

At the South Suburban Humane Society (SSHS), we believe change is long overdue. As a humane society that wants to build a more compassionate world, silence and indifference over racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, classism, and other forms of oppression are against the very foundation of our organization. At SSHS, our mission has always been to create a better world for pets *and* the people who love them. In a field that has not historically valued all people the way it should have, we are committed to doing better. We are committed to lead by example and push for real change in Animal Well-Being.

We understand that creating a culture of inclusion and belonging—where people’s unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives are valued, respected, and seen as an asset—helps us serve our community and animals better. Improving the lives of animals is intrinsically tied to the well-being of people and the protection of our shared environment. A focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging will help us address access to care challenges, strengthen the human-animal bond, and build a more caring society.

SSHS is committed to creating an environment that is diverse, inclusive, equitable and fosters belonging. A place where all staff, volunteers, fosters, community members, donors, clients, and board members are treated with respect and dignity.

For the purposes of this statement, *Diversity* refers to race, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexual identity, familial status, age, disability and socio-economic status; *Inclusion* is valuing, respecting, and encouraging the full participation of each individual in the life and leadership of the organization; *Equity* is a process that ensures all people have the opportunity to contribute, develop, and grow despite historical, structural, legislative, racial, and socio-economic inequities. *Belonging* refers to offering the opportunity for all to feel accepted, valued and included. It also refers to feeling psychologically safe to be authentic while contributing to our mission of creating a better world for pets and the people who love them.

We are an organization that celebrates the rich diversity of the South Suburbs of Chicago. We will not tolerate discrimination, biases, harassment, or bullying of any kind. Regardless of race, socio-economic status, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, nationality, gender identity, gender expression, or marital status, we are an organization that celebrates the richness of our community.

As an organization, we agree to be guided by these principles and pledge that they will be reflected in our vision, mission, strategic planning, programming, governance, and board composition. Our commitment to diversity, equity, belonging and inclusion extends to our staff, our community members, and programs we develop and support.