

**The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**

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Civic engagement is most commonly referred to as an effort to make a difference and better society through the use of “knowledge, skills, values, and motivation” (“Civic Engagement,” n.d., para. 1). It is very important when it comes to our society because it allows people to act individually or within a group to protect morals or improve certain communities. The organization that I have decided to research is known as the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). This organization is non-profit and known for preventing animal cruelty through the use of civic engagement. This can be seen through their strong efforts such as rescuing mistreated animals, working towards passing humane laws, as well as sharing resources with other shelters around the nation.

It began in 1863, when an American diplomat by the name of Henry Bergh was on an assignment in Russia when he “stopped a carriage driver from beating his fallen horse” (“History of the ASPCA,” n.d., para 2). As a result of this, he soon realized that he could make a difference in the world by helping animals. Shortly after his experience, Henry Bergh returned to New York and resigned his position. From then on, he would “devote his energy to the prevention of cruelty to animals” (“History of the ASPCA,” n.d., para 2). It was in 1866 when Henry Bergh founded the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which was first based in New York. Since then, the headquarters of the ASPCA remain in New York City, but they now have numerous additional locations around the country. As of today, there are a multitude of different societies, but the ASPCA is known as the largest overall and the first to be founded in North America.

I have always had a love for animals, and I believe this is the primary reason why I was attracted to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I would like to learn more about the ways I can get involved and help prevent animal cruelty from happening in our

world. This issue is important to me because animals don't deserve to be mistreated. I believe animal cruelty needs to come to an end once and for all. I also learned that there are different ways people can use civic engagement to help support the ASPCA. Some of these include, volunteering at your local animal shelter, hosting pet food and supply drives, as well as joining the ASPCA Advocacy Brigade which helps “fight for the passage of stronger anti-cruelty laws on federal, state and local levels” (“It's National Volunteer Week! Here's How You Can Help Animals in Need,” 2016, para. 4). I plan on using these opportunities to get involved and help spread awareness to not only people in my community, but to people on a larger scale as well.

Henry Bergh happened to be the original founder of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, but as of today, it is currently run by a man named Matthew Bershadker. In June 2013, Bershadker was appointed, “president and chief executive officer of the ASPCA” (“Matthew Bershadker,” n.d., para. 1). Overtime, each of these leaders have demonstrated a democratic leadership style by reaching out to others and making an effort to eliminate animal cruelty. This can also be seen through their collaboration skills and the way they treat subordinates as equals. Using a democratic leadership style results in positive outcomes such as greater group member satisfaction, commitment, and cohesiveness, as well as stronger worker motivation and originality. Having a democratic leadership style has allowed Bergh and Bershadker to be successful and reach their goals when it comes to the organization.

In addition to leadership styles, overcoming obstacles is an essential part of being a great leader. Not only should leaders learn to overcome their personal obstacles, but they should also help others to overcome theirs as well. As a result of doing this, others are much more likely to be motivated, productive, and satisfied with their work. Any type of workplace, including organizations such as the ASPCA will experience challenges and difficulties at some point in

time. One example of a significant obstacle that the ASPCA has faced, occurred when Henry Bergh founded the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Bergh was completely unaware of the struggles and complications he was about to experience at the start of his journey. Around the time Bergh founded the organization in 1866, “America was not a friendly place for animals: workhorses hauled overloaded carts through the streets, dogcatchers were known to kidnap pet dogs and hold them for ransom, and dog fighting and cockfighting were common forms of entertainment” (“History of the ASPCA,” n.d., para 3). Despite these unfortunate factors, Henry already had his goal in mind. This goal involved doing everything in his power to successfully set up the ASPCA organization under the central idea that all animals deserve kind and respectful treatment, and laws should be established in order to effectively protect them. Animal cruelty is an on-going obstacle that the organization continues to face today, and it is up to us to work together to try and resolve this issue. Specific leadership practices/strategies that are used by the ASPCA to overcome the issue of animal cruelty include, collecting donations and the ASPCA Humane Law Enforcement. The ASPCA Humane Law Enforcement is able to investigate reports involving cruelty, arrest people who are held responsible, and rescue animals from horrific situations.

Throughout my research, I was able to learn more about the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and ways in which animal cruelty can be prevented. Civic engagement is so incredibly important when it comes to organizations like the ASPCA because spreading awareness allows people to reach out to others and make a difference. The ASPCA has a history of working very hard over the years to get to where they are now, and this wouldn’t have been possible without leaders such as Henry Bergh and Matthew Bershadker. Although

animal cruelty has yet to be completely eliminated, supporting organizations such as the ASPCA can help reduce the number of animals in danger and make our community a better place overall.

## References

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