



No-kill animal shelter opens in south Scottsdale

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Equipped with more shelter space, animal rescuer Kelly Perry is working to help put an end to pet euthanasia in Phoenix.

Lucky Paws Animal Rescue Shelter opened early this month after moving into a former Arcadia auto collision shop in southwest Scottsdale and equipping it with new shelter spaces, offices and a thrift store.

Perry founded with a goal to make Phoenix a euthanasia-free community for dogs, cats and other stray or unwanted animals that end up at shelters.

"That's the goal for my lifetime," said Perry, director of the new shelter.

Perry was inspired by the success of another group, Austin Pets Alive! in making the Texas capital a no-kill city for unwanted pets. The Austin operation's website states it is saving at least 90 percent of the pets that enter the city's shelters.

Perry knows she has a lot of work ahead. According to Maricopa County Animal Care and Control statistics, the county euthanized more than 46 percent of the 55,000 animals that arrived in its shelters in 2009.

Lucky Paws takes in all pets, including ferrets, rabbits, cats and dogs. The shelter is dedicated primarily to animals on the euthanasia list at the Maricopa County pound. Perry said she will rescue from 10 to 15 of those pets at a time, and about seven to 14 pets are adopted from Lucky Paws each week.

"It's an amazing reality when you walk through this facility and think these animals wouldn't be alive now," Perry said.

She pointed out one dog, a 1-year-old Norwich terrier named Sandy that was playing around with the Siamese cats in her office, was put on the euthanasia list for having a cold.

Lucky Paws' new location, at 6423 E. Thomas Road, affords 3,700 square feet more than its previous location in east Phoenix, for the same rent.

"It was an anxiety-ridden place to be," she said of the previous location, about 2 miles from the new site. "We were there for 15 months and quickly knew that we were out of space."

It took her half of that time to find the old auto shop, on a quiet street facing a canal, where Perry and her volunteers enjoy walking their dogs daily.

"It's like the Hilton for pets," Perry said. "It feels very safe here at the new location. I can just tell from the animals."

The new facility will fit about twice as many animals as before, with ample room for 100 dogs and 25 cats at any time.

County overwhelmed

Linda Soto, shelter manager for Maricopa County Animal Care and Control, said the county agency has little choice given the numbers of unwanted animals it handles.

"MCACC has no choice but to be an open-door facility," Soto said. "We are mandated by state law to accept these pets, and if we get full, there's not much else we can do."

Soto said MCACC has contracted with more than 90 rescue groups to help offload many of the animals. This community coalition, which includes Lucky Paws, adopted more than 5,200 of the pets at the county facility in 2009, according to MCACC statistics.

"We rely on our rescue partners to save the pets that we, unfortunately, can't save," Soto said. "The only other way we can take the number (of euthanized animals) down is by getting the public on board to be more responsible with the pets out there, and by having more pet-retentive owners."

Perry said many pet owners need to be better educated.

"People are giving up their animals for ridiculous reasons, like age or balding," Perry said, adding that most of these issues are very treatable.

Perry also attributes the problem to non-pet owners, who let stray animal populations proliferate in their neighborhoods.

"Even though the state sends out vouchers to pay for neuter costs, nobody takes care to neuter and then re-release pets from neighborhood to neighborhood," Perry said.

Volunteers, donations needed

Lucky Paws has no time limit for an animal's stay and euthanizes animals only if they are suffering from dire illness, Perry said.

She added the facility prepares pets for adoption in large part by the ongoing social interaction it has with facility workers and volunteers.

"We intimately know their personalities because of the living-room type environment we foster here," Perry said.

Lucky Paws is seeking volunteers to help out on Saturdays at 9 a.m. with some final construction at the facility.

It also is accepting donations of shelter supplies and gently-used items for its thrift store, which generates money that goes toward funding the non-profit's operations.

Prices for adoptions run from \$150 to \$200 for dogs and \$100 for cats.

For more information about Lucky Paws Shelter adopt, donate or volunteer. Contact them at 480-941-4135.



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Shelter Director Kelly Perry poses with two rescued newborn puppies at Lucky Paws Animal Shelter.
