Our New Strategic Plan

Creating a Roadmap for the Future

Our Strategic Planning Process

In August 2011, I had the privilege of joining Marin Humane Society’s Board of Directors, and was asked to chair the Strategic Planning Committee. Just a few weeks later, Nancy McKenney (Chief Executive Officer), Polly Elkin (then President of the Board) and I shared ideas on how to best launch a Strategic Planning process and create a new strategic plan for MHS.

The planning commenced in earnest early 2012 with the launch of the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), which met bi-weekly from January through August. This hard-working committee includes ten members, consisting of senior management and members of the MHS Board of Directors.

During the first half of 2012, we gathered and analyzed information from a variety of sources to hear from all of our internal and external constituents, understand socio-economic trends in our community, and learn from the experience and insights of other non-profit organizations:

• We reviewed a 2012 study: “A Portrait of Marin,” commissioned by Marin Community Foundation.
• We conducted our own Community Survey, administered by Q&A Research of Novato, including a strong representation of donors, volunteers, adopters, and other key constituents.
• We benchmarked 18 non-profit organizations to learn more about their strategic planning process and areas of focus.
• We studied the results of the 2012 Shelter Diagnostic Survey, measuring staff satisfaction at MHS.
Our Vision: We envision a better world for all animals.

Our Mission: We improve the lives of animals and people through advocacy, education, and support.

Our Tagline: A world of difference for animals.

- Accountability
- Appreciation for staff, volunteers and supporters
- Healthy work environment.

Core Areas of Focus
Our Strategic Plan (2012-2016) builds on four core areas of focus (shown on the next page), which emerged prominently in our internal and external data gathering.

From all of this data and analysis, we were able to identify the key strategic issues facing MHS. We moved from analysis to plan creation through a series of meetings with a broader group, the Strategic Planning Taskforce, comprising all of MHS’s senior staff and board members, and culminating in three workshops during the May-July timeframe. These sessions helped us synthesize a huge amount of information and organize it into a comprehensive plan of goals and strategies. The Plan was formally adopted by the Board of Directors on August 15, 2012, and implementation is now underway under the direction of Nancy and her senior staff.

Vision, Mission, Tagline, and Values
As part of our strategic planning process, we assessed our current Vision, Mission, Tagline (shown above), and Values. Our recrafted statements capture both the spirit of MHS as well as what we hope to accomplish in the future. Our Vision is now concise and clear, and our Tagline reflects our Vision. Our Mission has stayed broadly the same as before. Finally, our Values have been further defined and include:

- Compassion, care and respect for animals and people
- Promotion of the human animal bond
- Collaboration and partnership
- Exceptional customer experience

In the Community Survey MHS received feedback about being clearer on our advocacy positions. While we are best known for our work in rescuing, rehabilitating and rehoming companion animals in the local community, we also aim for broader regional and national involvement and impact in animal welfare and advocacy for all animals. We continue to serve our community with a variety of programs, through outreach and support, both to help people care for their animals, and to be a part of the solution in this tough economy. Our efforts are enhanced by a culture of collaboration and service, reflected in the teamwork of our staff and volunteers, and through partnerships both in the community and with other animal organizations. And of course none of this great work is possible without financial sustainability—the support of our wonderful donors, our fundraising efforts, and other sources of income.

Goals and Strategies
Our Taskforce has worked hard to
develop overarching goals that will guide MHS’s efforts over the next few years. Supporting strategies have been developed to ensure that we make progress against these goals year on year. Here are the highlights of our goals and supporting strategies. The next step will be for specific action plans to be built each year, to move these strategies forward.

GOAL #1 – Be a Local and National Leader in Animal Welfare and Advocacy
- Develop and communicate clear position on animal advocacy
- Engage in targeted campaigns and activities
- Expand efforts to save more animals statewide
- Exemplify a model animal shelter
- Provide education and support to animal welfare organizations

GOAL #2 – Strengthen our Impact as a Vibrant Partner in the Community
- Invest in children’s programs as a way to create next generation of animal lovers/supporters
- Raise awareness and visibility of the breadth of our community services
- Target diverse groups in Humane Education efforts, addressing language and cultural issues
- Boost and broaden Humane Education program in terms of geographic and generational reach
- Partner with other community organizations to co-deliver programs
- Direct support programs towards seniors, lower-income, and those with serious health conditions

GOAL #3 – Exemplify a Culture of Collaboration and Service
- Streamline organization structure, and align staffing, resources and work processes with mission and strategy
- Improve communications between departments and all levels of the organization, and across all constituent groups
- Provide an exceptional customer experience in all interactions
- Instill value of self-care and work-life balance
- Create a learning environment for staff
- Build a system of collaboration and partnerships

GOAL #4 – Ensure Financial Sustainability and Diversification
- Demonstrate fiscal responsibility through prudent management of all funds; strengthen financial and data reporting systems and analytics
- Develop personal relationships and history with donors to understand their interests, preferences, and desired level of involvement over time
- Invigorate volunteer program to ensure needed skill-sets are available and consistently deployed, helping to boost limited resources
- Research and target potential new sources of support
- Engage and enlist Board, all staff, volunteers, and community partners in fundraising efforts
- Develop new or expanded programs, services and events to provide additional income

What’s Next
Of course we would love to be able to wave a magic wand and make progress on all of these vitally important initiatives this year. Realistically though, we need to balance sustaining our current efforts, as we lay the foundation to build our future. Nancy and her senior team will be reviewing budgets and operating plans to make headway on moving these strategies forward, as early as this fiscal year, which runs through June 2013. You will be hearing more about their progress in upcoming issues of this magazine, as well as on the MHS website.

On a personal note, I am honored to work on this strategic planning effort, and humbled by the unswerving dedication of the staff, volunteers, and board members at MHS who work so tirelessly to fulfill their mission. As one Community Survey respondent so aptly put it: “MHS is a national model of dedication, compassion, and hard work.” I can certainly attest to that!

Heather Bowker is a member of the MHS Board of Directors and chairperson of the Strategic Planning Committee.

Photos on previous page (clockwise): Humane education, community outreach, advocacy and our pet partnership program are all areas of focus in the MHS strategic plan.