

Protect Your Community: Teach Empathy Toward Animals.

Before class begins, you overhear a student bragging to classmates about injuring or hurting animals. It may be a bluff. It may not be. Because you had recently read somewhere that animal abuse is a known predictor of future acts of violence, you choose to take this student's story seriously. That day, you begin class by holding a frank classroom discussion on animal abuse as a serious form of violence and later you contact the local humane society for advice on how else to address the issue.

Congratulations. You just put a dent in the cycle of violence. Because childhood animal abuse can intensify when unaddressed, education programs that help students recognize violence toward animals as an important link in the cycle of violence play a key role in preventing the injury and death of students, their pets, and their family members.

Developing a classroom ethic of respect and responsibility toward all life helps students feel empowered to prevent, recognize, and react to future violent acts in school or at home. Teachers can expand on the seriousness of animal abuse and the importance of valuing life throughout the year by encouraging students to consider themselves as guardians of the younger people and the animals who depend on them. Teachers have begun to report that referring to students as “guardians” reinforces good conduct because it acknowledges those students who are already modeling ethical behavior both inside and outside the classroom. Educators have also stated that they have enjoyed challenging students – especially those who are unkind or indifferent to animals or their classmates – to see the importance of caring for and protecting others who depend on them.



Break the Cycle. Try these Activities:

- Help students establish what they believe to be the ethical and social value of protecting animals from abuse and neglect. Ask students to write or talk about the role they play in improving the lives of the animals they may see being treated poorly.
- Invite a humane officer from the local animal shelter into the classroom to discuss how he or she handles animal abuse and neglect cases and to suggest how students can help.
- Ask teams of students to role play alternatives to aggressive behaviors to help bullies, victims of bullying, or those who are unkind to animals to learn and practice positive interactions.
- Encourage students to think of reasons why the treatment of animals can be poor where they are viewed as personal property, public entertainment, and commodities sold for profit. Ask students to research how viewing African Americans and women as property before the Civil Rights and Women's Rights Movements led to social, economic, physical and psychological injustices.
- Ask students to name the characteristics of a guardian. Ask students why they think children and animals both need guardians. Do the basic needs of your students compare with the needs of an animal companion? Discuss what happens when a child or an animal does not have a responsible parent or guardian.



We're Here to Help You.

Contact any of the following organizations for further assistance.

In Defense of Animals (IDA)

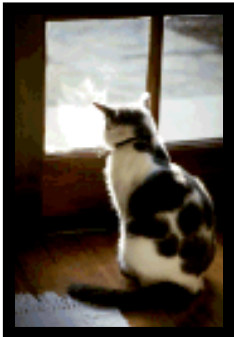
IDA offers thought-provoking art and essay contests and other helpful resources for educators through *Guardians For Life*, a humane education and violence prevention program. *Guardians For Life* helps educators to address childhood animal cruelty and to prevent future acts of violence through animal-based character building activities. Visit www.guardiancampaign.org for materials and contact information.

The American Humane Association (AHA): Resource Center on the Link

AHA's *National Resource Center on the Link* was created to assist professionals interested in preventing violence by providing resources and training regarding the connection between human violence and animal cruelty. Call the National Resource Center toll free at (800) 227-4645 ext. 461 or visit www.americanhumane.org.

Psychologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PSYETA)

PSYETA offers *AniCare Child*, a treatment approach for juvenile cruelty to animals. The 90 page practitioner's handbook provides comprehensive strategies and practical suggestions for assessing and treating childhood animal abuse. Visit www.psyeta.org for more information.



Doris Day Animal Foundation

DDAF, in conjunction with PSYETA, offers a project called *Beyond Violence: The Human-Animal Connection* which educates judges, prosecutors, mental health providers, social workers, advocates for domestic violence victims, and other professionals about the connection between animal abuse and violence toward humans. Visit www.ddaf.org for more information.

The Healing Species

The Healing Species education program is used in the SC State school districts, the SC Department of Juvenile Justice facilities, battered women's shelters, community groups, children's homes, and alternative schools. The eleven week curriculum promotes self-esteem and reinforces kind behavior to animals and people. It is available for purchase and use for all age groups by visiting www.healingspecies.org or by phoning (803) 535-6543. Training is available.

The Latham Foundation

The Latham Foundation offers a video and a 64-page cross training manual entitled *Breaking the Cycles of Violence*. The kit is designed to assist child protection, human service, domestic violence, and animal welfare professionals to identify, report, investigate, and treat interrelated forms of family violence. Visit www.latham.org for more information.

This document produced by:



In Defense of Animals
131 Camino Alto
Mill Valley, CA 94941

email: guardian@idausa.org

online: www.guardiancampaign.org