

TAPS' new home is the cat's meow

Shelter offers a place for felines to chill out, privacy rooms so people, pets can 'get acquainted'

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PEKIN - The cats and dogs at the Tazewell Animal Protective Society may have only moved a couple of miles away from their old shelter, but the difference in quality of life is worlds apart, according to officials.

About 100 cats and about 40 dogs living at TAPS made the move in truckloads from their former cramped and aged quarters at 2675 Allentown Road to their new digs at 100 TAPS Lane on Friday and during the weekend. The new facility is slated to open Tuesday after a long campaign raised money and volunteers devoted countless hours for a new shelter.

TAPS office manager Beth Lacascio said the new shelter will provide a healthier, happier and less stressful environment for the animals and better experience for potential adopters.

"All the way around, I think it's going to be better for the animals. The air quality is better, it's a newer, healthier building and there's a lot of features that are better for the animals," Lacascio said.

Dogs and cats have a processing area and "get-acquainted" and viewing rooms for adopters to spend private time with the animals.

Dog runs allow dogs to either stay inside in larger cages, or go outside through a small door built into each cage.

Cats can chill in the open cat room, which boasts cat toys, climbers, chairs and a couch to make their temporary home more like a real one.

The new facility is located on Pekin's south side off Illinois Route 29. The street - TAPS Lane - was named specifically for the organization. The land for the facility was donated by Alice and Henry Cakora, TAPS board president.

It also has a training center, a maternity room, a surgery room for sterilization and other minor treatments and recovery room. The air handling system is designed to minimize the spread of disease and there's even a quarantine room to isolate animals.

TAPS is a not-for-profit agency that takes in about 800 cats and dogs a year.

Money for the \$430,000 facility was raised through a capital campaign and more money is expected when TAPS sells the Allentown Road facility, which is valued at about \$150,000.

The old facility, which is less than half the size of the new one, lacks many of those amenities. Some of the living spaces for the dogs have been deemed inadequate and cramped by TAPS supporters.

Animals had to remain in cages in the Allentown Road facility. The rooms were also much smaller and had inadequate air flow, which encourages the spread of disease, said TAPS Director Sue Taffar.

"The (old) facility is just so run down and it's kind of depressing," Taffar said. "The animals will be happier and I hope (the new facility) will improve our volunteer basis."

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