

Daily Reporter

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Animal welfare nonprofit seeks volunteers; PetSmart partnership boosts adoptions

By **Rorye Hatcher** - February 1, 2017

HANCOCK COUNTY — A nonprofit dedicated to finding homes for stray animals needs volunteers to help it keep up with the demand now that the group has entered into a partnership with a local pet store.

Officials with Partners for Animal Welfare Society Inc. of Hancock County say they need community members to help in the adoption area at PetSmart, which opened in mid November and agreed to feature local PAWS animals in need of homes.

PAWS typically sees about 25 cats and dogs adopted per month; that number has increased to 30-plus per month thanks to the exposure the animals receive at the pet store, said PAWS founder Nancy Rubino. Nearly a dozen cats and kittens have been adopted through the partnership between the organization and the business in about two months, she said.

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The all-volunteer PAWS operates a small retail store and adoption center at 3141 U.S. 40 West but holds adoption events at the Greenfield Tractor Supply store, 1645 N. State St., in addition to its relatively new partnership with PetSmart, in an effort to get more pets in front of families.

The newest location means a greater need for volunteers to care for adoptable animals.

Rubino hopes to get as many as 15 new volunteers to help with the daily cleaning and cuddling of cats at PetSmart, 2211 Barrett Drive, as only three people are currently volunteering to tackle the task, she said. It currently takes those three volunteers about three hours a day to care for the animals' needs, she said.

PAWS has about 40 volunteers on its roster, with a core group of about 12 who step up to help with the daily cleaning and feeding chores, Rubino said.

The partnership with PAWS already has had some unexpected benefits, she added. At least two volunteers discovered PAWS because of the adoption area at PetSmart — Stephanie Wainscott of Shirley and her son, Joshua Wainscott, 11, began volunteering with the organization after a visit to the pet store.

"We've been coming ever since visiting PetSmart," Wainscott said. "It's (my son's) favorite thing to do."

PAWS aims to promote animal welfare in Hancock County through education and pet population control by developing education programs, promoting shelter adoptions and providing improvements to shelter facilities.

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Partners for Animal Welfare Society of Hancock County, or P.A.W.S., is seeking volunteers to help clean the pet adoption area at PetSmart and cuddle the adoptable pets there.

PetSmart, which held its grand opening in mid-November, is located at 2211 Barrett Drive, Greenfield, just north of Gander Mountain.

To volunteer with P.A.W.S., email pawshancock@aol.com or call the P.A.W.S. office at 317-318-9483.

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