

Statement from the Cedar Valley Humane Society Board of Directors

On Thursday, September 3 2009, The Cedar Valley Humane Society experienced the transition of several staff members. This was the culmination of a sequence of events set in motion by the earlier decision by us, the Board of Directors, to search for an Executive Director to add to the existing staff. We had concluded this action was necessary in order to address a range of issues related to the operation of the humane society and in order to ensure its effectiveness in the future.

We had hoped to be able to implement this transition in an orderly manner so as not to disrupt the operation of the humane society and impact the care of the animals. But, that was not to be. As a result of the efforts of some, these events have been the focus of some media attention and public speculation. After these events became public, we resisted discussing them publicly, preferring instead to focus on implementing the needed changes as quickly as possible and moving forward.

Unfortunately, it is clear that we will not be allowed to do that. In an attempt to clear the air and put to rest baseless rumors and accusations, we would like to share some details regarding the state of affairs we were confronted with on September 3.

Animal Care

Unhealthy conditions in cat intake areas. Many cats (approximately 75%) in the cat intake area, where cats are initially housed and evaluated prior to moving into an adoption area, were sick, primarily with upper respiratory infections. This is common in shelters where conditions are allowed to become overcrowded. It was made worse by inadequate ventilation and high humidity levels. **Immediate Action:** Working with the shelter's contracted veterinarian and Anne Duffy from Kirkwood Community College's Veterinary Technician program, the animals were immediately started on a medication regimen. **Today:** That number has since been reduced to about 30% as the result of rigorous adherence to veterinary treatment programs and the implementation of an effective isolation room.

Disregarded veterinary treatment programs. Prior to the transition, our contract veterinarian had prescribed treatment programs for numerous animals and had provided medications to be administered by staff. After the transition, it was discovered that these treatment protocols had largely been disregarded and the animals gone untreated, despite the medication being readily available in the building. **Immediate Action:** These treatment programs were immediately restarted. **Today:** Many of the animals have recovered and been adopted into new homes.

Lack of effective isolation space to prevent the spread of disease. The building lacked an effective isolation room in which cats with illnesses could be isolated from the general population while being treated. Establishment of such a room had been identified as a priority by our veterinarian but no effective steps had been taken by staff to implement such a room. **Immediate Action:** Steps to create the isolation room were set at high priority in order to have

completed as soon as possible. **Today:** That room has now been established and we have seen immediate benefits of it in the form of reduced illness levels.

Overall health and euthanasia levels. As described above, the overall level of care was such that infection control and cross-contamination were not being managed effectively. This resulted in high rates of illness within the general population and the need to euthanize animals that might otherwise have been treated or prevented from becoming ill in the first place. **Immediate Action:** Treatment programs were instituted, an isolation room established. **Today:** Due to improved operational processes and efficiencies, and the overall improved health of the animals in our care, we have seen a drop in the need for euthanasia practices.

Lack of documented procedures for animal care and cleaning. No written procedures existed for animal care or cleaning. **Immediate Action:** Staff and volunteers were trained on effective animal care and cleaning procedures. **Today:** Written procedures are now under development to ensure consistent and effective care and cleaning.

Inadequate animal care records. Records regarding the care and treatment of animals were not well organized or managed. This made it difficult to track animals as they moved through the facility and even maintain a 100 percent accurate accounting of how many entered and what the outcomes were. **Immediate Action:** All records through the facility were inventoried and organized and new records were created if needed. **Today:** We are in the process of evaluating the entire the record process to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Inadequate management of foster and rescue programs. It wasn't clear that all the necessary due diligence was being performed and legal requirements regarding foster program and rescue groups were being complied with. **Today:** The foster and rescue program is being revised to ensure compliance with all legal requirements and to ensure optimal care for the animals that we entrust to others. Foster programs and cooperation with rescue programs are vital parts of shelter operations and we are committed to strengthening and expanding ours as much as possible.

Cats kept in inadequate housing. Several cats were found being kept in a small house next door to the shelter. These cats were suspected of being ill and had been moved into this house in an attempt to isolate them from the rest of the population. The conditions in the house were unsuitable, however. **Immediate Action:** The cats were removed from the house and placed into the shelter. **Today:** Animals are no longer being housed in that location and will not be moving forward.

Adoptions

Adoption applications not being followed up on. Immediately following the transitions several pending adoption applications were found. In some cases the adopters had made repeated calls to the shelter inquiring about the status of their application but had not received a return call. These applications represented animals in the shelter that could have been in homes. **Immediate Action:** Within hours, pending and new adoptions were facilitated. **Today:** We are revising our adoption process to ensure more efficient operation that will allow us to adopt out more animals, more quickly.

Adoption spaces. Cat adoption spaces were not being utilized as effectively as possible. This resulted in fewer cats being available for adoption than could be, making it harder for cats to find new homes. **Immediate Action:** We added large, tiered cages in the lobby to increase adoption space for kittens. **Today:** We've reconfigured an adoption rooms and designated one area for adult cats and the other for kittens. This gives us two adult spaces now as opposed to only one. We utilize the cages within the rooms to allow cats to adapt to the room prior to release into the room. As cats get adopted from the room it allows us to release new cats into the rooms and move up new cats to "holding" adoption cages. This change has resulted in increased cat adoptions.

Animal Control

Lack of documentation and outdated animal control agreements. Animal control agreements with some municipalities were undocumented and others had not been updated in several years. **Today:** We are working to establish and update agreements as soon as possible.

Financial and Business Records

Lack of a financial audit. It had been many years, at least, since a full financial audit had been performed. Earlier this year, we had initiated an audit and were awaiting the report at the time of the transition. **Today:** The audit report has since been provided by the audit firm and the recommendations from the report will be immediately implemented.

Unorganized administrative and business records. Business and administrative files were unorganized and difficult to access. **Immediate Action:** We began weeding through the files and reorganizing. **Today:** We continue to work on streamlining the administrative functions and record keeping processes.

Housekeeping

Equipment in disrepair and poorly maintained. Several pieces of equipment had been allowed to fall into disrepair or were being poorly maintained. This includes an air conditioning unit that had been allowed to operate for some time without any filters in place, resulting in a blocked coil necessitating costly repairs. Additionally, a broken washer that was only months old had been left with water inside the machine for so long that it had molded, causing unsafe conditions for the animals and staff. **Immediate Action:** We prioritized the equipment that needed to be repaired and scheduled the repairs immediately (including the air conditioner and washer). **Today:** Equipment continues to be repaired as needed to allow more efficient operations.

Cluttered offices and storage spaces. Offices and storage spaces were cluttered and in need of cleaning and reorganizing. Outdated medications and supplies were found throughout the facility, often in unexpected places. **Immediate Action:** A group of volunteers spent an entire day cleaning and organizing the shelter's storage areas and filled an entire dumpster of garbage

from inside the facility. **Today:** The space gained from this purge is now being used more effectively and we continue to weed through these spaces and reorganize as time allows.

Since the departure of the staff members on September 3, we navigated an interim period while we completed the search for an Executive Director. That search has completed and our new Executive Director, Zach Melton, began work last month. Since starting, he has worked diligently to begin to address the issues described above, among others, while continuing to ensure that the animals are cared for and as many as possible are adopted into permanent homes.