



# member to member

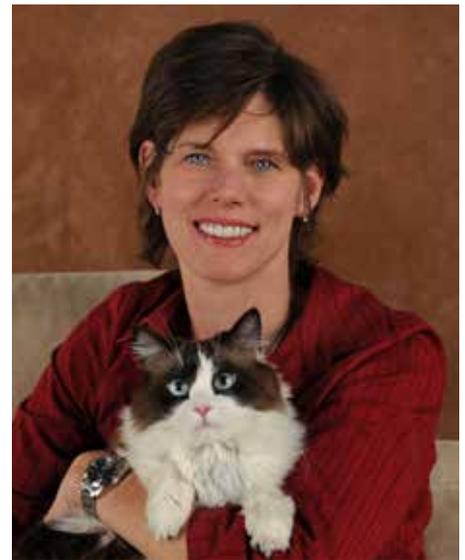
## PAWS TO THE GROUND: TURNING AROUND AN IMAGE

BY CHRISTINE ROBINSON,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, THE ANIMAL FOUNDATION

**C**aring for animals is serious business. I learned that lesson eight years ago when I first stepped into the not-for-profit world at The Animal Foundation. The headlines we were receiving were not the kind any organization wanted or welcomed, and we were facing a serious crisis demanding a new business paradigm. As a new leader at the Foundation, I recognized that there were many well-intentioned and highly dedicated people running the organization. I soon understood that what was missing was a thorough understanding of the business functions necessary to run a successful not-for-profit enterprise, including finance, human resources, accounting and sound policies, procedures and practices. Personally, I was excited to marry a business skill set with a personal passion. I love animals, and I am trained in organizational leadership and change management. By combining the two, I knew that animals' lives would be saved and that I could and would steer us out of a bad place through stronger operational management, communication, the use of external expertise and organizational assessment and planning. Those efforts have been successful, and we have elevated our goals to the next level.

I am delighted to share that in June of this year, we announced our new five-year goal to progressively achieve a 90 percent save rate for all animals entering our care by 2020. How did we get there from where we were? In order to achieve this ambitious – yet reachable – goal, we had to devise a new plan to articulate our vision, clear goals and measuring sticks of success. As part of developing this strategic plan to improve our operation, we employed the “why” questions to define who we are and what we do. We thought through our competencies, and the services we do, or should, provide. A thoughtful planning process provided the framework and opportunity to readjust our business model. Some adjustments were minor, and others required a radical change of the whole areas of our business model. The fulfillment of our vision requires a well-crafted plan to change and evolve our operation to progressively achieve a far greater percentage of animals saved on an annual basis.

Our goal of progressively moving towards a 90 percent save rate for the animals who enter our care, requires that we relentlessly continue to make improvements in almost every area of our organization. We must stay on top of the best practices that evolve in the work we do to save animals. Every year, new challenges emerge along with better solutions to existing



problems. We will continue to improve, evolve and ultimately achieve our goal, both by creating our own plan, and collaborating with community stakeholders to design and implement a community-wide strategic plan to achieve success.

We are particularly excited to engage our community's most talented business leaders such as all of you as we work to create one of the nation's most successful not-for profit enterprises engaged in saving animals across our community.