

## Critters get new homes through adoption program

By **JOSIE MUSICO**  
Staff Writer

Four-legged visitors to Brownfield's animal shelter have a great temporary home, but staff and supporters still hope they don't exceed their stay.

Instead, they encourage animal lovers to consider giving them new, permanent habitations through their adoption program.

"We work with the vet to get some of these adopted," said Chief of Police Tony Serbantez.

Prospective new owners must be 18 or older and meet approval based on their past pet ownership. Adopted animals receive a rabies vaccination and are spayed or neutered, which supporters feel is a win-win for both the owners - who won't have a litter of puppies to care for - and for the city's animal-control department, which will thereby be responsible for fewer animals.

"One of the adoption requirements is that they get spayed or neutered - the dog gets an owner and they're not out there reproducing," Serbantez said.

Animal Control Officer Plutarco Castro noted that some animals formerly held in the shelter have since found new homes as far away as Austin and Houston.

More than 250 animals have been adopted since the shelter opened in late 2008, replacing an older facility located southwest in Coleman Park. The now-four-year-old

building has holding facilities for 16 dogs and four cats, and contains heating and air conditioning and plumbing systems.

Dogs and cats are likely to land a spot in the shelter after they are caught loose or unrestrained in the community. If they are not claimed, they are fed and cared for the next three days until they are euthanized as a last resort for controlling the pet population.

"We get a lot of calls from people who think the animal shelter is just a place for euthanasia, and that's not the case," said Friends of the Brownfield Animal Shelter Secretary Tracie Bateman. "...We feed animals and put them in adoption programs."

They can remain longer under certain circumstances, though, such as if staff have reason to suspect their owners were away on vacation and unaware they were missing. They scan animals for microchips that list their owners' names and contact information, then attempt to reach them if they determine they have indeed been implanted with those chips.

"We try to locate the owners," Serbantez said.

And to reduce the overpopulation that leads to the unfortunate demand for the shelter's euthanasia service, consider a quick trip to the veterinary clinic.

"We encourage everybody to spay and neuter their animals, because euthanasia is the result of what

happens when you don't," Bateman said.

Formed in 2010 and managed completely by volunteer efforts, the eight-member Friends of the Brownfield Animal Shelter committee also sponsors a pet foster program for animals awaiting long-term adoption, and several annual fund-raising projects such as the Relay for Paws walk around Coleman Park, a "Howl-oween" dog costume contest, Christmas Open House, flea and tick vaccinations and pet food donations to low-income families.

For information about how to foster or adopt an animal from the shelter, please call the Terry County Veterinary Hospital at 585-6363 or the Brownfield Police Department at 637-2511.



Animal Control Officer Plutarco Castro offers a neck rub to Blue, one of the temporary residents of the Brownfield Animal Shelter. The shelter is home to several dogs and cats currently available for adoption.

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