

Sheltered animals have new 'friends' for funding

Posted to: Chesapeake Clipper Pets





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Friends of Chesapeake Animal Services, from left, Mary Brinker, Ferne O'Hara, Bridget Vincent, Lydia Plaster, Debra Ross, Patti Hamilton and Rick Hamilton, at a recent meeting. The group formed in July of this year to help supply the needs of animals at the City Animal Control Bureau and help enhance the new shelter which has not yet broken ground. (Barbara J. Woerner | Special to The Virginian-Pilot)

By Barbara J. Woerner

Correspondent

Lost, stray or abandoned animals may one day have a new shelter to house them, thanks to the newly formed nonprofit Friends of Chesapeake Animal Services.

Patti and Rick Hamilton, along with Fern O'Hara and Mary Brinker, all from Chesapeake, are volunteers at Chesapeake Animal Control, located in Cavalier Industrial Park off I-64's exit 297.

The idea for the nonprofit came after the volunteers tried to raise money to pay for a dryer that caught fire at the present shelter. But people kept asking if the group was a 501(c) 3.

"And I think 'What's that?' " said Rick Hamilton. "We found out people really want to give to a real non-profit."

The local animal control center got more than a new dryer out of Rick and Patti Hamilton's efforts. Friends of Animal Services was officially created in July.

"We're here to help the animals at Chesapeake Animal Control and raise funds to help with the new shelter the city is building in the future," said Patti Hamilton. "We're chartered to help with that."

On Nov. 7, the city closed on a parcel of land to build the new shelter. The land, made up of a little more than 17 acres, is located west of where Battlefield Boulevard and South Military Highway intersect.

"We've got about 10-1/2 acres of uplands and the balance is wetlands," said Steve Snyder, the city's project manager. "We are currently negotiating with a consultant about designing the project.

"The project could be done in 15 months once it's started," he added. "As of right now we don't have complete funding for the building project."

Kathy Strouse, superintendent of the city's animal control unit, commended her staff and volunteers for making do with the present location at 3807 Cook Blvd.

"We've outgrown our facility," she said. "The city is absolutely committed to a new facility. "The staff does a great job, but we need more space to house our animals and for our staff to operate out of."

Rick and Patti Hamilton agree.

"With a building over 20 years old, you're battling efficient heat and cool air circulation," said Rick Hamilton. "The cats are especially prone to airborne diseases."

The new building would provide better accommodations for the cats, Snyder said.

"Vets want specific air movement with 10 to 12 air changes per hour," he said.

Meanwhile, the new non-profit is already planning fundraisers for the new shelter. The Great Stray Round Up, will take place Jan. 30 at Greenbrier Mall.

To make the public more aware of the need for a new shelter, the Chesapeake Animal Control and Chesapeake Humane Society held an open house Saturday at the current facility. Those who had adopted pets from the facility were invited to come back.

Friends members hope the public will see the need and get on board with the project.

"I came to volunteer and it's sad that it takes a non-profit group to help fund part of a new facility," said Debra Ross, a shelter volunteer and member of Friends.

"You see the need and get tired of waiting," said Patti Hamilton.

"Now that we've got all of our paperwork filed and approved with the IRS and others, we can start applying for grants and keep pushing forward."

For more information on Friends of Chesapeake Animal Services, call 487-0021, or visit www.friendsofchesapeakeanimalservices.org.

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