



Rita B. Huff Animal Shelter closes on land for new facility

By Kristin Edwards

Staff Reporter

Mon, Jun 16 2008

— The Rita B. Huff Animal Shelter closed on 7.84 acres of land near state Highway 75 North on which a new building for the shelter will be built within the next two years.

The purchase of the land, which the shelter made using savings of almost 20 years, will simplify the process the shelter now faces of raising funds and grants for the construction of their new building.

"I'm more excited about this than I was when we closed on my home," Rita B. Huff board president Barbara Collins said. "Since we closed Wednesday, now comes the hard work of raising the money to build the new shelter, and we're ready for it."

Collins said the 7.84 acres are located near state Highway 75 North near Kate Bar Ross Park.

"The land is actually city property, and behind it is another piece of city property," she said. "The land is located within city limits, and we'll be working with both the city and the county to attempt to raise money to have the shelter built.

"In total, we're estimating that the building will cost over \$3 million."

The new building, which Collins said should be operational within two years, will be used to further the services provided at the shelter currently.

"We'll be doing exactly what we're doing now, but we'll have a lot more room to do it," said Marjolein Lemmon, shelter executive director. "We'll have more space to have educational programs and things like dog training, and we're also hoping to have a dog park.

"We're also hoping to have areas both in the building and on the outdoor property for people to sit down and get to know animals they could potentially adopt."

Lemmon said the board and staff of the shelter are looking forward to the process of raising the money for the building and expanding their services.

"This is really great," she said. "The purchase of this land was a long time coming, and the new building is highly needed. We're really looking forward to starting to raise the money we need and getting this shelter built as soon as we can.

"We really will be bigger, and that will allow us to serve the community a little better and easier."

In order to raise money for the construction of the new building, Collins said the shelter plans to solicit the help of corporations, individuals and government grants.

"The entire tri-county area uses this shelter, so we're hoping to gain support from a variety of sources," she said.

"We've had lots of public support in the 20 years our current shelter has been open, and there are so many individuals who have made large donations over the years.

"We wouldn't be where we are now without them, and we won't be able to get this new building going without more help from so many of those wonderful people."

Collins said the process of raising money for the building will begin as soon as possible, because the hope for the new shelter is to have it up and running as early as a year and a half from the land purchase.

"We're starting right away, and now that we know where the shelter is going to be going, we'll be able to provide possible donors with more direct answers," she said. "We've talked to different people and organizations, and they've always asked us where the building was going to be located. Well, now we know, so we can go back

and talk to them.

"We felt that we needed to take this initiative to show our part that we're serious about this new shelter." The shelter will not only need monetary partnerships and donations to continue work on the new building, Collins said.

"We need people to help us continue working on fundraisers, both to keep the existing shelter open and for the new one," she said. "We've got a lot of hard work coming up, and we've already put a lot in to get this far.

"Anyone who would like to volunteer is more than welcome to contact me or any other board member."

For more information or to volunteer, contact Collins at (936) 662-7416.

Copyright © 1999-2008 cnhi, inc.