



A Voice for Animals Scholarship

Rescue 911 For Our Shelter Animals

**Students who are aged 16 to 18 must write an essay or submit a short video that addresses either the mistreatment of one animal species or one cause of animal suffering; or the preservation of one endangered species, occurring anywhere in the world, and potential solutions to alleviate animal suffering.**

For the past five years, my family has been supporting our local Brandywine Valley SPCA. BVSPCA is “Pennsylvania's first no kill, open admission shelter. The BVSPCA puts the

## Rescue 911 For Our Shelter Animals

"human" back in humane animal treatment (BVSPCA, 2023). My sister and mom volunteered and walked dogs on the weekends. I was a hockey player throughout my middle school and high school career and could never go to walk dogs on the weekend, so I handled bi-annual collections for wish list items that the SPCA needed from cleaning supplies to towels, blankets, dog beds, food, toys, treats and more! Diamond Pets suggest the following 15 items that are most needed by animal shelters: money, toys, food/treats, cleaning supplies, towels, blankets, newspapers, grooming supplies, collars, leashes, furniture, crates/carriers, food/water bowls, flea/tick treatment, toilet supplies, nursing bottles, and office products (Diamond Pets, 2023). I collected items at my hockey rink, in my neighborhood, from family and friends, and purchased items at pet stores, yard sales, etc. to donate to the shelter.

Not only does our SPCA care for shelter animals, they also do so much for the community. According to the ASPCA, 6.3 million companion animals enter shelters in the US every year (ASPCA, 2023). This number is astonishing! Not only are SPCAs managing the care of animals at the kennel, but they also help people in the community who want to love and care for their pet, but may not have the means to do so. They run food barn that is open a few times per week where families in need could go to get free food for their pets. I also donated many new items to the barn so that people who were in a tough spot could still find a way to support their pets without having to relinquish them to the kennel. One of the things I tried to do most was collect new bags of dog food from neighbors or over the Facebook Marketplace so that I could donate them to the food barn.

### Rescue 911 For Our Shelter Animals

In the years that I have been donating to the SPCA, I have seen so much sadness. We particularly visited the dogs at the shelter. So many of them have been mistreated, abused, used in dog fights, malnourished, abandoned, or rescued from overbreeding or hoarding situations. My family and I have seen it all. On days when I was not playing hockey, I would go to the SPCA with my mom and sister and just visit the dogs. I would bring treats, toys and blankets when I visited. I was also allowed to bring dogs into “quiet” rooms to remove them from the kennel environment and give them some quiet time and relaxation. I also assisted my mom and sister with “dog on a date” where we would pick a dog at the kennel and take him/her in our car to a park, walk the dog and play with him/her outside of the kennel.

The most rewarding experience is when my family and I became fosters for one of the dogs that was completely malnourished. We took him into our home, gave him a quiet place to heal, gave him his medication, took him for all of his surgeries, and allowed him to heal with love in our house. He was suffering from a torn bowel due to the family that had him not getting him any medical care. Unfortunately, that dog (named Coby) passed away due to extreme mistreatment and malnourishment. We really hoped to help him be a success story, but at least he died with a family. The SPCA even officially adopted him to us before he was euthanized so he would die with dignity and the love of a family. My family was with him up until his last breath and I just know he died knowing and feeling love. I don't think we could have asked for a better ending to his life, but nonetheless, his death was senseless. He was a beautiful, well-behaved, loving

### Rescue 911 For Our Shelter Animals

French Bulldog that deserved so much more than the previous family gave him. It was so sad to see what he had to endure up until his last day on earth.

During COVID, it was really difficult to handle donations and such to the SPCA since we could not get out of the house much, but I was still able to collect items and drop them off outside of the shelter on nice days. We continued to do this so that the animals would still have supplies during the shutdown. Since I was home that year for school, I learned how to refinish furniture. I collected free pieces of furniture from neighbors and even off the side of the road. I painted several pieces and donated the profits to the SPCA for supplies and animal needs. I painted a table, desk, end tables, a side table, a foyer table, and a sofa table. All of these items were sold and I used the money to donate to the shelter. My family and I also used the profit from one desk to sponsor the adoption fee of a dog that was at the kennel the longest. We asked the kennel to identify a dog that had been in their care or returned and spent the most time getting overlooked. We paid that dog's fee and the shelter advertised that the dog's adoption fee was sponsored. That kind gesture allowed the longest resident dog at the kennel to get adopted after almost 1 year living in the kennel life! We were so happy to see this result from our donation.

I have so many ideas on how to alleviate animal suffering. For the people who abuse and mistreat animals, I just hope that people know to report these things so that animals can be saved and that people who can't care for their animals anymore know how to properly relinquish custody of their animal to the SPCA without penalty so that the animal can get the help that they need.

### Rescue 911 For Our Shelter Animals

Social media is such an amazing platform to get this information out – especially to young people. They need to do a good job of promoting positive animal care, keeping animals vaccinated, spayed/neutered and encouraging people to adopt and support animals in shelters.

Our society needs to understand that there are so many good animals in shelters, they should not be overlooked. Whenever I visit the kennels, I will take pictures and small videos and post them to my social media pages asking people to share, visit, support their local shelters. There was one dog that I know of, that got adopted as a result of this effort! That too, was very rewarding.

In terms of helpers and volunteers, it is great to have people who can donate regularly to shelters, gather all of the necessary wish list items that shelters need to operate, and help them keep supplies for the animals. Also, those that can volunteer the time to walk, visit, care for and foster animals is a HUGE relief to the shelter life for many animals. It is such an experience for the animals just to be removed from the shelter for a day or even overnight. Animals thrive off of the attention, care and love of a human. Even if people can't walk dogs or spend too much time, there are so many ways to support the shelter life. People can donate, clean, wash towels, bathe animals, etc. There is so much open and available to people to help from the smallest ways to the biggest ways.

For those that are struggling financially, it is important to advertise and let people know about the free shot clinics offered at various pet stores, reduced rates to spay/neuter their pet, and also places like BVSPCA who offers free food/supplies/bedding and care to families in need.

## Rescue 911 For Our Shelter Animals

If more people cared about the welfare of our animals, there would hopefully be less suffering.

Every little bit of support helps!

Thank you for reading my essay.

Daniel Athey

### Sources

American SPCA (2023). Adopted from [www.aspca.org](http://www.aspca.org).

Brandywine Valley SPCA (2023). Adopted from [www.bvspca.org](http://www.bvspca.org).

Diamond Pets (2023). 15 Things Your Rescue Shelter Needs. Adopted from [www.diamondpets.com](http://www.diamondpets.com).