

Cat 7: Service Learning

Group 7-12 Project Apetionate

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ABSTRACT

Project Apetionate is a new and budding Service Learning project that has pushed out a series of initiatives to the public to raise awareness on pet abandonment and adoption and to educate potential pet owners about the realistic expectations of owning a pet. The project also hopes to help the youth gain insights on animal shelters and ultimately minimise the number pet abandonment cases to a significant low.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

Our rationale for starting this project was due to firstly, our passion and love for animals and secondly, because of our views towards the harsh and unfair treatment of animals - pet abandonment. We believe that all animals deserve a home, and to these domestic pets, their "homes" are their owners' homes. Hence, is it not cruel to be "kicked out" by their owners from what they consider the most "loving home"? Animals are living things, and thus like us, do deserve care and love from others. Abandoning them is not only the direct opposite of "being loving", but it is also at the same time making the abandoned animals vulnerable to various problems by removing it's only shelter. Hence, we feel that those animals should not be treated as such. This mindset gave us the drive to carry out Project Apetionate.

1.2 Objective

Our objectives are:

- a) To raise awareness to the public and potential pet owners through various platforms
- b) Educating them about this issue of pet abandonment

- c) Educating potential pet owners so that they would be clear about the time, effort and money involved in having and maintaining a pet, hence reducing the number of pet abandonment cases.

1.3 Area of Concern

According to SPCA's Annual Report (2015-2019) on their website (spca.org.sg), there is a downward trend in numbers of pet intake by SPCA which also reflects the number of abandonment cases in society. However, when we took a closer look at the numbers, we found out that although there is a downward trend, the numbers still remain significantly high of over 1500. This shows how pet abandonment still remains a problem in our society despite all the stricter laws and measures put in place to protect these pets. In another research done to find out why pets were being abandoned by their owners, a news article by Straits Times (Hong. 2018, 20 February. Straitstimes.com: Some dogs given up as part of 'spring cleaning'. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/some-dogs-given-up-as-part-of-spring-cleaning>) titled "Some dogs given up as part of 'spring cleaning'" gave us some insight into the lives of pet owners and the struggles they face when raising a pet. In the article, according to Derrick Tan (2018), Voices for Animals founder, he stated that "It happens a lot that owners want to give up their pets closer to the festive season. Many people do spring cleaning and often 'spring clean' their pets out, and this mainly happens to older animals." This shows how culture also plays a part by increasing the number of pets abandoned. In another article on the website Pet Secure by Corraine Daw (n.d), [Why are so many pets abandoned Retrieved from: <https://www.petsecure.com.au/pet-care/many-pets-abandoned/>] we found out that pets are mostly abandoned due to 4 reasons. Firstly, pets are abandoned because the owners may have "no time to look after them". Secondly, the "maintenance" of our pet "becomes too expensive" because you might not be able to "afford vet fees" or daily necessities for their pets.. Thus, they decide to abandon them instead. Thirdly, pet

owners may have “purchased their pet on impulse” without really thinking of the time and dedication needed to take care of the pet cautiously and realistically, resulting in the pet owner being “irresponsible” and abandoning the pet. Finally, pet owners may have “moved into a property which prohibits pets” and as a result, the owner is forced to abandon their pet. This leads to our area of concern which is even though there is a declining trend over the years, there is still a sizable number of owners abandoning pets. Oftentimes, these pets are abandoned due to reasons like lack of time, money and effort - and these can be avoided with greater awareness and information on the requirements of pet care.

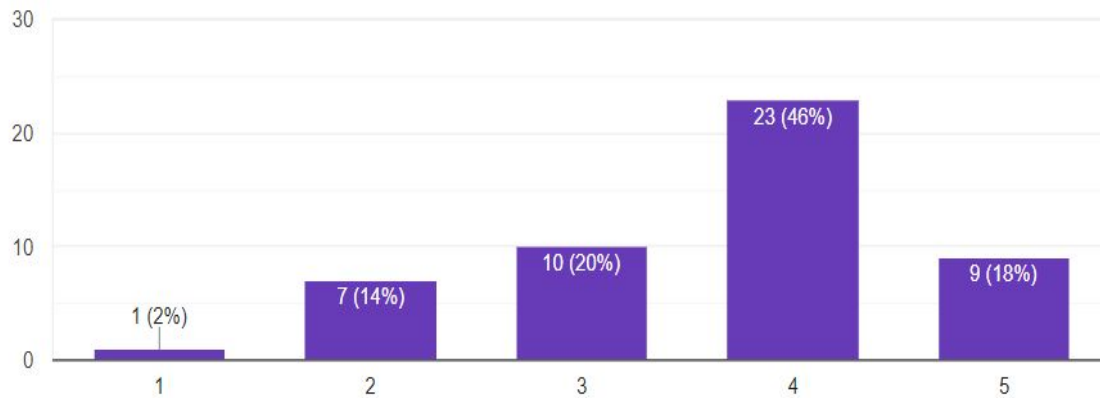
1.4 Needs Analysis

In addition, to further prove that pet abandonment is a problem in society, we have to seek the public’s opinions about this. Hence, we conducted a needs analysis survey on our topic of pet abandonment and adoption, receiving a total of 50 respondents on our survey. Out of the 50 people, 64% of the respondents agreed that pet abandonment is prevalent in Singapore, indicating that the majority of people agreed that pet abandonment is an issue.

Q1b. On a scale of 1-5, how far do you agree that there is an issue with pet abandonment in Singapore?



50 responses



Furthermore, we included the different factors that might contribute to pet abandonment and sought the public's views on this. In the end, 74% of the respondents thought that it is because people feel it takes too much effort to raise a pet. 72% of the respondents thought that it is because people have no time to look after their pets while 56% of the respondents thought it is because people have lack of money to afford and maintain the pets well. From these survey results, we can conclude that people still feel that pet abandonment is still an issue in our society and therefore this issue should be addressed.

1.5 Underlying problem

After that, we crafted our underlying problem. Given that there is a sizeable and significant number of animals being abandoned by their owners due to easily avoidable reasons, how might we help to reduce this number by raising awareness to potential pet owners such that people are clearer about the time, money and effort involved in having a pet? At the end of the project, we believed that our project has achieved its goal by using different ways which we will discuss later to create connections with the

community while still maintaining social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the difficulties, we managed to reach out to many members of the community, mostly the youth, through the use of our social media account and by spreading awareness using the various ways we could come up with using an online platform, such as quizzes and pledge boards. In the end, we could tell the public learnt something about pet abandonment because most people scored 10 marks and above out of 14 in the online quiz we created. Furthermore, we managed to raise \$2178 for our beneficiary through our donation drive.

2 ACTION PLAN

2.1 Limitations

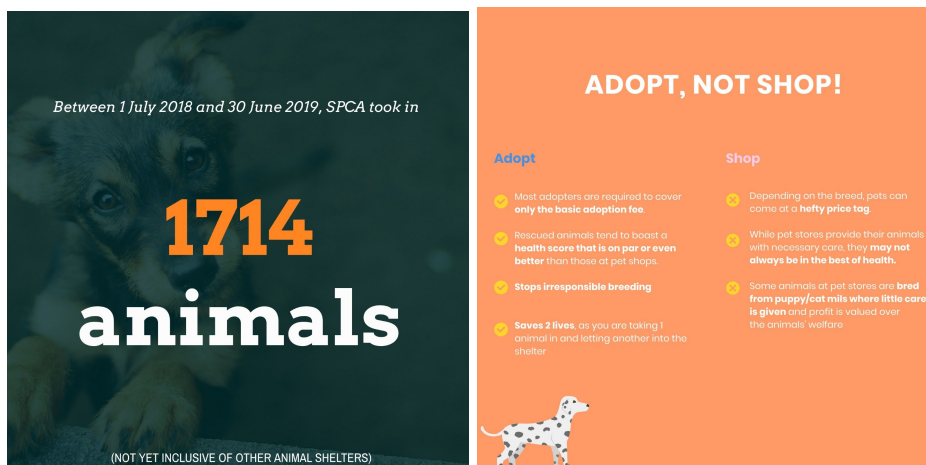
There are mainly two limitations. Firstly, it is due to covid-19. Covid-19 has made a great impact on everyone's lives. In terms of our project, it has caused us to be unable to interact physically with the community. Interacting physically is a vital and important component of a Service Learning project as it is more effective when it comes to spreading awareness to the public and physical interaction also makes the project more memorable. Also, our originally planned action plan had to be cancelled too because some of them required physical interaction. They include awareness campaigns, volunteer sessions, and a fundraiser. Hence, we were forced to move online and change our action plan accordingly. Secondly, it is due to a delay in response from Causes for Animals Singapore, our beneficiary. We had to communicate with CAS via email and because they usually receive quite a lot of emails daily, it led to a delayed response from them which resulted in a delayed implementation of certain initiatives like the quizzes, fundraiser etc which needed their approval or help.

2.2 Solutions

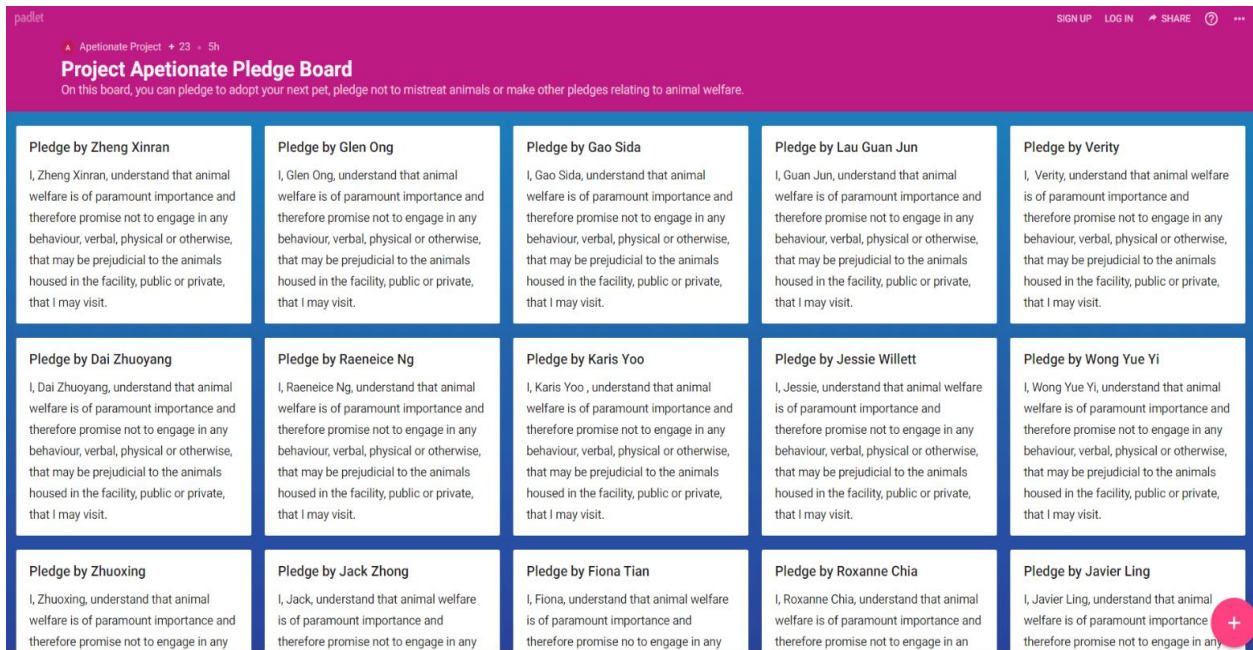
One of our original action plans was to have a physical awareness campaign, however it had to be cancelled due to the unforeseen circumstances that Covid-19 caused. Hence, we had to resort to spreading awareness on social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Next, even though volunteer sessions were still available for the public to participate, due to government preventive measures, we were strongly advised not to go. Thus, the alternative would be for us to figure out the information ourselves by either researching online or emailing CAS if our followers had any questions. Initially, we also decided to do a website to provide the information on CAS, pet abandonment and adoption etc. However, an important factor to consider is the effectiveness of such an initiative in spreading awareness. Hence, we had to ask ourselves this question: “How many people will actually spend their free and leisure time going into the website and read the information?” In the end, we decided that it was unlikely to be very impactful to the community. Instead, we shifted all the information onto Instagram and Facebook through the well designed and attractive info posters we have created. This would raise much more awareness compared to websites as people are more active on social media. Lastly, it would be our fundraiser. We couldn’t conduct a physical fundraiser so we did it through the giving.sg website. This website is a platform for us to raise funds for CAS and all proceeds will immediately go to them after our online fundraiser campaign has been approved by CAS themselves. In addition, the fundraiser was delayed because CAS was busy sorting out their problems at that time. Thus, we felt the most suitable solution was to wait patiently instead of sending consecutive emails because sending consecutive emails would be annoying and cause inconvenience for the beneficiary. However, we did send 1 email each week to remind them of the initiative so as to prompt them for their approval again.

2.3 Accomplishments

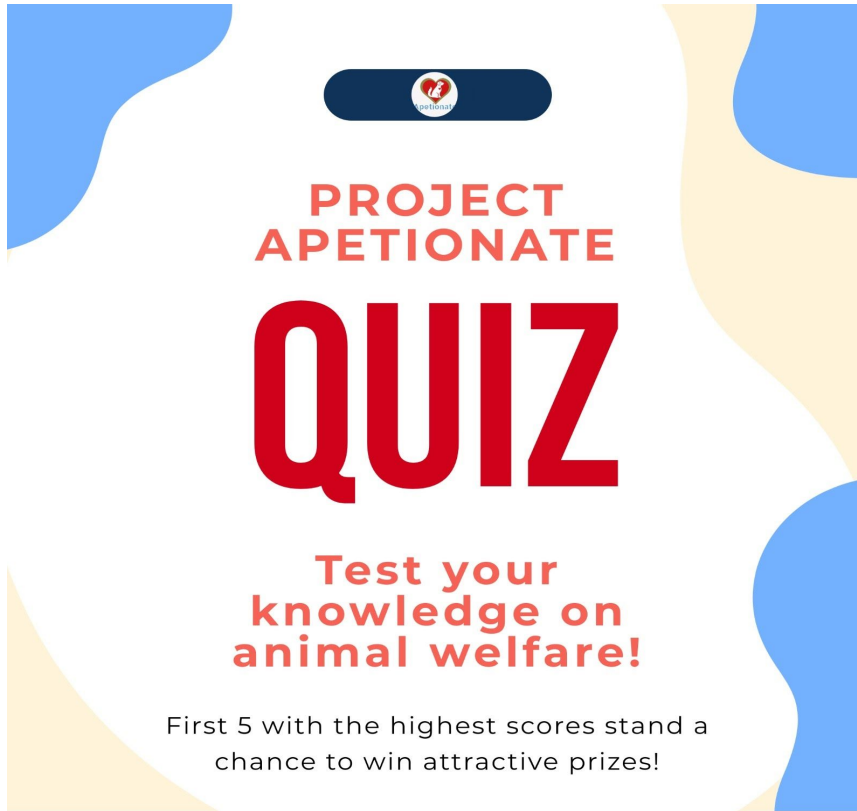
Because of the several limitations and challenges we faced as stated above, we had to come up with a more suitable action plan. Our final action plan includes interactive quizzes to put the community's knowledge of the infoposters we have posted to test, weekly well-designed info posters to educate and raise awareness to the public, a pledge board on padlet to encourage people to pledge not to mistreat and abandon animals and lastly, an online fundraiser approved by CAS to raise funds for them to support and maintain the rescued animals. For our info posters, there are three main key features which makes it an effective way to spread awareness. They are well-detailed with the necessary information yet at the same time easy to read. They are also well-designed so as to make it more aesthetically pleasing to the public, hence attracting more people. They are also easily accessible as they are posted on social media where most people who have a phone will have access to and they can read them as and when they like.



Our pledge board serves as another platform to interact with the wider community. It helps to promote consciousness among the community by allowing them to pledge to our cause. In addition, it serves as a way to guilt-strip anyone who violates their own pledge.



We also implemented fun online quizzes so that the public can put their knowledge of what we have posted to the test. Having these quizzes will evoke a sense of excitement because there are attractive prizes to be won. We emailed CAS and requested for them to sponsor us their merchandise as prizes for our quiz initiative. Fortunately, CAS had sufficient stock available and was also willing and happy to help us! Our first prize was a CAS tote bag, the second and third prizes were CAS post it pads and our fourth and fifth prizes were CAS key holders. Therefore, the public will be more motivated and willing to learn about our cause.



Finally, we have our donation drive created by us through the giving.sg website to encourage people to donate to our cause. It serves as a replacement for the fundraiser we wanted to do earlier and all proceeds will immediately go to CAS. We have in total raised \$2178, exceeding our initial target of \$2000.

The screenshot shows a donation drive page on the giving.sg website. On the left is a large image of a small, brown and black puppy with a pink collar, sitting on a sandy surface. In the bottom left corner of the image is the logo for 'Causes for Animals Singapore'. To the right of the image, the title 'Support the Rehabilitation and Rehoming of Strays' is displayed in bold black text. Below the title is a red heart icon with a white question mark, followed by the text 'by Project_Apetionate for Causes For Animals (Singapore) Limited'. Below this are four circular icons: a left arrow, a share icon, a refresh icon, and a close icon. The amount '\$2,178' is shown in large black text, with 'raised from 26 donors' in smaller text below it. A progress bar shows '100% of \$2,000' and '75 more days'. Below the progress bar is a purple button labeled 'Donate Today'. Underneath the button is a tax icon and the text 'TDR will be issued for donations of \$10 and above.'. At the bottom of the page is a teal button with a white heart icon and the text 'DONATE TODAY'.

3 REFLECTION

The 5 ways we conducted our reflection were as a team, after each evaluation, after each initiative, gaining feedback and questioning respectively. A crucial component is reflecting as a team as it allows us to all share our views and improve not just individually, but as a whole. We also did it after each evaluation so as to improve based on the evaluators' comments. Furthermore, reflection was done after each initiative because we would need to constantly question ourselves how we can target and encourage a wider community. Fourthly, it is to gain feedback. Gaining feedback is important as we can get to understand the views of others and thus improve and make changes accordingly to appeal to more people's opinions. Last but not least, it is to seek help and question our mentor/CAS to be clearer about certain ideas better and also to make better decisions.

3.1 Group Reflection

Our objective is to raise awareness to the wider community and raise funds for CAS to rescue and maintain rescued animals. Project Apetionate acts as a platform for us to carry out meaningful activities such as the quiz, weekly info posters and the fundraiser which both spreads the awareness of pet abandonment and adoption as well as helping out our beneficiary financially by raising \$2178 for them during this difficult time. Throughout this project, we have been able to gain popularity and garner support for our cause and many people have also learnt more about pet abandonment and adoption as seen from our quiz where most people scored above 10 points out of 14. This shows how our project was able to serve as a reminder to the community that pet abandonment and adoption is still a problem in society and we should not ignore this problem despite the stricter laws and measures put in place to support these pets. There are many areas of improvements if we reflect deeply and scrutinise what can be

further improved. However, we feel the key things we will do differently in the future will be firstly, to cooperate with different beneficiaries in the beginning to ensure that if one beneficiary is unable to support us through carrying out the project, there will still be alternatives that we can turn to. Secondly, another thing to improve on is probably to come up with an alternate plan in case the situation changes. For example, in the beginning, we focused on coming up with plans that we will do without Covid-19 and barely considered the worst possible scenario where we will not be able to interact physically with the community, resulting in a short delay of the implementation of our online initiatives.

3.2 Individual Reflection

Jordan Chung - Personally, I feel that my perception of the entire project (whether it is about pet abandonment and adoption issues or about animals shelters) has been remodeled greatly before and after the participation of Project Apetionate. At first, I used to care little about such problems of pet abandonment cases and felt that they were just a minor issue in society. Even though I felt anger towards people who mistreated them, I never actually bothered to do anything about it. It was this year, where I was given an opportunity to do a service learning project that I came to realise how major this issue is now. And it was all due to my pure love for those poor animals and passion to do something about this. Hence, I expressed my desire to raise awareness to the public and felt rather accomplished that we as a team have at least played our part. Next, I used to think that animal shelters are nothing but just shelters for the pets to get what they need to survive. However, after I looked from another perspective in terms of the rescued animals, I came to realise that these “animal shelters” that I have once thought of as “nothing” are seen as heroes and saviours to the poor abandoned animals as those were the places the animals saw as their “shelter” and a place where they will be given care and love. Thus, I will, in future, try to continue

raising awareness and also try to help these animal shelters, whether it is financially (donation) or physically (volunteering).

Jack Zhong - I feel that this project has furthered my understanding of animal shelters. I have realised that there is actually a huge problem of pet abandonment and that many people are in the dark about this. This project has also made me view the animal shelters in a different light. I have come to realise the difficulty of the work that animal shelters have to do to ensure the health and well being of the animals. This project has made me more sympathetic to the abandoned and stray animals which I used to just ignore. In the future, I will volunteer and help out in animal shelters as well as make donations.

Jayden Sng - Before the project, I thought animal shelters (particularly CAS) were just normal. They rescue abandoned pets and give it whatever care they need. I didn't think too much of it. But now, after the project, I realised that these shelters do more than just rescue and care. They feed strays and conduct education programmes and non-profit shelters like CAS constantly require funds to be maintained. This made me realise that these shelters are not always smooth-sailing and constantly need us, the public, to play our part and help out. In the future, I will be more sympathetic with these animals at the shelter and try to help out as much as I can through donations or by volunteering.

Lau Guan Jun - In the beginning, we created this group because each one of us loves animals and decided to work on this cause because all of us felt that this issue should be addressed as pets should not feel that much pain when looked after by an owner. Before we embarked on this project together, I was the type of person who just loved animals but did not really do anything to support any causes. Because of this, after I learnt that we could do an SL project as a secondary 2 student, I immediately decided to work on this SL project as I wanted to help those animals in need. At first, I

always thought any animal shelters were just to take care of unwanted pets and nothing else. After working with CAS and researching more on the topic, I realised that animal shelters actually go above and beyond their goals by rescuing helpless animals and also convincing the government to implement harsher laws to protect these animals. With these new lessons learnt, I found new respect for animal shelters and I will be sure to help them out in future events.

4 REFERENCES

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