**Companions and Animals for Reform and Equity**

**Michael Blackwell, DVM, MPH, Director, Program for Pet Health Equity, University of Tennessee:**

>> Keeping the animal’s interest at heart,

looking out for its well-being,

protecting it even.

Yet wanting to get it in a home.

I think we must be very careful about where we go digging

to try to find a reason not to adopt.

That’s the key.

Are we looking

for reasons to adopt?

Versus reasons not to adopt.

I think that philosophy

is important,

that the spirit of that is important. (00:00:30

If a person is motivated to go to the shelter to find

a pet to bring into their family

most of those people

are not doing it with ill intent.

There is a serious interest in finding a family member.

I believe sheltering industry

should be about facilitating those new relationships. (00:01:00)

Facilitating the relationship.

Not figuring out a way to

ensure that it will be perfect

and perfect for ever and ever ever.

Because nothing operates that way.

**Zach Skow- Marley’s Mutts**

>> The burden of proof should be the other way around.

People shouldn’t have to go into an adoptive scenario

with this horrific burden of proof

to show to whatever adoption agency

that they aren’t maniacs.

You know.

There should be a real,

it doesn’t provide a foundation for a loving exchange. (00:01:30)

It provides a foundation for a very confrontational exchange.

And you’re not going to see

the best of people

when you’re confronting them with this kind of like

implied suggestion that they may not be suitable.

**Blake Everett- Young-Williams Animal Center Adoption Specialist**

>>We need to trust in the goodness of people,

we need to have it in our mind when they come in the door

that just like us they’re a good person

trying to do the right thing

and give an animal the best home they possible can

and sometimes just need a little more education (00:02:00)

or maybe haven’t picked the right animal

and that is kind of where your job comes in.

But if you trust in the goodness of them

and trust that they’re wanting to do the right thing

then you’ll have a more positive interaction with them

and actually be able to impart

better advice to care for the animal.

They’ll care more about what you say

because you’re having a good interaction.

**Betsy McFarland- Principal, Adisa**

>> I really believe

the vast majority of people

who want a pet

and have a pet

actually care (00:02:30)

and want to do the right thing.

I think there’s always the exception

and there’s going to be jerks.

Just like in every walk of life,

there are people who aren’t nice to people,

there are people who aren’t nice to children

right?

There are just some

not so great people

but the vast majority of people

are really trying and actually care.

So sometimes

even if it may not look like the best situation

it may not mean that its wrong

it doesn’t mean that someone does care.

I think a lot of times it depends

on how someone grew up with animals

or if they haven’t had access to things some of us take for granted (00:03:00)

like vet care

and information about how to best care for an animal.

Sometimes people make mistakes

and it doesn’t mean that they don’t care

I think it’s up to us

as folks that work in the field

at shelters

and rescues

and spay and neuter clinics

to empower people

and provide what they need to help them do the best they can

for the animals that they care for.

So again

it comes back to what makes a good pet owner

is also what support are we providing to pet owners (00:03:30)

to help them be good pet owners.

All that they have to have is a desire to care for animal,

the rest we can teach them. (00:03:52)