Hi my name is Matthew Lawson and I am the Adoptions Manager for Young Williams Animal Center located in Knoxville, TN. We were so excited to hear that we had some winning strategies to help animals with long LOS find great homes.  
  
The great thing about these forums and networking groups is that we all have the same goals and mission, so in the spirit of sharing information (which I hope others will share their success stories as well); here are some of the tactics and techniques that we used to get these guys home:

* We launched a **Doggie Day Trip Program**. The purpose of Doggie Day Trips is to provide stress relief for long LOS animals while getting them exposure in the community. We have staff hand pick dogs that are showing signs of stress or that may need a break from the shelter and we employ the use of volunteers or members of the public who want to take our adoptable pets out to local spots such as parks, dog friendly restaurants etc. Some took the dogs home on rainy days to snuggle and watch movies. The dogs get a stress relief and the volunteers actively promote the adoptable dog while they are out.  
  + We provide each DDT bag with treats, a water bottle/bowl, a paper with great spots to take your buddy for the day, and also business cards where they can write the animals name and provide interested parties with directions to the shelter.
  + We also employ the use of DDT Outing forms to gather data on behavior and other traits that we can use to promote the animal.
* We launched a **Sleepover Program** to give adopters who are on the fence or worried about existing pets/family members the opportunity to have the dog in their home for a few days before finalizing. As many of our long LOS animals had minor behavior issues, this was an easy way to convince adopters to take a chance on a new pet.  
  + We had an initial goal of 125 sleepovers for the year but we exceeded that goal and ended up doing 288 with an approximate 80% success/adoption rate. The animals that returned came back with valuable information to help us find a better fit in the future.
* We took advantage of **social media, tv appearances, Instagram, Facebook**… YOU NAME IT. We also encouraged the public to like, comment and share our posts for enhanced awareness. Some of our best success stories came from telling a story and allowing the public to share.
* We **clicker trained our cats**! This was so fun and was a great way to get cats to interact with the public.
* We re-branded our **working cat program** with catchy signage and created new relationships by personally reaching out to farms and 4-h organizations
* For behavior dogs we implemented a **behavior check sheet that graduated the animal** up to “ready for adoption” status. Our behavior team came up with small steps and milestones that our kennel staff could implement to make the animal more adoptable while in their care.
* We even got a little radical in our **play groups by safely muzzling dogs that were rumored to be dog aggressive** and allowing them to interact in small controlled groups. Many of these dogs were not dog aggressive, they simply did not have the socialization skills that they needed to be successful. A good portion of these dogs had their “no other dogs in home” limitations lifted as long as there was a successful dog-to-dog meet and greet.

Thank you Maddie’s Fun for your support of our mission of “A Home For Every Pet”. The great thing about this challenge is that it inspired us to take a good look at our processes and find ways to be better. We are so thankful and also very excited to see what other shelters/organizations have done!

