Activity X: 
Overview: Students read stories about animals who have become homeless due to some of the most common reasons for relinquishment at animal adoption centers. They will then consider what could have been done differently to prevent the animals from losing their homes.

Procedure:

Introduction
1. Ask the students if they know where animals at adoption centers come from. Possible answers:
   - They are found on the street.
   - They were abused or neglected in their homes and were taken away for their safety.
   - People moved and did not take the animals with them.
   - People did not like how the animals behaved.
   - People decided that they did not have time for their animals.
   - People did not want the animals anymore.
2. Tell the students that animal adoption centers do their best to take good care of the animals and find them good homes. Explain that what adoption centers really hope for is that when people adopt animals, they will keep them forever, be responsible guardians, and provide them with everything they need to be happy and healthy. Add that sometimes unexpected circumstances might make it difficult or impossible for people to keep their animals anymore, in which case it is better to bring the animals to an adoption center than to leave them alone or on the street or give them away to strangers. However, many of the reasons people do not keep their animals could be avoided.

Homeless Animal Stories
1. Ask student volunteers to read each homeless animal story.
2. Ask the questions from the Homeless Animal Follow-Up Question Guide.
3. As students answer the questions and identify ways to prevent animal homelessness, you can write the solutions on the board.

Wrap Up:
1. Ask the students what can be done to prevent animal homelessness based on what they learned from the stories. Possible answers:
   - Think ahead before adopting.
   - Give animals ID tags/microchips.
   - Spay/Neuter.

Activity 2: Helping Homeless Animals

Overview: Students read stories about animals who have become homeless due to some of the most common reasons for relinquishment at animal adoption centers. They will then consider what could have been done differently to prevent the animals from losing their homes.

Procedure:

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1. Ask the students if they know where animals at adoption centers come from. Possible answers:
   - They are found on the street.
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   - People moved and did not take the animals with them.
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Homeless Animal Stories
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   - Think ahead before adopting.
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Inside Tips

- The homeless animal stories provided are fictional stories based on some of the most common reasons for animal homelessness and relinquishment.
- Instead of asking the students to read all the stories as one activity, you could read a few stories over the course of a few periods.
- To help the other students follow along with the story, you can provide each student with a copy of the stories or have the stories projected on a power point and save paper.
- Consider breaking the students up into small groups to read and answer the questions, and then share out loud.

Classroom Teachers

- As an extension activity, you could have the students choose one of the stories and write an additional paragraph about what the animal’s life is like now, after being adopted into a new forever home.
- As an extension activity, you could have the students draw one of the stories, but change the story so that the family provides the animal with what s/he needs so they keep their companion and the animal is happy and healthy.

Outside Humane Educators

- If you are not able to provide copies of the stories to each student or project the stories on a power point, you might consider reading the stories to the students yourself.

Activity 2: Helping Homeless Animals (continued)

- People should only have animals as companions, not to use them.
- Research the qualities you want in animals before adopting them.
- Understand and accept the animals’ natural behaviors before adopting them.
- Provide for the animals’ needs, like scratching posts for cats and toys for dogs.
- Make sure that you know how to train an animal humanely and that you have the time to devote to the animal.
- Plan to keep an animal for his/her whole life and really think about how long s/he is going to live.

2. Ask the students what they learned about adopting an animal and what they will think about before adopting an animal when they are older. Allow students to respond.
Homeless Animals Stories

Story 1: Lilly’s Story
Hi, my name is Lilly and I lived with a wonderful family. My family let me run all around the neighborhood. I thought it was fun at first, but then I did not recognize anything around me and I became scared. I did not know how to get back to my home. A nice person picked me up and fed me. He brought me to an animal adoption center. The adoption center wanted to find my family but did not know where to look. I tried to tell people, but they did not understand my barking. I never saw my family again.

Story 2: Olive’s Story
My family named me Olive and used to play with me all the time. I really liked to curl up on their laps and purr while they pet me. One day I noticed all these boxes and they were packing up all their things. In the middle of their packing they put me in a cat carrier and drove me to a place with lots of other animals. I heard them talking to a man saying that they were moving and they could not bring me with them. I didn’t understand why they didn’t want me to move with them. Now I am waiting for a new home.

Story 3: Bronx’s Story
When my family first brought me home they named me Bronx and I thought they would keep me forever. I loved them so much that I always wanted to be with them. I jumped up on them when they came home and I begged for food at the table. When I was left alone I sometimes chewed things because I was bored and I sometimes went to the bathroom on the floor because I did not know any better. My family became upset with me and gave me away.
Story 4: Benny’s Story
My family thought I was a cute boy and called me Benny. When they first saw me they said I was the sweetest cat they ever met. I think it is fun to scratch. I actually have a need to scratch; it is part of who I am. They didn’t like how I scratched their furniture and they decided that they didn’t want me anymore. They brought me to an animal adoption center and said that I was too much work. I hope that another family will want me and understand my need to scratch. I do not know where my family members are, but they left and they did not bring me with them.

Story 5: Peanut’s Story
My family picked me because I was small and cute and they named me Peanut. After a few months they got tired of my personality and brought me to an animal shelter. I was really excited all the time. I jumped high, played in the yard a lot and wanted to go for long walks. They said they did not have time for me and that I had too much energy. I am so sad and now I am waiting for a new family.

Story 6: Juniper’s Story
When I was little my brothers and sisters were put in a box with a sign that said, “Free to a good home.” I hoped that a nice person would give me a loving home. Instead, a man walked by, grabbed me, and said that he thought I would make a good guard dog. He chained me up in the backyard and I lived there for three years. He threw food scraps at me and gave me water, but it would sit for days at a time and it tasted bad. I was lonely and scared all the time. One day a different man came by. He talked to me in a gentle voice and he took me off the chain. He brought me to a place with kind people who cleaned me, fed me good food and gave me clean water. They also gave me a toy and a name, Juniper, something I never had before. Now I am waiting for my new forever home.
Homeless Animal Stories: Follow-Up Question Guide (page 1)

Story 1: Lilly
- How did Lilly get to the animal adoption center?
  Answer: Her family let her run all around the neighborhood and someone found her on the street.
- What could the family have done differently?
  Answer: It was not safe to let her run around by herself. They should have had her on a leash.
- What else could the family have done to make it easier for someone to locate her family?
  Answer: The family could have put an I.D. tag on her collar and microchipped her.  
  Note: Explain what a microchip is in case the students do not know.

Story 2: Olive
- How do you feel about the fact that the family left Olive?
  Allow for responses.
- How do you think Olive felt about being given away?
  Allow for responses.
- Why do you think they couldn’t take Olive with them?
  Possible answers:
  - They moved to a place that does not allow animals.
  - They were moving far away and they didn’t think she would like the long trip.
  - They thought it would be too hard to move all their stuff and Olive at the same time.
- What could the family do to keep her?
  Possible answers:
  - They could do more research and find a place to live that allows animals. There are a lot of places that are pet-friendly.
  - They could ask the veterinarian for advice about how to make Olive comfortable during a long trip.
  - They could ask a friend to watch Olive until they moved all their stuff and then could come back to get her.

Story 3: Bronx
- What did Bronx do that the family did not like?
  Answers: Chewed things, went to the bathroom on the floor, begged for food at the table, and jumped up on people.
- Did Bronx know not to do those things?
  Answer: No.
- How would Bronx learn not to do those things?
  Answer: The family needed to make time to humanely train him.
Story 4: Benny

- What did Benny do that the family did not like?
  Answer: He scratched the furniture.

- Is scratching a natural behavior for a cat?
  Answer: Yes, it is something cats need to do.

- What could the family do to protect the furniture, but still let Benny scratch?
  Answers:
  - They could put a protective plastic cover over the furniture.
  - They could try getting a scratching post and put it in front of the places he likes to scratch.
  - They could consider adopting a different species if they are that concerned about their furniture.

Note: It is important to add that the post may help, but it may not prevent cats from scratching the furniture altogether.

Story 5: Peanut

- Why did the family choose Peanut?
  Answer: He was small and cute.

- Does anyone know what type of dog Peanut is?
  Answer: He is a Jack Russell Terrier mix.

- Should you choose your friends based on how they look on the outside or inside?
  Answer: Inside. The same is true for your animals.

While we do not want to stereotype dogs since each one is an individual, Jack Russell Terriers tend to be very high energy dogs. They usually need someone who wants to take them out for jogs and play ball for a while. Before adopting an animal, think about the qualities you are looking for in a companion and the time you can devote to the animal. Tell the adoption staff what you are looking for in a companion and ask them to help you find a perfect match.
Story 6: Juniper

- **What happened to Juniper?**
  Answer: Allow students to summarize.

- **How could this have been prevented?**
  Possible answers:
  - It is important to know why people want animals, so we should not just give them away for free to anyone.
  - The person who had Juniper’s mom could have spayed her and the person who had Juniper’s dad could have neutered him.
  - If someone noticed that Juniper was chained in the backyard sooner, she would not have had to live chained up for three years.

- **How is this story different from the other stories?**
  Possible answers:
  - The other families either lost their animals or gave them up (even though they could have done things differently to give the animals better lives). However, this person was not giving Juniper what she needed, but he wanted her anyway. Someone else had to come to rescue her.

- In the other stories, it would have been best for the animal if the family did something differently and kept the animal. In this story what was best was that Juniper was rescued and adopted into a new home.

- **If you see an animal being neglected or abused what should you do?**
  Answer: We should tell a trusted adult so that s/he can inform the proper authorities.

**Note:** Provide your students with the proper numbers of the local authorities in the area that should be notified of animal abuse or animal neglect. Let them know that they can call anonymously.

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