



Maddie's Fund

Sixteen national animal welfare organizations came together for the Open Arms Challenge to encourage animal shelters and rescue organizations to pilot new approaches that increase inclusivity for new adopters and volunteers, and provide a welcoming environment for all community members.

From November 22, 2021, to January 3, 2022, nearly 200 participating organizations across 42 states (plus DC!) embraced inclusive policies, including but not limited to translating materials into multiple languages; reducing lengthy adoption applications; creating new partnerships with organizations outside of animal welfare; and removing barriers to adoption, foster and volunteering. These amazing efforts resulted in the adoption of 47,341 dogs and cats and support for 33,565 volunteers and 25,296 foster caregivers during the Challenge period!

"The love of a pet should not be a privilege. As an industry, we need to stop looking for reasons to say 'no' and start saying 'YES!'," said Mary Ippoliti-Smith, Executive Leadership Team member, Maddie's Fund®. "By opening up our arms and removing barriers, pet lovers no longer have to go elsewhere to acquire a pet. It's amazing what can happen when we believe people when they say their home is ready for a dog or cat instead of combing through it, looking for hazards. We celebrate each and every one of the participating organizations who did just that!"

The changes made to programs and processes varied from organization to organization. For some, it was as straightforward as providing literature in multiple languages or returning voicemails in a timely manner. Others started having open and honest conversations with adopters instead of requiring lengthy, written adoption applications, undertook bias training, or focused on neighborhoods where adoption events were not previously held.

"Our foster and volunteer networks are slowly starting to be more representative of the diversity in our community and we are excited for the opportunities that presents," said Tamara Lackey Executive Director of Beautiful Together Animal Sanctuary and a winner for Robust Programs. "We also expanded our adoption

event locations and marketing to reach a broader and more diverse audience, which has increased our adoption base to include more people of color, which is one of our major goals."

"Michelson Found Animals Foundation is proud to support the 194 participating organizations that implemented programs and processes that are inclusive and equitable for everyone," said Brett Yates, CEO of Michelson Found Animals Foundation and a funding partner of the Challenge. "We believe that this program is very unique, and we are confident that substantive changes will result which will help many people and their pets to lead enriching lives together. Congratulations to our winners!"