

Animal Shelter Expected to Meet Deadline

By Jacquie Pipkin

A recent visit to the Carteret County Humane Society's Animal Shelter in Newport revealed a fresh new look to the facility and an air of enthusiasm among its volunteers. Shelter Manager Candace Christopherson explained that recent citations from the Animal Welfare Section of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDACS,) which threatened to close the facility for failure to meet standards, has actually been a boost.

Since the wide publication of the facility's woes, donations and contributions from individuals and area businesses as well as manual-labor hours donated to do the work of fixing the facility have enabled the shelter to correct deficiencies that were the source of repeated citations during annual inspections. As Christopherson explained, a lack of funding not a lack of caring makes it a challenge to keep the 25+ year-old concrete building maintained. With the facility taking in approximately 4,000 animals a year, most of the funding is budgeted for food, heat, utilities and staffing. On an average, the cost per animal taken in is \$73, which does not include shots, spaying and neutering.

On February 10, the NCDACS inspector gave the shelter 45 days to make some of the repairs cited in the report and to show progress on others. Items needing attention included rusted metal building doors and cages, antiquated feral cat cages that presented a danger to volunteers and animals, a faulty draining system for outdoor pens and runs and deteriorating chain-link fencing. The NCDACS inspector returned on March 25, and again, the shelter failed its inspection. However, while not all the repairs were completed, the inspector was impressed with the progress that had been made. Only two metal doors are left to be installed, indoor runs need to be stripped and painted and feral cat cages are on order. These will complete the items needed to pass inspection.

The NCDACS inspector returns in June. With continued donations and the help of volunteers, Christopherson is hopeful the shelter's license will be renewed. This is the only shelter in the area that provides refuge for abandoned animals and animals that can no longer be maintained by their owners. It also serves as a quarantine site.

Since taking charge of the facility in 2005, Christopherson has reorganized its operations, and with dedicated volunteers and through fundraising activities, has changed the image of the shelter. The shelter is now considered a place where animals are rescued, cared for and, when ready, put up for adoption. Euthanasia is a very small part of the operation and done only when absolutely necessary. When the shelter becomes overcrowded, Christopherson calls on shelters in other states and arranges for volunteers to transport the animals to shelters where there is room for them.

Christopherson wishes to thank all those who have so generously worked and contributed to keep the shelter open. She explained that, when (not if) the shelter's license is renewed, it will not be the end of the story. The needs are ongoing; the building is not getting any younger. Once one repair is made, another always presents itself. With the declining economy, contributions and donations until just recently had dropped considerably. Christopherson asks the community to please continue to support the facility so it can continue to take care of the animals.

Those interested in volunteering can call the Humane Society at 247-7744. Contributions should be made out to CCHS, 853 Hibbs Road, Newport, NC 28570. Donations can also be taken to the site.



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