

**Episode #20 of Intentional Wealth: Introduction to Washington Area Humane Society
with Taylor Duda
A Podcast from Braun-Bostich & Associates**

Welcome to Intentional Wealth, a monthly podcast where, alongside notable financial professional guests, Private Wealth Advisor and Founder of Braun-Bostich & Associates, Amy Braun-Bostich, delivers useful insights and strategies that help YOU live your best financial life! Remember, when your money has meaning, and your goals are purpose driven you can truly live with intention.

Now here's the host of Intentional Wealth, Amy Braun-Bostich.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Hello and welcome to this episode of Intentional Wealth. Welcome, Taylor Duda. Taylor is the director of Development for Washington Area Humane Society. And the Humane Society's mission is to provide shelter and care for the abandoned and abused animals of Washington County. Their goal is placing them in forever homes, with the vision being that all animals have a valued life and loving home. Taylor is with us to give more background about Washington Humane Society and ways to donate or adopt. Please welcome Taylor. Taylor. Thank you for joining us.

Taylor Duda: Thank you, Amy. I'm so excited to talk to you today.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Before we get more into the Washington Humane Society, I'd like to know a little bit about you, how you got started working with the Humane Society and what your role entails.

Taylor Duda: I've been with the Washington Area Humane Society for six years now. I accepted the job after moving back to the area from Cleveland. I'm a huge animal lover. I have five pets of my own at home.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Are they all dogs and cats or?

Taylor Duda: I have three cats, I have a bunny and I have a chinchilla.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Oh my goodness.

Taylor Duda: A little bit of an array. I did have a, I had a 13 year old golden retriever, but he passed away in August.

Amy Braun-Bostich: I'm sorry.

Taylor Duda: Thank you. But yeah, moving back from Cleveland, I accepted the job at Washington Area Humane. I've always wanted to work in a rescue and it seemed like the perfect opportunity. So now in my role, I oversee all of the fundraising initiatives, events, donor relations, as well as volunteer and program management.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Oh, that sounds very busy.

Taylor Duda: Yes, yes.

Amy Braun-Bostich: On the history section of your website, the idea of the Humane Society was started in 1905. Can you give us a little background how you got to where you are today more than 100 years later?

Taylor Duda: Yeah. So we were founded in 1905 as the Washington County Humane Society. We were run by volunteers and Humane Society officers at that time. In 2002, we became a no kill facility and changed our name to the Washington Area Humane Society. That really was to point out that we were privately funded and not a county pound as we were previously perceived. After spending nearly 70 years in the same building, in 2018, we began a capital campaign and raised \$5 million. And then in 2019, we broke ground on our new home, which we moved into in January of 2020. It is a 10,000 square foot building with holding for 100 pets. So now operating in this brand new facility, we are impacting over 6,000 pets per year.

Amy Braun-Bostich: That's fantastic. That is fantastic. You are also the only approved kennel in Washington county to intake strays from the state of PA and your intakes average 600 animals annually. What services are offered to the animals that are cared for there?

Taylor Duda: So, yes, we intake over 600 animals directly from Washington county each year. Every animal who enters our door receives multiple wellness exams, are spayed and neutered, receives a full set of vaccinations, flea and tick treatment, and a microchip from intake. They will also receive any other medical attention that is needed. That can range from X rays to dentals. We've done amputations and eye removals. It really depends on the animal's state of health when they come through our doors. But now we are still staffed with a full veterinarian team. We have a surgical suite and an X ray machine.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Wow, that's, I haven't been to the new building yet, but I was at the old one several times and the new one is just so much. Yeah. Just from viewing it from the street. So, in 2024 you guys were able to help 5700 animals with your life saving mission. And the Humane Society also had like 100% intakes from Washington County. So you, that meant that you took everybody in that needed to be taken in, is that correct?

Taylor Duda: So that is wishful thinking. We have a steady wait list. But what that means is 100% of the pets that did end up at our shelter was from Washington County. We didn't cross state lines, we didn't go out of county to bring animals in. A lot of rescues in our area will go to Texas or Alabama and bring dogs up. But our mission is solely focused on Washington county because the need is so high. There are plenty of more animals that need our help in the county. So, by focusing directly on Washington county, we are making an impact as to where we serve and where we live.

Amy Braun-Bostich: That sounds great. It says here you also completed 489 adoptions in 2024.

Taylor Duda: Yes.

Amy Braun-Bostich: That's great.

Taylor Duda: And we should be close to about almost 550 adoptions this year by the end of this year.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Wow, that's fantastic. And then 275 strays given a second chance, 328 neglect and abuse calls investigated. So, you have your own people that go out and do that?

Taylor Duda: We do we employ one full time Humane Society police officer. She has the same powers as any other cough in our community, but she's directly employed by us, and she investigates neglect, abuse, and cruelty calls. So, on average, we probably get over a thousand calls each year. Last year, she went out and investigated 328 calls, and from those calls, we removed 94 animals from homes.

Amy Braun-Bostich: And then also. So, you're a source of finding owners too, right?

Taylor Duda: We are, yeah, so, when we get strays in, we do everything we can to reunite with them, with their families. So, when they come in as a stray through our door, we hold them for 72 hours. We post on our Facebook page. We keep call logs of people who have called us with lost pets. We do everything we can to reunify those pets with the people. You know, sometimes pets slip out the door, get out a fence, and good Samaritans will bring them to our door. So that is one of our ultimate goals, is to reunite them.

Amy Braun-Bostich: That's very nice. That's very great. And then also you do place animals in foster homes.

Taylor Duda: Yes. And that really, that program came from COVID So during 2020, when we first moved into our building in January and then had to shut our doors in March, we had about 100 pets on site. And then were stuck with a skeleton crew up at the facility due to staffing and having people around each other. So, we really relied on foster homes. So, we had seen such a dramatic increase in foster homes being available in 2020 that we've kind of kept that going. And it's wonderful for the animals if they need around the clock care or a little bit more one experience to get them ready for the correct home. A foster placement is a lot less stress than a shelter environment.

Amy Braun-Bostich: That must be hard to let go of the animal once you've had them for a while, though.

Taylor Duda: Oh, I mean, I could never be a foster. That's how I ended up with my bunny.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Yeah. That's great that people do that, though. That's wonderful.

Taylor Duda: Absolutely.

Amy Braun-Bostich: And then you also have a veteran adoption program.

Taylor Duda: Yeah. So, vets can come in and adopt a pet, whether that's a dog or a cat, puppy or kitten, through our Pets 4 Us Vets program. Program that is fully funded by private donations. But typically, we will adopt out about 40 pets on average to US veterans a year.

Amy Braun-Bostich: And then you also do free lifesaving care for community pets.

Taylor Duda: Yeah. So not only do we care for the pets that come through our doors, but we also strive to be a community Resource for community members with pets who may be in need. Vet appointments and vet office visits are so expensive now a lot of people can't afford them. So, if they have a pet at home that is in need of, you know, a wellness exam or they need an X ray, we do offer those services at either a low cost, discounted cost or no cost, depending on the situation. We offer low cost vaccination clinics every Thursday of the month from one to four People can sign up and bring their pets in. You're only paying for vaccines; you're not paying for an office visit. A cost for rabies vaccines, \$20 compared to \$60 at a vet, you know, a privately owned vet.

Taylor Duda: We do low cost spay and neuter vac, spay and neuter surgeries for community pets. Those are all grant funded. So, we have grants that allow us to bring those surgery costs down to \$45, which if you took a cat to get spay and neutered out of vet, it would be over \$250. So, you're paying \$45 and getting the same care from us. Our ultimate goal is just to help those pet parents retain their pets so that they don't end up at our shelter.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Yeah, it says too that you guys utilize 36,113 pounds of pet food.

Taylor Duda: Yes. So, we have a community pet food bank. It's ran just like a human food bank. We get tons of donations in from the community, whether it be food or treats or litter. Some of the things we can't use here for our animals we will use for the food bank. So, we typically host a food bank every quarter. Our goal is about four a year. People can drive up, grab what they need from us and then be on their way. We don't ask for any information, we just trust that they're going to be in need. But yeah, last year we distributed £36,000. This year we are on track to hand out over £40,000 of wow.

Amy Braun-Bostich: And the food that you actually feed the pets in your care, is it all, is it the same food or do you just take in donations for that too?

Taylor Duda: So, we do take in donations, but primarily we will feed our pets on site a certain brand. We use Purina here for the dogs just to keep them all on a consistent base. Switching up their food could cause GI problems. It would just be like switching your pets food at home. And then for the cats, we typically will do Purina or Friskies, which a lot of times people will donate what we use. But in the case that they don't. And they donate an off brand. It's still great food. So that is when it would, you know, be distributed straight to our pet food bank.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Gotcha. And then you have 250 active volunteers. What do they help with?

Taylor Duda: We do. So, we have a huge active volunteer base. They help with anything from animal handling. So, we have people come in and walk the dogs and do enrichment with the cats. So, cuddling the cats, playing with them. We also have volunteers come in and help us clean the animal spaces. So, all of our kennels and condos are cleaned twice a day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. It's a heavy undertaking. So our staff is responsible for that. But we also supplement them with volunteers. If we have anyone willing to do that job. We have volunteers come in and help us with laundry. They'll help us put donations away. We have lobby greeters, all sorts of different volunteer opportunities here. We have admin support, so you can come in and help us stuff.

Taylor Duda: Letters, thank you letters, solicitations and things like that.

Amy Braun-Bostich: That's great. And then 37,518 volunteer foster hours.

Taylor Duda: So that is a combined total of everybody's time given, whether they were a volunteer or they did provide that foster home for animal in need.

Amy Braun-Bostich: How long typically would animal be in foster care?

Taylor Duda: So, it depends, you know, on that case for kittens, which is our biggest foster need, especially from May through September, when we're in kitten season and the weather is nice and all of the stray cats outside are having multiple kittens. Usually, people will bring in kittens around one month old, a few weeks to one month old. And those kittens really require around the clock care, but they cannot be spayed or neutered until they're about eight weeks old or reach three pounds. So typically in that situation, those kittens would be in a foster home for four weeks. We have had dogs, we've had, like, hospice foster dogs. So, dogs who have a terminal cancer diagnosis. We had one. Her name was Croissant. She was a boxer. She was wonderful. She spent two years in a loving foster home.

Taylor Duda: They made her comfortable, and we provided their food and medical attention and everything else they needed, but they provided the home and, you know, she got to live out the last two years of her life in a home.

Amy Braun-Bostich: That's so nice. That's great.

Taylor Duda: Yeah.

Amy Braun-Bostich: How wonderful. These accomplishments must make everybody feel that works there.

Taylor Duda: Yeah. We are super proud of everything we've accomplished and the number of animals we've impacted. I think our team does a Great job recognizing the need for animals in our community and figuring out a way to make those things possible. With everything we've accomplished, we still want to reach more animals. Like I mentioned earlier, there's always a wait list of animals who need our help. We've had an ongoing wait list of cats waiting to come to our facility, whether their owner surrenders or strays or people have passed away and left their cat. So, while those numbers are amazing and

they're the best we've ever done so far in our history, our team doesn't stop. We know we can do more, and that's what we strive for.

Amy Braun-Bostich: So, they're on a wait list because there's just no room left in the facility for them.

Taylor Duda: Yeah, right. Yeah. Our facility holds 50 dogs and 50 cats at any one time. And right now, we've been maxed out in space on the cat side for probably seven months. Our adoptions have slowed down, which that's a nationally known crisis right now. Adoptions everywhere have been slow.

Amy Braun-Bostich: I was just gonna say, I heard that more people are relinquishing their animals now. Is that true?

Taylor Duda: It is. We are seeing an increase in owner surrenders for multiple reasons. You know, veterinarian care has skyrocketed. I mean, it's outrageous to go to a vet and try to get your pet scene. Cost of food is up. People have adopted pets during COVID and now we're seeing that turnaround to where they want to surrender them because they haven't been socialized. Things like that.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Yeah, that would be horrific to have to do that. I saw also that the goals at the Humane Society is to improve awareness and reduce barriers to increase adoptions and intake. How have you been executing on those goals? What have you guys been doing?

Taylor Duda: Yeah, those are big goals that we're focusing on right now and for the near future. Those came out of our strategic plan that we just finished. So, for the next few years, those goals are really going to be the forefront of everything we do at the organization. I think one of the biggest challenges that we're facing right now is letting the community know everything that we do at the Humane Society and offer for community pets. As I mentioned, the low cost vaccination clinics, the spay and neuters, supplementary veterinarian care. So, we are trying many different ways to get that information out. We are big on social media. We use Facebook and Instagram. We send out emails. We have ads in the observer reporter.

But we also are getting out in the community more, whether that's through our Humane Society police officer, talking to community members. We do events all of the time throughout the communities, visiting libraries and schools. I think awareness is a huge driver for us, especially in removing that barrier from adopting. I think a lot of people think the adoption process is long and drawn out, but we have a really simple adoption process. It can take anywhere between 24 and 48 hours to get approved for animal. It's as simple as filling out, you know, an application, making sure you're the right fit, and then doing a meet and greet. We are really working on encouraging people to visit our facility. Seeing the animals in person is completely different than seeing them on a website.

Taylor Duda: A lot of people want, you know, the cute puppies and little kittens, but we have older dogs here that are so sweet and, you know, love people. And I think if we got

them out to our facility and let them meet them and tell them their story, more people would be apt to adopting.

Amy Braun-Bostich: That's really great. It's wonderful. So, it sounds like you're living your core values. You listed commitment, community, compassion, innovation, integrity and collaboration. So those values seem very important.

Taylor Duda: They are. You know, we use those values as a, as our driving force behind everything that we do as a staff. We are super passionate about our mission. That's why we all work here. So, I think conveying that to the public in our community is really important and helps, you know, guide us to meet those goals that we have set.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Outside help is always needed, I'm sure, and appreciated to accomplish what you've accomplished. How can those who are listening today, or anyone interested, help donate to the cause or even if they're interested in adopting? What is the protocol you all have in place?

Taylor Duda: Yeah, so we are 100% privately funded. So, we are fully funded by individuals, corporations, foundations, people like you and I. So, any donation is welcome and appreciated, whether that's small monetary or item donations. We have a wish list on our website of every product that we use daily at the shelter. So, food, treats, litter, you know, vet supplies that help us. Toys, leashes, anything that you can think of. If we can get those items donated, it really alleviates the expense for us. We also accept donations at any time of the day. We typically have white donation bins outside of our front doors. So, if you can't make it while we're open, you can place your items in the bins even when we're closed. And then I would say our adoption process, it's relatively simple.

If you saw somebody that you were interested in, you would submit an Adoption application where we ask for your information, your vet's information, if you've previously owned pets, and then three references. Typically, it will get approved by our staff between 24 and 48 hours. And then our team schedules a meet and greet with you and either the pet you're interested in or. Or a pet that we think might fit well into your life and your family. And if that meet and greet goes well, then you can take the pet home. And, you know, it's super important to note that every time a rescue pet gets adopted, it makes space for another pet in need. So that's really, you know, adoption is what helps us combat that wait list.

Amy Braun-Bostich: That sounds great. If somebody wanted to volunteer to pack boxes or host a food drive or donate, what would they need to do?

Taylor Duda: If someone's interested in volunteering, we do have a tab on the website that lists all of the different opportunities that are available. We do a one-hour volunteer orientation where you come in and you learn more about us and you receive a tour and we tell you everything there is that you could help us with. From there, you get put into our volunteer database and you can sign up for whatever opportunity fits into your schedule. And then if anyone's interested in organizing a food drive or making a donation, I'm the contact for that. So, all of my information is listed everywhere on the website and I'm always happy to talk to, you know, whoever about that.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Okay, that sounds great. Well, you know what? Thank you so much for sitting down and detailing all the good work that you guys have done for Washington. And as most of us here are fur parents, we appreciate all that you do for our furry friends.

Taylor Duda: Thank you so much. And I just wanted to say, you know, Brian Bostitch and associates, you guys have been a great 2025 corporate partner, and we've loved partnering with you and your team. So, your support makes a difference.

Amy Braun-Bostich: Well, thank you. Yeah, we love your mission, so that's great. Thank you all for listening. And if you enjoyed our discussion today and interested in more ways to donate or adopt, you can go to their website at www.WashingtonPASHelter.org and you can also find us and them on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#), [YouTube](#), or our website, Braun-Bostich.com.