

Tips for Successful Large Adoption Events

Julie Castle, Director of Programs and Services for [Best Friends Animal Society](#) in Kanab, Utah, and Best Friends Founding Board Member Francis Battista offer these tips for finding homes for hundreds of animals at a time.

- 1. Super Adoptions are like Chinatown.** If you have two Chinese restaurants in one area, it's competition. But if you have a whole bunch of Chinese restaurants, it becomes Chinatown—a major visitor attraction. The increased traffic benefits everyone.
- 2. Figure on six months of planning.** The most important things to consider:
 - Budget
 - Sponsorship
 - Location and Date
 - Volunteer Committee
 - Graphic Design and Production
 - Group Participation
 - Permits and Insurance
- 3. Your most important volunteer person is the Group Participation Chair.** Diplomacy, good communication, and pre-event orientation make the event go smoothly.
- 4. Don't be afraid of fights among animals or among participating groups.** If the event is well run, neither will be an issue. There may be some drama, but planning an event of this magnitude tends to minimize group differences, foster cooperation, and bring out the best in people.
- 5. Most volunteers are underused.** Yours will keep coming back if you train them well, give them real responsibilities and allow them to make decisions within your pre-established guidelines.
- 6. It's less confusing for the public if you establish uniform fees and adoption policies for the day;** however, if that seems to be a stumbling block, letting each group charge its own fees and use its own procedures works very well too. Just be sure to make clear your basic ground rules for animals brought to the event—spay/neuter, vaccinations, crates and leashes, etc.
- 7. Super Adoption events are expensive. Try to cover most costs on someone else's dime** through sponsorships, in-kind donations, and vendor fees.
 - Car dealerships make great sponsors. You can make your event part car showroom and part adoption event. The cars attract audience for your animals and the dealership gets the chance to show off the cars.
 - An art school might be willing to assign creation of your collateral materials as a class project.
 - Vendor fees work better than asking for a percentage of sales.
- 8. Location is key.** Try to find a pleasant place, such as a park or race track, that is well known in the community, has plenty of space and parking, and is visible from the freeway. People will see the tents and stop by.
- 9. Don't be afraid of "Drive-by Adoptions." In fact, encourage them.** Remember, you're creating a festival atmosphere and bringing the animals to the people to expand the market for shelter animals. Most of these adoptions work out. Return rates from super adoptions are very low.
- 10. There's usually more interest in the dogs, so place cats right by the entrance** so everyone will see them.
- 11. When planning your PR and marketing, think like a politician.** Politicians are the "hungry marketers" and know how to get their messages to the people. Yard signs, door hangers, fliers, street banners, and tray liners in restaurants are all good tools.



12. Use the media.

- Blanket the radio and TV stations with public service announcements (PSAs) about six weeks before you want them aired.
- **Try to get a media sponsor** and encourage live broadcasts from your event.
- Be sure to provide the media with **heartwarming follow-up stories**.

13. Experience dictates that **you will likely adopt out about half of the animals** brought to the event. The wide variety makes it easier for people to find just the right animal.

14. In addition to adoptions, **these events provide opportunities** for rescues to gain visibility in the community and get to know each other. They also create opportunities for conversations with the public and media about pet homelessness.

15. You can do these events year after year. Best Friends has been doing them in Salt Lake and LA for ten plus years, and they still attract the crowds and adopt out hundreds of animals at each event.

16. Read the book. Best Friends created a comprehensive [Super Adoption Manual](#) (.PDF) that you can download for free from their website.