

Our Common Message – The Reasons Why

The New Shelter is a big project with multiple benefits. It's more than just a building. We feel its most important benefit is the way it will change our community, improving individual pet lover behavior in various ways.

Let me explain. The new shelter will:

- Provide a comfortable, inviting place for adoptions.
- Be a resource for spay and neuter support.
- Be a destination for classroom field trips and education.
- Attract many additional volunteers.
- Become a beacon of community awareness and a source of pride.
- And therefore, it will result in more responsible human actions throughout the area.

It's improved individual responsibility and actions that we feel will make the biggest difference in animal's lives in our county, and will also do the most to reduce the need for killing. When a few thousand people each do a little bit more than before, this creates the greatest effect.

Now, if we try to explain our project too simply with ideas like, "Because we need more kennels," this misses the most substantial community benefits, and this idea just won't click with some people. They'll understand that more kennels will soon fill up just the same, and animals will still have to be put down to make room for more. So what's the point, they'll wonder? They won't "waste" their money on us.

The Reasons Why are many, and these have the biggest effect on the community when taken together.

The point here is that while we don't want to over-complicate our message, neither do we want to over-simplify it. There's a sweet spot in between.

Please use these ideas and the ones that follow to help you formulate your group's message. Keep in mind that we want to be complete without being complicated.

Thank you for your help! It is vital to this project.

Advantages of a new shelter

- I. For adoptions
- II. For you
- III. For the animals
- IV. For the community
- V. Why right now?

For Adoptions

Imagine taking yourself or your family to a modern building designed for pet adoptions. Go inside and view the animals through windows in their rooms where they are playing or relaxing. With staff help, you can enter the room of one you'd like to see more closely and might consider for your pet.

Gone are the days of row after row of caged animals, begging to be released, tugging at your heart strings so strongly that you simply avoid the place. Perhaps previously, you left the old shelter quickly with an uncomfortable feeling that never really went away. You made a silent note to yourself never to go back to that unhappy place, and to put out of your mind the animals that ended up there and never got to leave.

The new shelter will be a pleasant place for adoptions. With an enjoyable environment for you, and a stress-free environment for pets, more adoptions will take place and more wonderful, abandoned animals will find homes.

For You

Your future pet will be evaluated for temperament and suitability. If it is grown, then you will already know its eventual personality. It will already be socialized, and if it is a dog, it will probably already be leash trained and potty trained.

Your pet will be fully prepared for you medically. This is less expensive than having it done yourself, and is far better than leaving it undone. This also takes much less of your own time. You can simply settle into an enjoyable routine with your new pet much more quickly.

If you don't find a pet that seems like "the one", there will be more from which to choose very soon.

Caring for a pet can make you happier and healthier. A pet can enrich your life. A pet can become part of your family. A pet can become one of your best friends.

For the Animals

There's a right way and a wrong way to house animals. The right way minimizes the effects of being caged.

The cages don't face each other. Thus, the animals don't get into a stare down, which can lead to aggression.

The walls and ceiling are made of sound absorbing materials so the dogs and humans don't go insane from the noise. This can be very loud when not properly designed, loud enough to require ear protection similar to working around jet engines or rock concerts. Properly sound dampened, it sounds like any other conversation with your dog.

Disease control benefits most from a modular layout. The infirmary is a separate building with multiple sick rooms, minimizing cross contamination through the air or hair or through human contact and clothing. Without this, entire rooms full of cats must be euthanized to eliminate infectious diseases such as upper respiratory infections or ring worm from cages, walls and floors. Everything in a room must be bleached or otherwise sterilized, and then bleached again and then again, and then finally left to sit for a few days before healthy cats can be reintroduced. If the cats who were in the room to be cleaned have nowhere to go when an outbreak occurs (like a multi-room infirmary, to separate stages of infection, treatment and recovery), then they get put down. All of them. This is the only way to contain a serious outbreak. (You can see this in the spike on the annual cat statistics chart of 2009.)

The story is similar with dogs. If one puppy comes in with parvo, then the rest have to remain caged for a week or two. They don't get their exercise and socializing (a daily session of human contact and play), aren't available for adoption, and take up space needed for new dogs coming in. The area becomes off limits to most humans -- workers and potential adopters alike -- to avoid any further spread of the disease. The regular outlets for getting dogs into homes are shut down, and since more dogs keep coming in, there's only one way out until the outbreak passes. There's no early release program for overcrowding.

A new facility is designed from these hard lessons. It no longer has to be this bad. A modern shelter takes all of this into account when designing fixtures, work flows and layout. A modern shelter minimizes disease, distractions and stress on the animals.

For the Community

There is something immeasurable about a source of community pride. Like a new stadium for the ball team, it has a way of getting more people interested and involved.

It's a feel-good place. It gives people hope of making a difference. People know that others will be there, too.

It brings positive attention. It ends the complaining and opens up the possibilities.

It removes barriers to success that were in the way before. It wakes up the mind to what can actually be done now.

It enables people to do the right things, and encourages them to do so.

As this attitude spreads throughout the community, more people will adopt, and more people will spay and neuter, more people will volunteer. Pet population control will improve. Killing will be reduced.

It will be a place for classroom field trips and community education.

It will help enable a future feral cat management program.

Why right now?

The old shelter is in the way of a county construction project.

The new shelter's genesis depended on the details of the larger construction project, and that first domino took years to fall. Now it has. This turn of events is fortunate because now our hand is forced as a community. The old shelter's better days have passed.

With the county construction project looming for a long time, serious discussions about a new shelter had to be delayed for years. The Grand Jury reports complained about the current shelter for nearly a decade without

missing a beat. The tactical improvements were beneficial, but they were like a band aid on a serious wound, done for the short term until better care could be provided.

We will use this delay to our advantage by incorporating the latest successful models from other counties that have been developed. Plus, we can now use an architect who has since gained the experience to become the penultimate expert in modern animal shelters.

Our plan is based on a model that is sweeping the state, and seems likely to continue doing so. When a community is ready to modernize its animal care, they will most likely do what we are doing. It has to be done right, and it can't be left undone.

For us right now, it's simply our turn. If we miss this window of opportunity, we will allow animal suffering to continue at a higher level for many years by our inaction.