

# Every Number Tells a Story

## OBJECTIVE

To understand that there's a very serious pet overpopulation problem, why that problem exists, and how it can be solved.

## ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

The class will take a trip to the Dumb Friends League to see first-hand how many animals are available for adoption. They'll complete a worksheet while at the League, which will help them gain an understanding of shelter operations and the severity of the overpopulation problem. The class will then come up with a campaign to educate the public on the pet overpopulation problem and how to solve it.

## MATERIALS

🐾 Tour worksheets

🐾 Video:

*Throwaways*, produced by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)

🐾 Display board

🐾 Markers

🐾 Paint

🐾 Magazines

🐾 Scissors

🐾 Glue

🐾 Video camera and videotape

## ACTIVITY

### **Preliminary Discussion**

🐾 What do animal shelters do?

🐾 What kinds of animals do animal shelters receive on a daily basis?

🐾 What does "overpopulation" mean?

🐾 Why are so many cats and dogs relinquished and why are they living on the streets?

🐾 Why do people want pets in their homes, in the first place?

### **Procedure**

The class will take a tour of the Dumb Friends League. Please contact the Dumb Friends League beforehand to schedule a tour with the education coordinator. On the tour each student will complete their worksheet which addresses questions about the numbers of animals they are seeing, what kinds of animals they are, and why these animals are at the Dumb Friends League. Each student should also have a prepared question to ask the coordinator. After returning to class, the students will complete the second worksheet.

As a follow-up to the tour, invite the education coordinator to come to your classroom and lead a discussion about the overpopulation problem. Discuss why animal shelters continue to be inundated with companion animals. When discussing overpopulation, it is important to recognize that one of the biggest factors is our society's lack of regard for companion animals. They are considered "throwaways," like an old shoe or faded sweater that nobody wants anymore. When animals are adopted into a family, they should be considered part of that family and treated just as kindly as the other members of the family. People must do their "homework" prior to adopting an animal.

They must understand the breed-type, the personality of the animal, how much exercise is necessary, and what kind of healthcare issues the animal might have. This can be accomplished by taking a class like "Pet Parenting" at the Dumb Friends League, by reading books, and by asking questions. The adoption of an animal is a huge commitment. You're responsible for caring for your companion animal and making sure it's healthy and happy for the rest of its life.

### **Discussion points**

- 🐾 Compassion toward all creatures
- 🐾 Responsibility of pet ownership
- 🐾 Importance and benefits of spaying/neutering
- 🐾 Obedience training for dogs

Show the video *Throwaways* followed by discussion. *Throwaways* portrays a series of dogs that are "thrown away" and those that are loved by their owners. It does an excellent job of showing the dramatic contrast between the two groups, and it answers some key questions about overpopulation. *Throwaways* can be purchased through the ASPCA for \$14.95. Call 212-876-7700, Ext. 4410, to order the video or you can visit their web site at [www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org). You can also visit the Dumb Friends League's web site at [www.ddfl.org](http://www.ddfl.org).

Divide the class into two groups to work on a public education campaign to educate people on the problem of pet overpopulation and how it can be solved. One group should work on a display board with pictures, paintings and messages. The other group will work on making a video of a "public service announcement." They will need to brainstorm on what type of message they want to get across, what materials they will need and what kind of audience they want to target.

Once the display and video are completed, they should be presented at a special program for the students' families and friends. Invite the education coordinator to present special awards to congratulate the students on their hard work.

### **Post-discussion**

- 🐾 What did you learn about the pet overpopulation crisis?
- 🐾 What are the most important things we can do to prevent it?
- 🐾 What does it mean to be "kind" to an animal or a person?

### **EXTENSION ACTIVITY**

The class can work together to do a special project to benefit the Dumb Friends League. For example, they might conduct a drive to collect food and supplies for the animals at the Dumb Friends League, or they could make decorations for a bulletin board at the League.

# Every Number Tells a Story...

There are hundreds of companion animals at the Dumb Friends League. Each animal has its own story to tell. Why did they get lost? Why was the bond between the owner and their animal broken? Did anyone ever love and care for them? Why were some of them abused and neglected? How do they feel in this new place? As you walk through the shelter, read their biography cards and read their body language. What are they trying to tell us? Answer the following questions as you walk through the shelter.

1. What different kinds of animals are brought into the shelter?

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2. How many animals are brought in every day?

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3. Pick two different kinds of animals and write down what their body language is telling you.

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4. What is the most interesting or unique animal you have seen today?

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5. What kinds of jobs have you seen the shelter employees and volunteers doing?

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# Every Number Tells a Story, Part Two

When you return to your classroom, please spend some time thinking about what you learned at the Dumb Friends League, and answer the following questions:

1. Why do we call it "adopting" instead of "buying" an animal?

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2. Look at the number you wrote down for how many animals are brought in every day. If the Dumb Friends League is open to the public for eight hours a day, how many animals are they receiving every hour? How many animals are brought in every week? Every month? Every year? In a period of ten years, how many total animals would the Dumb Friends League receive?

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3. How do you feel about the numbers you just calculated? What do these numbers tell you?

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4. What can you do to help end the pet overpopulation problem and the broken bonds between people and their pets?

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5. Write about an animal you were interested in today at the Dumb Friends League. Why do you think that animal was brought to the shelter? What do you think it needs?

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