

Animal Shelter has become success story

By Debbie Cole
Contributor

The Ohio County Animal Shelter staff was recently recognized for its initiative in addressing the hard, sobering facts of animal neglect. Although many households have pets and spend thousands of dollars on food and pet supplies, there are a stunning number of lost and unwanted animals entering animal shelters.

According to the National Humane Society, there are 6 to 8 million entering shelters annually. Although every community has the need for a shelter, only about 5000 are located in the United States.

Ohio County was met with a demand for an animal shelter many years ago. In 1985, a new structure was built on a portion of land at the Ohio County Fairgrounds. It was serving the need of a dog pound, according to Matt Mobley who took over the directorship of the shelter two years ago.

"I had never been involved in anything like this," said Mobley. "But I was raised on a farm and had an inherited stewardship of what nature gives us and when approached (about the appointment)



Animal Control officer Matt Mobley and Jan Remington lead the discussion during a recent fundraising dinner at the Ohio County Community Building.

the animals became my motivation."

He and his assistant, Amy Chase, literally began a mission of transformation of the dog pound into not only an animal shelter but an outreach as well. "We started with one problem and went to the next," said Mobley. With an estimated 2500 dogs in two years, the staff knew there had to be another way, other than euthanizing for the unwanted animals.

Chase began an intense exploration and internet research on animal shelters. She said it became a domino effect from there. Within a year, the Ohio County Animal Shelter had become one of the best known networks for advocacy of animal adoption. Currently Mobley is confident with his 80 percent success rate.

Many of the dogs are adopted through networking of other agencies and internet message boards. Late last year, Chase was able to save one of the animals from euthanasia by posting its description and picture on a website. A network of volunteers transported the dog nearly 500 miles to Madison, Wisconsin, where it was met by other group of volunteers who took the dog to its new home in Minnesota.

From there the staff, which also includes Mobley's daughter, Alexis, started looking at community-based solutions to help combat some of the deficit of a rural animal shelter.

One of the biggest is the overpopulation of animals. A female dog can produce two litters of 6-10 pups per year. A female cat can produce 3 with an average litter of 4-6 kittens. "It is not uncommon to find boxes of kittens at our doorstep on any given morning," said Chase.

Through cooperative efforts involving local veterinarians, Dr. Marvin Moore and Dr. Don Beckett and the City of Rising Sun, an implementation of a spay/neuter program is currently in effect. Through the spay/neuter program, any resident of Ohio County can benefit from the reduced cost.

"This is the single most important step you can take," said Mobley. "Have your pet sterilized so that he or she does not contribute to the pet overpopulation problem."

Like many other shelters, Ohio County's funding is minimal. "God knows we don't do this for the money," said Mobley as he addressed a crowd

of about 100 at the shelter's fundraiser last month. He said the budget is \$30,000 and that includes payroll, medicine, supplies, utilities, gas and maintenance.

Mobley began lobbying for his "Free Food Program." Wal-Mart donates all its damaged animal food, litter, treats and cedar chips to Ohio County's Shelter. In return, Mobley established an agreement to share with neighboring animal shelters. "We were one of the first to initiate such a program," said Mobley. An average of 400 to 500 pounds per week is collected.

Another goal was to educate ownership responsibility. Mobley said preventing your animals from becoming lost by ensuring they are always safely confined and wearing some form of identification would help. Another way is taking advantage of the reduced fees of the spay/neuter pro-

gram. And finally, "Only get an animal when you are ready and able to make a lifetime commitment to that animal."

Mobley said that if people do not take the time for education, within three years, the Ohio County Animal Shelter will be serving more animal control problems than population.

In addition, the shelter has created a wish list and accepts donations. Mobley told those in attendance that Ohio County has some of the most generous and supportive group of animal lovers.

An anonymous donation of 800 feet of fencing gives the animals the ability to socialize. Several people volunteer time to help with walking the animals. And one person sent a \$1,000 check to Dr. Marvin Moore for animal vaccinations.

Mobley told the group that collaboration is the See SHELTER on back page



Dogs housed at the Ohio County Animal Shelter have a place to roam and play after fencing was donated to the shelter.

Debbie Cole photo

Shelter

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key to successful animal shelters. Several of those in attendance at the fundraiser were from neighboring shelters, animal rescue centers, transporters and advocates from all over the tri-state.

Jan Remington, Vevay, has been an advocate of animal rights for many years. She told the group she has seen many shelters through the years and some horrible situations. She praised Ohio County's efforts in the conception of such a unique opportunity to meet a community need. "Ohio County Animal Shelter is an extraordinary example of what volunteers and good animal shelter leadership can produce."

The Ohio County Animal Shelter's hours of operation are Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12 (noon) and Thursday evenings from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

Items needed at the Ohio County Animal Shelter include:

- +Quart size water bottles for use with cat cages.
- +Scratching posts
- +Non-kitty litter
- +Cat milk
- +Frontline
- +Heartguard
- +Prenatal gas cards for transports.
- +Dog rawhides
- +Large chews
- +Cat and dog callers

Also, anytime dog walkers are needed whenever the shelter is open