



Event & Activity Ideas

Bringing together people in your community for a cause—as a parent, teacher, librarian, afterschool leader, PTO member, volunteer—can really make a difference! You can organize your own local campaign to help animals and support animal shelters. Your campaign can be a one-time celebration or festival, or an ongoing series of events and partnerships that offers humane education, information about pet adoption and animal shelters, and advice on responsible pet ownership.

You Can Help!

Whether because of the bond we share with our own beloved pets, the amazing work of therapy and other service dogs, or even the books and television show MARTHA SPEAKS, inspired by Susan Meddaugh's real dog Martha, we know that animals enrich our lives. Unfortunately, cruelty to animals, homelessness, and related problems are still prevalent in our society. For example, an estimated 6 to 8 million homeless dogs and cats enter animal shelters every year, and fewer than half are adopted. You can raise awareness about these issues and mobilize your community to take action through a local campaign.

Partners

Your local animal shelter is the place to start. Most communities also have a variety of animal rescue groups. The easiest way to find a shelter or rescue group in your area, if you don't already know one, is to go to www.PetFinder.com. The Humane Society of the United States at www.humanesociety.org/animal_community/resources/ has information on adoption, pet care, how to choose a pet, and many other important topics for kids and families.

Reach out to these local organizations and professionals to help you develop, organize, publicize, and conduct your special event.

- Veterinary schools
- Veterinarians
- Schools
- Afterschool programs
- Libraries
- Community centers
- Summer camps
- Pet supply stores (stores that don't sell puppies or kittens)
- Faith-based groups

Locations

Consider these places to hold your event or a series of events.

- School
- Library
- Community center
- Town hall
- Park
- Mall
- Animal shelter
- Pet supply store
- Farm/farm stand
- Community/Harvest/Spring Festival

Event Ideas

Animal Care Drive. Collect donations for the local animal shelter. (Every shelter has different needs, so always check with the staff first as what their specific needs are.)

Here are typical items a shelter might be able to use:

- Pet food and treats (for cats, dogs, hamsters, birds, and other pets)
- Catnip
- Bowls
- Grooming items (combs, brushes)
- Collars, leashes
- Paper towels
- Towels
- Blankets
- Dog beds
- Washable pet toys
- Cat litter
- Newspaper (to line cages)
- Bleach
- Laundry detergent
- Trash bags
- First-aid supplies (bandages, cotton balls)
- Office supplies

Adopt-a-Pet Day. Along with a local shelter or rescue group, host an Adopt-a-Pet Day. This could range from simply distributing information about adoption, to an adoption demonstration, to actually offering dogs to be adopted at the event. You can also join in with an organization or pet supply store that offers a weekly pet adoption event.

Shelter Tour. With the help of a local animal shelter, organize a tour of the shelter for kids, families, or other groups. End the tour with an activity for kids (see below), a

discussion about the tour, or suggestion from the shelter. You can also make copies and distribute the MARTHA SPEAKS Booklist.

Especially for Educators

Understanding Dog Talk. Use this stepped-out lesson plan to help children understand animals and how they communicate.

Pet Care/Pet Safety Demonstration. Have a veterinarian or veterinary student demonstrate pet care and pet safety. Children can use stuffed animal pets to practice the skills hands-on. Find tips on how to invite a guest speaker and host an on-site dog visit at http://pbskids.org/martha/parentsteachers/pdf/MarthaRABC_SpecialGuest.pdf.

Dog Wash. Involve local middle and/or high school students or other volunteers in a Dog Wash fundraiser for a local shelter. You can give attendees the option of making a donation of shelter dog supplies in lieu of a dog wash.

Viewing Party. Hold a viewing party featuring a MARTHA SPEAKS episode about pet adoption or responsible pet care (see Related Episodes). For viewing party tips, go to http://pbskids.org/Martha/parentsteachers/pdf/MarthaRABC_ViewingParty.pdf.

Breakfast/Lunch/Tea with Martha. You can combine this with the Viewing Party (above) or as its own event. Show a MARTHA SPEAKS episode, serve healthy snacks, and do some dog-themed activities. Decorate the space with Martha plush dolls, MARTHA SPEAKS books, and other fun items. Find them at: <http://marthaspeaks.tystoybox.com>.

Read Aloud. Have a volunteer or a local celebrity read a portion of *Shelter Dog Blues* or another book about adopting a dog from a shelter (see Booklist). Then use the MARTHA SPEAKS “Bark About Books” template at http://pbskids.org/martha/parentsteachers/pdf/MarthaRABC_StickerTemplate.pdf to make stickers.

Community Reads. Create a “Community Reads” program, where everyone reads the same book. Select *Shelter Dog Blues* (which tells the story of Martha’s life before she was adopted by Helen) or any other *Martha Speaks* book by Susan Meddaugh, and then hold related events and screenings.

Bark about Books! Combine the campaign with the *MARTHA SPEAKS Reading Buddies* or *Read-Aloud Book Club* program at your school or library.

The MARTHA SPEAKS Reading Buddies Program is a cross-age reading program that pairs kindergarten students with 4th or 5th graders to improve vocabulary and foster a love of books and reading. Learn more about the program at <http://pbskids.org/martha/parentsteachers/readingbuddies/index.html>.

The MARTHA SPEAKS Read-Aloud Book Club creates a fun environment for young

kids to read and talk about books, and to learn about the many positive roles dogs play in our lives. Find out more at <http://pbskids.org/martha/parentsteachers/bookclub/>.

Activity Ideas

Mix and match these fun, dog-themed activity ideas for kids.

- Fans of the television show will enjoy the “Meet Martha” handout.
- To find out how Martha came to be such a talker, distribute the “How Martha Became a Talking Dog” cartoon handout. You can also use this as a model for kids to draw their own Martha cartoon.
- Play “Martha Says.” Use dog motion words —*sit, stay, bark*—for a Simon Says-type game.
- Sing Martha-related songs, such as the MARTHA SPEAKS television theme song or the M-A-R-T-H-A song.
- Use the “Bone Bracelet” handout to make friendship bracelets.
- Distribute MARTHA SPEAKS coloring sheets (found at <http://pbskids.org/martha/prints/index.html>) for kids to decorate or take home. You can also use the MARTHA SPEAKS Character Cards at http://pbskids.org/martha/parentsteachers/pdf/MarthaRABC_CharacterCards.pdf.
- Have kids write cards to animal shelter staff to thank them for all the work they do. They can also use the “Friendship Card” handout to write letter to an animal or illustration their own pet adoption story.
- Make “pup” cakes, instead of cupcakes. Ask a local chef, bakery, or supermarket if they’d be willing to donate food supplies. (As always, be aware of food allergies and label food items.)
- Invite families to bring their dogs to the event.
- Include a “walk the dog” yo-yo demonstration.
- Sing dog-related songs, such as: **My Dog Blue, You Ain’t Nothin’ but a Hound Dog, Get Along Little Dogies.**
- Hold a tongue twister competition: “How much chow could a chow chow chew if a good chow could chew chow?” (from the book, **Martha Walks the Dog** by Susan Meddaugh).
- Have kids build a doghouse for a stuffed animal out of craft sticks, empty shoe or tissue boxes, or other craft supplies.
- Give “doggy bags” as giveaways. You can fill them with coloring sheets, stickers, and so on.

Other Helpful Resources

The Humane Society of the United States http://www.humanesociety.org/animal_community/resources has information on adoption, pet care, how to choose a pet, and many other important topics for kids and families.

