

'The Link' Between Pet Abuse and Human Violence

Experts in animal welfare, criminal justice, and other related fields met to discuss the connection.

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National experts in animal welfare, veterinary practice, humane operations, social services, child protection, criminal justice, education and domestic violence prevention met Sunday and Monday in Portland, Maine, for a brainstorming session on the link between pet abuse and human violence.

"Strategizing The Link: A National Town Meeting on Advancing Public Policy and Community Coalitions" was an opportunity for professionals to talk about ways to resolve violence more effectively by working together toward a common purpose. Goals of the national town meeting included: Strengthen community responses to family violence and pet abuse by uniting community groups and other professionals to plan a nationwide joint effort. Find out how research, legislation, and team-building initiatives will impact Link programming on the national, state, and local levels. Use the pros and cons of Link community ties as guides for successful team program development. Form a diverse national network to allow local groups to learn from one another's experiences in addressing pet abuse and human violence.

The event's "town meeting" format provided a forum for professionals from around the United States and from all areas involved in and related to the link between pet abuse and human violence to meet, network, and build national awareness about the link. Following the meeting, a group of leaders from national organizations will meet to use feedback from the attendees and help create plans for their respective agencies, individually and jointly.

Sponsors of the two-day conference were American Humane Association, The Linkage Project, and the Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust. Event coordinators chose Portland for this event because of the work being done by The Linkage Project and Maine's statewide efforts in this field, said Phil Arkow, interim director for Human-Animal Bond programs at AHA.

A survey of pet-owning families with substantiated child abuse and neglect found that animals were abused in 88 percent of homes where child physical abuse was present, according to AHA. Studies also indicate that children who witness animal abuse are more likely to repeat the cycle.