

SHELTER SPOTLIGHT

SCHOOL'S IN SESSION AT OHIO SHELTER

The Montgomery County Animal Resource Center in Dayton, Ohio, has a lesson to teach.

And that lesson is in the teaching itself. The organization has found that a focus on ongoing training and education for staff, volunteers and the community has made the Animal Resource Center a true asset to Dayton.



STATS

LOCATION:

6790 Webster St.
Dayton, Ohio 45414
www.mcoho.org/animalshelter
(937) 898-4457

FULL-TIME STAFF:

32

PART-TIME STAFF:

2

VOLUNTEERS:

400 — 200 of whom are on active status and average approximately 500 hours a month

ANIMALS HANDLED PER YEAR:

6,100 dogs, 3,050 cats and 250 other animals (e.g., wildlife)

YEARS IN OPERATION:

From 1981 to 2004 as Montgomery County Animal Shelter; changed name in 2004 to Montgomery County Animal Resource Center in conjunction with moving to its new facility

BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS OF

COMMUNITY SERVED:

Montgomery County is 461.7 square miles of rural, suburban and urban areas with an approximate population of 500,000. Approximate annual income of most families is \$41,846. The county seat is Dayton, and the county comprises 22 cities, nine townships and unincorporated areas.

SERVICES:

Animal control, stray dog housing, dog and cat adoptions, dog licensing, lost pet searches, humane education, vacation registration to provide added capacity to find pets if they become lost while on vacation with their owners, voluntary cat registration and a volunteer program.

ADOPTION FEES:

Dogs 6 months and older — \$131; puppies 5 months and under — \$156. Fee includes spay/neuter, basic veterinary exam, heartworm test, first set of vaccines, microchip and behavior classes.

Cats — \$60. Fee includes spay/neuter, basic veterinary exam, feline leukemia and feline AIDS testing, first round of vaccines, microchipping and voluntary cat registration for one year.

FUNDRAISING:

The shelter secures funding through the selling of county dog licenses, as well as external events such as IAMS Home for the Holidays, off-site adoptions at local PetSmart stores, a Pennies for Pets program involving donations from local elementary schools and a Giving Tree program featured at the community's hospitals during the holidays.

COMPUTER SYSTEM/SOFTWARE:

Novell GroupWise
Oracle
Kronos
AS400, a mainframe-based system written by the county's data processing staff that is shared with other county facilities

Montgomery County Animal Resource Center



SCHOOL IS THE RULE

As the largest companion animal shelter in the greater Dayton area, the Animal Resource Center has many virtues. The shelter has extensive humane education initiatives, participates with Petfinder.com to give adoptable animals more publicity on the Internet, offers on-site behavior classes for adopters and has a veterinarian on staff to provide care and treatment.

At the top of its list of best practices though is the center's emphasis on training. Center Director Mark Kumpf says training is something the center takes seriously — it is a continuing process that's geared toward the staff, volunteers and community.

For staff and volunteers, training is crucial to providing a safe and healthy working environment, he says. This leads to a reduction in lost time from injuries, illness or compassion fatigue and job burnout, to which most animal welfare professionals are prone. Training also helps keep staff and volunteers up-to-date on the policies and procedures and how best to help visitors and customers.

Bob Sexton, the center's animal care and control supervisor, adds more insight as to why training is so important: "Our profession has evolved, and continues to evolve, from the days of being 'dog catchers' to being professional animal control officers."

He says because of this evolution, training is needed not just for new hires but also for tenured employees.

"Employees at animal welfare agencies need to keep abreast, as laws change, best practices improve and

veterinary practices advance," says Sexton. He adds that training helps keep staff focused and in-tune with the changing needs of the profession.

Sexton says that animal welfare professionals are also considered "jacks of all trades." As such, workers have to be knowledgeable in all facets of operations and be able to convey that information to the citizens we serve. "We are educators, as well," he says.

To accomplish such a feat, training is imperative.

THE TRAINING AGENDA

As part of the animal care training, staff members are taught to focus on the "mental aspect" of the animals during their stay. Staff members are trained to provide animals with exercise, love and a soft blanket in all cages. Staff and volunteers are also trained in disease management and animal care. This training directly contributes to the enhanced care the animals receive, which in turn drives the shelter's adoption rates and reduces its euthanasia rates, says Shelter Operations Supervisor Mick Sagester. Staff members are also trained as adoption counselors and pet behaviorists, which helps the overall mental well-being of animals at Montgomery County.

At the center, newly hired staff members receive approximately three months of in-house training. After that point, staff members receive approximately 120 hours per year of ongoing training.

Volunteers undergo training as well so that they can free up the staff's time for other duties. Once trained, staff and volunteers are then well-positioned to provide education and guidance to the adopters and animal owners in the community.

**"OUR PROFESSION
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**— BOB SEXTON
ANIMAL CARE AND
CONTROL SUPERVISOR**

“We face the challenge that all pet owners do not have the knowledge they need to be good pet owners,” says Sagester. “We have an obligation to be the resource for the community when they need assistance with an animal question. We cannot do everything, but we should have the knowledge to send people in the right direction.”

Kumpf adds that training the public and adopters is the best way to ensure that animals are properly cared for and that the community’s needs are being met. They provide this training through obedience classes for new adopters that are included in the adoption fee, as well as through staff consultations, brochures, additional classes and online resources.

BUILT TO TRAIN

Montgomery County Animal Resource Center is a 25,000-square-foot facility with a 100-person-capacity training room that is used by the immediate shelter and by animal welfare professionals through Midwest Ohio. At the facility, many national trainings are offered, including American Humane’s Shelter Operations School, Shelter Operations School for Managers and Euthanasia by Injection.

“We look at the programs that are available nationally and make them available to not only our staff but to others in the region,” Kumpf says. The shelter is currently working on bringing more training opportunities to the facility.

“We do not limit ourselves to any one organization. We invite all to attend and work with all to provide the training,” adds Sagester.

TRAINED FOR SUCCESS

The effects of the trainings are evident. Montgomery County Animal Resource Center receives numerous compliments on how knowledgeable, courteous and helpful staff members are. And those are the staff — the animals are noticed as well. “Our adoption area receives numerous compliments related to how quiet and content our animals behave,” says Kumpf.

Kumpf says many of the center’s programs are being replicated by others in Ohio as well as nationally. The center has also received many requests to tour the facility. In fact, the center will be establishing tour dates so that it can accommodate all the inquiries. Kumpf says they also network with other organizations to see how best to offer training opportunities.

Sexton advises that shelters everywhere would benefit by offering training to their employees. “The employees will



bring back new knowledge or new ways of performing tasks. They should be given the chance to share this information with the whole organization,” he says.

With training and sharing, the organization will improve and grow. “Training will help prevent employees and the organization from becoming stagnant,” he says.

POSITIVE SCORES

Montgomery County’s approach to training is welcomed and appreciated by the staff and volunteers. “They feel it is a way for them to better their people skills, as well as their animal care skills,” says Kumpf.

The training has led to excellent volunteers. “Our volunteers are some of our most productive employees,” Kumpf says. He notes that John Crouch, the volunteer in-house groomer, has been with the organization longer than many of the salaried staff, and that part of the shelter’s new location was designed with Crouch’s input.

Sexton agrees that employees of the Animal Resource Center relish training opportunities. “They see it not only as a means of bettering themselves, but also enhancing their job performances and furthering the mission of the Animal Resource Center.”

He adds that, as a result of training, the shelter has been able to improve operations, offer more services and improve the quality of care animals receive.

GET MORE INFO

To learn more about Montgomery County Animal Resource Center’s training protocols, email animalshelter@mcoho.org.

To learn more about offering American Humane training at your organization, email training@americanhumane.org. ■

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THE RESOURCE FOR
THE COMMUNITY.”**

— MICK SAGESTER
SHELTER OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR