Adoption Matchmaking Lesson and activity

What age is this activity appropriate for? Middle and high school students

Instructional Objectives:
- Students will be able to define key words such as, "adoption" and "buying".
- Students will be able to understand the varying needs of humans and animals when it comes to finding the perfect home.
- Additionally, students will understand the importance of conversation-based adoptions and asking questions, so we can identify and match shelter animals to the adopter that best fits their needs.

Introduction: (5 minutes):

While lots of exciting things happen at animal shelters, today we are going to be taking about the **best** and **most** exciting event that happens at animal shelters and Rescues…this is the event that everyone *hopes* will happen for *each* and *every* homeless animal. ADOPTIONS!

Ask: *Why do you think it is that animal shelters and rescues do not call it "buying" or "selling" an animal?* Take suggestions.

- It's because **pet adoption** is the process of taking guardianship of and
- responsibility for a pet where their previous human abandoned or released them to a shelter or rescue organization.
- The reason why "adoptions" are so exciting is because when you adopt a pet, you are not adding to the nation's pet overpopulation problem and you're saving **3 lives!**
  - o **1.** The animal you adopt
  - o **2.** Space is now available for that shelter to rescue another animal.
  - o Your adoption fee goes to providing care and resources for other

Ask: *Are all humans born exactly the same?* (No, we are different ages, ethnicities, color hair/eyes, heights, weights, personalities etc.)
Dogs and cats are the same way! They can be different shapes, sizes, and colors and have a wide variety of personalities too.

Ask: *Do you think some animals may get adopted more slowly than others? Why?*
- Yes! Some exmaples include:
  - o Senior animals, even though they are often playful, happy and trained. A lot of people usually want baby animals.
  - o Black-furred animals, especially big black dogs spend more time waiting for their new home than their lighter-colored animals because they'rer often considered less pretty or eye-catching.
  - o Certain breeds of dogs take longer to find homes due to stereotypes and how they are shown as aggressive on TV

Body: (10 -15 minutes)

One of the best parts of adopting an animal from an animal shelter or rescue is that the staff and volunteers at shelters and rescues work *very* hard to find the animals the best home possible for that particular animal. Today, you are going to be our staff who are helping animals find homes!

Ask: *How do you think our staff help the animals find the best homes for them?*

Mostly by getting to know the animals' personalities, and taking time to get to know the potential adopters too! We ask a lot of questions to our customers to help them find the best pet for them.

Ask: *What kinds of questions do you think we would ask potential adopters?*

All kinds!! Some examples include:
- How much time do they have to devote to a pet?
- How active is this family? Are they looking for a hiking buddy? Or a pet to snuggle on the couch with?
- Do they have other pets? Or kids (and what ages)?

Ask: *What do you think would happen if someone came in and they weren't a good fit for the animal they wanted to meet?*
We can talk through the animal's needs and what changes might need to happen for them to work together (if that's an option). We can also try to find another friend who could be a better match for them!

Read a couple of the animals' written bio's and prompt students with questions like:
- What do you think this animal is like?
- What can we tell this animal does and does not like?
- What kind of home may be best for him/her? Why?

Matchmaking Game! (15 -30 minutes)

Today, you are our staff who will help the adoptable animals find great homes! Now, you are going to have the chance to test out everything we just learned and your matchmaking skills!
Explain:

- We are dividing up into teams. Work together to decide what animals and adopters go together.
- Just like it's important that our staff are kind and respectful when speaking with adopters, it's important that you are kind and respectful speaking to each other during this activity.
- Today, we have 9 adoptable animals and 8 potential adopters.
- It is your job to match each animal with the best family.

- Remember that first impressions – or pictures in this case - aren't always what they seem and you must thoroughly read about each animal *and* family in order to match correctly.
- Also, tell the students to keep in mind that just like in the real world, there's a chance that not every adopter is ready for a pet.

Students have **10 minutes** to match make and then spend **5 minutes** going over the correct answers. You can make this longer if you have more time and they need extra time!

Answer Key:
1. #1(Richard) – Penny
2. #2 (Cozy Couch Couple)- Katya & Lubja
3. #3 (Jerry) – Toby & Max
4. #4(John & Jennifer) – Xenia
5. #5 (Ellie) – Sky
6. #6 (Adventurous Hiking family) – Maximus
7. #7 (Evan) - Chloe
8. #8 (Video Game Family) – Sasha

Discussion:
- What could you say to a friend that says, "I want to adopt a white dog, I just prefer lighter colored animals"?
- What could you say to a family member that says, "I love puppies so much that I'm going to buy a puppy from a breeder"?

Resources:

https://www.aspca.org/adopt/meet-your-match
https://www.petfinder.com/pet-adoption/pet-adoption-information/
https://www.sfspca.org/adoptions/how-adopt