

Jacqueline Pinol:

The Canine Condition. Come. Sit. Stay. Welcome to the Canine Condition podcast. My name is Jacqueline Pinol. I am an actor, documentary filmmaker and animal rescue advocate. The Canine Condition podcast is a platform to bring awareness to dog adoption and to provide all dog lovers and pet owners with information and resources on how to raise a healthy well balanced dog. If you are thinking about getting your first dog or just want to know where and how you can help a dog in need, this is also a place for you.

How many people does it take to make a difference? To make an impact on something? Anything? The answer is one. It could be you or me or your neighbor or my neighbor. Taking positive action towards something is contagious. Humans are curious creatures by nature. If someone we know or hear about is doing something cool or trendy, we automatically want to be a part of it, or know how we can do something cool or trendy of our own. The question is, will you? And we may be curious, but not know right away what we can personally do to bring about positive change in an area that affects our life, our immediate surroundings or our community as a whole. Don't let your curiosity stop there. Ask questions. Use social media to your advantage. Be the change you want to see. Envision what it would look like. Who are the people you can call lean on or joined to take further action and get closer to seeing that change happen.

If you're like me and you would like to see dog homelessness end, then I will tell you, there are incredible people just a phone call or email away who would love to hear from you. After all, in any cause we stand behind, we are all just people helping people. The cool thing about this cause is that we are people helping dogs too. This episode will introduce you to a fantastic dog rescue organization, giving you an opportunity to reach out to them and learn about their incredible efforts to improve the Canine Condition. I am talking about the Chicago, Illinois based nonprofit organization, One Tail at a Time. Their mission is to end pet homelessness by making pet ownership a joyful and accessible experience for all. They focus on vulnerable populations of dogs, such as large breed dogs, senior dogs, sick dogs, parvo puppies, pit bulls, and neonate kittens.

The organization is able to further their mission by rescuing animals from overcrowded shelters while providing the support and resources that pet owners need to keep those dogs in forever homes where they are loved, and out of the shelters and off the streets. It is a pleasure to introduce the development director of One Tail at a Time, Cara Schwalbach.

Welcome to the podcast, Cara.

Cara Schwalbach:

Thanks for having me.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Absolutely. I'm so excited to talk about One Tail at a Time and what's going on in Chicago and Illinois as a whole. So tell us how you got involved with One Tail at a Time and what motivates you and drives you to advocate for this cause?

Cara Schwalbach:

Sure. Well, I've been involved with One Tail since 2016 and I started out as a volunteer for about a year. I moved to Chicago from a much smaller town in Kentucky. And shortly after that, I adopted my first two rescue dogs and I always grew up with pets. I very much came from a pet loving family and community, but I didn't honestly have any experience with animal welfare or rescues directly until I started

volunteering in Chicago. And right from the get-go, I was hooked to doing everything. And shortly after getting my hands involved, I realized that you could do so many things, from walking the dogs and caring

for the dogs. Behind the scenes, you could also fundraise and do marketing and go to meetings. And I wanted to do it all. So I kind of just dived right in, started doing as much as possible. And shortly after that, joined the staff as one of our fundraisers.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, awesome. And I saw that you are development director, right? So what does that require you to do?

Cara Schwalbach:

So as development director, I get to talk to our program staff about what their goals are for the year, about what their hopes and dreams are for the organization and for our animals, and think about, okay, how are we going to make that possible? Because as a nonprofit, every single thing that we do from turning on the lights at our adoption center to starting a new program, to caring for an emergency animal, every single activity is made possible through a donation made by an individual or a rescue loving business. So I get to look at our fundraising plan and come up with campaigns, fundraising initiatives, to meet those goals and support our programs.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Can you give us a general idea of the layout in Chicago and if you service just inner city, extend to the suburbs? Does dog homelessness affect the inner city, even if it's happening outside of Chicago?

Cara Schwalbach:

One Tail at a Time was started in 2008 as an organization that wanted to help big Chicago dogs. But since then, we've evolved to an organization that still very heavily supports our local Chicago dogs, but also our Chicagoland dogs and our transport partners in the South, so Texas, Arkansas, Alabama. But Chicago Animal Care and Control, which is our tax funded shelter here in Chicago, that's our largest partnership. So last year, just at that shelter alone, we rescued over 400 dogs and we were super, super grateful that our community helped us become the number one transfer partner for dogs at CACC last year. But in addition to that, our team and our awesome shelter director, Anna, she's working year round to maintain our other partnerships everywhere and build new partnerships so that we can be there wherever we're needed.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And I love that you mentioned right now that you have a partnership with CACC. I've been to Chicago Animal Care and Control. I know they've battled being overcrowded and had to euthanize in years past, meaning they don't always want to do that. So when you mention this partnership with the shelter, tell us what that's about. Because as an outside person, I will tell you that a lot of people, including friends of mine, will have this idea that shelters are terrible or, "Shelter people. Oh, they're so mean and they don't do their job," and "What's wrong with them? How could they do this?" But we're not getting the other side of the story. So enlighten me.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. It was shortly after I got involved with One Tail actually, that it all started to click and I realized no one starts working at an animal shelter, whether you're at a tax funded shelter or a rescue group, because they don't want to help animals. No one wants to go to work every day and have to make tough

decisions about who gets to walk out of the shelter and who doesn't. Everyone goes into the business of helping animals because they want to help animals.

So rather than take the approach of us versus them, One Tail at a Time really tries to work with our partners and be as collaborative as possible. And that means coming up with new programs, it means asking, "What do you need from us so that we can get as many dogs and cats and bunnies out as possible, any day of the year?" And we're super grateful that here in Chicago, our tax funded shelter, CACC, publishes their data right on their website, monthly and quarterly. So you can go to CACC's website and see what kind of progress they're making every year, every month. You can see it by species. You know who's coming in, what those outcomes were by animal, what rescues are pulling animals and how many every single month. And CACC has made tremendous progress over the last 10 years, especially.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I'm so happy to hear that. Yes, I actually have noticed the progress through posts from your rescue and other rescues in Illinois. So it's really nice to know that you can reach out to them and help animals and that they let you. One of those programs, by the way, is CRISP, right? I've seen pictures of you guys in signs about this program called CRISP with the partnership that you have with the shelter. And for our listeners, CRISP stands for Chicagoland Rescue Intervention and Support Group. Can you tell us more about that program and how it helps prevent further dog homelessness?

Cara Schwalbach:

CRISP is one of our absolute favorite programs. We think it's so important to ending pet homelessness. And our executive director, Heather, she's always quoted as saying "It isn't rescue if they have a home." And I don't know that we can better talk about why CRISP was started and why we value that program so much better than that because if we can help keep a pet with their family, rather than taking a pet away from a family, spending funds on that pet and then finding another home for them, it's better for the pet and it's better for the family that loves the pet if we can keep them in their original home. So CRISP was a really neat program in that it's a collaboration. So it's founded by One Tail, but now it's actually a coalition of nine local animal welfare groups.

So five days a week, at Chicago Animal Care and Control, volunteers are onsite. And when a family shows up considering surrendering their pet, dogs, cat, there's been Guinea pigs. I'm trying to think of the wildest. I think there's been lizards. I'm trying to think of the wildest animal that shows up. Instead of giving them an intake form and giving no other alternatives but to take their pet, the volunteers simply ask, "Well, how can we help you keep your pet today?" And that opens a conversation and a dialogue. And if we're able to help that family keep their pet, a lot of the time, it's a one-time medical expense. So they have a senior dog and their dog needs a pretty costly dental, or their dog was injured by a car or bit by another dog and needs a multiple thousand dollar surgery.

And those are questions that we wouldn't have got answers to if we didn't open that door. We would have simply met their pet at the shelter waiting for rescue if our volunteers hadn't been there. So that's the first part of the program. But if we're not able to keep that pet with their family, the second part is we start networking their pet right away into other rescue groups all over the Chicago land area. So since starting CRISP, thousands, I think the latest number was over 2,800 pets since 2016, have been diverted from the shelter through the volunteer days at CRISP.

Jacqueline Pinol:

That's so awesome. That's a lot of pets.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah.

Jacqueline Pinol:

So because this is another thing in the rescue world or people who don't know about rescuing animals is you hear the stories of like, "Oh, how could people give up their pets? I would never. I could never." Which sure, I can relate to that. I would never. But I guess you never know until you're in their shoes. There must be circumstances that make people go. And as you're describing the scenarios, I'm thinking there's people who actually don't want to surrender them and they think that's their last option.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. There are hundreds and thousands of families just locally in Chicago. Families come to us in tears. Sometimes they have their children with them. And these are families, a lot of the times, who have had to make decisions on will they buy their kids school supplies. A lot of the times they've already exhausted the veterinary options available to them. But we have those resources to provide care for their pet. And one of my favorite CRISP stories that I want to share if that's okay-

Jacqueline Pinol:

Please. Yes, we love stories.

Cara Schwalbach:

It's from a couple years ago, but I always think of it because one thing about our CRISP families is that they're so grateful. And a lot of them keep in touch with photos of their pet and follow up with updates. I think one family at the very beginning of CRISP baked a pie and brought it to our volunteers.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh my gosh, that's so awesome.

Cara Schwalbach:

This dog's name was Azul. And as you can probably picture him just by his name, but he was this big blue nosed hunk of a pittie. And we first heard about Azul, well I should say CRISP first heard about Azul, through Lost Dogs of Illinois. They contacted our executive director, Heather, because Azul had ended up at Chicago Animal Care and Control. And when they were able to locate his family and his family came excitedly to pick him up from the shelter because he had been found, they found out that he had sarcoptic mange, which is severely, severely contagious. And they were caring for elderly individuals in their home who were autoimmune compromised.

So they were advised not to have a dog that was that contagious in their home. So they weren't able to bring Azul home that day, but they also weren't able to pay for the cost of long-term boarding because treatment for sarcoptic mange can take weeks. So when CRISP was contacted, we were able to pay for Azul to go to one of our vet partners, get treatment for, I think it took a couple weeks. And while he was there, his dad came and visited often. Each time he went, the vet would send us pictures of them together. And I'll have to send you a link where you can see different pictures of Azul's dad visiting him.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, we would love that. We'll share it too on our social media.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. And then he got to go home. He was treated, he got to go home. And now he's just living a life with his family, where he should be. Not with a new family.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Of course. I absolutely agree. That's really nice to know that we have to think outside the box and figure that there must be situations beyond our control sometimes. And if they involve our pets, it's nice to know there's resources at the shelters, because not all shelters can provide these kinds of services or support. So families would meet you or encounter volunteers right outside CACC, right?

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. Right at CACC. Now this program is the first point of contact. When anyone, period, contacts CACC to surrender their pet, they're always put in touch with CRISP to see if CRISP can help.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Aside from the other welfare organizations involved, are there other shelters that are also willing to work with you guys and set up CRISP as well as CACC?

Cara Schwalbach:

Right now, CRISP is only at CACC. But with our transport partners in Arkansas and Tennessee, if they follow us on social media, so they see all of our posts about CRISP. And they're always saying, "We just wish you would start something like that here. We wish we could start something like that here," because they're bringing us dogs that were in similar situations where the family really, really wanted to help their pet, but they didn't have the resources to provide for that family. So their pet was driven up to Chicago to be rehomed. But imagine if more organizations existed across the country that could just keep a pet in their home.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Well, and hopefully, maybe in the future, if it's not happening now at least, if they're aware of it and they're seeing you guys are leading by example.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I believe it could probably happen.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. Yeah. We're seeing progress. And it's just changed. It's kind of like mind shift of people even starting to think of it differently about pets surrendership and that there is always another side to the story. I think that's progress in itself.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes. And that it's okay to ask for help. I have met a lot of pet owners in my journey with the Canine Condition that they're embarrassed or shy, or sometimes that you have pride and you don't want to ask

for help, but there's nothing wrong in asking for help. We do it all the time with other things and we don't even realize it. Why not do it to help ourselves and our pets. So it's something to really ponder upon.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And you mentioned Heather. I wanted to let everyone know how I met Heather Owen, who's the founder of One Tail at a Time. I got to interview her several years ago when we first started shooting the documentary part of the Canine Condition. And one of the things I'm most impressed about, and which is also why I'm so happy we get to catch up here now with you, Cara, is how One Tail at a Time has had such an increase in support. I have seen the numbers grow and the community outreach has been unbelievable since we did our initial interview. How did you guys make that happen? It's the envy of all rescues to have so many volunteers and people behind your mission.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. We're grateful. I just wake up grateful every single day. It's the lifeblood of our organization, that sense of community. And I'm glad that you mentioned Heather again. If I had a hat, I would take it off to her right now because so much of that growth has been organic, but the seeds were planted from Heather back when she started One Tail at a Time in 2008. And if you go to our mission statement, that word accessible, it's right there in our mission statement, making adoptions joyful and accessible to people. But that idea of accessibility, it really stretches beyond our adoption program and it stretches into our foster program. If someone wants to foster with us, we provide everything that you need to get started. All the supplies, all the support. We have an awesome team of volunteers that is available 24/7 on email.

We even have a team of volunteers that love behavior support. So they've been trained up on that. But volunteering with us in itself is accessible. We don't have so many tiers and hoops that you have to go through to become a volunteer with us. Now we're doing these virtual orientations where you can become a volunteer. And adopting, I think one of the biggest ways that we try to make adoptions more accessible is remove some of those barriers that sometimes maybe divert people from adopting or scare people away from adoptions. Those super, super complicated adoption procedures or those really costly adoption fees. You'll see a lot of times we do sponsored adoption fees or low cost adoption events. We're just all the time trying to remove our barriers, get people through the door, because if we can get them into our community, then they tend to stick around.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And you think that it's okay even when you make the process easier, you're still able to do proper vetting of people and homes so that you feel like you are still finding homes that are safe and volunteers that are responsible on people that are going to stick to your mission?

Cara Schwalbach:

Yep, absolutely. So we have a bunch of metrics that we track closely. And our return rate, it's funny, it doesn't seem to be correlated at all. The more barriers we remove, our return rate doesn't go up. So we don't see any ties there. And if I was Heather, she has this amazing list that she keeps of all the studies that show all of the vetting and those more exhaustive adoption procedures. Those don't always mean that the animal is safer or going to be more loved in a home.

Jacqueline Pinol:

You're right, there is no guarantee. I've definitely seen it one way or another. And I think that's one of the things I love about One Tail at a Time. I think you do take a look at one tail at a time, and I love, as cheesy

as I'm making that sound, it speaks to me because I feel like you look at families that way, you look at saving each dog that way, they have a specific set of needs and you make that story individual onto itself. It's not just one of the many that you save. And speaking of stories of dogs from One Tail at a Time, can

you tell us one about a dog that maybe it was a difficult save or that took a little bit more effort and funding, but that is thriving and it is a happy new beginning perhaps for the dog?

Cara Schwalbach:

Well yeah, if you're going to ask about costly funding, one of our earlier saves this year was a super, super sweet little pittie named Arugula. She lovingly became known as Ru. And she was found in an alley, super emaciated. Gosh, I think when she came to us, she was about 24 pounds and she was found by a good Samaritan, wrapped in a blanket. And people started sharing her on Facebook and tagging One Tail at a Time, asking if we could help. And as soon as our executive director saw her picture, there was no question we were going to try to help. But honestly, she was pretty literally clinging on to life. She was so lethargic that she couldn't walk, she couldn't stand. If you go to our social media or our YouTube channel, you can actually see those videos.

And those were the videos of her after her first stint at the emergency vet, when she had made progress. But she had several trips to, and several stays at the emergency vet. And then she went to an amazing foster home, but she still wasn't putting on any weight. And she had a few setbacks with her re-feedings, which is a pretty complicated and risky, risky undertaking for a dog as emaciated as we found Ru.

And it turned out that she actually had a blockage that she needed emergency surgery for. So she had to have the surgery. That was also another risk because of how frail she was. But there wasn't an option for her not to have the surgery. So she had the surgery and two blockages were removed. It ended up being a combination of this rope toy, which leads us to think that she has been a loved family pet and has known love in her life. And after that, she went back to her foster home. She started thriving with her foster siblings and putting on weight. And now, she's meeting potential adopters.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Really?

Cara Schwalbach:

She does not even look like the same dog. And the way that the community just stepped up and supported her care, it was just really, really impressive. Thank goodness, because she took a bit of extra TLC to get on the right track.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh my goodness. It's so sweet. And they're so resilient and it's almost like they look at you and those eyes that you just know they know they're going to be okay, that they're loved, that they matter.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah, yeah. We're just so thrilled to see her turning a corner. There were a lot of moments where we weren't sure. And the whole community was behind her wanting a positive outcome and you're just not sure what the next update is going to be. But when she made it through surgery and then made it to see another day and another day and another day, it was moving.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, that's really great. And those ER visits are not cheap per night.

Cara Schwalbach:

They're not.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes. And that's wonderful that advocating for funding. This is why it's so important to understand that donating makes a big difference that whether it's \$5 or \$10, when you multiply that by maybe hundreds of volunteers and donors out of state too, it's great to see the outcome of these beautiful stories.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. Without our donors, Ru's care would have been, I don't want to say a setback because we're so grateful to be able to give Ru the chance. But I think that her emergency bills ended up totaling over \$20,000. But within a weekend of her being in our care, over 500 donors had made contributions to her care and we were able to get her care fully funded so that we could not only provide Ru's care, but we got to go back to the shelter and that same week we saved another parvo puppy, we saved a special needs cat, and we were able to help more medical pets just because of how much the community showed up. But again, would not be possible if people weren't there for our animals.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Absolutely. That's awesome. I feel like clapping right now. But if I do, then the sound gets all distorted.

Cara Schwalbach:

I feel you.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Just know that I'm virtually clapping. I wanted to talk, since you're bringing up some of the medical cases and how expensive it is to treat them, in 2016, One Tail at a Time started the ISO program. And when I was there, you guys didn't have that and had not opened up a center. Can you tell us about that? Because I got really excited when I saw the opening online.

Cara Schwalbach:

Oh, gosh. Our ISO program starts actually back in 2016, like you mentioned. That's when we were first starting to recruit fosters to specifically care for our ISO dogs. And that's just short for isolation. And this was meant so that we could increase the number of dogs we were intaking from Chicago shelters who had been potentially exposed to contagious illnesses. And back in 2016, that was when we were still seeing the effects of canine flu here in Chicago. And we're not seeing canine flu today, we are still seeing other contagious illnesses that we have to isolate dogs for.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Of course, yes.

Cara Schwalbach:

But canine flu was no joke.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I remember that. I actually do remember lots of rescues struggling with that. Also in the South, it was a really bad year for the flu for canines.

Cara Schwalbach:

It was terrible. The need for rescue just shot up and you really had to have spaces to isolate these dogs, to be responsible to other pet owners in the community and have a place to get these dogs healthy. So we've started with just a foster program. And actually this is when I first started volunteering with One Tail. One of our supporters, they went away for the Christmas break. They were gone, I think it was December and January and they weren't going to be in their home. And they asked if a One Tail would want to use their home as a temporary isolation space. So we actually got to pilot having a facility for the ISO program.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Cool.

Cara Schwalbach:

And that was the first time that we got to go to the shelter and take ISO dogs in groups. So instead of one at a time, maybe it was three to five at a time and people could come and meet them before fostering them. And then volunteers also got to help care for the dogs because those dogs, they need some extra TLC as well. They were pretty sick. I remember volunteering with one really, really old little Chihuahua named Raisin and a sweet little boxer named Mama because it was evident she had had puppies recently. But they always had upper respiratory infections and sometimes that would turn into pneumonia. So they all had their own little bedrooms where they would be isolated so that they could start on the right track. But then they would go to foster and they'd their isolation period. And either, they would get adopted after that, or they'd go to a foster home, they'd be able to go to a foster home with another pet after that.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, good. Okay.

Cara Schwalbach:

This was super successful. Volunteers were hooked. There was a sense of community around getting our ISO dogs healthy and adoptable. So after that, we had to have a facility for this program.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Awesome. Yeah.

Cara Schwalbach:

So we invested in it more. One Tail hired a staff member to grow the program more just via foster homes. That took off, and we started looking for a long-term space for the program. And we found, it was a lot of up and down and was trying to find the right facility, but we ended up finding a temporary shelter. It's actually a house that ended up being our longterm house. It's the Brian & Sheri Qualizza Isolation Center.

Jacqueline Pinol:

How nice.

Cara Schwalbach:

And it's still the same volunteers. It's a whole community over there. They love it. The same volunteers sign up for shift after shift after shift there. It's a really, really special place to be.

Jacqueline Pinol:

That's so cool. It makes me want to go over there and volunteer for a little bit.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. You'll have to someday. So my mom and dad actually live in Kentucky. My mom drove from Kentucky to adopt one of our ISO dogs.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yay for mom. She's so awesome.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. Yeah.

Jacqueline Pinol:

That's really great. See, it's already spreading the good message and getting the word out in Kentucky, which is wonderful. It's what I'm sure a lot of shelters and people in Kentucky would want to grow that kind of support out there. So why not? And how has COVID times affected some of these situations? I know that COVID obviously brought unprecedented change to all of us. So how was One Tail at a Time able to adjust, but continue on its mission and continue saving dogs?

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. We had no idea, I think like the rest of the world, what to expect at the end of February and beginning of March last year. We thought, "Wow, no one's going to adopt any dogs forever. No one's going to foster or volunteer forever. No one's going to give us any more money to save any more dogs. What are we going to do?" But at the same time, Chicago Animal Care and Control, where we were just starting to become their top transfer partner month after month, they were putting out a plea for help because they were closing their volunteer programs. Just stopping wasn't an option. And at this time, with people starting to work from home, within like 72 hours, we got over 2,000 applications from new fosters.

Jacqueline Pinol:

2,000? You said you got 2,000?

Cara Schwalbach:

2,000 foster applications for an organization that, in 2019, our total intake was 975. We knew that our first priority had to be scaling up and figuring out how to welcome all of this new support because it was there, we couldn't turn it down and our community needed us and shelters everywhere needed us. So that's what we did. And very luckily, we were already in the process of opening our in-house veterinary

clinic so that we could bring costs down for all of our animals. That's helped tremendously, but also it sped up, or I should say, it's lowered the amount of time that animals are in our care because they're able to see the vet quicker. So all of those pieces just kind of fell into place so that we could welcome more animals quicker and then get them adopted quicker. And then of course, everything went virtual.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yep.

Cara Schwalbach:

Our adoptions went virtual. We did close all of our facilities, but now those have been opening back up and our adoption center, we have a reopening date set.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Cool. You do?

Cara Schwalbach:

I know. Yeah.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Can you say what it is yet or not yet?

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. Well, we're going to be sharing it in a few days.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Oh, good.

Cara Schwalbach:

So April 3rd.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Awesome. Okay. That's fantastic. We will share about that as well. I love the turquoise couch. I don't know if everybody says that. But if anyone has not visited One Tail at a Time's social media, you've got to check out the turquoise couch. It's absolutely gorgeous and it looks really good on our documentary footage. So once that is out and ready to be released, I will also be mentioning that to you guys.

Cara Schwalbach:

Great.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yeah. So it's good that because everyone went virtual, it just became the new norm, but you were able to continue adopting out safely and saving dogs from shelters, right?

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah. We were able to continue pretty much normally.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Well, the support grew. So at least you knew you were actually saving more dogs during this time than you thought you would have, right?

Cara Schwalbach:

Yes. Our goal for last year was to rescue 1,500 animals and our intake was 1,800, over 1,800.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Okay. Okay.

Cara Schwalbach:

Yeah.

Jacqueline Pinol:

I love that. And I have to say that One Tail at a Time has one of the absolute most informative and thorough websites I have seen anywhere. So congratulations, first of all, on your website team, because you guys put out so much information that is not just unique to you, but to help give resources to any animal or pet owner that is out there, whether they're in Chicago or not. And I really think it's wonderful to put that message out there. So tell us, what is it that you wish more people would have knowledge about or would seek out and learn about?

Cara Schwalbach:

I'm going to flip that question a little bit and flip it into maybe how we could do more for our community. Because one thing that we're always looking at is, I feel that we've got a good sense of the type of resources that people are seeking from us, especially the pet families that we want to provide more resources to. So we feel that we have to step up how we're getting those resources to the community. So everything on our website, we're working to make more accessible. We're working to provide as much information as we can in Spanish, as well as English. And not only our community support materials, but also our volunteer and foster and adoption opportunities across our website.

We've made improvements over the past couple of years, but we know that we have to do a lot better. So that's what we're doing. I would love just to see, I think our website, our community engagement manager is working on a newly invented resource page for our community. I'm excited to see the outcome of that, and that should be coming later this year. But I feel like that's one of the biggest pieces that's missing from our website right now, is just getting as much content accessible to the community as possible.

Jacqueline Pinol:

It's accessibility, again, like you were mentioning earlier. But honestly, and I'll tell you just from the outside looking in, it's amazing. It's a great, wonderful website. You guys should obviously be very proud.

Cara Schwalbach:

Thank you.

Jacqueline Pinol:

And I think it's a great place to send people. So speaking of that, tell us where our listeners can follow and support One Tail at a Time on social media. And what is your website?

Cara Schwalbach:

So we're all over social media. That's probably our main form of communication to the public, to our volunteers, to everyone, One Tail at a Time. We do have a sister organization, One Tail at a Time in Portland. But we're just @onetailatitime. We're on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, like I said, YouTube. And then our website is onetail.org. If you're on our website, just a few key highlights, our membership program is an awesome opportunity to get involved. I don't think that I touched on that.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Tell us about it, absolutely.

Cara Schwalbach:

Oh, okay.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Please.

Cara Schwalbach:

I always will. I'll always talk about our membership program. So our membership program is our monthly giving program, and this is an awesome way to make a difference. Every single month, year round, the donation is made automatically and you can become a member for as little as \$5 a month.

Cara Schwalbach:

You can pause your donation anytime that you need, but we find that most people become a member and stay a member because they love seeing that impact add up so fast. And that is the most reliable kind of support that we get every month, because when we have a newsletter go out or we have an event, those are one time donations and we're super grateful for them. But those monthly donations, when we're looking each month at how many new dogs we can bring into our care, those membership donations are what we're really looking at. So become a monthly donor if you can. And then we have all of our adoption. We have over 250 animals in our care at all times, so you can see our available pets there, foster opportunities, volunteer opportunities, all the good stuff.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Awesome. The membership program is awesome. And I know you guys give little goodies here and there, I've seen.

Cara Schwalbach:

We do have some cool swag.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes. So listen up people, let's get on onetail.org and I will definitely have all the live links to One Tail at a Time's social media as well in the show notes for this episode. Our listeners should know that I am not getting paid to advocate for any one organization on this podcast. I choose to interview guests and organizations that I know are doing the good work for dogs and for people across America. One Tail at a Time has the Canine Condition seal of approval from me. Thank you so much, Cara, for being my guest today and sharing One Tail at a Time's mission so that we can all find another way to help and give back to those who need us.

Cara Schwalbach:

Thanks again for having me. This was great.

Jacqueline Pinol:

Yes, absolutely. Thank you.

In honor of our canine companions, who are also very curious creatures by nature, we should all remember that the Canine Condition in the United States needs us to stay curious to keep engaging and voicing the need for more humans to come together to end pet homelessness. In our daily lives, we see a direct outcome from the actions we take. Many of us believe in karma, so we are conscious of what we put out into the world. I would like to leave you with this question. What is your mission statement? Does it include doing something outside yourself that will affect positive change around you? And to all you dog lovers and advocates, I say, do what you can. You don't have to take it all on or do too much. Make it fun. Tell your friends or family to join you because one human at a time, we can save one tail at a time. Thank you for joining me for this episode. Please click subscribe on our podcast. And until next time, hang onto those leashes. The Canine Condition. Come. Sit. Stay.