

**Sunday Column – Together**  
**For publication 3.19.17**

In college I took a class that required us to work in groups to complete a project due at the end of the semester. When the assignment was introduced the groans, including my own, were audible. By the end of the semester I counted this as one of my best college experiences.

What I found was that, by working together, we were able to create something that was far better than I knew I could have done by myself. It was worth the complications of trying to figure out what time everyone could meet and coping with an assortment of personalities.

Ever since then I have been eager to work with groups and nearly always find it rewarding. This is especially true in animal welfare. I work with professionals in this field who have been doing this work for decades. Others, like me, are relatively new but we come to the work with valuable insights from our various fields of work and study that bring new insights to old problems.

Since embarking on this path in 2012, I have been fortunate to benefit from the experience of others who share freely what they have learned. The Humane Society of the United States, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Maddie's Fund, Best Friends Animal Society, and others share a wealth of downloadable information, including webinars, articles, and how-to manuals. Their experts are available by phone at no charge and their annual conferences are affordable.

It would be unbearable to do this work without the support offered by the national animal welfare organizations and our sister organizations locally and throughout the U.S. We encourage others to steal from us whatever they find useful. This is a part of our industry culture. We know others have been in our shoes and may have insights or experiences we can learn from. We don't have to reinvent the wheel. When it gets too sad we know we can count on each other for support.

Unfortunately, it can still get ugly between organizations with differing philosophies and capabilities. Animal welfare workers may have strong feelings about limiting the time and money expended on any one animal. They will say that we sometimes have to sacrifice the one to save many more. The terms "no-kill" vs. "kill" when used in relation to animal shelters divide us, yet many persist in distinguishing themselves, one from the other.

This is on my mind after attending an animal law conference in Atlanta last Tuesday. The conference brought together law enforcement and animal control officers, prosecutors, veterinarians, and animal welfare workers. The theme of the conference was that we all need to work together to effectively crack down on animal cruelty and neglect. Yet over and over I heard attendees vocalizing their complaints about groups attacking one another.

It is why Best Friends Animal Society's tag line is "Together we can save them all". It is the only way we will and I know we will succeed only to the extent that we overlook our differences and maintain our focus on helping animals and the families who love them.

*Bobbi Yeo lives in Opelika, AL. She is the CEO of PAWS Humane in Columbus, GA, an animal shelter and veterinary clinic offering low-cost spay/neuter and other services to the public. Email her at [byeo@pawshumane.org](mailto:byeo@pawshumane.org) with your comments and story ideas.*