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America's #1 Companion Gets Respect The CATalyst 2009 Top 10 Cat-Friendly Cities

(PHOENIX, American Animal Hospital Association Conference – March 27, 2009) – What makes a cat-friendly city? The love and care cats receive, says the CATalyst Council. Today, the recently formed organization is set to raise the stature of America's number one companion, the cat, by announcing the CATalyst 2009 Top 10 Cat-Friendly Cities. The CATalyst Council, a coalition of the veterinary community, academia, nonprofits, industry and animal welfare organizations, hopes to call attention to how much the cat is loved and cared for in these cities, and set the bar for other cities to follow in the annual rankings. The cities named include Tampa, Phoenix, San Francisco, Portland (Ore.), Denver, Boston, Seattle, San Diego, Atlanta and Minneapolis. The list was compiled after reviewing the top 25 standard metropolitan areas for such data as cat ownership per capita, level of veterinary care, microchipping and cat-friendly local ordinances. The CATalyst Council hopes to include shelter data in the 2010 list.

"Cats really are America's number one companion," said Dan Kramer, senior marketing manager of industry relations for Pfizer Animal Health and chair of the CATalyst Council. "Our goal is to recognize and celebrate why cats are such popular companions. We applaud the efforts of these major metropolitan areas for providing a wealth of resources for cats and their owners along with their earned accolade of being one of America's Top 10 Cat-Friendly Cities."

The CATalyst Council also noted for honorable mention, Ithaca, N.Y., home of the Cornell Feline Health Center, which educates the public about felines and their health. Education is key in understanding cats. By and large, each community has the tools and resources to properly care for cats. Too often, though, cats can hide symptoms so owners do not realize any health problems exist. This makes it even more important for cat owners to visit a veterinarian on a regular basis because many of these illnesses are preventable.

"Cats outnumber dogs by nearly 10 million among the pet-owning public. This list clearly shows cats are loved by many," said Steve Dale spokesperson and a CATalyst Council board member. "However, in my work as a journalist, I've spoken with animal control officials, welfare organizations and veterinarians across the country and often hear that cats are more likely to be neglected than dogs, more likely to wind up in shelters and less likely to be seen by veterinarians. Obviously there is room for the nation to improve the overall status and care of cats, but these cities are overcoming the current standard."

Dogs have long been called man's best friend. Recent data suggests that cats truly are America's number one companion. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association's *2007 U.S. Pet Ownership & Demographics Sourcebook*, the number of cats owned (81.7 million) outnumbers that of canines (72 million) by nearly 10 million among the pet-owning public. In addition to the rise in cat population, the AVMA reported cat visits to the veterinarian fell some 11 percent between 2001 and 2006. A 2006 survey by the Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA) also showed that overcrowded animal shelters are seeing more cats given up than their canine cousins.

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“There is a higher number of cats than dogs surrendered to shelters nationwide, increasingly so in these economic times of financial strain and home foreclosures,” said Jan McHugh-Smith, Society of Animal Welfare Administrators (SAWA) secretary, president of the San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) and CATalyst Council board member. “We are eager to showcase these cities that demonstrate outstanding compassion and resources for cats and their owners in order to elevate the status of the cat.”

The CATalyst Council is also continuing its outreach to educate the public and the veterinary industry through the *It's All About the Cat* campaign. Initiated by the CATalyst Council, the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) and the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) are partnering to develop feline life-stage wellness guidelines for veterinary professionals. The Winn Feline Foundation will coordinate the writing of a consumer version of the guidelines with the assistance of writers on its media committee. Once adopted, the CATalyst Council will work with other animal organizations to share this information with consumers.

“We are reaching out to all parties – the pet healthcare community, shelter and welfare organizations, government and the public – to ensure that cats receive the proper care and attention they need and deserve,” said Dr. Jane E. Brunt, executive director of the CATalyst Council. “It truly is all about the cat.”

About the CATalyst Council

The 2009 CATalyst Council board of directors includes: Dr. Jane E. Brunt as executive director; Dan Kramer, senior marketing manager of industry relations, Pfizer Animal Health, as chair; Robert Rohde, president, Dumb Friends League, as vice chair; Dr. Alexis Nahama, vice president of marketing, VCA Animal Hospitals, as secretary; and Dr. Karen Felsted, chief executive officer, National Commission on Veterinary Economic Issues, as treasurer. Other board members include: Dr. Anna Worth, American Animal Hospital Association; Dr. Christine Jenkins, Hill's Pet Nutrition, Inc.; Bill Lopez, Merial; Jim Flanigan, American Veterinary Medical Association; Jan McHugh-Smith, Society of Animal Welfare Administrators; Dr. Diane Eigner, American Association of Feline Practitioners; Heidi Jeter, Morris Animal Foundation; and Steve Dale, nationally syndicated pet columnist and radio show host.

The CATalyst Council is a national initiative comprised of animal health and welfare organizations and corporations to champion the cat in light of troubling statistics released by the American Veterinary Medical Association that show an increase in the cat population coupled with a decline in veterinary visits for cats. For more information, visit www.catalystcouncil.org.

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