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| **Department:**  Shelter Operations & Marketing | Created by: Kara Montalbano, Director of Marketing & Community Relations |
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| Updated: 1/31/24 | Writing a Web Memo SOP |

1. **Writing Pet Bios (aka Web Memo) for Shelter Animals**

**General:** The Potter League website as well as social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and X, PetFinder.com & Adoptapet.com all significantly increase the exposure of our adoptable shelter pets to the public. Our Pet Bios/Web Notes must reflect accurate as well as appropriate information to the public.

1. **Procedure:**

**Writing a Pet Bio/Web Memo**

* Staff and Volunteers writing web memos for adoptable shelter pets must use our animal management software, Shelterluv, to obtain accurate information about a pet.
* Web memos are based on facts and assessment of professional shelter staff, not the writer’s opinion.
* Highlight all the positive and unique traits of pet early in web memo. People tend to skim when reading plus do not have long attention spans. Web memos should not be any longer than 5 sentences.  
  *If an animal has a special adoption condition, their web note will likely be more than 5 sentences.*
* Web memos can be creative in nature, but should speak to the animals’ bio as best as possible
* Information to use when writing a memo: Past history from owners is useful as is documented shelter behavior. When writing a memo, be sure to use attributes assigned by staff as your guide. We often see things in the shelter which supersede what a pet guardian has said.
* Information about certain adoption conditions should be included as noted below. If staff or volunteers need guidelines for a condition which is not listed, please see a manager for guidance.

**WRITING PET BIOS**

1. **Make a Connection**  
   Potential adopters appreciate knowing the unique qualities of each pet. While it's crucial to provide information about the pet's adoptability, our primary focus is to engage the audience by highlighting why each pet will make a great addition to their life. Envision the ideal owner for a pet and write about them. For example, *"Would be a great companion for someone who loves outdoor adventures"* or *"If you enjoy quiet evenings, you'll love Bella!"*
2. **Highlight the Positive**  
   Emphasize the positive aspects of an animal's personality and avoid making health or behavioral issues the primary focus. The goal is to draw in the right adopters by describing the pet's best qualities, the type of home they will thrive in, and the adopters who will connect best with them, **not to warn away the “wrong” adopters with a long list of an animal’s shortcomings**. Every bio should accentuate twice as many positives as negatives. The primary objective of a compelling adoption biography is to spark interest in an animal, while our adoption staff and volunteers engage in detailed discussions with potential adopters about the pet's specific needs during the adoption process.
3. **Pay Attention to Tone and Language**  
   Use a warm, playful, and encouraging tone when addressing restrictions or requirements. While focusing on the positive traits of an animal, carefully choose words that make potential adopters feel positive and excited about connecting with the pet. Positive adjectives like delightful, charming, and lively can create a more inviting atmosphere, ensuring that readers smile when they engage with the bio. This approach is crucial to avoid unintentionally deterring qualified adopters with an unfriendly or intimidating tone while attempting to filter out unqualified applicants.
4. **Remember: there’s no such thing as too many positive adjectives!**  
   Wonderful • Adorable • Sweet • Intelligent • Smart • Dignified • Laid Back • Easygoing • Good Natured • Warm Hearted • Kind • Confident • Outgoing • Social • Curious • Loving • Friendly • Affectionate • Snuggly • Cuddly • Gentle • Sensitive • Happy • Silly • Chatty • Bouncy • Goofy • Playful • Exuberant • Mischievous • Adventurous • Athletic • Scamp • Knucklehead • Peppy • Fun-Loving • Spunky • Sassy • Handsome • Stunning • Gorgeous • Beautiful • Volunteer Favorite • Good Listener • Social Butterfly • Jaunty • Spirited • Graceful • Inquisitive • Radiant • Charismatic • Delightful • Cheerful • Charming • Witty • Comical • Joyful • Enthusiastic • Relaxed • Easy-tempered • Tenacious • Zesty • Vibrant • Endearing • Playful soul • Bright-eyed • Eager • Animated • Perky • Sprightly • Whimsical • Resilient • Trusting • Expressive • Magnetic • Jubilant • Dynamic • Hardy • Courageous • Free-spirited • Unflappable • Adaptable • Perceptive
5. **Negative words to avoid entirely:**  
   Hates - Strongly Prefers or Disfavors • Dislikes - Prefers • Won’t - Chooses not to or is inclined not to • Can’t - Has difficulty with or may struggle with • Doesn’t - May not or has a tendency not to • Shouldn’t - May do better with or benefits from • Fearful - Cautious or Wary • Defensive - Protective or Cautious • Scared - Apprehensive or Anxious • Standoffish - Reserved or Observant • Pushy - Eager or Enthusiastic • Stubborn - Independent or Strong-willed • Dominant - Assertive or Leadership qualities • Nervous - Cautious or Watchful • Distrustful - Cautious or Wary • Anxious - Apprehensive or Watchful • Dependent - Companionable or Social • Territorial - Protective or Watchful • High-strung - Energetic or Dynamic • Aloof - Independent or Reserved

**You can also convey the same message using positive words:**  
 “Won’t be a good fit with other animals” > “**will thrive in a home where** he can shine as an only pet”  
 “Shouldn’t/can’t live with small kids > “**can join a home with** adults or older teens”  
 “Isn’t good with small dogs” > “**does best with** dogs his size or larger”  
 “Doesn’t like to be left alone” > “**is happiest when** he’s with his people”  
 \*Be careful with “needs” and “should”: these words may not be negative, but repeatedly saying what an adopter “should do” or what an animal “needs to have”, can come off as bossy and make an animal sound high maintenance.

1. **Avoid Gimmicks: the animals are cute, so we don’t have to be!**  
   When crafting adoption bios, it's crucial to strike a balance between showcasing the endearing qualities of the animals and maintaining a professional yet inviting tone. While the animals themselves exude cuteness, it's essential that the language used in their descriptions remains positive, playful, and warm without relying on overly cutesy or gimmicky expressions.  
     
   Avoiding gimmicks implies steering clear of exaggerated language or overly saccharine phrases that might come across as insincere or detract from the genuine nature of the pets. Instead, focus on cultivating a connection with potential adopters by adopting a second-person perspective. By directly addressing the reader with statements like "You'll love Max's smile!" or "Imagine coming home to a companion like Bella," the bios aim to create a personal and relatable experience for the prospective adopter.

This approach encourages a sense of engagement and connection, emphasizing the unique qualities of each pet without resorting to clichés or superficial language. The goal is to foster a genuine connection between the reader and the animal, steering away from marketing gimmicks and ensuring that the bios remain authentic, relatable, and ultimately compelling to potential adopters.  
  
**Examples:**  
**Furever Home:** Instead, use terms like "loving home" or "loving family."  
**Paw-some:** Opt for more straightforward language to describe positive traits.  
**Furbaby:** Use "companion" or "pet" for a more professional tone.  
**Purrfect:** Choose "ideal" or "perfect fit" to convey compatibility.  
**Adorbs:** Opt for "adorable" or simply describe the endearing qualities.

**WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR BIO**

1. **A Positive and Engaging Introductory Statement:**  
   Begin with a captivating introductory statement that encapsulates the pet's essence, offering potential adopters a glimpse into the pet's unique qualities – think of it as their “headline”.  
     
   **Example:** "Meet Luna, the radiant feline with a heart full of love!"
2. **Positive Descriptions & Inclusive Language:**  
   Provide a glimpse into the pet's character by offering at least two positive descriptions that unveil their unique personality, habits, and the sheer joy they bring.   
   Delve into how the pet expresses affection, uncover their sources of happiness, and paint a vivid picture of their ideal day.   
   Foster a connection between potential adopters and the pet by unveiling facets of their personality—whether they're playful or enjoy a cozy day on the couch.   
   Explore if they have a beloved toy or endearing habits that make them special.   
   Envision the perfect adopter or home for the animal and vividly describe it, creating a more profound understanding and connection with the pet.  
   Consider incorporating language that emphasizes the uniqueness of each pet and the diversity of adopters. Highlight that different pets suit different lifestyles, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to adoption.  
     
   **Example:** "Luna is not just affectionate but a true snuggle enthusiast, and her playful antics will keep you entertained for hours. If you're looking for a companion who brightens your days, Luna is your girl!"
3. **Highlighting Individuality:**   
   Encourage the use of specific anecdotes or unique traits that showcase the individual personality of each pet. This can help potential adopters connect on a personal level with the animals, fostering understanding and empathy.
4. **Brief Medical Descriptions:**  
   If applicable, use plain language to provide a concise description of any medical issues or needs, focusing on how these conditions can be managed. Explain what it means for both the pet and the adopter.
   * Avoid overly technical language and be brief (ideally no more than two sentences total). This is not the time to go over an animal’s entire medical history and treatment – adoption staff can take care of that!
   * **FIV:** “Cat’s name” has FIV, a medical condition which typically causes a weakening of the cat’s immune system. Cats with FIV can live normal lives, both in quality and duration. Routine veterinary care and an indoor-only life can help maintain “Cat’s name” health.
   * **WOUO:** Sometimes stray cats come into the Potter League with bumps, bruises and even wounds from their time spent on the street. We can never know exactly what happened to these cats but we are dedicated to helping them find the safety and security of a new, indoor home with people to protect and love them. Due to certain requirements by the State Veterinarian these kitties require a special adopter who will agree to follow some short-term restrictions in the new home. One such restriction is adopters must live in the state of RI. To learn more about adopting this incredible cat, we invite you to contact us for a chat. “Cat’s name” is super sweet and well worth this little bit of extra effort!
   * **Other Chronic Medical Conditions:**   
     Because there are many different types of these, the web note will need to be personalized a bit to that particular condition. Some examples:  
     + **General:**Cleo happily embraces to a specialized high-fiber diet, contributing to her vibrant health while managing her chronic medical condition.”  
       **Kidney Disease: “**Cleo, at the age of 10, is entering a phase where, like many cats, she may encounter some challenges with her kidneys, a condition medically termed as early chronic kidney disease. Despite being asymptomatic and not currently on any medications, Cleo will benefit from regular monitoring by her veterinarian to ensure her ongoing health and well-being.”
     + **Diabetes: “**Cleo gracefully manages her diabetes, embracing twice-daily insulin shots with a positive attitude; she thrives on a special diet and regular veterinary care, ensuring her continued well-being.”  
         
       **Example:** "Luna has a mild allergy easily managed with a special diet, ensuring she stays healthy and happy. Regular vet check-ups keep her in tip-top shape!"
5. **Special Behavior or Training Needs:**  
   Briefly describe any special behavior or training needs in an encouraging and casual manner. Avoid intimidating language and emphasize ongoing training as a positive opportunity for connection**.**
   * **Translate Behavior Notes:** For dogs, this is where we “translate” their back-end behavior notes (“pushy – experienced owners only”) into positive, non-intimidating descriptions (“This spirited charmer blossoms in the company of someone skilled and nurturing, bringing out the best in his playful and vibrant personality.”)
   * **Concise and Positive Descriptions:** Keep the descriptions brief and uplifting, avoiding any sense of an intimidating problem list. Highlight the positive side, such as 'This friendly boy is diligently working on his manners' or 'This wonderful girl will find her greatest joy as the sole pet in your home.'
   * **Emphasize Growth and Improvement:** When discussing any behavioral challenges, frame them as opportunities for growth and improvement rather than as negative traits. Use language that conveys the idea that with the right environment and support, pets can overcome challenges and thrive.
   * **Encourage Open Communication:** Encourage potential adopters to engage in open communication with shelter staff. Emphasize that discussing any concerns or questions about a pet's behavior is welcomed and can lead to a better understanding of the animal.
   * **Ongoing Training Emphasis:** When addressing hyperactivity or lack of training, present their ongoing training as a collaborative effort. Instead of placing the burden on adopters to figure out obedience training, express that 'He'd love to continue working on his training with you!'
   * **Motivations and Building Bridges:** If a pet is motivated by treats or toys, highlight this as a positive aspect. By sharing what motivates them, we build a bridge between the pet and potential adopters, fostering a deeper connection and understanding.
   * **Plain Language and Manageable Conditions:** Utilize clear language over shelter jargon to present medical and behavior issues as manageable conditions. Encourage adopters to see challenges as opportunities, emphasizing that with care and attention, these conditions are within reach.
   * **Promote Ongoing Support:** Mention any post-adoption support or resources available to adopters. This could include follow-up consultations, training tips, or access to behavioral experts. Reinforce the idea that adopting a pet is a journey with ongoing support.  
       
     **Example:** "While Luna is learning some basic commands, she's eager to continue her training journey with a loving family. Her enthusiasm makes every training session a joy!"
6. **Compatibility with Kids and Other Animals:**  
   Discuss whether the pet gets along with or can live with kids and other animals. Emphasize the kind of home they can join rather than the type of home they can't.
   * “No kids” makes a dog sound like it eats kids for breakfast: even people who don’t have kids of their own won’t want a pet that sounds like it will hurt a child. Mention why this restriction exists without making it sound like one: “he’ll be happiest in a home with adults who can be sensitive to his age” or “he can join a home with kids over 12 who have experience with big goofy dogs”
   * If they get along great with every animal and human they meet, remember to talk that up!
   * For animals with a lot of restrictions (no other animals, no kids), try to work as many of them as possible into one sentence to keep it from feeling like a list of issues. Instead of “He is not a good candidate for a home with children. He is dominant with other dogs and chases cats, so he needs to be the only pet,” try, “He’ll do best in an adult home where he can shine as the only pet.”  
       
     **Example:** "Luna adores children and is known to be a great playmate. She may prefer to be the only feline queen in the house but would thrive in a home with kids over 10 years old."
7. **Positive Closing Statement with a Call to Action:**   
   End the bio with a positive closing statement that encourages potential adopters to take action.  
     
   **Example:** "Luna can't wait to brighten your home. Fill out an adopter profile at [www.potterleague.org,](http://www.potterleague.org) give us a call at 401-846-8276 or best yet, visit her at our Animal Care & Adoption Center located at 87 Oliphant Lane in Middletown, RI today and let Luna's warmth and joy become a cherished part of your life!"
8. **Optional:** 
   * **Adoption Fee discount:** “Pet’s name” is offered at a reduced adoption fee. We do not need to explain why in a web note, we can do that in person.  
       
     **Example:** " Luna comes with a reduced adoption fee, making the journey into your hearts even sweeter!"
   * **History:** How the animal came to PL (stray, owner surrender, etc). We don’t speculate or go into great detail about how hard an animal’s life was before being rescued. Detailing of past history is irrelevant and does not matter why a pet is at the shelter, takes away from their fresh start, and invades privacy. Negative details also fuel the misconception that all shelter animals are broken or have a dark past, and feeling sorry for an animal or angry at past owners won’t get them adopted – a positive connection will!
     + If we know that an animal was with the same person for many years, that can be good info to share in a different light: it lets adopters know that the animal has lots of experience living in a home!
     + Many PL animals came from transports, where when often too many animals come in and space runs out. As a primary transport partner from these overpopulated areas, we know they work very hard to save as many animals as they can, so we **do not** say or imply negative things about them. **EVER.**