

An article has been circulating over the internet concerning my first year as General Manager of LA Animal Services. I have decided to respond to these allegations. The article is in *unbolded italics*. My response is in this bolded font. The article is titled:

Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa is not keeping his campaign promise to our animal loving City.

When Antonio Villaraigosa was running for Mayor of Los Angeles in 2005 he promised the citizens of Los Angeles that if elected, he'd "hold the new General Manager (of LA Animal Services) accountable for creating a legitimate plan to reduce euthanasia." He said he would "demand better performance and real accountability from the Department." Well, the truth is in the statistics and the statistics show that his new General Manager Ed Boks failed. In 2006 751 fewer animals made it out of the shelter alive than in 2005. The euthanasia rate did not go down from the previous year. This is the first time since they had public records available that there was no improvement. What went wrong? And what is the Mayor going to do about it

LA Animal Services' kill-rate hit an all time low in 2006. In calendar year 2006, 19,214 dogs and cats were euthanized in LA's six municipal Animal Care Centers. This represents a 6.6% decrease compared to 2005 (20,562) and more than a 50% decrease compared to 2001 (37,846).

Of the 25,045 dogs taken in by Animal Services in 2006, 6,937 were euthanized. This represents an incredible 72% live release rate! These numbers show a 14.2% decrease in dog euthanasia compared to 2005 and a 60% decrease compared to 2002! 28% of all dogs entering LA Animal Services were euthanized in 2006 for one of the following three reasons: The dog was 1) sick/injured, 2) dangerously aggressive, or 3) there was a lack of space to hold the dog for a longer period of time.

Of note, 41% of all dogs euthanized were pit bulls, despite the fact that adoptions for pit bulls were up 7.6% and the live release rate for pit bulls increased nearly 12% - thanks to the help of New Hope Adoption Partners (rescue groups encouraged to take advantage of a no fee release program).

Success for cats was not so dramatic. Of the 21,373 cats taken in by LA Animal Services in 2006, 12,278 were euthanized. This represents a 1.3% decrease in cat euthanasia compared to 2005 and a 19% decrease compared to 2003. 57% of all cats taken in by LA Animal Services were euthanized in 2006.

One reason this number is so high is because 46% of all cats

euthanized (5,584) were orphaned neonates. Neonate kittens are too young to survive on their own. Animal Services developed its “Bottle Baby Program” in 2006 to help reduce the number of neonates euthanized each year. This program trains volunteers and staff to foster neonates in their homes until they are old enough to be spayed or neutered and adopted. Although very rewarding, fostering neonates is also labor intensive, requiring foster parents to feed “sucklings” with eye droppers or baby bottles every two hours for several weeks until they are weaned. In 2006, 186 neonates were successfully fostered. Animal Services intends to increase that number in 2007 with the help of compassionate volunteers. Another significant percentage of euthanized cats were feral (wild) cats.

Two target populations we as a community have to focus our resources on in 2007 are our pit bulls and our cats. As we get our feral cat and pit bull populations under control we will take yet another giant leap towards No-Kill, but no one is harboring illusions that it will be easy. They increasingly need to be targets of our spay/neuter efforts.

A few months after Antonio became the Mayor of LA he fired then General Manager, Guerdon Stuckey and immediately appointed Ed Boks as the new GM... by coincidence, he was in need of a job as his animal control contract would not be renewed in New York. Should this have been a red flag?

I need to provide some history here because my critics seem to have successfully sown some doubt into at least a few minds about how I came to be in LA. Prior to moving to New York City I served as Executive Director of Maricopa County Animal Care & Control. My critics are correct when they say I promised to stay on as Maricopa County Animal Care & Control’s Executive Director for five years. I did not want to leave Maricopa County to move to NYC. It took New York City a year to successfully recruit me to move there. I turned that position down several times. It was only when no one else would step up, and after many national animal welfare leaders, especially Nathan Winograd, persuaded me to take the position that I asked Maricopa County to let me do both.

Maricopa County agreed and I spent two weeks in Arizona and two weeks in New York each month for the last six months of 2003 running two of the largest animal control departments in the country simultaneously. If Maricopa County asked me to leave, as my critics allege, why would they support sharing me with NYC during my last six months there? And why would NYC consistently try to recruit me to take the position for nearly a year if I was doing such a bad job in Arizona?

After six months of double duty, I felt confident that I had a good enough team in place in Arizona that I could comfortably take on the NYC challenge full time. I also felt this move would help provide a better forum for raising the No-Kill discussion to a place of national prominence. I thought I could help more animals, and I think I did.

As director of Maricopa County's animal control program I successfully ended a decades old deficit based budgeting process with 24 cities and towns. I replaced it with a full cost recovery contract with each municipality increasing AC&C's revenue by more than \$4 million annually!

When I did decide to leave Maricopa County, I left with:

- 1. A Chairman of the Board (of Maricopa County Supervisors) Award "in recognition of outstanding leadership as the director of Maricopa County Animal Control Services."**
- 2. My first Life Time Achievement Award presented by In Defense of Animals "for an extraordinary life of compassion, commitment and achievement dedicated to ending animal homelessness and providing compassionate care for homeless animals." I received this award the same time my partner, Sheriff Joe Arpaio, was recognized for his groundbreaking work in Maricopa County's anti-cruelty efforts.**
- 3. A national award for excellence from Alley Cat Allies for my work in transforming the way Maricopa County cared for feral cats, and**
- 4. A National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award for designing, developing, implementing, and managing Maricopa County's Management Institute that trained hundreds of County supervisors, middle-managers, and executives in better management practices. This Institute was cited by Governing Magazine as a significant factor in Maricopa County being recognized as the "Best Run Municipality in the United States" in 2004.**

My critics allege that I was asked to leave New York City Animal Care & Control. Let me be clear on this point. The only person to ask me to leave New York City was Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa in Los Angeles. In early December, 2005, after being offered the LAAS job by Mayor Villaraigosa, I met in a closed session of the Board that oversees AC&C in NYC. I had never committed to more than two years in NYC and I advised the Board that I would not be seeking an extension of my contract because I had another opportunity I felt important to pursue. I was asked by our Mayor's Office to not make the full reason for my decision known to the public until after the Mayor had addressed Guerdon Stuckey's status with the department. Thanks to an innocently erroneous characterization in newspaper coverage of the New York Board's vote to not renew my contract, this brief period

of confidentiality seems to have allowed the misimpression that I was fired to be perpetuated in the minds of a few ever since.

Not wanting to leave NYC in the lurch, I recommended my friend and former colleague in Arizona and New York, Mary Martin, to replace me. If I had done such a terrible job in NYC, as my critics allege, and was asked to leave, then why would the Board take my recommendation for my replacement? Why did the Chairman of the Board, who is also the City Health Commissioner for NYC, go on public record expounding the “amazing turn around in NYC” under my leadership and then follow up with a letter of recommendation? And why was I invited back to NYC on January 31st, 2006, to receive my second Lifetime Achievement Award specifically for my work in NYC at an event attended by AC&C Board of Directors and Department of Health officials?

My decision to leave NYC was another strategic decision on my part designed to help generate a national dialogue on No-Kill. My decision to come to LA and support Mary Martin replacing me in NYC meant that two of the strongest No-Kill voices in the nation would now run the two highest profile animal control programs in the United States.

Boks started his new job officially January 3, 2006. He immediately "introduced" a host of new programs with catchy names like Big Fix, S.T.A.R. and FELIX. He opened his arms wide to the rescue groups and activists. He said yes to every request and offer. He wrote Op-Ed pieces for the local newspapers. In front of City Council he swore LA would be NoKill by 2010 if not 2008. He even started a blog, and the activists rejoiced. Well, maybe not all of the activists. The Animal Defense League of Los Angeles (ADLLA) was still on the fence about Mr. Boks.

Month after month he was churning out positive reports about the new programs and progress. His six month report came out and things looked good. The euthanasia rate was dropping and dog adoptions were up. He made some rosy projections of continued success by the end of the year....

Then all of a sudden there were no more monthly reports after August. The reports just stopped. Activists thought nothing of it as the positive news and press releases just kept flowing from the Department in abundance. In early January the annual statistics report was finally released, and a bomb was dropped on the animal community. The annual euthanasia rate did not go down for the first time since they started keeping public records! Fewer animals made it out alive!...

No doubt about it 2006 was a difficult year, starting with our having to rework the department's proposed 2006-2007 budget on a short timeline, and then starting the long process of rebuilding the internal

capacity of a demoralized department. The Department had serious infrastructure issues after a decade of a revolving door on General Managers and other management staff, including Personnel Directors. Some in the department had enjoyed working with my predecessor and weren't ready for a change (I do not fault them for that). Others did not share my No-Kill philosophy and resisted it. I don't want to make excuses, because, as General Manager, I take full responsibility. Whatever performance issues I was having in 2006 are being addressed. With the addition of Linda Barth and Deborah Knaan as my Assistant General Managers last fall and winter, respectively, the department is finally gaining the internal capacity to begin tackling the most doggedly stubborn issues it faces. Many of these issues are precisely the ones that contribute to the kinds of animal-related problems covered in the internet article, and they are at the top of the new management team's agenda.

All of Boks' predecessors improved the euthanasia rate even though they had less money, fewer employees and smaller facilities. More animals were now dying, getting sick, being stolen and escaping than ever before.... Boks was definitely not on his way to meet his NoKill goal, not by a long shot.

No matter how you evaluate the numbers, fewer dogs and cats died in 2006 than in any other year since the beginning of keeping such statistics. I believe that the decline was not as dramatic in 2006 as previous years because we are getting closer to what the industry statistically considers to be No-Kill (especially for dogs) and that the easy gains have already been made. It's also interesting that the article indirectly praises the same former General Managers that were so often villified by department critics in the past, much as I am villified now. The animal care industry throughout the country views Los Angeles to be the "acid test" for people in my line of work, so I knew what I was getting into when I came here. I am undaunted and determined to make the improvements all of us would like to see. But I also am realistic about how long it will take.

As we work toward our goal we find ourselves dealing with the most challenging animals. Our adoptions are at an all-time high which means we are effectively placing our "easy to adopt" animals. New Hope numbers are down because not even our over 70 partners are able to place many of the more challenging animals they so generously rescue from the shelters. Although New Hope placements are down in 2006 compared to 2005, 2006 realized the second highest number of New Hope/Adoption Partner placements in the past six years, and I am grateful to every rescuer for their role in that effort.

Animals dying while in the shelters is actually down nearly 10%. Recording the number of animals stolen and escaped is an example of better record keeping. Identifying and tracking these problems in our database allows our Center Managers to refine our processes to mitigate their occurrence in the future. Stolen and escaped animals combined represent less than 1% of total animal impounds.

None of these statistics were available to the public without a Public Record Act request prior to my tenure with the department and my implementing a policy of transparency. They are now posted and updated monthly on our website. I've heard complaints about how they're laid out and organized, but no one has complained that the information is available.

Why didn't all his catchy new "NoKill" programs work? Well, most of them were not new or else not implemented. He took LA's existing programs, gave them catchy new names then rolled them out as his own creations. FELIX was his feral cat program from NY but LA already had one, it just didn't have a name. He put all the current spay/neuter programs under his Big Fix name and called that a new program. He started the S.T.A.R. program to help rehabilitate very ill or injured animals. Again, they were already doing this, they just didn't call it a program or give it a name....

It's called marketing. Having dozens of imprecisely identified programs was not helping the department establish its identity as the most important animal welfare agency in the region. There are only so many programs to address the problems associated with pet overpopulation. All of the major animal agency heads who advocate No-Kill employ many of them in one form or another, adapted to the context in which they're working. As for some of them not yet being fully implemented, we're not trying to hide anything. Programs will be implemented and expanded as we have the capacity to do so. Others, like ideas being developed in our new interdepartmental/inter-agency "Humane L.A." effort, will come on line when they're ready. We don't expect any of them to solve the problems all by themselves. But all will hopefully make at least a small contribution toward reducing the kill rate, increasing adoptions and helping the communities of Los Angeles appreciate animals that much more.

Packaging programs in a way that allows the community and the media to get their arms around them is key to their success. For instance, since putting all the spay/neuter programs under one easy to identify umbrella program called, The Big Fix, spay/neuter surgeries went up 48%. Feral cat surgeries went up 118% under Operation FELIX.

Of course, these gains aren't just the product of re-packaging programs. They're the product of a lot of hard work by department staff, by our spay/neuter contractors and partners, by feral cat and TNR advocates and volunteers, and so on. Now we've finally re-opened the South L.A. Animal Care Center spay/neuter clinic full time and are looking at other ways to further expand spay/neuter efforts in Los Angeles. We fully understand how important a role spay/neuter will play in the long run toward reducing both pet overpopulation and euthanasia. But we also understand that there's a lag time between performing appreciably more surgeries and seeing a real ripple effect in the statistics.

Actually, as overpopulation begins to wane, the number of impounds will wane too, and then we'll face the interesting situation wherein our kill percentage probably will no longer be falling because the numbers of both impounds and kills will be significantly down! At that point we'll all have to re-think how we want to characterize our progress. I, for one, am looking forward to that day.

He brought his "new" Foster, Senior 4 Senior, Bottle Baby and New Hope programs. There are only a handful of animals in the Foster program which actually already existed. The Senior 4 Senior program was written before he got here and it is still not even approved or implemented. The Bottle Baby program is an old program with few participants. The New Hope program was just the renamed old Adoption Partner program. What's more, New Hope animals were free to rescuers in 2006. When it was called the Adoption Partner program and rescuers had to pay for the animals in 2005, they actually saved more animals. The drop in New Hope animals was significant. Other programs such as Plus One Minus One, No "e" below the knee and others just fell by the wayside.

New Hope placements are down 8.5% - suggesting LA Animal Services is efficiently adopting out the most adoptable animals and our New Hope partners are now able to help the more difficult to place animals, nearly 6,000 in 2006. This is reinforced by comparing the actual numbers. New Hope placements are down 646 animals, but we adopted an additional 897 animals.

The New Hope program provides several significant enhancements to the former Adoption Partner Program. These enhancements include but are not limited to: 24 hour/7 days a week access for all New Hope partners to all LAAS Animal Care Centers; a designated New Hope Coordinator trained to provide the very best customer service to our New Hope partners; access to the New Hope Alert either by e-mail or on our website. This Alert is updated on our website hourly and provides the pictures, descriptions, and other details and location of every animal in need of their help. When necessary, and as resources

are available, Animal Services even transports the animal for the New Hope partner having difficulty making these arrangements for themselves.

The New Hope program in L.A., which employs a name I've used in my previous locations, has been fine-tuned in significant ways with the valuable help of key humane activists here, along with the Board of Animal Services Commissioners. The collaboration sometimes hits bumps in the road, but I feel strongly that New Hope is becoming the kind of effective program that will help its participants do their very best for our shelter animals. The short-term numbers are less important than the long-term capacity enhancement it represents for rescuers.

Most of his "programs" were actually not very life saving to begin with. They are more about positive press than saving lives... Maybe a fancy new website and positive press is all the Mayor really wanted all along.

These programs are proven to be life-saving. First in Maricopa County, then in New York City, and now in L.A. They are still in use in Maricopa County and NYC and are also being replicated in other communities around the nation. Is the author suggesting positive press and an easy-to-navigate website will not help save more lives? It is not either/or. It is not "focus on the infrastructure and message of the Department" or "save lives." We have to do both to be effective. Enhancing our website, consolidating and branding our message and getting the word out are all key to saving lives.

A great example of this was the recent "No-Kill Weekend" held in February. With the help of an outside media consultant graciously provided by the Rescue and Humane Alliance, the event received an unprecedented amount of publicity, drew large numbers of volunteers, and brought the public out in throngs. More than twice the usual number of animals were adopted during the event compared to the same weekend one year previous and, thanks to thoughtful adoption counseling provided by volunteers, almost all of the more than 300 adoptions that took place have "taken."

We are working to build the capacity to be able to do this kind of intensive effort more regularly. But we don't have it yet and, contrary to the rhetoric of our most vociferous critics, it's not something that happens by simply snapping your fingers, sending out an e-mail or carrying a picket sign.

So what was Boks doing during 2006 if not saving animals? ... His online Match.com profile says he's a "social drinker," "spiritual but not religious,"

"realistic," a "successful administrator making a real difference in my field" and his turn-ons are "power" and "erotica."

He wants to date "Caucasian/white" women who speak English only, have degrees who are "successful professionals" who make over \$75,000 a year who are between 5'4" and 5'8", 35-52 years old, not fat and no kids. He says he's "5'11" "athletic," "toned," into "cuddling" and his politics are "non-conformist." There are quite a few photos of him online hugging female Department rescue-partners with one hand with a drink in the other at parties. He spends time on the Board of Directors of some of the groups run by these women. He was never one to miss a party or event, an opportunity to rub elbows with politicians, celebrities and more cute animal rescuers who looked up to him as the "animal savior." Basically, he had a good time in LA on the tax payer's dime.

I have no Match.com account. I have been involved in a committed relationship for the past six months. Prior to that, I did socialize as any single person who had just arrived in the city might do. I do attend fund raisers and I do have my picture taken with others. I serve on no Boards. I actually fail to see what any of this has to do with anything, given that I work long hours nearly every day and have worked many weekends since arriving here.

On top of it all, it seems he was involved in a few scandals. He posted a sexy photo of a woman in a string bikini on the Department website to advertise a bikini contest at Hooters. Local women's groups called him sexist. The Mayor and Laura Chick made him end the Department's involvement in the event. ..

I disagree that this qualifies as a scandal, but it certainly was a controversy. The ad/flyer that contained it was developed by Hooters without my involvement. Taking down the picture and replacing it with a t-shirted dog ultimately was my responsibility. I acknowledge that I had not anticipated the negative reaction the whole idea provoked from some people and I subsequently made the decision to not allow Animal Services to be the beneficiary of this event as a result.

He was sued by an African American ex-employee for discrimination. Seems Boks fired the African American employee who had years of experience and then hired his white friend who had no experience but did have a criminal conviction on his record...(ADL-LA has been notified that Boks has now been caught, and the city is looking into, sending hundreds of pornographic pictures to women in the humane community from his city computer during work hours.)

The lawsuit in NYC will be decided in the courts probably this year. The allegation that I have been "caught" sending pornographic

pictures to anyone is ridiculous. I have never done any such thing. I challenge anyone to produce any such emails.

Within the last week there have been new accusations about possible Hayden Act violations. As per the Hayden Act the shelter must hold an animal four days before euthanizing unless the animal is dying or unweaned. Blog "LA Animal Watch" run by a past supporter of Boks has posted charts supplied by Shelter Watch that show over 1,000 violations within the first ten months of 2006 alone. At the time of this posting Boks is stating that it was just poor record keeping, which is still a violation of the Hayden Act besides evidence of poor administrative skills....

LA Animal Services has not violated the Hayden Act, nor did I suggest that Mr. Muzika's allegations were based on faulty departmental record keeping. In fact, his allegations were based on his misunderstanding of the data in his possession. My explanation of the facts can be found on our website under Facts vs. Fiction: Rumor 3..

LA Animal Watch used to be a keen supporter until the failure in the annual statistics and the Hayden Act violations came to light. Boks seems to have lost support even from his staunchest defenders.

Bloggers come and go. I am thankful for any expression of support or constructive criticism in blogs, articles or any other vehicle for communication, but LA Animal Services does not manage by blog. LA Animal Services manages by the numbers and by the individual needs of the animals in our care.

There was an accusation that he was in fact behind an infamous blog fan site called "LA Animal Friends." That blog would post positive inside information about him and the Department and basically refute anyone who ever said anything negative about Boks. It seems Boks ordered a volunteer to start and write the blog. He provided the content of the blog and even wrote parts of it. Ghost writing your own fan site?

I met with two department supporters in February 2006 to discuss the development of a Blog as a way to respond to the critics of the Department and to also keep the community informed of what was happening. "Ed's Blog" is the result of that meeting. I am the sole author of Ed's Blog. I have never given any other blogger, anonymous or otherwise, any information to publish for me in any way, shape, or form.

When the volunteer his "number one fan" finally saw the horrible year end statistics, she immediately shut it down. A few other pro-Boks blogs seem to

have turned against him and now there are rumors of sexual harassment lawsuits against Boks by some of the female rescuers...

There are no grounds for any sexual harassment lawsuits.

Notes:

Ed Muzika charged Boks with almost 1,000 violations of the Hayden Act. Boks' response was . . . 809 apparently healthy animals were killed prematurely. Then he said these animals weren't apparently healthy at all. He said 773 were actually sick or unweaned or dangerous and therefore killed. That means LAAS made 773 errors out of 809 animals. This is a 96% error rate! Either Boks is lying and they are killing in violation of the Hayden Act, or he is telling the truth, and he is a grossly incompetent administrator overseeing a grossly incompetent staff.

Ed Muzika made these allegations with partial data. The designation “apparently healthy” is not a medical diagnosis. It is how an animal appeared to non-medical staff at the moment of impound. Later, when a veterinarian inspects an animal anomalies may be discovered. One example is a cat that looked “apparently healthy” but in fact was suffering terribly with three dead kittens decomposing inside her. There is no way to have known this at the time of impound. Muzika was using the information from the impound data but did not have the information collected later on these animals.

We think he's LYING. . . (like we said from almost the beginning of Boks reign of terror, "If his lips are moving, he's lying.!) His LATEST claim about the killing of these animals is. . . . are you ready for it?

OWNER REQUESTED EUTHANASIA! Yep, he's NOW saying that 15% of those killed were owner requested; the problem with THAT excuse, is owner requested euthanasia is no longer allowed by law!

LA Animal Services does not provide owner-requested euthanasia. I have never made this claim verbally or in writing. This claim cannot be found in any LA Animal Services documents anywhere.