

Jackson's *Hearts to Home* Journey  
with Second Chance Pet Adoptions  
Proposal

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## Introduction

Stories are designed to connect organizations with stakeholders. “Storytelling is part of our being – our anthropological make-up. It’s been around longer than spoken or written language” (Sledzik, 2018). I plan to utilize the art and science of storytelling to inform, persuade, inspire and motivate Second Chance Pet Adoptions’ target publics for their new program, *Hearts to Home*.

This paper is broken down into two parts. Part One will map out the strategy for Second Chance Pet Adoptions, including their situation analysis, identifying their target publics and proposing objectives, key messages and media channels. Part Two summarizes the story strategy and highlights the science behind storytelling—the character arcs. Also in Part Two is the full story of Jackson’s *Hearts to Home* Journey with Second Chance Pet Adoptions, the story angles behind it and how I propose presenting this story to the media and target publics.

## Part One: The Story Strategy

### **Situational Analysis**

In 1987, three women, Cheri Sowter, Deborah Ruggero, and Judy Benrud dedicated their lives to helping homeless animals in the Triangle” (Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill, North Carolina area). It all started when they would see stray animals trying to survive on the streets of Raleigh and decided to do something about it. They began to “foster” stray cats and dogs (Second Chance Pet Adoptions “About Us”).

According to the 2015 Public Animal Shelter Report, released by the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA&CS), shelters across the state euthanized approximately 36,226 dogs and 68,514 cats in 2015. In Wake County alone, dogs were euthanized at a percentage of 16.8 and cats were euthanized at a percentage of 34.9 (NCAGR).

As the number of animals increased, many of them sickly, Second Chance knew these animals would need proper health care if they were to ever be adopted. Judy and Cheri had a connection to The College of Veterinary Medicine at North Carolina State University, where some veterinarians and veterinary students were able to donate their time and services to care for the animals (Second Chance Pet Adoptions “About Us”). This gave Second Chance the resources they needed to care for the health and well being of these strays.

However, North Carolina still gets its share of winter weather, and these animals couldn't stay outdoors all year long. In 1989, as Second Chance blossomed, they decided to become a non-profit 501 (c) (3) rescue organization. After that, Second Chance leased a building to house and care for these loveable animals. Volunteers were then recruited to care for the animals and help screen applicants of people wishing to adopt. Other volunteers began fostering animals, raising funds, and introducing rescued animals to potential permanent homes (Second Chance

Pet Adoptions “About Us”). It is through the word-of-mouth of three animal-loving women that Second Chance has become what it is today, thirty years later.

As the oldest no-kill animal shelter rescue organization in the Triangle, “Second Chance makes a lifetime commitment to each of the animals it rescues, retaining the option of taking them back in the event the new home cannot keep them” (Second Chance Pet Adoptions “About Us”).

Second Chance Pet Adoptions is located in Wake County. In 2017, 130 dogs and 170 cats were rescued. Second Chance Pet Adoptions has rescued an estimated 12,000 animals since their inception. Over the past 3 years, they have averaged 148 dogs and 302 cats adopted per year. Of their \$450,000 annual budget, all from donations, about 10 percent goes to support fundraising and promotional efforts. Second Chance also has 300 active volunteers (Adock).

Last year, Second Chance Pet Adoptions launched a new program called *Hearts to Home*. It is an transport program that rescues animals from overcrowded shelters in the south and drives them to shelters in northern states where space is available.

Megan Adcock runs the *Hearts to Home* transport program and has built relationships with local and remote rescue groups. She has helped over 300 dogs find homes outside the Triangle area. The role of volunteers in the *Hearts to Home* transport operation is critical and recruiting these volunteers is key to its success. Second Chance Pet Adoptions' first transfer was this past December. A walker coonhound made the trip and was placed almost immediately with its adoptive forever family. Also transported was an adorable litter of puppies that took over two separate trips to complete. (Second Chance Pet Adoptions “Volunteer E-Newsletter”).

Second Chance will formally introduce the *Hearts to Home* program at its Open House on March 25, 2018, along with plans to begin transporting cats later this year. However, the

program wouldn't be possible without volunteer fosters and drivers. The *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program is a large program that takes much coordination and time to complete. Second Chance plans to also focus on an outreach program to increase its volunteer numbers in helping these animals travel to empty but adequate shelters up north (Second Chance Pet Adoptions "Volunteer E-Newsletter"). While Second Chance has only just begun partnering with this program, it is looking forward to saving 150 or more animals this year thanks to its animal-loving volunteers and donors. However, this can't be done without the assistance of more volunteer fosters, drivers and donations.

### **Target Publics**

- Volunteers of other shelters across the East Coast: Current volunteers are guaranteed animal lovers/owners who already donate their time and resources to ensuring the care of shelter animals. They are likely to either volunteer for the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program or know someone who would. Also, being located across the East Coast is vital for them to accept rescues in their available shelters. According to ASPCA, "significantly more women than men work in and also lead animal welfare organizations."
- Veterinarians who partner with animal shelters along the East Coast: According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, north of North Carolina, V.A., P.A., and N.Y. have the most veterinary clinics along the East Coast (BLS). If we are able to harness their resources, we could not only ensure the health of the animals being transported, but also gain more volunteers. The quest to build this broad network is a good one and lends itself to inexpensive social media channels.

- Shelter volunteers: Volunteers are animal lovers/owners who already donate their time and resources to ensuring the care of shelter animals. They are likely to either volunteer for the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program or know someone who would love to volunteer.
- Animal owners: People who own animals are different than people who just love animals, because their love for animals generates into action in order to help animals in need. Animal owners know of the hard work, dedication, care and patience required. These are the people who could possibly be open to fostering an animal for a short time for the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program. According to Pew Research, pet owners are more women than men; more white than any other race; and the largest age group ranges from 30-49 year olds.
- Animal lovers: Animal lovers might want own an animal, but often have reasons they cannot. Some of these animal lovers would jump at a chance to pet a stranger's dog or cat just because it brings them joy. They may be open to fostering pets or driving for the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program. As animal lovers, they also are more likely to donate and/or share information about the cause.

## **Objectives**

- Recruit 10 more volunteers to foster and drive for the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program before May 2018.
- Rescue 2-5 animals per week for the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program from April until December 2018.

## Key Messages

1. In 2016, North Carolina county shelters were forced to euthanize over 3,500 dogs and 8,500 cats, owing to a lack of space and resources to board stray and abandoned animals.
2. Without enough adequate space, it makes the mission of Second Chance Pet Adoptions, the Triangle's oldest no-kill animal shelter, heartbreakingly difficult.
3. Second Chance has found the solution with its *Hearts to Home* program, which transports these animals from overcrowded southern states to northern states with more space in their shelters.
4. To do this, these animals need volunteers who are able to short-term foster while awaiting transfer and who are able to drive a short leg of the overall life-saving journey for the *Hearts to Home* program.
5. To volunteer and/or donate and help make the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program possible, please visit [www.secondchancenc.org](http://www.secondchancenc.org) and/or email [h2h@secondchancenc.org](mailto:h2h@secondchancenc.org).

## Media Channels

- Local/Regional News: WRAL, WNCN, ABC11, WRDC
- Social Media: Instagram, Facebook
- Internet: Website Blog, YouTube, E-Newsletter

## Part Two: The Story Plan

### Story Strategy Summary

In 1989, Second Chance Pet Adoptions became a non-profit 501 (c) (3) rescue organization. Since then, Second Chance has flourished in helping to house and care for these loveable animals while they find their forever homes (Second Chance Pet Adoptions “About Us”).

At the end of last year, Second Chance Pet Adoptions launched a new program called *Hearts to Home*, which transports animals from overcrowded shelters in the south and drives them to much emptier shelters in northern states as a solution. To transport these dogs short-term fosters, who house animals awaiting transfer, and many drivers, who each volunteer for a short leg of the overall life-saving journey, are relied upon. The role of these volunteers is critical to the project, as foster parents welcome the animal into their home for 2-4 weeks, during which time the animal will receive any necessary medical care and then be delivered to the next transport location until its final destination. The *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program is an important and effective strategy to reduce overpopulation in our area while providing adoptable animals to areas where the supply does not meet the demand.

### Characters

- The Victim: Jackson, a 2-year-old bulldog mix. Unfortunately, potential adopters have overlooked him time and again during his long duration at the Franklin County Animal Shelter.
- The Hero: Second Chance volunteer, Megan Adock, who found him Jackson at Franklin County Animal Shelter and pulled him out.

- The Mentor: Second Chance's *Hearts to Home* program that fostered him for a week before sending him to one of their partner rescue organizations in Maryland.
- The Threshold Guardian: Franklin County Animal Shelter. While the shelter volunteers tried their best to find Jackson a forever home, it just wasn't the right place for him. He needed to overcome his stay there because potential adopters overlooked him for so long.
- The Herald: The foster and driver volunteers. Thanks to them, Jackson made the trip up to a less-crowded shelter in Maryland.
- The Shadow/Villain: The possibility of euthanization. Will Jackson have better luck getting adopted in Maryland or will potential adopters overlook him, again forcing the shelter to euthanize him?
- The Allies: Second Chance Pet Adoptions shelter and the partner rescue shelter, The SPCA of Anne Arundel County in Maryland. Thanks to their alliance, Jackson's future is looking brighter than ever.

## **Presenting the Story**

### **Narrative Through Photography vs. Videography**

The story of Jackson is a great narrative that can be used as a template to tell many similar stories of dogs and cats rescued and transported to their forever homes. This narrative works best in video format.

A recent study, published in the *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare*, in the UK took 735 people and had them view a video and photos of four shelter dogs: "Two were Staffordshire Terriers, representing dogs who are usually more difficult to find homes for, and the other two were a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel mix and a Poodle, representing a type of dog usually in

high demand” (Maddie’s Fund, 2017). The study found that “viewing dogs in videos as opposed to photographs tended to improve participants’ perception of the dog’s behavioral traits. Dogs viewed via video were considered to be more trainable, intelligent, friendly, and gentle and less dominant, aggressive, and unsociable than when they were viewed via photograph” (Maddie’s Fund, 2017). The study didn’t track adoption rates or analyze the qualities of an effective video. The research was based off of “how people’s impressions of the dogs were influenced by whether they viewed them in still photos or video” (Maddie’s Fund, 2017). However, this study still shows one of the most effective formats for animal shelters to utilize.

### **Traditional vs. Non Traditional Media Channels**

In 2010, according to Pew Research, “a third (34%) of the public say they went online for news yesterday,” yet “[m]ore than a third (36%) of Americans say they got news from both digital and traditional sources yesterday, just shy of the number who relied solely on traditional sources (39%).” Therefore, telling this story through traditional news on television as a feature story is still worth the reach.

The local and regional news stations I plan to have feature Jackson’s story are:

- WRAL,
- WNCN,
- ABC11 and
- WRDC.

## **Social Media Channels**

Social media is a great way to reach people in the area that want to foster or drive for the *Hearts to Home* program, but just don't know about it. It's also a great opportunity for followers to share and like the short clips Second Chance posts, which will expand the reach of viewers.

- YouTube: I would spotlight a full-length video of Jackson's story on Second Chance Pet Adoptions' YouTube page. YouTube is owned by Google, which offers nonprofit marketing through videos. This allows nonprofits to promote their stories on YouTube and gives viewers easy access to donate to a cause (Google For Nonprofits). YouTube also offers YouTube Space, where a team from Google's YouTube helps teach nonprofits how to create compelling videos as well as offer state-of-the-art videography equipment for nonprofits to utilize (YouTube Space).
- Instagram: I would tell Jackson's story in short clips for Instagram. Instagram is great for posting photography and videography content. Second Chance Pet Adoptions has over 1,000 followers on Instagram.
- Facebook: I would also tell Jackson's story in short clips for Facebook. A majority of shelter animals are found and adopted thanks to the massive reach Facebook can offer, and a majority of shelter volunteers also use Facebook to communicate and coordinate rescues and adoptions. Megan Adock uses specific Facebook pages and groups to reach out to potential volunteer fosters and drivers for the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program. There are currently almost 200 members for the *Hearts to Home* Facebook group invite-only page. Second Chance Pet Adoptions has over 7,000 followers on Facebook.

- Live Streaming: Another great way to utilize Facebook is to live stream a journey like Jackson's. Live streaming "can help you connect with your prospects and community in a whole new way, making your brand more real, more relatable and more accessible" (Olenski, 2015). Live streaming will not only tell the world of Jackson's story or a similar story, but allow *Hearts to Home* to educate people about the program and how more fosters, drivers and donations are needed to rescue more animals (Olenski, 2015). Live streaming offers "rich, tangible content that's highly desirable and a lot of fun to peruse, not to mention very informative" (Olenski, 2015). Live streaming isn't only great to reach those 7,000-plus followers, but also to interact with them in real time, giving a more personal touch.

### **Website Blog**

For those who appreciate traditional print, I would post Jackson's story on Second Chance Pet Adoptions' website blog. In this format, we would be able to post the full-length story of Jackson with clear and concise subheadlines as well as a combination of photos, videos, and links. For example, I would link the Franklin County Animal Shelter in North Carolina and the The SPCA of Anne Arundel County in Maryland.

### **E-Newsletter**

The e-newsletter would be great for reaching out to the over 300 active volunteers who are more likely to take action and foster or drive for the *Hearts to Home* program than just to donate. We would be able to directly reach those who already generate action from their love for animals, whether that be volunteering time or donating money. In this format, I would also post

the full-length story of Jackson with clear and concise subheadlines as well as a combination of photos, videos, and links.

### **Most Effective Earned Media Channels**

The most effective earned media channels are online through Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. You've gained your audience's trust and interest with the content you consistently post. Sharing Jackson's story through this earned media channel will only solidify that relationship and expand your outreach.

### **Piquing the Interest of Media Gatekeepers**

Media gatekeepers would be interested in Jackson's story and similar stories because it draws emotion and a sense of suspense from the audience. It is a "feel good" story to improve community relations.

The strategy to sell this story to media gatekeepers is to present this as a feature release and not as a press release. Tom Foremski from Silicon Valley Watcher offers great advice about sending journalists information and stories. He suggests to provide a brief description of the announcement content, to provide a list of quotes from each speaker and to provide multiple links to other news stories and reference sources. The strategy is to make this feature story easy to read and break down if the journalist wishes to give it their own spin.

### **Narrative Arc and Plot Points**

#### Jackson's *Hearts to Home* Journey with Second Chance Pet Adoptions

**Exposition:** Jackson, a 2-year-old bulldog mix, sits in a cage with another dog inside the Franklin County animal shelter, wagging his tail as he happily waits for a family to stop by and say hello. Jackson was a stray found wandering the streets during the hot summer. There is no air

conditioning in the row of overcrowded cages as young families with giggling children walk through deciding on a dog to adopt and welcome into their family. A young boy stops by Jackson's cage. Jackson jumps up on the door, his tail wagging rapidly as slobber drips down the side of his goofy grin. A mother pulls the boy away. "Not this one," she says.

**Rising Action:** It is now Christmas time. Snow has not yet fallen in North Carolina, but Jackson shivers in his cage as cold air leaks through the concrete walls and floors. On December 21, a couple stops by his cage. Jackson lifts his head off the freezing floor. Is this his time? Are the days of being overlooked again and again finally over? The couple smiles as they take him home. He shakes in the car ride to their house. He doesn't like cars.

Once they let him out of the car, he sees a vast lawn of crunchy yellow grass. He runs around in circles, sniffing all the new places to explore! The man yells his name, "Jackson! Get over here!" Jackson comes running to his new family up the front porch. Two small children are standing by the door, watching wide-eyed. Two new playmates! Jackson runs up to them, sniffing and licking their faces. One child doesn't say anything while the other screams, "I don't want it!" "Jackson is your Christmas present, boys! He's now a part of our family," the woman says.

Plot Point 1: Christmas passes. One child ignores Jackson and one kicks him. The couple bickers before deciding on December 28 that Jackson isn't right for their family. Back in the scary car Jackson goes. He whimpers as he watching the trees pass by in a blur.

Plot Point 2: Jackson has been returned to Franklin County's animal shelter. The volunteers there urge the couple to not return him. They are overcrowded with dogs here and don't have the space for him anymore. Jackson is put back into a cage he must share with two

other dogs. The animal shelter will, unfortunately, have to euthanize him if he's not adopted again soon.

Plot Point 3: Megan Adock has been an intake coordinator volunteer, pulling dogs out of overcrowded animal shelters, for four years. She recently joined Second Chance Pet Adoptions, Raleigh's oldest no-kill animal shelter, to start the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program. While scouring overcrowded shelters, Megan stumbles upon Jackson in the beginning of January. Jackson jumps up on the cage door to greet Megan, his tail wagging rapidly as slobber again drips down the side of his goofy grin. When Megan first sees Jackson, she immediately knows she needs to get him and some other dogs out of there before they're put down.



(Photo Credit to Second Chance Pet Adoptions "Hearts 2 Home Animal Transport"

Private Volunteer Facebook Page)

Plot Point 4: With the help of Second Chance Pet Adoptions, Megan has multiple resources and connections to help get Jackson to his forever home. Her friend Vicki Borowiak is in Maryland, where the supply for adoptable animals in shelters does not meet the demand. She was able to reach out to The SPCA of Anne Arundel County, Maryland, a confirmed 501 (c) 3 nonprofit and adoption center. Megan looks at their adoption contract to ensure the dogs will be in good hands and to see if they have similar adoption policies as Second Chance Pet Adoptions,

i.e., will they take the dog back if they have to?; will the dog be indoors?; will the dog be offered full care? Megan says, "If there's anything we question, we email so it's documented. Once that's good, we send them links to shelter Facebook pages, and they'll see what dogs are in need." The SPCA sees Jackson and asks Megan to test him for dog/cat friendliness.

Plot Point 5: The SPCA is interested in helping Jackson find his forever home. Now the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program is in full swing as Megan finds a volunteer foster, pulls Jackson out and sends him to that foster who will care for him for one week to ensure Jackson is healthy and able to make the journey up north to Maryland. Second Chance Pet Adoptions supplies the foster with all the stuff Jackson will need, i.e., food, a crate and a few toys. While Jackson is in foster care, Megan posts an announcement on social media that they're in need of drivers. She splits the drive up into different legs; sometimes, these journeys need up to 10 drivers, each for about 1 hour of the long trip. Followers will say they can take one or more legs of the journey.

Plot Point 6: During his time with the foster, Jackson visits the veterinarian to attain a health certificate stating he is healthy to be transported from state to state. Luckily, Franklin County's animal shelter has a volunteer veterinarian on staff, so Jackson is as healthy as can be. After the week is over, the foster meets the first volunteer driver at the meet spot. Jackson is nervous, but the volunteers bring him snacks, food, water, toys and blankets to make him comfortable for the long journey ahead. After each 1-2 hour leg, each driver stops to let Jackson relieve himself and get some fresh air. He's not sure where he's going, but all these volunteer drivers give him lots of cuddles, snacks and toys, helping him stay at ease in the scary car.

**Crisis:** The day of travel is over. Jackson has finally made it to The SPCA of Anne Arundel County animal shelter. The shelter has a few dogs and cats in crates. Jackson is put into

a large crate all to himself. Not only that, there's a blanket, a bowl of food and a bowl of water waiting for him. Jackson is neutered, making him more adoptable for families. The last volunteer driver for the *Hearts to Home* program speaks with the volunteers at The SPCA wondering how long it'll be before Jackson is adopted. "He's a really good dog," the driver says. "He deserves his forever home."

**Climax:** Two days pass by before a family with a boy walks up to Jackson's crate. The boy smiles at him telling his parents, "I want this one." Jackson's tail wags rapidly as slobber drips down the side of his goofy grin. Will he finally be adopted? Will this be his forever family? The mother laughs, "Look how happy he is. He seems like such a sweetheart." The family signs the paperwork to adopt Jackson. The volunteers at The SPCA tell his new family of Jackson's long journey to find a forever home thanks to the help of Second Chance Pet Adoptions' *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program.



(Photo Credit to Second Chance Pet Adoptions Volunteer E-Newsletter)

**Falling Action:** Jackson immediately fits in with his forever family and they fall in love with him. This isn't always the case as we saw with Jackson's first adoption, but it's animals like

Jackson that are in dire need of a forever home. Second Chance Pet Adoptions' *Hearts to Home* is a new animal transport program. The story of Jackson is one of many that Second Chance is hoping to reproduce for 144 more dogs this year, but it can't be done without the volunteer fosters and drivers that make these trips possible.

"This year," Megan says, "we're seeing shelters full of more dogs than cats." They would like to start rescuing cats with the *Hearts to Home* program, but are still in the beginning phases of growing the dog side of the program. Unfortunately, they are still not able to stop overcrowded county shelters from euthanizing healthy, adoptable dogs.

The whole budget for Second Chance Pet Adoptions and for the *Hearts to Home* program is funded only by donations. They are in need of a steady flow of volunteers. Right now, they fluctuate with only 10-15 foster families that care for animals for about 1-3 weeks, which Megan says, "we need to get more to save more. If we don't have a foster, we can't rescue the dog."

Megan was sent a picture of Jackson at a local pet store in the beginning of February, where he was outfitted with a new harness and bandanna. She was told by Jackson's new family, "Other shoppers were smitten with him." They brought him home in short order, affirming Second Chance Pet Adoptions' new transport program is a powerful way to give an animal a second chance.



(Photo Credit to Second Chance Pet Adoptions Volunteer E-Newsletter)

If you would like to volunteer as a foster or driver for the *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program, or donate, please email [h2h@secondchancenc.org](mailto:h2h@secondchancenc.org) or visit [www.secondchancenc.org](http://www.secondchancenc.org).

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### **Story Angles**

One specific story angle that will help me connect to stakeholder audiences a news media profile on Megan Adock and how she began the *Hearts to Home* program. Another specific story angle that will help me connect to stakeholder audiences is a story about a litter of rescued puppies by Second Chance Pet Adoptions and through the *Hearts to Home* program found their forever home hundreds of miles away.

I am hoping these story angles and others like them will connect with stakeholder audiences enough to create an action; whether that's just sharing the story, donating or actually volunteering, any of those options would be great for Second Chance Pet Adoptions and the *Hearts to Home* program.

## Conclusion

The story of Jackson is one of many similar narratives that Second Chance Pet Adoptions can use to reach and to influence its target publics. Through the art and science of sharing Jackson's *Hearts to Home* story, especially in video format, I plan to inform, persuade, inspire and motivate Second Chance Pet Adoptions' target publics to donate their time and/or money for the new *Hearts to Home* Animal Transport program.

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