

SHELTER SPOTLIGHT

Relationship Building Results in Funding for Wisconsin Shelter's New Building

The Dodge County Humane Society is a small shelter that has achieved a lot with relatively little, thanks to its emphasis on reaching out to all facets of the community.

In her opening letter in the Dodge County Humane Society's 2007 Annual Report, Shelter Director Kimberly Waugus pulled no punches when describing the organization's 980-square-foot structure, which had been built more than 30 years before. "Anyone who visits our current facility can see that it is small, severely overcrowded, and lacks the proper isolation and quarantine areas. Our air conditioning quit working in August 2007 and our furnace is on its last leg."

Continued Waugus, "We need a new building. We need to be able to provide decent, humane living quarters for our animals and adequate quarantine and isolation wards to keep staff and other animals safe."

Fortunately, the new building so desperately desired had already been purchased in 2005 and was ready to undergo much-needed renovation. Waugus informed shelter members that it would cost \$400,000 to get the new facility up and running with only the bare necessities. "For now," wrote Waugus, "we will be very content with a structurally sound building, heat and hot water."

On July 24, 2008, the Dodge County Humane Society moved into its new home, which — at almost 10 times the size of the original facility — can house twice the number of animals more safely and comfortably. This small shelter solicited the funds to do so by following the foremost rule of successful fundraising: Build relationships first.

STATS

LOCATION:	Dodge County Humane Society N6839 State Road 26 Juneau, WI 53039 www.dchs-wi.org (920) 386-0000
FULL-TIME STAFF:	5
PART-TIME STAFF:	4
VOLUNTEERS:	125
ANIMALS HANDLED PER YEAR:	1,244 in 2008 (632 dogs, 566 cats and 46 other)
YEARS IN OPERATION:	41

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS OF COMMUNITY SERVED:

Population of approximately 86,000 within 36-square-mile Dodge County. Primarily rural with some urban development. The average household income is \$45,190.

SERVICES:

Stray animal services, bite quarantine, adoptions, foster program, dog training, doggie day care, educational seminars, tours, Pets Escaping to Safety program, Kids Kamps, pet therapy group.

ADOPTION FEES:

Puppies under 9 months – \$200; small dogs (under 25 pounds) – \$150; dogs over 9 months – \$100; In Your Prime dogs (seniors) – no fee; purebreds – \$200-\$300. Fee includes spay/neuter, distemper vaccination, microchip, 30 days of Shelter Care pet health insurance and rabies vaccination.

Kittens under 9 months – \$90; two kittens under 9 months – \$160; cats over 9 months – \$50; In Your Prime cats (seniors) – no fee; Best of Both Worlds cats (outdoor cats) – \$50. Fee includes feline leukemia/FIV test, spay/neuter, distemper vaccination, microchip, 30 days of ShelterCare pet health insurance and rabies vaccination.

COMPUTER SYSTEM/SOFTWARE:

PetPoint

FUNDRAISING:

The shelter relies upon private donations from events such as spring and fall fundraising dinners, Golf Outing, Paws for a Cause Annual Dog Walk and Pictures with Santa.

DODGE COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY BY THE NUMBERS

- Building is a 2008 remodel of an existing cement-block and steel-beam structure
- 9,600 square feet, including thrift store of approximately 1,800 square feet and 1,200-square-foot multi-purpose room for meetings, seminars and dog-training classes

ON THE HORIZON

- Have applied for a grant to purchase new cat condos and add a pitched roof, car port, additional play yards for the dogs and possibly a dog park

Raise Your Profile, Then Raise Money

The Dodge County Humane Society is located near Juneau, a town of around 2,500 in the heart of rural Wisconsin, about 60 miles northwest of Milwaukee. As such, the shelter is not surrounded by large corporations it can rely on for funds and sponsorships. Nevertheless, it gets the job done, sometimes a dollar or two at a time.



“This shelter is truly a community-based organization,” says Waugus. “We do not have one substantial source of income; instead, we rely on donations by local corporations and individuals to stay in business. When we started our capital campaign drive to renovate the new building, we knew we would have to obtain some large donations — but we also realized that even the smallest donation mattered.”

Waugus also understood the importance of building relationships to get those donations. “That was the number one priority when I took this job,” states Waugus. “I needed to put Dodge County Humane Society on the map, as well as repair some broken relationships and adjust how we were viewed. In prior years, the shelter had come near to closing due to poor management and lack of fundraising. We needed to get our name out there in a positive light.”

Before starting the public relations blitz, Waugus made sure that she and the board of directors were on the same page in terms of their mission statement, services, costs and other essentials. “Then I proposed that we make our shelter more visible by holding a lot of little events,” says Waugus. “I told the board that they would be public awareness events, not fundraisers. You have to start by getting people to know who you are and to come into the shelter to look at the animals.”

Waugus and her staff and volunteers — along with an all-volunteer fundraising committee — set about to raise the profile of the shelter. Waugus herself spent a lot of time

visiting local municipal officials and doing presentations to area civic groups, schools and churches. She submitted a series of articles about animal-related topics to area newspapers and made appearances on local radio and TV shows, including a regular pet segment for the NBC affiliate in Madison, Wis.

In December 2007, the Dodge County Humane Society was asked to take in about 20 dogs from a man whose wife had suddenly passed away. Recalls Waugus, “This was an urgent situation for the animals and for us; we only had 10 dog kennels at the old building and were already full. Nevertheless, it could not have come at a better time. I put out a plea to area shelters and rescues for immediate help and contacted the media. The story was picked up by several TV stations, and eventually we got statewide coverage. What a wonderful Christmas

story — and what a wonderful way to say ‘we desperately need a new shelter.’”

American Humane’s Meacham Grant Helps Shelter Improve Safety

When the Dodge County Humane Society renovated its current building, many “frills” were eliminated due to budget constraints and the need to finish the project quickly. One of the cuts made was the installation of metal grids over the windows in the dog kennels. Unfortunately, without the grids, the dogs were able to jump from one kennel into the next, creating a safety hazard for both animals and staff.

To help remedy the situation, American Humane awarded a \$4,000 Meacham Foundation Memorial Grant to the shelter for the purchase of the grids. These grants are awarded to American Humane member shelters each year to fund capital campaigns, building improvements and equipment purchases that directly affect the welfare of animals in shelters. To learn more, visit www.americanhumane.org/meacham.

Special Programs Key to Visibility

These formal public relations efforts were augmented by the visibility received from the many community programs offered by the Dodge County Humane Society. One of the most successful is the shelter’s sponsorship program, in which individuals

or schools pay for a particular animal’s adoption fee so it can be adopted out at no charge. Waugus says they receive about 10 sponsorships each month. “One woman sponsors every adult cat that has been in the shelter for longer than 30 days,” says Waugus. “She comes in every other month and usually ends up giving us \$1,000



The shelter's thriving thrift store

to \$1,500 each time.” In fact, the sponsorship program and resulting increase in cat adoptions has been so successful that Waugus has occasionally been able to pull in cats from other shelters.

The shelter also offers a variety of other programs and services that keep it in the public eye. These include Kids Kamps interactive mini-seminars for children, a foster program, a doggie day care program, dog training classes, a pet therapy group and educational seminars. The shelter partners with a local domestic violence facility for Pets Escaping to Safety (P.E.T.S.), in which the shelter fosters animals owned by victims of domestic violence for up to 30 days. The shelter's thrift store is also a good draw for bringing potential adopters and income (about \$3,000 a month) into the shelter.

Fundraisers and Donations: It All Adds Up

The shelter also builds relationships, awareness and its bank account with proceeds from a number of popular events: twice-yearly fundraising dinners and raffles, the annual membership drive and seasonal activities such as Pictures with Santa and the Golf Outing.

But formal events hosted by the shelter are just one piece of the fundraising puzzle, declares Waugus. “What totally floors me is how many people and organizations in the community hold fundraisers for us,” she says. “We tell a school or the Kiwanis Club that we need cat litter or canned food, and they get together and hold a mini fund drive — then pretty soon, we get a van full of supplies or a check.”

For the capital campaign drive, the shelter's fundraising committee did private solicitations of individuals and approached corporations and foundations for contributions. The resulting \$550,000 surpassed the shelter's original goal and allowed it to complete the entire dog kennel and thrift store wings and repave the driveway.

The Bottom Line? Caring for Animals

At the end of the day, all of Dodge County Humane Society's relationship-building and fundraising efforts are for the sole purpose of fulfilling the shelter's mission: To promote animal welfare by providing care and shelter to animals in need, by facilitating adoptions and by educating the public. States Waugus, “My philosophy is, these animals are all God's creatures, too — thinking, feeling beings who deserve to be treated appropriately.”



Free-standing kennels for overflow dogs



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