

## The Cumberland County Animal Control Center

By

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I feel a great love for animals, so I decided to interview someone from the Cumberland County Animal Control Center-- Ann Chalker, the Rescue and Volunteer Coordinator. I was very surprised by what she had to tell me, and I learned the importance of her job and the shelter.

One of my first questions for Ms. Chalker was why there are so many animals in the shelter. According to FAPS (Fayetteville Animal Protection Society) 800 to 1000 animals that are adoptable are euthanized **every single month**. Mrs. Chalker explained that there are really two major reasons for the large intake of animals at the shelter. One reason is that most people do not realize how much responsibility required to own a pet. You have to be available for feeding and watering it, and exercising and training it. Many people do not realize how time consuming it is. The second reason there are so many homeless animals is that most people fail to realize the financial responsibility of owning a pet. Paying for pet grooming, food, and medical expenses add up extremely quickly. People lacking the time and money needed to care for their pets are two main reasons that animals are brought to the center; the Animal Control Center's intake of animals could be lowered if people were more aware of the commitment it takes to own a pet.

While interviewing Ms. Chalker, I discovered the challenges of the animal control center. First, there are a lot of misconceptions about the animals found in the shelter. One misconception about the shelter is that the only dogs and cats that are up for adoption have attacked someone or have a disease. While there are some animals in the shelter with problems, the majority of the animals have amiable traits. "We've had problems with people taking pictures of sick animals and putting the pictures on the internet," Mrs. Chalker told me. "They say things like the animal is extremely sick and is up for adoption, and is going to be put

down in a three days, which gives people a bad idea about the shelter; but really, that wasn't even the case with that dog." When people have preconceived notions about the shelter, they steer clear of adopting, even if those notions are wrong. "After we receive an animal at the shelter, and it's been washed and brushed, we put up a picture online. That's one of our biggest hooks to get people to adopt," Mrs. Chalker explained. When people are aware that there are family-friendly dogs at the shelter, they are more likely to adopt.

I found it interesting that the government funds animal control. The county provides the "basic necessities" for the shelter, like food, medicine, and the Animal Control Center's staff. . While this is very important to the shelter, the animal control center lacks other things that would be helpful to have. When I asked Mrs. Chalker what donations were needed at the shelter, she said, "Really, just anything to improve the lives of the animals; things like toys, treats, blankets, shampoos, and flea treatments. We have some flea treatments provided if the animal's condition is life-threatening, but otherwise, it isn't really covered." The shelter's first goal is to "control the animals" and protect the public from any aggressive animals; however, the shelter also believes in giving the animals as much of a normal environment as possible, relying on donations to improve the quality of their lives.

After interviewing Ms. Chalker, I realized just how important animal control is to Cumberland County. A plethora of adoptable animals are put down each year, because the public is unaware of the responsibility it requires to own a pet. Some people do not adopt from the Animal Control Center because they are under the false impression that the animals are dangerous or sick. The funding only covers the basic necessities for the animal control center. Even though the Animal Control Center, and donations are needed. Even though the Animal Control Center faces many difficult problems, it continues to provide homes for many animals, and prevents them from becoming a public menace.