

**RESCHEDULED AND NOW FREE OF CHARGE!**



**A conference for professionals in the fields of animal welfare, child abuse and domestic violence, and for *anyone* who wants to help keep children, adults, and animals safe from harm.**

**DECEMBER 12, 2018**

**Featuring Keynote Speaker**

**Phil Arkow**

**Prolific author, inspiring educator, and violence prevention expert  
Coordinator of the National Link Coalition**

**11am – 2:30pm at the Farmstead Golf & Country Club (lunch provided)  
88 Lawrence Rd, Lafayette Township**

**Please RSVP to [admin@dasi.org](mailto:admin@dasi.org) or call 973-579-2386**

### ***Why is this so important?***

Animal abuse, cruelty and neglect are often considered isolated incidents wholly separated from other forms of family violence. Today, professionals involved with victims of family violence are not surprised when they learn that often these acts are linked, and that various agencies are working with the same families. They no longer excuse animal cruelty as “boys will be boys” or “it was only a cat.” Instead, they see animal abuse as a sentinel indicator, “the tip of the iceberg” and often the first sign of other family and community violence. Intentional abuse in any form should be taken seriously. Knowing that there is a Link, agencies involved in preventing family violence need to work together for a more effective, species-spanning response.

## How are they linked?



Once caseworkers in any of the four fields begin to look for it, they often find other forms of family violence co-occurring. Domestic violence and child abusers may kill, harm or threaten animals to exert dominance and power over their victims and to show them what could happen to them. In this way, animal abuse silences domestic violence and sexual abuse victims, is a serious risk to pets, and is a significant barrier that prevents them from leaving violent relationships.

When children are cruel to animals it is not necessarily an exploratory stage of development; it could be the earliest stages of conduct disorder, a gang initiation ritual, an act of revenge, peer pressure, or a way for an abused child who feels powerless to exert control over his or her own victim and gain a sense of power. Exposing children to animal cruelty may desensitize them against all forms of violence.

Senior citizens in particular may be at risk of not being able to care for their animals adequately, of neglecting themselves in order to care for their pets, of being exploited by those who would take advantage of their attachment to pets, or of keeping too many animals in inhumane hoarding conditions.

## What are the effects of animal abuse?

In addition to causing pain and suffering to the animals, animal abuse can be a sentinel indicator and predictor — one of the earliest “red flag” warning signs of concurrent or future violent acts. Abusers and impressionable children who witness or perpetrate abuse become desensitized to violence and the ability to empathize with victims. Abuse is often cyclical and inter-generational. The earlier professionals can intervene to break the cycles of violence, the higher the rate of success.

## Why should social services professionals pay attention to animal abuse?

Victims are often reluctant to talk about abuse that has been directed at them, but they may be more comfortable talking about abuse to their pets, which can then break the ice about discussing their own abuse. Neighbors are more likely to report suspected animal abuse than child welfare, domestic violence or elder abuse cases, thereby making their local humane society or animal control agency a “first responder” and the first point of social-services contact for a family in crisis. Children who talk about having many pets that died or disappeared may be trying to say that their pets have been killed or abused, and further investigation is necessary.

Offenders often do not see animal cruelty as a serious crime and may readily admit to animal abuse but not to family violence. This may be one way to put an offender away where he will not hurt others.

Professionals in law enforcement, social service agencies, education, human and animal health care, and the courts should recognize animal abuse as a significant dynamic in their work and routinely screen for animal welfare issues. They can partner with animal care and control agencies in concerted, collaborative prevention and intervention programs.

**What can we do?**

Complex societal challenges, like the prevention of violence, require integrative solutions and collaborative initiatives.

Thus, PROJECT PROTECT.

We are working to bring the Sussex County community together to help keep children, adults, and animals safe. Please join us!