

Animals Find a

Safe Haven

in Valdez

For more than 30 years, the Valdez Animal Shelter has worked hard to find good homes for all adoptable animals—no small task, considering last year more than 600 animals passed through the shelter.

The shelter has grown from humble beginnings as a small addition to the sewer treatment plant with one part-time animal control officer to the current building with twice as much square footage, owned and run by the city of Valdez.

The crew consists of Shana Anderson, the full-time animal control officer, and three part-time staff members.

“The new building is a vast improvement over the old shelter, providing more room for the animals to live and a much more pleasant environment for volunteers and visitors,” says Shana.

While the city owns and operates the shelter, a nonprofit group of volunteers called the Friends of the Valdez Animal Shelter (FVAS) provides many support services.

The group is dedicated to enhancing the lives of the shelter animals.

FVAS is funded mainly through donations and fundraising efforts. Fundraising throughout the year includes sales of pet toys and T-shirts. Its major annual events include the dog walk-a-thon, adoptathon, the Spring Fling Bazaar, booths during Gold Rush and the Christmas Bazaar, and Santa Paws, where you can get your pet’s photo taken with Santa.

From these efforts, FVAS pays for all adopted shelter animals to be spayed/neutered and to have an identification microchip inserted.



The microchip is put under the animal’s skin and can be scanned by most animal shelters to identify where the animal belongs.

“It is currently the best method, as it can’t be lost like a license or fade like a tattoo,” says Shana.

She once used this method to identify a border collie who had come all the way from British Columbia, Canada, and was able to contact the dog’s owner.

FVAS also supplies the shelter with extras, including cat beds, toys, dog bones and treats, and educational materials. The group helps fund building improvements and pays for the advertising of available shelter animals.

FVAS community outreach programs include a doghouse loan program, free straw, and a steady supply of dog and cat food at the Valdez Food Bank for those in need of temporary assistance.

The spay/neuter program is one of the group’s most vital. Not only does it ensure this service is provided to all adopted animals, it offers a low cost spay/neuter program for all residents of Valdez and the Copper Basin.

The cost varies based on factors such as the animal’s species, age, sex and general condition, but the goal is to help residents by working with people based on their financial situation.

FVAS is setting up a free spay/neuter voucher program for Copper Basin residents. Since a great portion of the surrendered animals come from the Glennallen, Copper Center, Kenny Lake and Chitina areas, the program aims to help those residents, and reduce the number of unwanted animals. The vouchers will be good at the Valdez Vet Clinic and with Dr. Tobey in Glennallen.

The program is funded through FVAS, with a one-time donation of \$5,000. FVAS hopes to raise the money to provide this service twice a year, and is looking for donations.

Caring for the animals and finding them homes is the primary goal of the animal shelter. This takes the work of many. In addition to shelter staff and the dedicated members of FVAS, many volunteers help. Twelve volunteers assist the shelter on a regular basis, and more help out occasionally.

Volunteers range in age from 13 to 73. Last year, more than 1,500 hours of volunteer time was given.

Shelter volunteers improved the lives of hundreds of dogs, cats and miscellaneous four-legged creatures.

“It is proven to greatly benefit animals to have as many people as possible interact with them,” Shana says, noting that is why more volunteers are needed.

Many volunteer opportunities exist at the Valdez Animal Shelter,



Above, Katie Daniel receives a grateful kiss from a shelter dog during a bath. Below, Marisa Brown, left, and Mykaela Rybak give a pair of cats some attention. Opposite page, a shelter cat ready for adoption.

such as walking dogs, bathing puppies, grooming cats, cleaning, taking photos of animals, helping to find homes, fundraising, participating on the FVAS Board of Directors, providing foster care or simply playing with the animals.

In addition to volunteering, the shelter is always looking for donations of towels, blankets, straw, dog and cat treats and toys, and airline kennels. No act of kindness goes unnoticed by the shelter animals, so don't throw your used items away.

With so many animals passing through the shelter, the shelter staff is forced to go beyond Valdez to look for good homes. The shelter hopes to find someone in the Copper Basin willing to advertise pets from the shelter in their area.

Looking beyond our backyard, many animals go great distances to find a family. Animals have been shipped to the East Coast. In



July, a dog was adopted by people in Tucson, Arizona.

One of the shelter's newly adopted dogs wins the award for the farthest traveled. He is on his way to Scotland.

Adopting an animal from the shelter is easy. Interested families need to fill out a form and partici-

pate in an interview. The cost is \$30 for a dog adoption, \$25 for cats. The prices for other animals vary, depending on the species.

The cost includes spaying/neutering, an identification microchip, a rabies shot and a city license for a dog.

If you already have a furry family addition, the shelter is a great place to find information on animal care and training. It has a lending library, free literature, and offer consultations with Shana. Tours, training and educational presentations are available to groups. ■

If you are interested in opening your home and your heart to a homeless pet, or would like to volunteer at the shelter or with Friends of the Valdez Animal Shelter, contact Shana Anderson at 835-4560 or 835-2286. For more information, visit www.ci.valdez.ak.us/animalcontrol.