

Animal lovers helping the Village Animal Shelter

[By Thomas G. Wolfe](#), Managing Director of Phillips Murrah P.C.

I'm reaching out to you as a fellow animal lover to make you aware of The Village Animal Shelter and to ask for your help to make much-needed improvements on behalf of the animals that find themselves there.

Early last summer, I read an article in the newspaper about The Village Animal Shelter and a woman named Cheryl Steckler (who runs The Pet Limousine in OKC), who was looking for volunteers to help walk and provide human interaction with dogs (and cats, but mostly dogs) that were confined there, sometimes for months on end and with no real hope in sight. Thinking Cheryl would be inundated with calls, like any reluctant volunteer, I waited a couple of weeks before I called her to see if I could assist.

Glad for the offer, she invited me to come see the shelter and meet some of the dogs. Cheryl is the driving force behind this, and I am only doing what I can to assist.

The shelter was built in the mid-eighties, and it shows. It's small, with only 6 cells for dogs and an even smaller area for cat cages. Inside the concrete-floored shelter, dogs spend most days in cages. On weekdays, weather permitting, they are allowed outside in small concrete runs. Most distressing, on weekends they are caged for 23 hours a day. Shelter employees are good people, but a lack of resources makes for a dire situation.



Making Things Better

To try to make the situation at least somewhat tolerable, volunteers purchased dog cots and some toys for each of the cages. Though the Village employees who run the shelter are really good people and do what they can, the situation is dire due to the aged state of the shelter and lack of resources.

So, Cheryl and I (but mostly Cheryl,) put together a small group of volunteers to try to make things better – now called the Village Animal League ("VAL").

The Village City Council has been very helpful and has worked hard to help us make things better. In addition to allowing the dogs to be walked during the week between 10 a.m.-3 p.m. and weekends early in the morning, the City Council has allowed Dr. Park (Britton Road Vet-Clinic) to administer vaccines, and we've engaged the Oklahoma Humane Society for spaying and neutering.

We've also had a number of dogs either directly adopted or transported to other states for adoption.



Emma enjoying some sleep at her new home after being adopted.

One of our favorite success stories is Emma, a pit-mix. Emma was in the shelter for 4 months, often by herself, going the first 3 months without walks or any human contact beyond the workers who cleaned her cell in the mornings and gave her food and water. Because the City Council worked with us, we got her vaccinated, spayed and adopted.

More Can Be Done

As time passed and we began to interact with the dogs on a regular basis, the goals of the volunteer group expanded. We decided that what we were doing wasn't enough, and that the shelter itself needed to be reconstituted to reflect a higher standard of care.

I went to a friend, Jim Abernathy, who, in addition to being a Village resident, is a great guy, a home-builder and dog lover. Jim helped design modifications to the existing structure that would provide for better, humane conditions for

the dogs, including modern cages, access to the outdoors, natural lighting, sanitary drainage, better flooring, and a play area with synthetic grass.

If you wonder about the current state of humanity, this part of the story will make you feel better. The total cost to complete Jim's plan is approximately \$94k, but fully 1/2 of the total cost, or \$47k, is being donated from the Construction industry: Jim Abernathy Homes; Midwest Wrecking; Moon Decorative Concrete; Chad Cramer, Evolve Design; Roman Castillo; Jenco Roof, McConnell Masonry; Pella Windows; Keith Bailey Plumbing; Oklahoma Air Conditioning; Trek Electric, Jack and Billy Krepps; Absolute Water Proofing; and Red River Fence. The City of The Village also graciously allocated \$28K.

NOW WE NEED YOU TO DONATE!! The Oklahoma Humane Society is accepting donations for this project through The Village Animal Shelter so that donations will be tax deductible.

Here's How to Donate

- Make checks payable to Oklahoma Humane Society, write in the memo line: "Village Animal League" or "VAL Fund," and mail to P0 Box 18471, OK 73154.
- To donate online, go to www.okhumane.org/donate/one-time-donations, click the "Donate Now" button, reference "Village Animal League" or "VAL Fund."
- Or, call 405-286-1229.

Thank you,

Tom



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