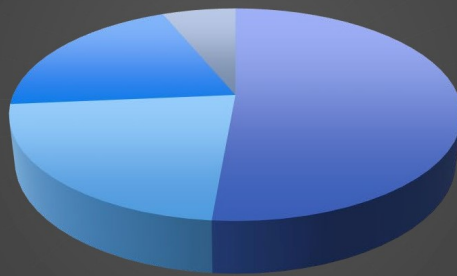
- The revised mission, vision, and core principles will be added prominently to agency communications, including website/Facebook pages, press releases, and other public information pieces.
- The Executive Director and Board will develop tactics, measurements, and timelines for each of the objectives outlined within.
- DBCHS will communicate the plan's findings and decisions through its website, public events, and Facebook page.
- Signage will be updated to better communicate with the public.
- Progress on the objectives contained within the plan will be reported to the Board at least annually.
- The community will learn more about DBCHS outcomes and progress through its annual report.
- Staff and volunteers will develop opportunities to communicate the Humane Society's mission, services, and outcomes through the community to expand knowledge about animal care and welfare.

## APPENDIX: Community Survey Results

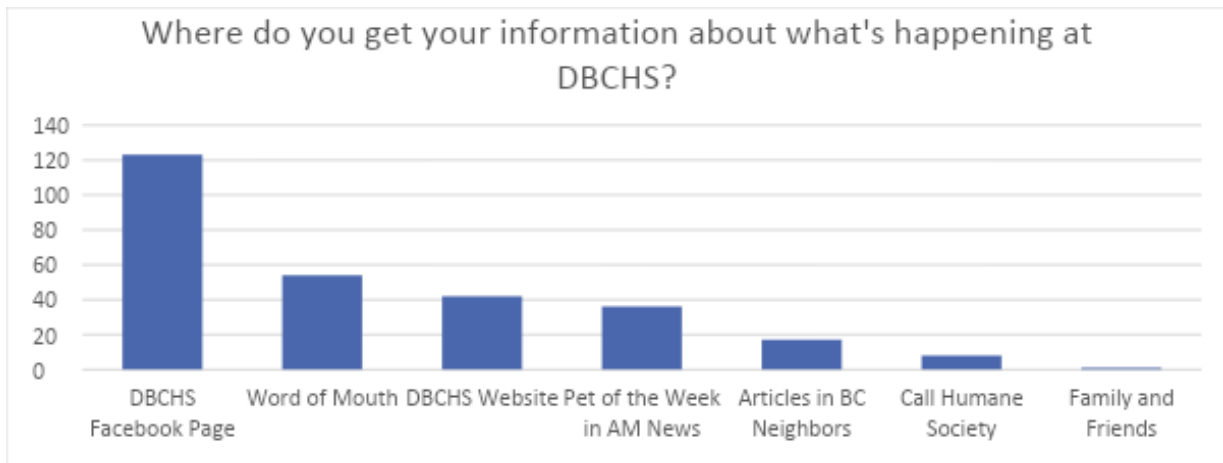




**What is the one thing the Humane Society can do/initiate/offer/expand to make the biggest impact on pets in our community?**



- Low or no-cost basic vaccination clinics
- Temporary emergency boarding
- Low or no-cost microchipping
- low or no-cost grooming clinics





**Danville - Boyle County Humane Society**

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