



SAN FRANCISCO
SPCA

Thursday, January 09, 2003

Dear Supervisor,

OFFICERS

RICHARD E. DIRICKSON
Chairman of the Board

JACQUELINE L. YOUNG
Vice Chair

FILMORE C. MARKS
Treasurer

EDWIN J. SAYRES
President

I am the Humane Education Director for the San Francisco SPCA. I work with both teachers and community leaders to reduce violence and teach respect for life. For several years I have been using the term *Guardian* in my work and I have seen its benefits. I'm now asking for your support of the Owner/Guardian Ordinance and have outlined some important points below. I understand that both words have the same legal meaning, but ask you to consider that there are other important reasons to officially recognize *Pet Guardians* in addition to *Pet Owners*.

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- The goal of Humane Education is to help children grow into compassionate, responsible members of the community.
- There is strong and abundant evidence connecting the early abuse of animals to violence crime, and other socially un-acceptable behaviors.
- Children have a strong, natural connection to animals that lends itself well to teaching character values, empathy, and kindness.
- One of the first and most basic concepts taught to children about animals is that they are living beings and NOT objects or things and must therefore be treated with respect.
- Because the term *owner* refers to *things* and contradicts humane education lessons regarding the differences between living beings and objects other terms have been developed to describe the bond humans have with their animals, especially their domestic pets.

- The problem with creating terms like *Pet Parent*, *Caretaker* or even *Guardian* for the sole sake of an educational lesson is that none of the terms are used widely in society. This disparity alone causes confusion and reduces the value of humane and character education lessons.

I ask you to support the Owner/Guardian Ordinance because it will keep us from sending mixed messages to our children about the treatment, care, and needs of animals. This is important because of the connection between cruelty to animals and violence to people. Ultimately our societies understanding of "guardianship" will reduce the need for public animal control services and make better citizens committed to non-violence and mutual respect for life.

Sincerely,

Kelley Anne Filson

Director of Education, SF/SPCA