NC STATE Design

Nancy Rekhelman, MID Candidate
Carolina Gill, Committee Chair
Dr. Sharon Joines, Committee Member

Companion

Adoption matching for strong life-long bonds between pet and owner

Project Summary

Shelter overpopulation is a key concern for animal rights efforts in the US. Each year, 3.9 million animals enter shelters in the US. 31% of these animals are euthanized. This project investigates the animal shelter system and the cycle of animal intake and adoptions. Through a wholistic examination of the animal shelter system in the US, this project identifies the underlying causes of shelter overpopulation, and a design solution is proposed to help mitigate these issue.
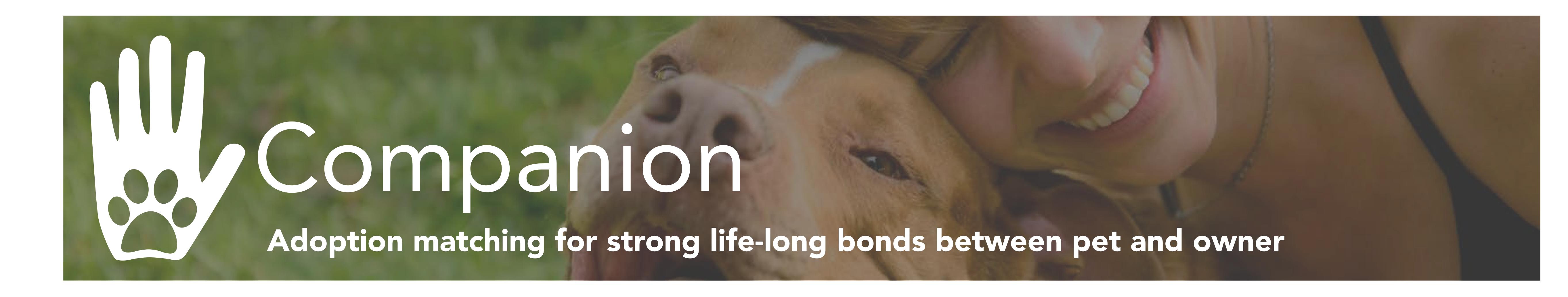
Research Question

Many pet owners relinquish their dog to a shelter due to behavioral problems or misguided perceptions of what owning an animal entails. How can the rate of dog relinquishment to shelters be reduced?

Sub-Questions

1. How can people be better prepared to own a pet and better educated about pet behavior and what to expect?

2. How can people be better paired with an animal who will fit their lifestyle?

3. How can behavioral problems be addressed so that animals are not relinquished to the shelter?

4. How can shelters facilitate successful adoptions

Selected References

"The Relationship between Training Methods and the Occurrence of Behavior Problems, as Reported by Owners, in a Population of Domestic Dogs." Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research 3.5 (2008): 207-17. Web.Weiss, Emily, Heather Mo
Digiacomo, Natalie, Arnold Arluke, and Gary Patronek. "Surrendering Pets to Shelters: The Relinquisher's Perspective." Anthrozoos: A Multidisciplinary Journal of The Interactions of People & Animals 11.1 (1998): 41-51. Web.
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"Pet Statistics | ASPCA." [Online]. Available: http://www.aspca.org/animal-homelessness/shelter-intake-and-surrender/pet-statistics.
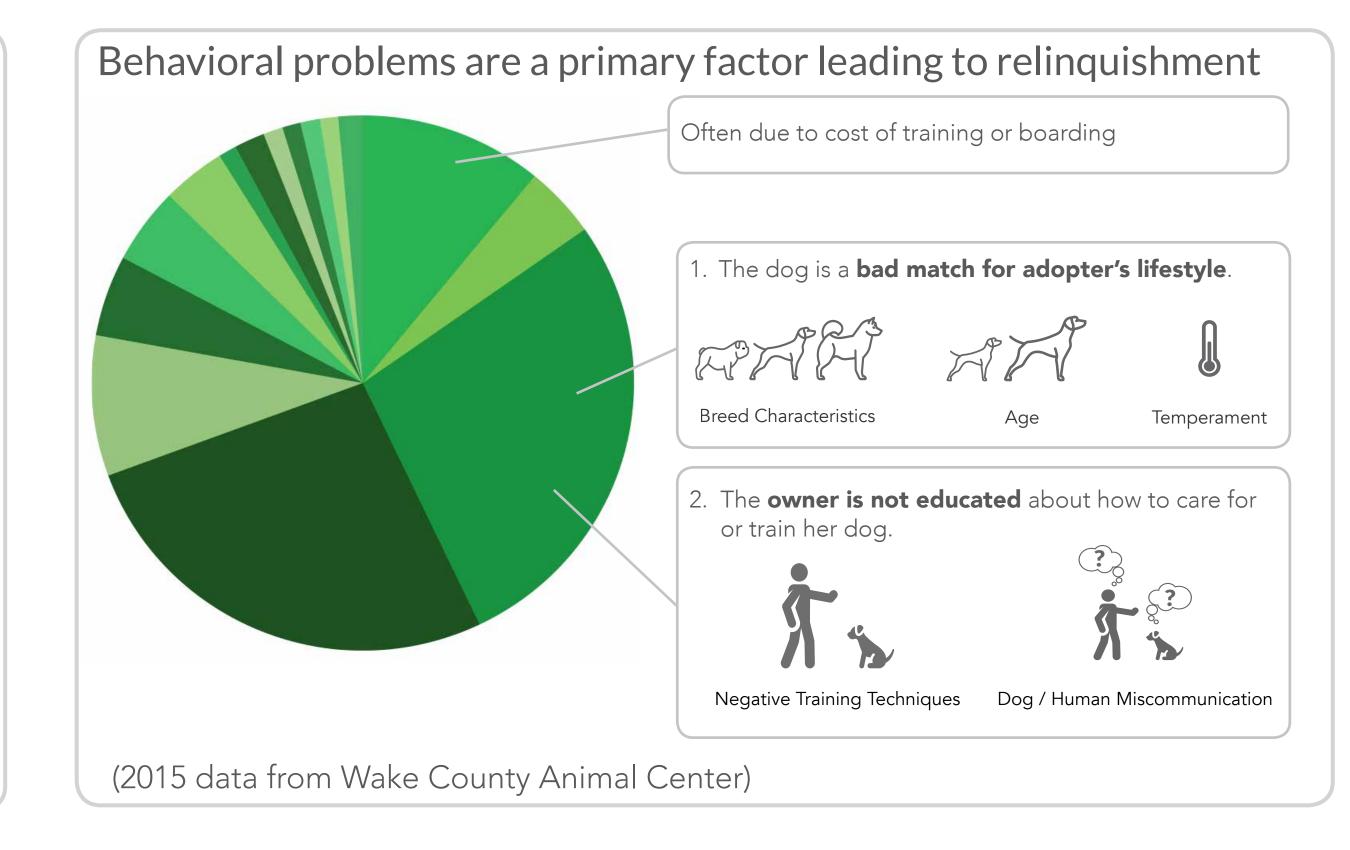
① PROBLEM SCOPE

Animal shelter intake cycle

3.9 million dogs enter shelters each year. 31% of them are euthanized.

Relinquish Dog — Abandon on street — Surrender to shelter — Picked up by animal control

3 primary reasons cited for relinquishing dogs

Behavioral problems are a primary factor leading to relinquishment

Often due to cost of training or boarding

1. The dog is a **bad match for adopter's lifestyle.**
   Breed Characteristics — Age — Temperament

2. The **owner is not educated** about how to care for or train her dog.
   Negative Training Techniques — Dog / Human Miscommunication

(2015 data from Wake County Animal Center)

② DEFINING THE CUSTOMER

Shelter Intervention
Preventative approach

The shelter is the customer. The shelter will subscribe to a service that it will implement in its shelter to help adopters make better adoption decisions in the shelter

VS

Home Intervention
Reactive approach

The adopter is the customer. The adopter purchases a product or service that will help them understand and handle behavior problems after adoption.

Design Focus

Value proposition

Value	• Potential to prevent returns by making good matches • Advertise commonly overlooked dogs
Customer Relationship	• Provides immediate, personalized assistance • ASPCA is a trusted organization
Channels	• Exposure: available to adopters at shelters
Revenue Streams	• Existing donation based funding source

Animal shelter tools market review

	Affordable	specific to shelter	No specialized training required	3rd party resource
Meet your match survey				
Behavior log				
Behavioral modification programs		Opportunity		
Adoption counselors				
ASPCA Safety Net Program				

③ MAPPING USER EXPERIENCE

Phase 1: Defining user pain points

Semi-Structured Interviews

- 5 Shelter staff
- 2 Volunteers
- 2 Behavioral Specialists

SPCA OF WAKE COUNTY — ASPCA — NC STATE Veterinary Hospital

Job Shadowing

- 3 Shelter managers
- 2 Volunteers

How will the service fit into existing routines?

Phase 2: Identifying opportunities

Co-Creation Exercises

- 2 Volunteer Coordinators

Map out activities for a new volunteer program

Adopter "Think Aloud" Exercises & Testing

- 4 adopters
- Part 1: without app
- Part 2: with app

What are adopter's perceptions of the shelter and animals?

④ USER JOURNEY MAP

Lack of Direction	Unrealistic Expectations		Lack of Information	Lack of Support
Go to Shelter	**Observe Dogs**	**Play**	**Questions**	**Adopt**
• Adopters are not knowledgeable about what they are looking for	• False perceptions: barking, shy, jumping up • Good dogs overlooked • Adopters loose track of all the dogs they have seen	• Behavior in kennel does not reflect behavior in the home • Takes too much time to play with a wide selection of dogs	• Adopters do not have access to much information about the dogs • Adopters do not realize that surrender forms are behind the kennel card	• Little to no direction from the shelter

(Adopter Pain Points)

⑤ RESEARCH THROUGH DESIGN

Prototype testing with animal shelter volunteers
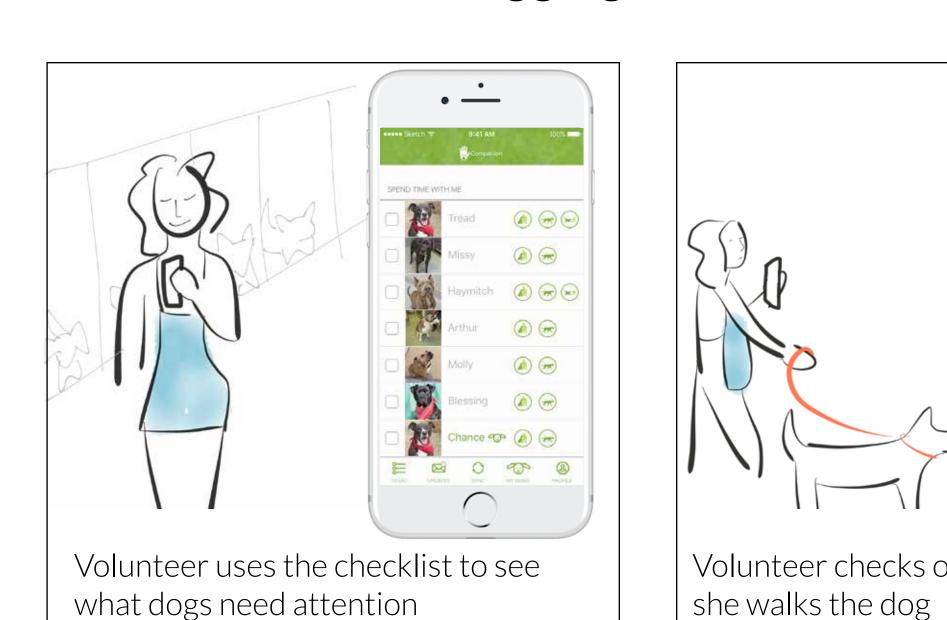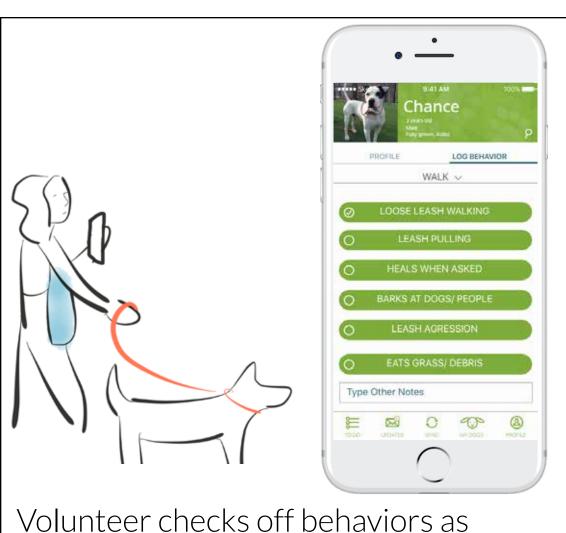

Landing Page — Dog Profile — Record Behavior
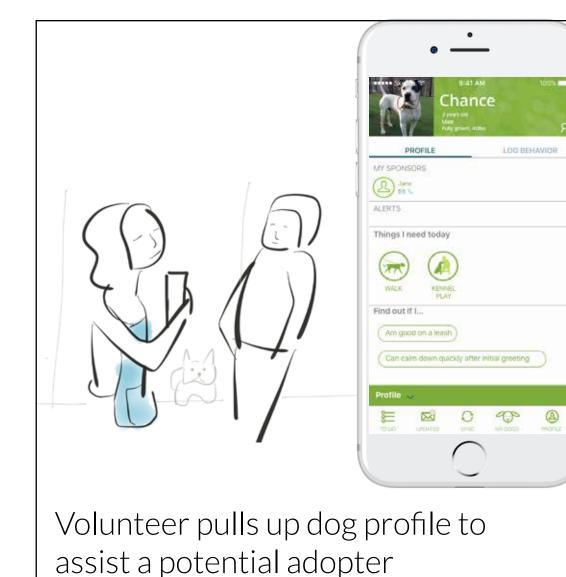
Key Themes

1. On-the-go logging

2. communicating with staff

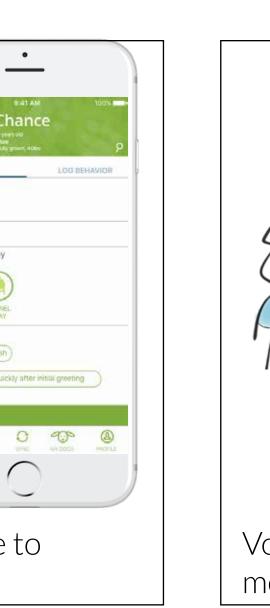3. Having more direction about what behaviors to log

⑥ DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

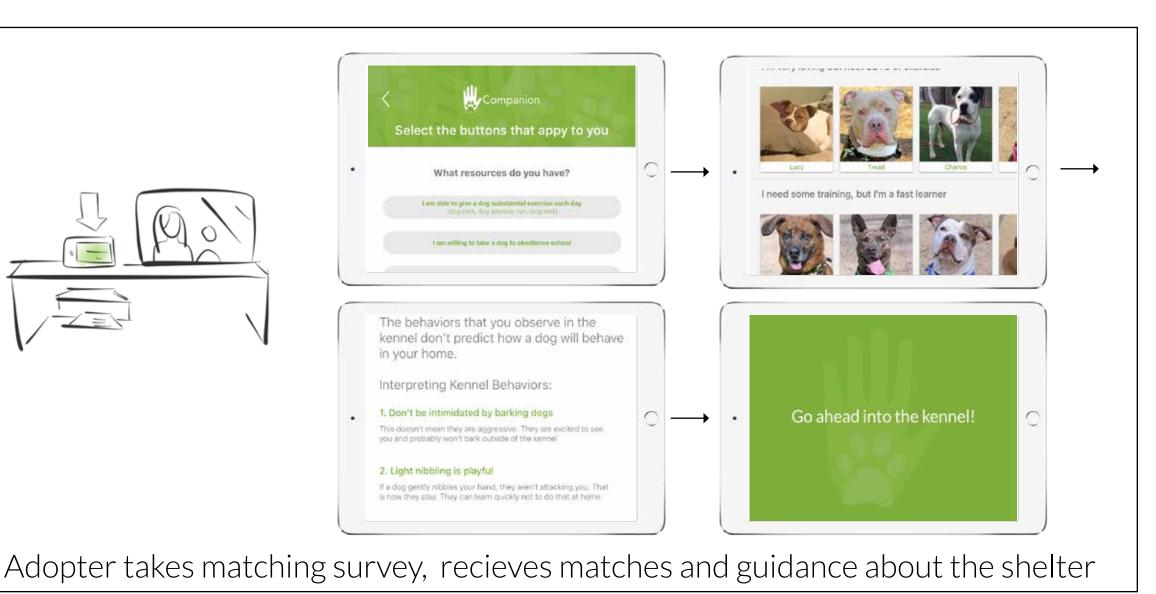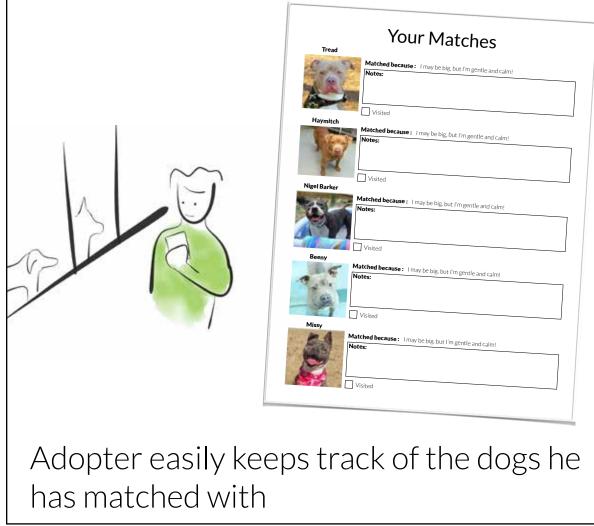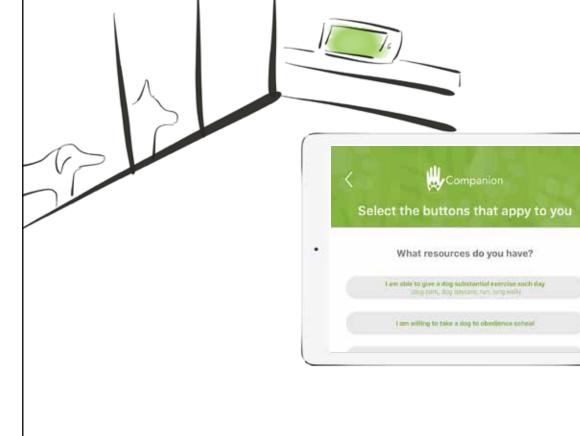Detailed behavior logging and increased adopter direction leads to more informed and successful adoptions.

Volunteer uses the checklist to see what dogs need attention

Volunteer checks off behaviors as she walks the dog

Volunteer pulls up dog profile to assist a potential adopter

Volunteer sees her impact and is motivated to continue volunteering

Adopter takes matching survey, recieves matches and guidance about the shelter

Adopter easily keeps track of the dogs he has matched with

Adopter looks up detailed information about the dogs he is interested in adopting