



# UNITED SPAY ALLIANCE CONFERENCE



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**Saturday, October 10, 2026 & Sunday, October 11, 2026**  
**10:00 AM – 5:00 PM ET**

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**Saturday, October 10, 2026**

**10:00 AM – 10:15 AM**

## **Opening Remarks**

*Stacy LeBaron, United Spay Alliance Director of Strategy and Board Member*  
*Dr. Becky Morrow, Frankie's Friends and United Spay Alliance Board Member*

**10:15 AM – 11:15 AM**

## **BISSELL Pet Foundation's Fix the Future®: Changing How America Solves Pet Homelessness**

**Cathy Bissell, Founder, BISSELL Pet Foundation**

Pet homelessness isn't an adoption problem—it's a prevention problem. In this session, Cathy Bissell shares how BISSELL Pet Foundation's Fix the Future® initiative is changing the animal welfare landscape by addressing the root cause of pet homelessness through affordable spay and neuter access. Learn how this national, high-impact model is reducing shelter intake, easing overcrowding, and creating a more sustainable future for pets and the communities that care for them.

**About Cathy Bissell** | Cathy Bissell is the Founder of BISSELL Pet Foundation and a national leader in animal welfare, known for advancing prevention-based solutions that address the root causes of pet homelessness. Since 2011, her approach has always been to find out why existing systems aren't working — and then build ones that do.

Under her leadership, BISSELL Pet Foundation has impacted the lives of nearly 1.5 million pets across all 50 states. In 2023, she launched Fix the Future® — the only national program bringing veterinary care directly into the communities that need it most, deploying veterinarians to spay, neuter, vaccinate and microchip pets at scale. Now the largest spay/neuter program in the United States, Fix the Future has provided 400,000 surgeries in under three years. She also conceived Empty the Shelters®, the nation's largest funded adoption event, which has helped find homes for more than 408,000 pets since 2016.

Cathy's work spans the full spectrum of animal welfare — from transport and wellness to crisis and disaster response. She is known for her hands-on leadership and her deep relationships with shelters across the country, listening closely to their most pressing challenges and responding with solutions designed to meet them. Under her oversight, 100% of contributions to BISSELL Pet Foundation go directly toward helping pets.

Today, Cathy's six adopted pets reaffirm her commitment to saving animals until every pet has a home.

..... **11:15 - 11:30 AM ET | Break** .....

**11:30 AM – 12:30 PM**

## **The Rural Reality: A Panel Conversation**

**Julie Jacobson, Program Manager, Spay Tennessee (Moderator)**

**Victoria Partridge, Executive Director of the Street Cats Club (Panelist)**

**Cole Wakefield, Executive Director, Good Shepherd Humane Society (Panelist)**

The panel will address some of the challenges and solutions for doing more spay/neuter in rural areas. Often the solution involves more pet services (food pantries, vaccines, etc). We'll discuss how these needs are being met in some areas, and what other organizations could consider implementing in their own communities.

**About Julie Jacobson** | Julie grew up in Minnesota and spent a career in the US Air Force, retiring as a Lt Col. After retirement got her first dog, a pit mix named Kalamity Jane, aka "the bitch that started it all". Julie was active in

foster and spay/neuter in a rural county in TN for almost 20 years (no animal control, no shelter, and no vet) and since 2010, has been networking across the state as Spay Tennessee.

**About Victoria Partridge** | Victoria Partridge is the Founder and Executive Director of Street Cats Club, a grassroots 501(c)(3) nonprofit and Kansas-licensed animal shelter based in Emporia, Kansas. She founded the organization in July 2019 with a simple goal: to improve the lives of community cats through humane, accessible solutions.

Since then, Street Cats Club has grown from a small local effort into a high-impact, entirely volunteer-run organization serving rural communities throughout Kansas. The organization provides free Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), foster and rescue services for sick, injured, and orphaned cats, community cat food assistance, winter shelters, and spay/neuter support for low-income pet owners.

Under Victoria's leadership, Street Cats Club has significantly expanded its spay/neuter capacity. In 2026, the organization is on track to spay/neuter and vaccinate more than 1,000 stray and community cats, more than double its previous year's total, all while remaining powered entirely by volunteers.

Recognizing that access to affordable spay/neuter services is often one of the greatest challenges facing rural communities, Victoria has also helped expand Street Cats Club's work beyond its home county. The organization is one of the few TNR groups providing Travel TNR, bringing trapping, transportation, and spay/neuter resources directly into underserved communities throughout Kansas, where local TNR programs or accessible veterinary resources may not exist.

Street Cats Club is also the only animal shelter providing foster care services throughout all of Lyon County and into surrounding counties, helping fill critical gaps in areas with limited or no shelter resources.

Victoria brings to the Rural Panel the perspective of a grassroots leader who has built and scaled lifesaving programs in communities where funding, veterinary access, transportation, staffing, and other resources can be limited.

**About Cole Wakefield** | Cole Wakefield is an animal welfare leader, strategist, and educator with nearly a decade of experience building practical, humane systems in rural and under-resourced communities. He currently serves as Executive Director of Good Shepherd Humane Society in rural Arkansas and is a founder and co-facilitator of Rural Humane, a national initiative focused on rural-tested approaches to animal welfare. Cole is a Certified Animal Welfare Administrator (CAWA) and holds a Master's degree in Management and Leadership.

..... 12:30 - 1:15 PM ET | Lunch Break .....

**1:15 PM – 2:15 PM**

## **Engaging Private Practitioners With High Efficiency Training**

***Karen Slomba and Ivy Wolff, Slomba Shelter Solutions***

The demand for accessible, high-quality spay/neuter services continues to outpace supply — and private practitioners are uniquely positioned to help close that gap. This session explores how High-Quality, High-Efficiency Spay/Neuter (HQHESN) training engages private practice veterinarians as active participants, and helps them become a more meaningful force for community impact. Presenters Karen Slomba, CEO of Slomba Shelter

Solutions, and Ivy Wolff will share the structure, outcomes, and business case behind a training series designed to build surgical efficiency without adding hours to the workday.

**About Karen Slomba and Ivy Wolff** | Karen Slomba is the founder of Chief Spay/ Neuter Party Planer of Slomba Shelter Solutions, bringing together powerhouse veterinary teams to support animal shelters across the country with high-quality, high-volume spay/neuter services. With more than 20 years of experience leading shelters, launching community programs, and traveling the country helping organizations find their perfect hire, expand their capacity to serve their communities, and work smarter, Karen is, in short, the equivalent of a bedazzled Swiss army knife: compact, sharp, and multifaceted.

Ivy Wolff is the Director of Operations at Slomba Shelter Solutions, where she manages things behind the scenes -from clinic logistics and contractor coordination to program and systems development. A retired professional equestrian competitor and coach, chef, and operations consultant, Ivy came to S3 with decades of experience making complex, high-stakes things look easy. She is, by her own admission, currently training for the unofficial title of Professional Karen Wrangler.

..... 2:15 - 2:30 PM ET | Break .....

**2:30 PM – 3:15 PM**

## **Partners for Pets: A Toolkit for Animal Welfare Organizations and Veterinarians**

***Julie Bank, Principal, JBankConsulting***

Not all animal welfare organizations have the in-house veterinary support they need, which means they are reaching out to private vets for these essential services. Some only require a veterinarian of record relationship (VoRR) to allow them to legally purchase prescription medications. Others need much more support and are looking for vets who can provide a wide range of services. Having a partnership with a veterinarian is invaluable to animal welfare organizations (AWOs), but benefits extend to the vets as well.

This workshop will discuss tips and tools about how to make the partnership a successful one, thereby increasing access to care. We will share specific ideas and case studies found in a new free toolkit on this topic that discusses topics such as how to create a relationship, the legalities behind the relationship, and how to grow the relationship to meet both parties' needs and goals.

**About Julie Bank** | Julie Bank is a veteran animal welfare professional. For the past 35 years, she has worked in operational and executive roles in nonprofit and governmental animal welfare organizations throughout the Country. She has worked on national, international, and local projects.

She is currently the principal at JBankConsulting, where she works with all types of non-profit organizations to help them with strategy, program development, and assessments. Julie specializes in change management and helping organizations to grow. She writes a free weekly blog on all matters of non-profits. Whether working in a large, governmental animal services or a small, private humane society, Julie has used her skills in strategic planning, management, operations, program development, human resources, business operations, outreach, fundraising, and communications to assist organizations with their goals.

Julie is also an adjunct at the University of Florida teaching fundraising and development and leadership.

She is currently the interim executive director for the United Spay Alliance, filling in while the current director is on leave. She is also the primary content specialist for the Shelters United Toolkit and course we will be talking about in this session.

Julie has a bachelor's degree in business, management, and finance, a master's degree in interdisciplinary studies, and master's coursework in Museum Education and Non-Profit Management.

**3:15 PM – 3:30 PM**

## **Cat Trivia! Featuring DeKalb County Commissioner Michelle Long Spears**

..... 3:30 - 3:45 PM ET | Break .....

**3:45 PM – 4:55 PM**

## **Opening a Spay/Neuter Clinic: A Toolkit**

***Karen Little, Founder, Alley Cat Advocates***

Hard work? Yes. Impossible? No. Whether fear is holding you back or you are ready to begin, this presentation will provide you the confidence needed to move forward. It also serves to launch a new "Spay/Neuter Clinic Toolkit" that includes a checklist to help you select the spay/neuter clinic model that best fits your community's needs along with guidance on all the topics to consider along the way. The toolkit's key features will be shared and you will be encouraged to take the next step through real-life examples. It isn't rocket science—but there are still t's to cross and i's to dot. Let's get it done!

**About Karen Little** | Karen and her husband founded the nonprofit Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) group Alley Cat Advocates in 1999. Based in Louisville, Kentucky, the group has altered over 86,000 community cats and has worked to transform the culture of care provided community cats in the region. Karen was instrumental in helping pass an ordinance change in 2012 that propelled the implementation of an extremely successful municipal Return-to-Field program, moving the city's Save Rate for cats to over 90% where it has remained. Since 2018, Alley Cat Advocates has held the citywide contract for Trap-Neuter-Return and all related community cat issues. In 2020, under Karen's direction, a successful capital campaign concluded with the opening of a Community Cat Complex dedicated to the care and well-being of community cats. The complex houses a high quality, high volume spay/neuter clinic dedicated solely to altering community cats as well as medical space for housing and caring for community cats needing extra care. Now retired, Karen busies herself with hiking, swimming, biking and volunteering for the occasional high quality, high volume spay/neuter clinic.

**4:55 PM – 5:00 PM**

## **Final Thoughts**

***Dr. Becky Morrow***

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# Sunday, October 11, 2026

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**10:00 AM – 10:15 AM**

## Opening Remarks

*Stacy LeBaron, United Spay Alliance Director of Strategy and Board Member  
Dr. Michelle Gonzalez (Dr. G), Rascal Unit, and United Spay Alliance Board Member*

**10:15 AM – 11:15 AM**

## To Spay or Not to Spay...Are We Asking the Right Questions?

*Dr. Rachel Powell, Greenhill Humane Society*

For decades, orchiectomy (“neuter”) and ovariectomy (“spay”), commonly referred to as S/N, of companion animals has been widely promoted as a cornerstone of preventative healthcare and prevention of pet overpopulation. In the United States in particular, S/N has been viewed as essential to preventing unwanted litters, reducing shelter intake and euthanasia, and improving individual animal health and welfare. Yet concerns about potential adverse health effects of S/N revealed by some veterinary research and published recommendations to delay or eliminate S/N have complicated what was once a relatively straightforward recommendation. But are owners and veterinarians asking the right questions about the decision to S/N pets?

**About Dr. Powell** | Dr. Powell graduated from the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine in 2002. She spent more than 15 years in mixed animal and equine-exclusive private practice, before transitioning to shelter medicine in 2018. She completed the Maddie’s UW/UCD Shelter Medicine Fellowship in 2018-19. Currently, she is the Director of Surgery at a progressive, non-profit shelter in Eugene, Oregon with multiple county/city contracts, 2 veterinarians, and an annual intake of ~5,000 animals. She also sits on the Association of Shelter Veterinarians BOD and serves as ASV’s member representative to WSAVA.

Her professional passions include surgery (esp. HQHVSN), community cat management, and Access to Care/OneHealth programs. When she is not working, she enjoys all things outdoors in the beautiful PNW with her husband and dogs.

..... 11:15 - 11:30 AM ET | Break .....

**11:30 AM – 12:15 PM**

## USA Grant-Making Programs

*Elizabeth Finch, Educational Strategist*

United Spay Alliance is working hard to bring spay/neuter funding back to the community to enable programs to become self-sufficient and strong business models. Learn about the various opportunities that we offer.

**About Elizabeth Finch** | Elizabeth Finch is an educational strategist specializing in community cat management and animal welfare. Her work spans educational content development, grant program administration, and professional resource creation. She develops educational programs and content for Community Cats Central, helps manage grant initiatives for United Spay Alliance, and is currently collaborating on a veterinary textbook. Through her writing, speaking, and training, Elizabeth is committed to helping animal welfare professionals and volunteers turn knowledge into effective action.

..... 12:15 - 1:00 PM ET | Lunch Break .....

**1:00 PM – 2:00 PM**

## **One and Done: Best Practices in Anesthesia, Analgesia & Low-Stress Handling for High-Volume TNR**

***Robin Post, RVT, Director of Clinic Operations, Animal Fix Clinic***

For many community cats, TNR may be their one and only opportunity to receive veterinary care. “One and Done” focuses on making that opportunity count. This presentation explores practical, evidence-based strategies for providing safe, effective, and compassionate anesthesia and analgesia while minimizing stress and maintaining efficiency in a high-volume TNR setting.

Topics include low-stress handling, anesthetic and analgesic considerations, perioperative and post-operative pain management, monitoring, recovery, and workflow strategies designed specifically for community cats.

Pain management is more complicated for community cats because hands-on treatment, oral medications or other traditional post-op care may not be feasible. We’ll discuss safe handling, minimizing stressful holding times and their return to the community.

When we may only have one chance to get it right, every part of the experience matters—from the moment a cat enters the clinic to the moment they are safely returned to their community.

**About Speaker Robin Post** | Robin Post, RVT, started her medical career as a veterinary assistant in the shelter medicine department of the San Francisco SPCA, then assuming a supervisory role in the SFSPCA Spay/Neuter clinic. Before joining Animal Fix Clinic, Robin was Supervisor of Off-Site Spay-Neuter Services, where she coordinated MASH-style spay/neuter clinics and helped develop spay/neuter programs at municipal shelters. She is also a reserve field technician for HSVMA-RAVS.

Robin has overseen the anesthesia of literally tens of thousands of dogs and cats (from half-pound kittens to feral dogs to geriatric patients) in just about every imaginable physical condition. She received the Linda Markland Outstanding RVT of the Year Award in 2023. Robin is a RECOVER Certified ALS Rescuer and a Fear Free Certified Professional. Robin lives in Albany with her cats, and Marge from Muttville.

..... 2:00 - 2:30 PM ET | Break .....

**2:30 PM – 3:30 PM**

## **Fundraising: From Planning to Asking**

***Julie Bank, Principal, JBankConsulting***

Fundraising doesn't have to be overwhelming or something you tackle only when you need money. This practical session will explore how to create a fundraising plan, understand the range of strategies available, and build a sustainable fundraising program whether you have a dedicated development staff or are doing it with a small team.

Participants will learn how to:

- Create a fundraising plan that provides focus, direction, and realistic next steps.
- Explore multiple fundraising strategies and learn how to start and implement them with the resources you have.
- Make time for fundraising by stepping back from day-to-day operations and investing in long-term organizational sustainability.
- Build relationships and make the ask—including practical ways to become more comfortable talking about your organization, developing relationships, and asking for support.

The goal is to move fundraising from something that feels intimidating or reactive to a manageable, relationship-driven part of your organization's ongoing work.

**About Julie Bank** | See full bio under Julie's session from Saturday: Partner's for Pets at 2:30 PM.

..... 3:30 - 3:45 PM ET | Break .....

**3:45 PM – 4:45 PM**

## **M.A.S.H & The No Birth Movement**

***Emma Clifford, Animal Balance***

Animal Balance has used the M.A.S.H (Mobile Animal Sterilization Hospitals) strategy for over two decades to effectively and humanely reduce cat and dog populations internationally. M.A.S.H includes TNR cats, institutionalized animals and companion animals - all cats and dogs. Post pandemic, we have refined the model to serve the US. Concentrating our efforts in California, we are providing 1,000 spay/neuter surgeries a month, 200 per clinic, so 5 clinics per month, to underserved communities. We have co-authored the bill AB2010, which has passed to the Senate. This will allow HQHVSN groups to use community centers, or one large room, for M.A.S.H events. This strategy cuts down overpopulation and removes the barriers for access to veterinary care for all. M.A.S.H events are the strongest tool that we have to humanely reduce cat and dog populations.

I will explain the model, its successes internationally, in places such as the Galapagos Islands and Cuba, and now domestically, in California. Prevention is the cure for overpopulation and as such, we have launched a shared social

media campaign called, The No Birth Movement. A natural step on from the No Kill Movement, which refocuses available resources to concentrate on stopping overpopulation, not the outcome of it. #nobirthmovement is a positive campaign that challenges the status quo in the US. California kills over 100,000 cats and dogs annually, and it does not have to. The current situation is not acceptable as California has the resources to make different choices.

In this talk, I will explain the M.A.S.H model and how US based groups can start their own M.A.S.H teams by collaborating with existing HQHVSN groups. I will explain how the model can grow in each state. I will also share how to promote the M.A.S.H events with your local government and encourage funding. If there are state laws that need to be amended, I will explain how to do that. I will also make suggestions for social media messaging, remaining positive, but using direct language, always stating that prevention is the cure.

**Takeaways:**

- Understanding the importance of M.A.S.H events (always included TNR) as part of the HQHVSN services
- Legal hurdles explained with a real example
- How to start your own M.A.S.H unit
- Messaging via social media to refocus the US funding in animal welfare to prevention

**About Emma Clifford** | Emma Clifford graduated from the University of Central England with a BA Hon. in Sociological Research in 1995. Emma was born in the UK, into a family who rescued animals. As a teenager she became vegan and began actively protesting blood sports and other forms of animal cruelty, such as vivisection.

After graduating, she moved to the United States and joined the animal welfare movement. For 8 years she worked at a local, national and international level, immersing herself in the movement and learning how to manage a successful non-profit organization. While at The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SF/SPCA) she developed and directed the feral cat, foster and sterilization programs. She was also the city representative for the SF/SPCA. She has presented at conferences and advised other humane societies on how to implement these programs in their cities and reduce the city's euthanasia rate.

In 2003, Emma discovered that the cats and dogs of the Galapagos Islands were being poisoned as a means of population control. In response, Emma founded Animal Balance in 2004. Shortly after, Animal Balance began their work sterilizing the cats and dogs throughout the Galapagos Islands. As of 2024, 80% of the cats and 72% of the dogs are sterilized so now this program is a maintenance program managed by the Ecuadorian Government. Due to the success of this program, Animal Balance has expanded operations globally. After the pandemic, Animal Balance brought M.A.S.H (Mobile Animal Sterilization Hospitals) events to the US, focusing on California as that state kills 100,000 animals a year.

Emma gives lectures and consults with many animal welfare organizations around the world to help find ways to reduce the cruelty and suffering of animals and implement humane and sustainable animal management programs.

**4:45 PM – 5:00 PM**

## **Closing Remarks**

**Stacy LeBaron, United Spay Alliance Director of Strategy and Board Member**  
**Dr. Michelle Gonzalez(Dr. G), Rascal Unit, and United Spay Alliance Board Member**

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