

THE BUTLER COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY

CARING FOR ANIMALS ON THEIR FOREVER-HOME JOURNEY

By Heather Cherry

For over 100 years, the Butler County Humane Society (BCHS) has worked to provide forever homes for unloved, lost, and discarded animals. “We provide a haven to these animals on the journey to their forever home,” Michelle Edinger, Director of Development at BCHS, said. “We’re most proud that for the last 20 years, we have been a no-kill shelter. We don’t dispose of any animals. We keep them here—we will share them with other rescues if we can fulfill a need.”

In addition to a sanctuary, BCHS provides educational activities on humane animal treatment and spaying and neutering. “It is important to look at the reason why there are humane societies or animal rescues. It’s because there are unwanted and unloved animals,” Edinger said. “Our dream is not to need animal shelters, but until then, we have to look at the root cause and do our part to prevent it.”

“[Not spaying or neutering animals] result in an overpopulation, and animals get discarded,” Edinger added. “One key part of being a responsible pet owner is to get your animals spayed and neutered so that the animal population doesn’t increase.”

At BCHS, all dogs and cats of any age are accepted. “There is no age limit. Any unwanted animal, we will take,” Edinger said. “We have a great foster program. Our foster families care for the animals in a home-like environment, which greatly benefits the animals—they are better prepared for when a home opportunity develops.”

“It is quite amazing to me—seeing how well the animals transition out of the shelter and into a home,” Edinger added.

The foster relationship is significant for puppies that may have been rejected by their mother. “These puppies need more human-animal socialization. Any animal that is still breastfeeding typically moves into our foster care system,” Edinger said. “

She knows firsthand how rewarding (and beneficial) fostering a pet can be. Recently, Edinger took on fostering a senior dog. “She is flourishing. She has a spring in her step—she is happy, and her tail wags,” Edinger said. “When I took her in, her tail was down, and she was lethargic. Now we go on frequent walks, and she’s thrilled. It is gratifying to witness the difference it makes pulling an animal out of the shelter and into a home.”

Not only does the shelter provide a loving and nurturing environment—all animals

receive medical care upon arrival.

“As soon as an animal comes into the shelter, they receive medical care—they receive vaccinations, spayed or neutered, and a microchip,” Edinger said. “Medical care is one of our biggest expenses. Every animal continues to receive medical care as long as they are here.”

While animals await their forever home, they still receive love from the staff. “The staff love the animals and are focused on them. We bring animals into our offices to help socialize them,” Edinger said. “Some animals have been a stray their whole life, so they don’t trust humans. Our staff sits on the floor to do paperwork so the animal can sit close to them and build their trust—showing them that not all humans are bad.”

“There are a lot of big hearts out there, and it is amazing to walk into someone’s office, see them sitting on the floor and doing their work so they can be close to an animal,” Edinger added. “As an animal lover myself, having animals in my office regularly is great.”

What makes the difference is a large number of volunteers. “We have a huge number of volunteers, and they are critical to our operation,” Edinger said. “They do everything from cleaning to walking dogs to taking cats outside in a cat stroller to see the sunshine and the birds. We can’t say enough positive things about our volunteers.”

HOW TO ADOPT A PET

If you’re considering adopting a pet, visit the BCHS website. You can view animals that are available and complete your application. References, including from your Veterinarian, are required. “If a person is going to bring a pet to their home, we verify a good relationship with their Veterinarian,” Edinger said. “We call references—assessing the applicant can handle a pet.”

Once the application is approved, adopters come in and are provided with medical information about the pet. “If people have existing pets at home, we ask that they have an introduction with the pet they want to adopt,” Edinger said. “The last thing we want to do is have an animal come back.”

The length of the adoption process depends on how quickly referrals respond—but typically, the entire process takes about a week. “If anyone is thinking about getting a pet, I recommend completing the application now,” Edinger said. “We can pre-approve it—that

way, you can keep an eye out for animals that come available.”

“Applications are kept on file and remain approved until you’re ready to start the adoption process,” Edinger said. “We’re here to match animals with families, and we do what we can to make that happen.”

If you’re interested in adoption but worried about the commitment, foster-to-adopt might be a viable option. “Our foster-to-adopt program allows families to take a dog into their home and do a “test run”—exposing the dog to your home and family. It’s a very nice option—especially if you’re not sure.”

On a final note, Edinger shares her gratitude for the community members that support BCHS. “We appreciate the community’s generosity. That’s very important to us, and we realize we could not do it without them.”

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2020:

- 741 animals came into the shelter, and 532 were adopted
- 103 lost animals were reunited with their owners
- 120 dogs were spayed or neutered and over 500 cats were spayed or neutered
- 303 animals were cared for by our foster families

For more information, visit butlercountyhs.org.