

New shelter fund-raising underway

By Kimberly Horg

KHORG@LEDGER-DISPATCH.COM

To some, the members in their family who are hairy and walk on all fours are cherished and adored (if they are not Homosapiens). The animals who are waiting to become loyal pets, "man's best friend," are now getting something back in return: Better treatment in an updated facility.

Fund-raising efforts that will go toward the county's new animal shelter will now begin. It was announced by the board at the Amador County Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 28 that the Amador County Animal Control Organizational Assessment and Recommendations are on track and the go ahead was given to move forward to establish funds.

"It is a common sense decision that will make the shelter work. I feel everyone is on the right track and that we will have a successful shelter," District One County Supervisor Rich Escamilla said.

"In July of 2004 we asked that an organization review be taken because of the concerns of the public and today staff is here to review the outcome of that review," County Administrative

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Officer Patrick Blacklock said.

"There are a number of concerns by volunteers and the public. I interviewed 17 individuals, full-time and extra help and everybody I interviewed has shared goals. All of the same key themes: A challenged capacity, very few policies, a lack in training and record keeping, reduction in euthanasia and to implement a more efficient system to collect wildlife on the road as well as collecting and disposing of dead deer were all stated by multiple individuals," Deputy County Administrative Officer Sara McClellan said.

Amador County General Services Administration Assistant Director Jon Hopkins and McClellan have been reviewing an action plan for the shelter over the last couple of months. They concluded that a plan needs to be developed with 10 focus areas including to clarify and affirm the reporting structure/chain of command, employee roles and

responsibilities, reduce work loads, develop critical policies and procedures, improve existing facilities, increase shelter office technical capacity, improve record keeping, develop and implement training priorities for the staff, improve relationships between volunteers and employees and improve internal employee communication.

"I want to let the board know that the decisions we are making are informed. Our goal is to kick out a policy every couple of weeks so you can see where we are going," Hopkins said. "You can't make everyone happy but we are going to try."

"We are on the cusp of developing a much superior facility," McClellan said.

"The goals are achievable but it will take work," District Two Supervisor Richard Forster said.

"You have a good strategy. We are on our way," District Four Supervisor Louis Boitano said.