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PEDIGREE Foundation Awards San Diego Humane Society \$100,000 Grant *SDHS is selected out of nearly 500 entries for its Welcome Committee program for shelter dogs.*

SAN DIEGO — More than 15,000 dogs end up homeless in our community each year — and the transition to a shelter environment can be incredibly stressful for animals. That’s why San Diego Humane Society is delighted to announce it has received a \$100,000 grant from PEDIGREE Foundation to support its Welcome Committee program, which helps to reduce the adjustment period for dogs entering the shelter, build relationships with people, and decrease fear, anxiety, stress and frustration. The program focuses on incoming dogs who display fear- or stress-based behaviors during their first 24-48 hours in care. By helping dogs overcome transitional stress when they enter the shelter, the program protects their wellbeing and reduces stress-related behaviors — which, in turn, helps dogs find their new homes faster.



With this grant, to be distributed over two years, San Diego Humane Society will be able to continue to build on the Welcome Committee program for dogs. “We are sympathetic to the stress an animal is experiencing when arriving at a shelter,” said San Diego Humane Society Vice President of Behavior Programs Amanda Kowalski. “If we can be extra sensitive to their feelings from the get-go and respond in ways that teach them skills to cope with fear, anxiety and stress, we will also help them feel comfortable much faster and promote resilience. Our positive approach often results in the dog finding a family much faster.”

Welcome Committee candidates display behaviors in the first 24-48 hours that include:

- Retreating to the back of the kennel when approached.
- Attempts to avoid handling or leashing.
- Trembling.
- Excessive vocalization.
- Frozen or shut down behavior.

Welcome Committee plans include:

- Calm and Quiet protocol: rewards dogs for quiet and calm behavior at kennel front and builds a positive conditioned emotional response to people.
- Drive-by Treat Tosses: teaches dogs to feel comfortable and excited when people approach their kennels.
- No Pressure Interactions: helps dogs feel more relaxed and comfortable in the presence of humans.
- Treat Trails: builds confidence and happy associations with the environment and handler.
- Building Focus on a Handler: teaches dogs to comfortably focus on their handler by offering eye contact and checking in while in different environments, especially if they are feeling scared or anxious.
- Fear Free Leashing: teaches dogs to feel comfortable and relaxed with wearing a collar and having a leash clipped on for walks.
- S.W.A.G. (Sit, Wait, Attend, Generalize): An approach to interacting with every dog during every interaction. We teach dogs these skills so they learn to navigate their environment as well as connect with and respond to people — us and their future families.

San Diego Humane Society’s [Behavior & Training Program](#) plays a central role in the organization’s commitment to Stay at Zero euthanasia of healthy and treatable shelter animals in San Diego County. In 2013, the organization



opened its Behavior Center, which has given more than 4,000 animals with complex challenges a second chance in finding a home. In addition to providing lifesaving training for shelter pets with behavioral challenges, SDHS helps members of the community by offering over 40 training classes (with many now available online via Zoom), a Behavior Helpline and an online resource center with articles and videos. To learn more about San Diego Humane Society's pet training resources, visit sdhumane.org/training and tune in to San Diego Humane Society's social media channels throughout January, which is recognized as National Train Your Dog Month.

B-roll/photos of San Diego Humane Society's Welcome Committee work for media use can be downloaded here: <https://bit.ly/32LDtkp>

Suggested Tweet: Great news! @PedigreeFound has given @sdhumane a grant to support its Welcome Committee program, which helps reduce the adjustment period for dogs entering the shelter, build relationships with people, and decrease fear, anxiety, stress and frustration.

About San Diego Humane Society

San Diego Humane Society's scope of social responsibility goes beyond adopting animals. We offer programs that strengthen the human-animal bond, prevent cruelty and neglect, provide medical care, educate the community and serve as a safety net for all pet families. Serving San Diego County since 1880, San Diego Humane Society has campuses in El Cajon, Escondido, Oceanside, Ramona and San Diego. For more information, please visit sdhumane.org.

About PEDIGREE Foundation

We believe every dog deserves a loving, forever home. PEDIGREE Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working to help end pet homelessness. About 3.1 million dogs end up in shelters and rescues every year and too many never find a home. The foundation was established in 2008 by Mars Petcare, maker of PEDIGREE® food for dogs, to help increase dog adoption rates. We've awarded more than 5,800 grants and nearly \$10 million to U.S. shelters and rescues that help dogs in need. At PEDIGREE Foundation, we're working toward a day when all dogs are safe, secure, cared for, fed well and loved. See how you can help: PedigreeFoundation.org

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