

Foster 50 Challenge - 2025 Outcomes Summary

What is the name of your organization?	Santa Barbara County Animal Services
What type of organization are you?	Government shelter
Which animal type(s) does your foster program focus on?	Cats and Dogs
City/Town	Santa Barbara
State/Region/Province	California
What is your organization's EIN?	95-6002833
What is your organization's primary goal during this challenge?	Increase foster adoptions

	2025	
Number of dogs placed in foster care from July 1 - August 31, 2025?	871	2410 (Full 2024)
Number of cats placed in foster care from July 1 - August 31, 2025?	213	349 (Full 2024)
What was the average length of stay (in days) for dogs in foster with outcomes between July 1 - August 31, 2025?	59	35 (Full 2024)
Are there any unique elements to your intake method that would impact the calculation for LOS (Length of Stay) for dogs during this time?	n/a	The prior question doesn't make sense. Do you mean pets adopted from foster during that time or pets adopted during that time that had been in foster during that time or pets that had been adopted during that time that were ever in foster
What was the average length of stay (in days) for cats in foster with outcomes between July 1 - August 31, 2025?	35	90 (Full 2024)
Are there any unique elements to your intake method that would impact the calculation for LOS (Length of Stay) for cats during this time?	n/a	Same comment as for dogs. The way the question is worded is weird. Primarily cats in foster are neonates and have a 2-3 month length of stay
How many dogs were adopted directly from foster homes from July 1 - August 31, 2025?	148	26 (Full 2024)
How many cats were adopted directly from foster homes from July 1 - August 31, 2025?	51	85 (Full 2024)
How many new fosters did you recruit during July 1 - August 31?	235	
Number of active foster volunteers as of July 1, 2025	324	325 (July 1, 2024)
Number of active foster volunteers as of August 31, 2025?	559	325 (Aug 1, 2024)

	<p>This year we focused on making fostering more accessible and flexible, and the results show clear shifts in how animals are supported outside the shelter. We saw a significant increase in dog day trips, which grew from 196 in 2024 to 265 in 2025. This reflects our efforts to normalize short-term foster opportunities and reduce barriers by making it easy for community members to participate without long-term commitments.</p>
Describe any new foster strategies your organization introduced. Did you remove barriers or implement changes that led to an increase in active foster volunteers or more animals being placed in foster care?	<p>At the same time, foster-to-adopt placements decreased, not due to reduced interest but because our team caught up on spay/neuter surgeries. With animals able to move more quickly to adoption, fewer needed to transition through foster-to-adopt arrangements.</p> <p>We also recorded a decrease in neonatal fosters (121 down to 106), which is a positive outcome of our strengthened Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) efforts in the community, reducing the number of kittens being born and entering the shelter.</p> <p>Short-term options like overnight fosters (19 to 46) and shelter break fosters (44 to 58) also increased, showing that diversifying foster types has made it easier for more people to help. These changes reflect a shift toward reducing barriers, offering flexible commitments, and matching animals with foster homes more effectively, ultimately keeping more pets in home environments where they thrive.</p>

Which new or expanded practices were most effective?	The most effective practices were those that lowered the barrier to entry and gave community members flexible ways to participate in fostering. Expanding dog day trips proved especially impactful, with placements rising from 196 in 2024 to 265 in 2025. This program brought in new foster volunteers who might not have committed to traditional fostering but were eager to help for a few hours or a day, giving dogs enrichment and exposure that often led to adoption. Short-term foster options also showed strong results. Overnight fosters more than doubled (19 to 46), and shelter break fosters increased as well (44 to 58). These options provided stress relief for dogs, supported volunteer engagement, and gave staff valuable behavior insights. Additionally, our improved spay/neuter capacity was effective in reducing reliance on foster-to-adopt placements, helping animals move directly into permanent homes. And our strengthened TNR program reduced the number of neonatal kittens entering care, which indicates that community-based prevention efforts are having the intended impact. Together, these practices show that flexibility, prevention, and operational efficiency were the most effective strategies in expanding foster care impact.
What surprised you most about participating in this Challenge?	What surprised us most was how challenging it has been to implement the foster bingo card incentive program we had originally planned. While the idea was designed to boost engagement in a fun and rewarding way, we found that putting it into practice required more time, coordination, and resources than anticipated. This experience highlighted how even simple-sounding programs can present unexpected barriers, and reminded us that flexibility is key in developing foster engagement strategies.
What challenges did your organization encounter during this process, and how did you address or overcome them?	One of our biggest challenges was capacity — both in staffing and resources — to launch new engagement tools such as the foster bingo card program. Although the concept generated enthusiasm, we found it difficult to dedicate the consistent time and coordination needed to track progress and manage rewards. Instead of letting this stall our momentum, we shifted focus toward expanding programs that were easier to scale, such as dog day trips, overnight fosters, and shelter break fosters. We also faced challenges related to medical and spay/neuter capacity, which affected how quickly animals could move through foster-to-adopt placements. By investing in increasing surgical efficiency, we reduced those bottlenecks and helped more animals move directly into permanent homes. Finally, our neonatal foster numbers declined, not from lack of volunteers but due to our successful Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) efforts. While this changed the type of animals entering foster, it demonstrated progress in prevention work. By remaining flexible and adjusting our strategies, we turned these challenges into opportunities to streamline operations and expand community participation in foster care.
We'd love to hear your favorite tail from the Challenge! 🐾 What special story stands out most from your experience?	My favorite tail (tale) from the Challenge is Dozer's "Doggy Day Out" adventure. Dozer, a charming two-year-old Pittie mix, had the full VIP treatment through your Doggy Day Trip program—he enjoyed some beach sunshine, soaking up love and affection outside the shelter. The post captured a moment where Dozer was entirely at ease, relishing a taste of freedom and connection that foreshadows a bright, adoptive future. This story stands out because it beautifully illustrates how the Challenge's expanded programs—notably the Doggy Day Out trips—can transform an animal's experience overnight. It's not just about logistics; it's about giving a dog the chance to feel joy, normalcy, and belonging—even just for a day. Dozer's outing shows how compassionate, creative fostering can lift spirits, boost trust, and send ripples of hope throughout the community.

Sarah Aguilar

From: Amber Eby <eby@maddiesfund.org>
Sent: Friday, October 24, 2025 10:36 AM
To: Sarah Aguilar
Subject: Congrats! You're Receiving a Foster 50 Challenge Grant from Maddie's Fund

Caution: This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Sarah,

I'm pleased to let you know that Santa Barbara County Animal Services has been selected for a Foster 50 Challenge Grant from Maddie's Fund! You've been named a recipient of the Foster 50 Trailblazer Award, which is given to two animal welfare organizations for leading the way with creativity, resourcefulness, and measurable impact in fostering, and for a transformative commitment to innovation and growth that sets the gold standard for what's possible in animal fostering. You will be receiving a grant of \$25,000. Your grant reference number is 18103.

In total, PEDIGREE Foundation and Maddie's Fund are awarding \$100,000 in Foster 50 Challenge Grants to 12 organizations to support foster network programs.

Confidentiality

The full list of award recipients will be announced on Tuesday morning, October 28, and this news is confidential until then. We ask that you wait to share this information publicly until after the official announcement from PEDIGREE Foundation goes live on Tuesday morning at 9 AM EST (6AM PT). You'll receive an email from Pedigree at that time with more information and next steps. This email will also include information about the Zoom Reporting Huddle, scheduled for December 2 at 2pm ET (11am PT).

Payment

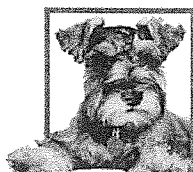
This grant will be paid via ACH transfer through Bill.com. The payment will be processed with our grants distribution request on Tuesday, October 28, 2025. You are the Bill.com Payment contact for your organization and have previously received checks from Maddie's Fund via Bill.com. Since this grant is over \$5,000, it is our policy to pay it via ACH transfer rather than check. **You will receive an email from Bill.com after October 28, asking you to set up an account.** Once you set up that account, we can pay your grant as a direct deposit ACH transfer.

Thank you for participating in the Foster 50 Challenge and helping to raise awareness of the power of fostering! PEDIGREE will be in touch with more information on Tuesday morning about next steps and receiving your grant. Please let us know if you do not receive that email by the end of the day, Tuesday, October 28, 2025.

If you have any questions about this grant, please reply to this email or give me a call at 925-310-5465.

Congratulations!

Best,



**Maddie's
Fund**

The Duffield Foundation

Amber Eby

(She/Her/Hers)

Senior Grants Specialist

[< Click to hear my name](#)

Office Phone // +925.310.5465

Time Zone // Pacific

**Let's help keep pets and people
together!**



Sarah Aguilar

From: PEDIGREE Foundation <info@pedigreefoundation.org>
Sent: Tuesday, October 28, 2025 6:28 AM
To: Sarah Aguilar
Subject: Congrats on your Foster 50 Challenge Grant!

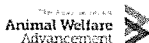
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Maddie's
Fund

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Cheers to Your Foster 50 Challenge Grant! 🐾

Show your Foster 50 pride and meet the other grant recipients

As the first-ever Foster 50 program comes to a close, we want to send our heartfelt **congratulations to you on receiving a Foster 50 Challenge Grant!**

In total, **PEDIGREE Foundation and Maddie's Fund have awarded \$100,000 in Foster 50 Challenge Grants to 12 organizations** to support foster network programming. The full list of recipients is available on the **[Foster 50 Landing Page](#)**. We encourage you to check out the inspiring programs from your fellow recipients.

As a next step, we've scheduled a **mandatory final report Zoom Huddle meeting for all recipients on Tuesday, December 2 at 1 PM CST**. You can find the **[Zoom registration](#)** link here. **Please register as soon as possible, and come prepared to discuss the following questions:**

1. How many foster volunteers are currently active in your organization?
How does this compare to before the Challenge?
2. Are you continuing any of the new or expanded practices you implemented during the Challenge?
3. What lessons did you learn from navigating challenges during this period?
4. Which new or expanded practices have been most effective for your organization?
5. What has surprised you the most as you've continued implementing these practices?

The official grants **announcement** has gone live, so you're welcome to start sharing the great news. To celebrate your grant with pride, we invite you to display the badge below on your website, social media, e-newsletters, email signatures or any other platform you choose. Downloadable image files for your use are **linked here**, along with a PDF of our 2025 PEDIGREE Foundation Grant Style Guide.



Thank you for participating in the Foster 50 program and helping to raise awareness of the power of fostering. It's been truly inspiring to see you elevate and strengthen foster programs that have transformed the lives of pets across the country. **Foster 50 delivered nationwide results, with nearly 9,000 net-new fosters, and an 11% increase in active fosters, enabling care for more than 36,500 animals.**

Your continued commitment to supporting foster and adoption initiatives is helping more dogs find their loving forever homes, and we can't wait to see what you do next. **We hope you'll join us for Foster 50 in 2026!**

If you've been forwarded this email, you won't want to miss the latest grant updates, best practices, and news from PEDIGREE Foundation! Subscribe to our email list:

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