

TAPS board, staff show off 'miracle'

By Elizabeth Farrell

Times correspondent

PEKIN - The Tazewell Animal Protective Society welcomed guests Sunday afternoon to a ribbon cutting ceremony and reception in celebration of its new building at 100 TAPS Lane, off of Route 29.

This is the shelter's fifth location in Pekin since 1958 when TAPS was chartered by the city as a non-profit organization.

"We'll put this building to good use," Henry Cakora, TAPS board

president, told the many attendees - including Mayor Frank Mackaman and former Mayor

Dave Tebben - who

gathered outside for the

ribbon cutting.

Cakora thanked all the people involved in the project, saying it was truly a group effort.

He estimated the new facility will end up costing about \$435,000, adding that the new building will allow the staff to house and care for many more animals. Improvements include more space for cat cages, a large dog run-room, complete with heated floors and a hospital room.

Beth Locascio, TAPS office manager, said there has been talk about performing spays and neuters at the facility.

Fundraising for the new building, which began almost a year and half ago, was left to the Capital Campaign Committee led by Chairman Sue Kyle. Donations came from individuals as well as businesses, Kyle said.

The names of donors who donated \$500 or more are displayed on a plaque in the lobby of the new facility.

Special fundraising events, among them the annual Wine and Dine, also brought in money for the project.

Mary Chapman, a long-time supporter of TAPS who years ago started the Wine and Dine, said about the new building, "It's my dream come true to have a place like this. These people are amazing who have done this, they're angels

"This is something I know God made happen, getting all the people to work so hard," added Chapman, her eyes tearing up. "It is just a miracle."

Animals have not yet been moved into the new building, but plans are to begin the official move in a few weeks.

A few more things need to be taken care of "before we can bring in the animals," explained Jan Simpkins, TAPS board secretary, who was helping Rebekah Wilson, TAPS board treasurer, give guided tours.

"We need volunteers, we need help with everything," said Wilson.

Volunteers are needed to help with the TAPS Petfinder Web site, to work as administrative assistants, to make veterinary runs, to participate in off-site adoptions, to help with fundraising and to assist in the daily activities required by the shelter, such as walking the dogs and cleaning the cages.

Cakora said he was very pleased with people's reactions to the building, adding that he hopes the new shelter will mean a higher adoption rate and a broader awareness about the issues facing these animals.

"The best thing would be for us to put ourselves out of business," he said.