

Dog Trainers Turn Focus to Saving Shelter Dogs

Student volunteers spend time training shelter dogs to help increase adoption rates.

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A national campaign launched by Animal Behavior College (ABC) in Los Angeles seeks to save the lives of shelter dogs by placing student volunteers in animal shelters to get canines trained and ready for adoption.

The vocational school for professional dog training instructors started the program "Students Saving Lives" as a way to help the millions of dogs who are surrendered to animal shelters each year by their owners. According to ABC, untreated behavior problems are a primary reason why dogs are sent back to the shelter and, for many, eventually euthanized.

In an effort to help reduce the number of surrendered and euthanized shelter dogs, ABC created a program that requires each of their dog training students to volunteer at least 10 hours at local animal shelters or rescue groups.

To date, about 2,000 ABC-certified dog trainers have donated more than 31,000 volunteer dog training hours to animal shelters and rescue groups throughout North America in an effort to help save the lives of animals. The dogs are taught basic obedience, and volunteers spend time correcting inappropriate behaviors.

Debbie Kendrick, vice president of ABC and creator of Students Saving Lives, said the program has helped countless dogs who were days away from euthanasia get placed into loving, permanent homes. When a dog is well-trained, that dog is more likely to be noticed at a shelter and adopted. Once home, the dog is less likely to have behavior problems, which often result in the dog being returned to the shelter.

In turn, the program also can be rewarding for the ABC trainer, said Shelly Levin, marketing representative. When students go into these rescues and shelters, they're often offered a permanent job.

"It's a perfect place to network because not only are they working with dogs, but they're meeting families who are coming in to adopt dogs," Levin said.