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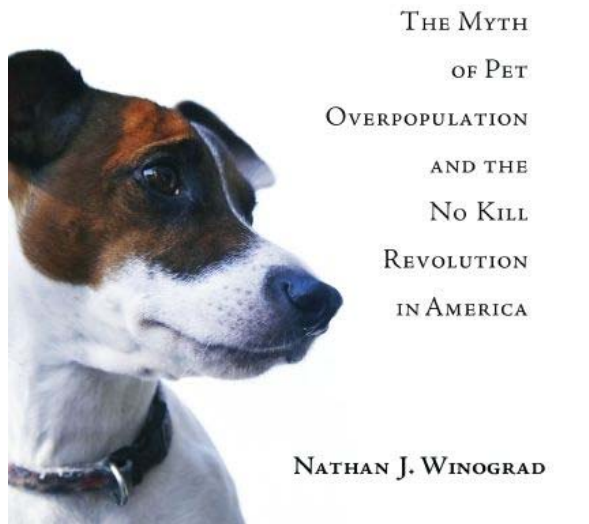
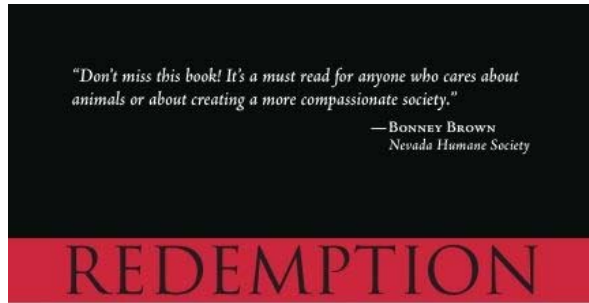
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Arizona

## The Revolution Will Be Sterilized



May 17, 2008 : 7:37 PM

Learn more about Nathan Winograd's Tucson Lecture

By Peter J. Wolf  
Special for the Best Friends Network

So, a lawyer, an animal welfare advocate, and an author walk into a hotel ballroom... Sounds like a setup for a joke, right? Actually, it's a perfectly accurate description of Nathan Winograd when he takes his show on the road.

From the moment I first learned of Winograd, I was intrigued. Here's a guy who walked away from a career in law to run animal shelters. He now serves as Director of the [No Kill Advocacy Center](#), a national organization that promotes the no-kill philosophy of animal sheltering.

On May 9th, the [Center for Animal Rescue and Adoption](#) brought Winograd to Tucson for a lecture based upon his book, *Redemption: The myth of pet overpopulation and the no kill revolution in America*. And so, on May 9th, I, too, was in Tucson — to hear what he had to say, to buy his book, and to meet others in what I'm now coming to realize is an entire *movement* of no-kill advocates.

Although I gave myself plenty of extra time to find my way to the Marriott University Park Hotel, it turned out to be unnecessary. I could easily have found my way just by following the steady stream of Arizona ["Pet Friendly" license plates](#), many of which conveyed a spay/neuter theme — a point made abundantly clear with plates such as "NUTR" and

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"ALTER".

Winograd promised the crowd of about 200 three full hours of information, and he wasn't kidding. In fact, he delivered closer to three-and-a-half hours of content, and looked to be hitting his stride just as the evening was drawing to a close. Which is no surprise when you understand something about Winograd's background and how much of his life he's invested in the "no-kill revolution."

Winograd was introduced to the world of homeless pets in 1989, by way of the 1,500 so-called feral cats (most of which were the offspring of cats abandoned by students) that made their home on the idyllic campus of Stanford University. When he learned of the university's plans to exterminate the cats, Winograd was shocked. But when he learned that the local animal welfare organizations — and, indeed, even the Human Society of the United States (HSUS) — offered no alternative, he was appalled.

Once the fledgling [Stanford Cat Network](#) persuaded university officials that the cats posed no health threat, they were able to implement a campus-wide trap-neuter-return (TNR) program (a radical idea at the time). Winograd calls it "an experiment in compassion." And the results of this experiment were simply astonishing. By 1992, no new kittens were born on campus.

But the Stanford experience also left Winograd scratching his head. How had an animal welfare system originally created to protect and save animals become such a threat to them? Not only did the HSUS and other animal welfare organizations find the killing of animals acceptable, they were passionately defending their position on the subject. (Winograd goes to some pains to emphasize that "killing" is the appropriate word here, as "euthanasia" involves the merciful killing of *suffering* animals; the more typical usage of "euthanasia" is at best a misnomer, and at worst a lie.)

It was around that time that the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), under the leadership of Richard Avanzino — a maverick in the animal shelter industry — was making great strides of their own. In 1995, San Francisco shelters — which had an abysmal track record prior to Avanzino's arrival — killed no healthy animals. And the killing of sick and injured animals had been reduced by 50 percent. (At the time, writes Winograd, most large urban cities were killing 80 percent of cats and more than 50 percent of dogs.)

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In other words, San Francisco's SPCA had demonstrated that no-kill sheltering was possible. It was cost effective, too. And the public — often seen as broadly indifferent (or even the very source of the problem) — enthusiastically supported the new approach. Yet, in place of accolades, Avanzino and the San Francisco SPCA attracted nothing but criticism (mostly from the very communities that should have been ecstatic at the news).

Frustrated, Winograd set out to show that San Francisco was no fluke. Which he has, replicating the results achieved there in Tompkins County (located in upstate New York) and Charlottesville, VA. In each case, Winograd has reformed local animal control programs, applying what he calls the No Kill Equation (which is spelled out in detail in his book). And in each case, the results have been incredible.

Still though, most shelters have found it easier to maintain the status quo than to make the changes necessary to adopt a no-kill program (changes that, says Winograd, begin at the top, with the head of each shelter).

Enter Nathan Winograd — with his groundbreaking book and speaking engagements, and the No Kill Advocacy Center. In addition to challenging the practices of typical animal control programs, Winograd dispels much of the mythology that underpins those practices. How many of us have been told — and believed — that there are simply more dogs and cats than people wanting to adopt them? Not so, says Winograd. Indeed, he devotes an entire chapter to this long-held belief, which has had such dire consequences.

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For me, what Winograd delivered Friday evening was nothing short of a unified field theory in terms of its potential impact. Suddenly (at least for those of us for whom Winograd's message was new), the reality of a no-kill community was no longer some foggy, distant aspiration. Sure, there's plenty of work to be done, but the goal has been reduced from the abstract to an honest-to-goodness, go-see-for-yourself reality. So, there's hope — lots of it. Of the five million or so dogs and cats killed each year by US animal shelters, Winograd says that four-and-a-half million of them could be saved simply by adopting his No Kill Equation.

That's worth repeating: four-and-a-half million of this county's homeless pets could be saved. And we're not talking about a far-off miracle drug here — we already have the cure.

Following his talk, Winograd received a standing ovation. But given his message, and the enthusiasm with which it was received, I half expected him to be carried out of the ballroom on the shoulders of the crowd. Clearly, the revolution has begun.

*Posted by Amie McGraham, Best Friends Network Volunteer  
Photo credit: Nathan Winograd*

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