Humane Education

Humane education strives to provide people with a body of knowledge and strategies to teach about human rights, animal rights, environmental stewardship, cultural and educational issues, and the most pressing issues of our time. The purpose of humane education is to make it possible for people to live ethically, sustainably, and peaceably together. In order to create a healthy, functioning society, humane education instills values such as compassion and integrity so that people can work to create meaningful solutions that can benefit people, animals, and the earth. There is an impetus among educators and administrators to include humane education in school curricula to teach respect, responsibility, empathy and to develop critical thinking and decision-making skills.

There are elements of humane education that can equip youth to deal with societal challenges. Humane education fosters the three C’s: curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking. Next, humane education works to instill the three R’s: reverence, respect, and responsibility so that people have the motivation to confront challenges. Lastly, humane education offers positive options and strategies for problem solving so that people are able to solve challenges.

One of humane education’s main goals is to bring awareness to issues involving animal protection. Humane education aims to expose the ways that animal abuse and mistreatment affect the environment and society as a whole. One issue that humane education targets is the inconsistent treatment of animals by humans, specifically the choices humans make based upon feelings, traditions, and habits. For example, humane education might consider animal abuse present in food, entertainment, research, and fashion industries. Furthermore, humane education regards abuse in the food industry as the greatest abuse humans impose on animals.

Humane education is the only movement that strives to include animals in the global effort to create a more just world. Specifically, it reminds people of their connection to animals and inspires them to treat all beings, including animals, with compassion and respect. Furthermore, humane education programs can contribute to improving student attitudes, behavior, attendance and academic achievement.
Through its affiliation with Valparaiso University, the Institute for Humane Education (IHE) offers graduate and doctoral level programs for those interested in pursuing a degree in humane education. The graduate level courses include coursework in education, environmental ethics, animal protection, human rights, and culture and change. Students are also required to complete a one-week residency at IHE’s campus in Surry, Maine.

Students at IHU are offered the opportunity to discover their capability to educate others and model a way of life that advocates equitable and compassionate treatment of all people. Typically, students at IHU are persons interested in creating long-lasting, social, economic, and educational change by acting as leaders and educators in society.

One of IHU’s core classes covers the topic of animal protection. The animal protection course covers issues such as animal agriculture, experimentation, hunting and trapping, and companion animal concerns. It teaches students about the different philosophies concerning the treatment of animals and encourages students to evaluate their own ethical viewpoints on the exploitation and abuse of animals.

Virginia Beach SPCA

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The Virginia Beach SPCA strives to create a more humane community by teaching respect, empathy, and compassion in classrooms. The Virginia Beach SPCA reaches 28,000 children annually through its humane education programs. Specifically, its Compassion Classroom program visits 2nd to 5th grade classrooms each month. The lesson is SOL-based and is accompanied by an animal friend. The programs typically last 30 minutes.

The Virginia Beach SPCA also offers their award-winning program Listening Ears to area schools. The program brings animals to reluctant readers to create a fun reading environment and the animals serve as non-judgmental listeners.
The Virginia Federation of Humane Societies (VFHS) is an organization comprised of animal shelters, humane societies, rescue groups, sanctuaries, animal control agencies, animal caregivers, and individual supporters throughout Virginia. Their mission is to address the issues of animal cruelty and pet overpopulation through humane education. VFHS uses grant funds to support shelters and animal welfare organizations through spay/neuter programs, shelter outreach, and educational programs. Annually, VFHS presents a conference featuring local and national speakers concerning a variety of topics with workshops that offer continuing education credit for animal control officers. Furthermore, VFHS communicates relevant news, events, and information to its members that support their work in animal welfare.

VFHS has launched several programs such as Spay Virginia as a statewide project. The primary goal of Spay Virginia is to spay and neuter animals in low-income households, adopted animals, and those that belong to people who are unlikely to have their animal spayed or neutered in order to reduce the need to euthanize healthy, treatable animals.

In addition, VFHS created a Scholarship Fund in 2005 to provide scholarships for attendance at the VFHS conference for Active and Associate Member organizations. Its goal is to provide scholarship opportunities for the VFHS annual conference and for other regional and national training sessions that are of value to its members.

Humane Education Advocates Reaching Teachers (HEART)

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Humane Education Advocates Reaching Teacher’s (HEART’s) provide a focus on human rights, animal protection and environmental preservation in order to impact the way young people think about their responsibility to other humans, animals and the natural world. HEART is a full service program for educators and students in the New York City, Chicago, Indianapolis, and Portland areas and offers their services to public schools and non-profit agencies at no cost. It offers its services to students of all ages, ethnicities, races, religious beliefs and socio-economic status as well as educators, administrators and community leaders. The HEART
The HEART program provides an instructional humane living program, teacher training, humane education consulting, and advocacy programs through the educational and governmental sectors. HEART envisions the replication of its program across the country.

The HEART program’s mission is to create better, more compassionate citizens that contribute to the greater community. Furthermore, HEART aims to cultivate a sense of responsibility among young people to act upon their personal beliefs, decrease animal abuse, and encourage people to strive for a sustainable environment.