

October Marks Adopt-A-Dog Month

American Humane Association says this year's event comes during a tough time for dogs.

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During the month of October, the American Humane Association likes to spread the word about the benefits of adopting a dog, from canine companionship to the proven health benefits that come from pet ownership.

During this year's Adopt-A-Dog Month, the organization stresses that there's a greater need to support dog adoption from animal shelters because of the housing crisis and economic turmoil. These events have taken their toll on an unexpected group: dogs.

Marie Belew Wheatley, president and CEO of American Humane, said that there is a great reason now for people who want a dog to get one from a local animal shelter or rescue group. "By adopting a dog from a shelter this October, or at any time, people can save the lives of these precious animals and give them much-needed, loving homes," she said.

Dog adoption should not be taken lightly, however. Before visiting a shelter, potential dog owners should consider the following:

Dogs require exercise just like humans. A survey by the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association shows an increasing number of dog owners are citing activities such as walking, jogging, and exercise as the top benefit of having dogs in their lives. Look for a dog with activity needs that fit your lifestyle.

Dogs aren't wallflowers. Dogs are social pack animals and need time outside, around other people and dogs. Remember this if you work long hours or travel often.

Dogs are family pets. Adopting a dog must be a family decision. Because dogs become members of the family, it's unrealistic to expect one person to assume responsibility. Everyone in the home must be ready to care for the dog.

They are similar to children. Like children, dogs are dependent on their owners for their needs, including food and water, health care, exercise, shelter, and companionship.

Pets are a long-term responsibility. Dogs can live to be 15 years. Potential owners should be sure they're ready for the commitment.