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Looking out for man's best friend: Underdog Rescue to open new adoption center Saturday

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BRADENTON — Just about all the dogs have names.

There's Blossom, Duffy, Skippy and Tia.

But the Westy male?

"We need a name for him," Shona Otto says.

A home, too.

Maybe Saturday will be his — and their — lucky day.

That's when Otto, Glenda Parks-Campbell and Julia Johnson, co-founders of UnderDog Rescue of Florida (www.underdogadopt.com), open a new adoption center at Dog Gone Beautiful, 5223 26th St. W.

The nonprofit volunteer group puts unwanted and abandoned dogs in foster homes, rehabilitates them and adopts them out.

Since its 2005 inception, UnderDog Rescue has placed 1,400 dogs in homes, according to Parks-Campbell, who, like her two colleagues, volunteered for other animal rescue agencies.

"Everybody wants the perfectly cute dog, and our dogs come with baggage," said Parks-Campbell, a retired teacher. "They are real life underdogs and we made it our mission to see they get homes, too."

UnderDog Rescue currently has 75 to 80 dogs in 30 foster homes, and nearly 40 will be on hand at 11 a.m. Saturday.

"It's a way for people to come and visit with some of the dogs, gauge their interest and then proceed with the process of adoption," said Otto, who is in sales.

That process is thorough.

UnderDog Rescue runs a property check, for example, to see if adoption applicants actually own their homes or are renters where pets aren't allowed.



"Everybody seems nice when they're looking at a dog, but when you actually check them out, you can find a lot of different stories," Otto said.

Most of their dogs come from shelters statewide, where they were scheduled to be euthanized due to space or medical issues.

"We got four Wednesday from (Manatee County) Animal Services," Otto said.

"We're the last resort."

Despite operating on a shoestring budget, UnderDog Rescue manages to get dogs complete care — from shots to dental work to grooming.

Their vet bills average almost \$4,000 a month.

Adoption fees of \$200 and higher pay the freight, but donations are vital.

"People are generous because it touches their hearts," Parks-Campbell said.

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