Meeting Notes – May 10, 2022

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, May 10, for its weekly program. We were honored to have Larry Bates, our assistant governor, visit with us today.

Dantz Frazer was responsible for the program and had invited Shawn SIms, executive director of the Chambers County Humane Society, to speak to the club. She has been the executive director since 2005. Shawn spoke of the decline in euthanasia rates. As a result of the pandemic and having to move to appointments to bring in unwanted animals, the center has been better able to control the number of animals coming in and is able to determine how many need to be moved out to accommodate those arriving. Since January, only three dogs have had to be euthanized. More cats, mostly feral ones, have been euthanized. Less than 10% of the animals brought in were euthanized, compared to a rate of 70-80% previously. In the year 2020, of the 1100 dogs brought in, only 11 had to be euthanized. State law requires that the center hold strays for seven (7) days. Shawn reports that very few owners reclaim their animals.

Shawn spoke of proactive measures they try to make. Adoption programs have been used in the past, but the requirements of the program make it difficult. To be part of an adoption program the animals must be fully vaccinated, spayed or neutered, disease tested and dewormed. Because the local vets are so backed up, and because of the cost of these procedures, it is hard to accomplish all of this in a timely and affordable manner. They do work with rescue operations to remove some of the animals from the shelter. Currently, most of the dogs in the Chambers County are bulldogs. Because the city of Lanett prohibits residents from having bulldogs within city limits and the city of West Point has several restrictions which have to be met before a resident can keep a bulldog. So, it is difficult to move these dogs out of the center to free up space for other dogs. Currently, there are 15 cat kennels and 16 dog kennels. Depending on the size of the dog, more than one dog may be able to share a kennel. In their new facility, cats now have a community room where they are free to roam outside of their cages.

One of Shawn's responsibilities is to oversee the budget. The cities of LaFayette, Lanett and Valley, as well as the Chambers County Commission, all contribute financially. Unfortunately, the pet adoption fee does not cover all of the costs of taking care of the animals, so the budget runs in deficit. The center had four full time employees and one part-time worker. They are in need of volunteers to walk and interact with the animals, as well as donated supplies (cat food, dog food, cat litter, etc.). Because the budget does not allow for competitive pay or benefits, it is hard to attract and maintain employees.

Diane Sherriff