

Big day for animal shelter as donations keep coming

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PEKIN, Ill. — Hours after receiving a monetary donation from a group of junior high students, Tazewell Animal Protective Society welcomed a well-timed donation of pet food from a local PETCO Thursday.

Larry Masterson, the new manager of the PETCO store on West Lake Avenue in Peoria, presented TAPS with \$6,100 worth of pet-care supplies. According to TAPS Executive Director Angela Blackman, the donation included hundreds of containers of “kitten milk” and pouches of soft kitten food; more than 100 cat litter boxes; as well as dozens of containers of dog biscuits and packages of dog food.

She said the timing of the donation was perfect.

“The kitten milk is especially amazing because it’s kitty/puppy season,” Blackman said. “Usually the spring and summer are when the cats and dogs give birth, so the kitten milk is important right now.”

Through an animal shelter and a system of 35 foster homes, TAPS currently houses 150 cats and 57 dogs. Blackman said the organization goes through about 16,000 pounds of pet food every year. The shelter on Taps Lane is so full that Blackman is keeping an “office cat” named Rudy. Rudy is a playful, fat cat who lives in Blackman’s office and who has already claimed most of Blackman’s chair, causing her to sit on just the very edge of her seat while she spoke with the Pekin Daily Times.

However, it is TAPS’s “no kill” policy that draws many of its supporters. Speaking before the drop-off, Masterson commended the organization’s goal of providing homes for all pets, and giving them proper training when necessary. PETCO allows TAPS to show some of its animals at their store site.

“We’re trying to work together, because PETCO believes in adoption first,” Masterson said. “We don’t sell any new pets or anything like that, and TAPS’, of course, goal is to find new homes.”

Blackman said TAPS is a privately funded organization that relies on donations and fund-raisers. She added companies have often donated food in the past when they switch their labeling and need to get rid of the food with the old labels. According to Blackman, TAPS has to buy very little of its pet food; usually only when an animal requires specialized food.

A TAPS delegation also regularly goes out to PETCO to solicit donations from pet owners.

“It’s really nice to have store support,” Blackman said. “It’s great to be a part of a community that believes in making a difference.”

In addition to relying on monetary and supply donations, TAPS also relies on volunteers to accomplish a lot of its goals. People can volunteer to be a foster home — and have all the resources needed provided by the organization — or a volunteer could be a dog walker or a cat cuddler, which is exactly what it sounds like.

People who wish to find out more about TAPS and how to help out can learn more at www.tapsshelter.org. The site is being redesigned for free by an East Peoria-based firm, providing another example of the many ways people can help.

Blackman said TAPS is a wonderful organization with which to get involved because, while not all animals get adopted, “at least they have somewhere to be.”

TAPS supply and demand

Donation from PETCO:

- 405 containers of kitten milk
 - 936 pouches of soft cat food
 - 108 kitty litter boxes
 - 85 containers of dog biscuits
 - 80 packages of dog food
- = \$6,100

TAPS:

- 1 animal shelter
 - 35 foster homes
 - 150 cats
 - 57 dogs
- = 16,000 lbs. of food used per year

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