



SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2023.** Please include this submission form with the electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).

PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Loudoun County

Program Title: Book Club with Animal Services

Program Category: Customer Service

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Peter O'Brien

Title: Division Manager, Communications

Department: Library Services

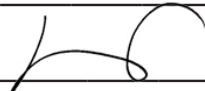
Telephone: 571-282-8786 Website: library.loudoun.gov

Email: peter.obrien@loudoun.gov

SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Chang Liu

Title: Director, Library Services

Signature: 

LCPL Book Club with Animal Services

Summary

In July of 2022, a collaboration between Loudoun County Public Library and Loudoun County Animal Services was created in the form of a book club dedicated to educating attendees on with books on animal welfare their impact on the world and stories about the relationships between animals and their owners.

Attendees of the book club meetings are then treated to a tour of the shelter with the focus being on animals that are available for adoption and the work that the shelter does in the protection of household animals and wildlife in Loudoun County.

An offshoot of the collaborative book club has been the “Death Café for Pet Owners” with a certified Death Doula discussing pet loss and the grieving process. This was also a joint venture between the two County organizations with a representative from both the library and the shelter in attendance.

A benefit of this collaboration was that Janice Hummel was able to do a presentation at the Virginia Library Association Professional Associates Conference called “Old Dogs, New Tricks” which highlighted the benefits of a partnership with the local animal shelter and steps towards other library systems creating their own collaboration.

This partnership is ongoing, with meetings held quarterly, with hopes to expand outreach to the communities that we both serve.

Nomination

While volunteering at Loudoun County Animal Services, a discussion began between myself and Henry Emch, Humane Education Coordinator about books that covered animal welfare and inspirational stories about animals and nature.

The shelter has many programs for children, but there was really nothing for adults on a continuing basis. It was at this point that the thought of creating a collaboration between Loudoun County Public Library and Loudoun County Animal Services began.

The first thing that we decided was the location. It was impractical to have the meetings at one of the

libraries since one of the goals that we had in mind was to, in addition to sharing a book, highlight the animals that are up for adoption at the shelter afterwards. With this goal in mind, it was determined that the book club meetings would be held quarterly in the shelter community room.

We then thought about the process of choosing a book that not only addresses animal welfare, but nature conservation and fictional tales of the relationship and bonds between humans and animals. Loudoun County Public Library has a vast collection of Book Club Kits, and we decided to tap into that resource first. Part of the criteria was that the title also needed to be available as an eBook and eAudio format so that even those with reading limitations could participate.

The cost for this program was minimal-Loudoun County Public Library either had a current book kit or purchased paperback copies of the title to build a new kit, and the meeting space and cost of refreshments were covered by Loudoun County Animal Services. Flyers for the program were created by the shelter, and distributed at the shelter and highlighted on their social media. The physical copies of the books were distributed at the shelter, with those requesting audio versions directed to the library catalog.

The first title discussed was “How To Be A Good Creature” by Sy Montgomery. After the meeting, attendees were offered a tour of the shelter and staff was available to discuss the variety of animals available for adoption.

During the meeting, there were moments where the sharing of personal stories of our own pets became emotional, especially when talking about the loss of a beloved pet. I had witnessed, while volunteering at the shelter, folks coming in to donate items left behind when their pet passed away, and the one thing they all had in common was the desire to discuss their loss.

After giving this some thought, I contacted, with the assistance of our programming division, a certified Death Doula who had previously conducted Death Café programs at various branches. I asked her if she had ever conducted a Death Café for Pet Owners, and she said no, but considered it a great idea. We agreed on a date that worked for everyone and had our first Death Café for Pet Owners. In attendance was Henry Emch, my book club collaborator, who came to answer some of the end of life and medical questions about the loss of a pet. The stories told were both heartwarming and heartbreaking, including a woman who said that her husband hasn't been able to wash his car because

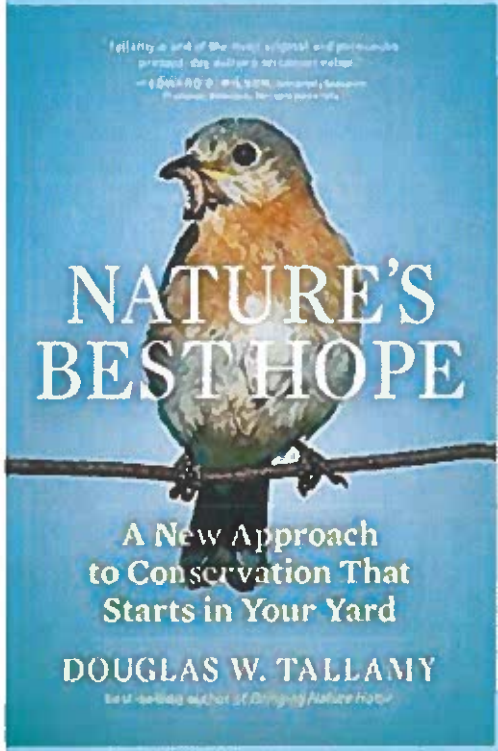
it still had paw prints on it from their recently deceased dog. It was the first time she had been able to say that out loud, and she thanked us for giving pet owners a judgment free place to discuss their loss. Once again, the collaboration between Loudoun County Public Library and Loudoun County Animal Services worked together to not only benefit animals and educate the public, but also allow people to share an important part of their life which had been lost. There were many tears, but also many smiles in sharing their stories. We have so far hosted two Death Café's for Pet Owners, and plan more in the future.

It has been an absolute privilege to work as a partner with Animal Services and to share the love of reading and animals equally. I look forward to continued success with these outreach opportunities for the various communities that we each serve.



Book Club

at Loudoun County Animal Services

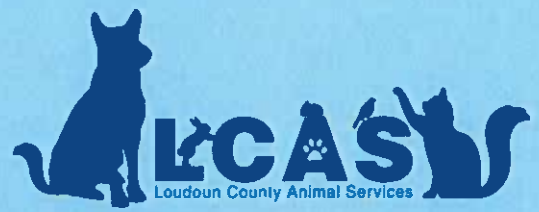


April 29th | 10:00am

**Nature's Best Hope
by Douglas W. Tallamy**

Join us at the animal shelter for book club! We will have a group discussion followed by a walk-through of the adoption areas at the shelter. Limited copies available.

Ask us how to get your copy today!



DEATH CAFE FOR PET OWNERS

Ashburn Library
Saturday, Jan. 14, 2 p.m.

Death doula Sharon Crowell
leads a discussion on how your pet's
illness or death can impact you.



Adults



LCPL

library.loudoun.gov