

## **Arizona Animal Advocates Volunteer Conference 2007**

By Malin Borg, Director of Administration, Arizona Animal Welfare League

Via funding from the Arizona Community Foundation, Arizona Animal Welfare League has been participating in a Citizen Stewardship coalition to create portable programming to improve people's relationships with and understanding of our natural heritage, and in particular, animals, whether domestic or wild, and their habitat.

In 2006, more than 100,000 animals were surrendered to Maricopa County shelters. All of us at the shelters, two-legged and four-legged alike, rely heavily on generous donations of time and compassion from volunteers. During the fall of 2006, a discussion started about the benefits of creating some form of standardized training for all animal welfare volunteers.

This discussion about what the needs of the different organizations are, the benefits of such a training collaboration, and how such a training tool would look, matured into concrete plans for a two-day conference, **Arizona Animal Advocates Volunteer Conference 2007**, which was held on February 24-25, 2007, at the Airport Crown Plaza in Phoenix.

The goal of this conference was two-fold:

- to attract new volunteers and provide those volunteers with the knowledge and tools they need to more quickly be able to start helping the animals
- to provide further training for current volunteers by taking advantage of the different areas of expertise existing within the different animal welfare organizations in Arizona

Another major goal of this collaboration, in addition to the benefits already mentioned, is the opportunity to present the needs of the community as a whole, each organization's role in relation to other groups, and teaching tolerance and an understanding of each organization's purpose.

Looking past this initial conference, which covered topics such as shelter medicine, the emotional component of this industry, overpopulation issues, dog body language, and animal cruelty/animal law, among others, we are hoping that this collaboration will continue in the form of regularly scheduled conferences and other combined continuing education opportunities, and eventually grow into a multi-level certification program.

The Arizona Animal Advocates Volunteer Conference 2007 was presented through a collaboration between Arizona Animal Welfare League and SPCA, Arizona Humane Society, Humane Society of Southern Arizona, Maricopa County Animal Care and Control, and Second Chance Center for Animals. We are proud to have had Maddie's Project in Maricopa County and PetSmart Charities as our sponsors.

The Arizona Animal Welfare League and SPCA (AAWL), Arizona's oldest and largest no-kill shelter, provides adoption, resource and education programs that improve the quality of life for dogs and cats. AAWL's shelter facilities provide a temporary home for nearly 2,200 dogs and cats every year, offering medical and behavioral treatment for those in need. Founded in 1971, AAWL's priority is to take in adoptable animals from other shelters where they might be

ethanized and to care for them until each is adopted into a loving, lifetime home. AAWL receives no government funding and is supported solely by donations and memberships. AAWL is located at 30 N. 40th Place in Phoenix. For more information, visit [www.aawl.org](http://www.aawl.org).