Changing Perceptions of Animal Control

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Traditional Enforcement Approach
• Citations
• Impoundments
• Some outreach to school groups and partners such as utility companies and postal service
• Enforcement
• Enforcement

Proactive Animal Protection
• Change Image
  – We are not the pound!
• Meet the Mayor’s Customer Excellence goals
• We needed to know what we didn’t know

Voters approve bond for new shelter
New shelter opens
Search for new director
New leadership, new direction

2008  2011  2012  2013
Understanding Community

• What does community want?
  – Review interactions and complaints
• Communication: banned judgmental language
• Shift in thought:
  – Pet owner wants to comply, but doesn’t understand the ordinance
• Customize interactions to build trust
  – Find ways to meet pet owners where they were
  – Created outreach approach and programs

Animal Welfare Partners

• Understand partner’s needs
  – Where do they see community need?
• Invest in relationships with partners
  – Never stop working on those relationships and never take them for granted
• Build alliances
  – Metro Denver Animal Welfare Alliance was instrumental in changing perceptions
  – Set baseline: generosity and common goal in animal welfare community

Less Obvious Partners

• Work with partners to leverage resources instead of competing
• Build connections with non-animal welfare partners for benefit of pet owner and Denver
  – Identify organizations serving target areas
  – Which areas are succeeding and which need help
Leading Change Within Staff

Self-perception
- Enforcement or Educators?

Internal communication
- Established all-staff meeting
- Asked for input

Staff-led innovation
- What problems need to be solved for ourselves? Our community?

• Created discretion and warning first instead of citations.
• Began outreach model of proactive animal control
  - Implemented in summer of 2013 with inconsistent results - some officers liked and some didn’t
• Try again to move away from enforcement mindset - well-entrenched
• Buy-in from staff is required, and can be slow

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Complaints &amp; Compliments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014–2015</td>
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<td>2015–2016</td>
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Positive Comments

Negative Comments

Complaints & Compliments Trend Over Time
Takeaways

• Change the conversation with the public from enforcement to compliance
• Be creative with compliance concerns
• Officers are often the face the public sees, give them discretion and tools to solve problems in the Field
• Be a good partner, follow through with your partners
• Listen to your staff