



Shannon Walter/Index

Adoption specialist Shelley Wells (left) and Missy Decker (right), manager of the Adair County Humane Society, said they have seen their share of sad stories with the animals that arrive, but they also have a wall full of photos of animals who have found loving homes.

Animals find home with locals

BY SHANNON WALTER
Staff Reporter

Barking echoes through the tiny building filled with the overwhelming smell of the animal residents trapped in their cages waiting for the sweet smile of a person welcoming them home.

This is what bombards visitors when they arrive at the Adair County Humane Society. Volunteers and those looking to adopt pull up to the brick building bursting at the seams with animals. After taking a step out of the car, the visitor is faced with happiness, sadness, yearning and much more from the faces of caged cats and dogs.

The summer heat or bitter winter cold makes the animals seem anxious, and they simply want to stretch their legs with a friend on a walk or with a family in a nice home. The puppies yelping in their cages quickly distract most visitors. Others go straight for the kittens. Some, however, get caught by the first thing they see when they walk in: the two women sitting just inside.

They've spent all morning cleaning kennels, doing laundry and chasing slobbering puppies back into their cages. They are perturbed from dealing with a few unpleasant people but are delighted to see those who desperately want to find a new four-legged companion.

They are there about six days a week to appreciate the joy of a family leaving with their newly adopted friend, the exhaustion of caring for hundreds of animals at once, the appreciation for the volunteers who help every day no matter what, the anger of receiving abused animals and the fear of having no place to put them all.

Missy Decker, manager of the Adair County Humane Society, is one of these women. She knows the name and personality of each and every animal at the shelter; she's a sucker for Chihuahuas and she has five dogs of her own at home. If she could take



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Missy Decker said the shelter has many volunteers from the University who walk the animals and give them attention.

them all home, she said she would. If she could ensure they would all be happy, she would.

"A lot of the animals have it better here than they have ever had in their lives, and that's a sad thing that a shelter environment with concrete floors and so many other dogs should be the best," she said. "But they have blankets, full bellies, warm temperatures and hundreds of devoted volunteers."

Education is Decker's biggest goal. The shelter offers a refundable deposit for spaying and neutering to reduce the pet population. They encourage parents and schools to teach proper pet care, and Decker answers any questions she is asked about the animals at the Humane Society and their practices.

"Many people have never thought about controlling the population by spaying or neutering, but they understand once we talk to them," she said. "It's the first thing I think about every day, and I'm really glad when I see that people have learned about it and

can make a change by educating people they know."

Decker said she thinks the rural setting of Kirksville contributes to the poor education of pet care, and this is the same of several other shelters in rural Missouri. Many of the animals brought into the shelter have never been on a leash or are not house trained because of the country lifestyle many people employ with their pets in northeast Missouri.

"It's very frustrating to see people who simply have a dog as a lawn ornament that they don't walk or play with," she said. "People bring in their old dogs because they want new ones, and the first thing that hits my head is a worry of what happens if I don't take them in. Who has to sacrifice their space in their cage? Are they going to drop them on the side of the road on the way home? These things scare me every day."

Decker has worked at the shelter for six years, and she said these problems have never gotten easier.

"The hardest thing for me is watch-

ing the ones you're attached to go home, not knowing if you'll see them again and hoping that they'll have a better life," she said.

Shelley Wells, the adoption specialist at the shelter, sits quietly next to Decker as she lets her do most of the talking, interjecting only a few times to laugh, smile or make her own comment.

"All six senses happen every day," she said. "I see, smell, taste, touch, hear and think about these animals."

Decker said she agreed, but also experiences many moments of joy each day. People in the community bring in donations, hundreds of volunteers never let them down each week and several animals find great new homes each day, she said.

"There's a positive side to everything here," she said. "I have met the best people here. You will meet magical, amazing, selfless people when it comes to animals. There are so many people that will help us with anything."

The walls of the office are adorned with pictures, letters and postcards from families who are so thankful for their new member of the family. Decker points at each one knowing their new life has finally overshadowed their bad beginning.

The shelter partners with several rescue organizations throughout the United States to send dogs and cats to new homes. Animals of all breeds and sizes have been sent as far as Alaska and even picked up in private planes. A map on the wall shows the many cities and states to which they have traveled. Decker said she hopes to see the map covered one day.

"I cry every day," she said. "Sometimes it's a good cry, sometimes it's bad. It never gets easier. We see about 50 people a day, and by the 50th person, I'm not very polite anymore. But seeing the animals happy makes it all worth it. Watching animals that you never thought would leave their cage playing with volunteers who are training them and giving them the attention they deserve makes [my job] worth it."

"It's an old-timey kind of show, and it's definitely a story about getting out there and living. [The characters] are just people that just want to live and experience life and fall in love and stuff like that so, I mean, that can happen in Kirksville."

Jackie Gonzalez
Director

PLAY | Variety of locals work together in new play, "The Matchmaker"

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"Hey, can we borrow this?" and have the community be so enthusiastically cooperative.

Because of this enthusiasm, Allemang said they almost never rely on sponsors.

"With all the volunteer work we get and all the support we get from the community, we haven't asked for money because we haven't needed to," Allemang said.

Allemang, a retired federal employee, teaches home-schooled high school students, with whom she puts on two shows a year, does theater in her church and is a Curtain Call board member.

"If I'm not in the show as an actress, I try to take a job doing something else," Allemang said. "Helping backstage with the props or whatever I can do to help because it takes a major team to put on a show — double the people that are out on the stage."

One of Allemang's home-schooled students, Arielle Willis, played August in the production, and is the youngest actress — having turned 16 years old just days before opening night. Willis said she enjoys working with the older, more varied age groups Curtain Call allows for.

"I actually like it better than working with peers because there's not as much pressure I think," Willis said. "And they don't really expect you to be a certain way."

Arielle Willis said she was able to perform with her dad, Mark Willis, who played Horace Vandergelder, which was a new and fun experience.

Mark Willis is an ordained minister and counselor and was involved in Campus Crusade for Christ at Truman for 10 years, an organization in which he participated in skits across campus weekly. He said he hasn't been in a real play since 1978, making his key role in this one a little intimidating, but said he is grateful for the unique experience of community that working with Curtain Call has provided.

"It's been incredible," Willis said. "First of all, seeing how many people from different aspects of the community come together and team up has been really encouraging because we received all kinds of donations from different groups in the community as well just people here from all kinds of walks of life. There's a little bit of family atmosphere here."

Squirrelfest displays variety of talents



BY RUSS BECKMAN
Reviewer

If you were walking through the Student Union Building last Saturday afternoon, you most likely heard the sounds of one of the five bands playing in Dobson Hall's annual rock show called Squirrelfest. The concert was free, and the bands differed in talent, type of music and energy level, so there was something for every music lover.

The first band to take the stage was a five-piece band called Manhattan. The band consisted of Truman students Bonnie Birdsell on vocals, Robert Williams on bass, Drew Williams on guitar, Jason Baskin on drums and Colin Hunt on keyboard and Flugelhorn. Manhattan played mostly soft songs filled with jazzy beats and other interesting, artsy melodies.

When Manhattan was playing, there was always something entertaining to listen to. However, it was

the vocals that seemed to have the greatest presence. Birdsell used her talent as a jazz singer very well. Her sound was sassy, gritty and very emotional. She also was very melismatic, meaning she could sing many different notes over the course of one word. She reminded me of a deeper sounding, rougher version of Alicia Keys.

The flugelhorn also was a nice addition to the band. Although the other instruments often drowned out the sounds of the horn, Hunt played as one would a trumpet in a jazz band. This subtle addition gave a new color to their music that is not often found in many local bands.

The second band to play was Victory Service. This band played mostly alternative rock and power-pop songs. The band featured Collin Koenig on bass, Ross Carter on guitar, keyboard and vocals, Chris Gatzke on

guitar and vocals, Patrick Kramer on guitar and Jacob "Biscuit" Ratliff on drums.

The band got into a good groove early in its set and continued to play skillfully for the rest of its songs. The music was relaxed and fun. It did not make the listener want to get up and start dancing, but it did make people want to tap their feet and bob their heads. They played mostly original songs, but finished the set with a cover of Jason Derulo's "Watcha Say." Carter beautifully arranged the dance song to their style of rock music. The song sounded great, but the singer's voice was sometimes off key. The group's best song was one of their originals, "Cards on the Table." It was a simple song incorporating straightforward guitar riffs, a carefree melody and the whole band singing lyrics that were very well writ-

ten with great harmony.

The next band to play was Here After This, but unfortunately, three of the five members were unable to make it to the concert. Only Jeremy Tripp and Ross Carter took the stage with acoustic guitars. They played a couple of songs, the best one being Blue Oyster Cult's "Don't Fear the Reaper," and even though they did not have a cowbell, it still sounded great. Once again, Carter's arrangement skills impressed the crowd. Although usually played as a grungy hard rock song, Here After This transformed it into a beautiful song that seemed as if it was made to be played soft and sweet on acoustic guitar.

When Here After This finished, solo artist Evan Tyler took the stage under the name of What Machines Were. Tyler was very impressive both on his guitar and in his vocals, but he lacked originality. He sounded and looked exactly like Jason Mraz. He even wore the fedora hat Mraz is famous for. He was by far the most talented artist at the concert, but all of his songs revolved around puppy love and the soft crooning of

the audience. Tyler, an up-and-coming artist, has music available on iTunes, but without his own spark of originality, he most likely will not make it much further.

The last band to play was This Is Energy. The band is comprised of Adam Gardner on vocals and guitar, Britton Campbell on drum, Charlie Springhart on bass and Dave Baronio on guitar. They usually played a fusion of punk and pop music. The music was fast and the guitar and drums were played loudly and excitedly. The lyrics were uplifting and the band was somewhat reminiscent of Blink-182.

The band was talented, but the most impressive thing about This Is Energy was the amount of liveliness they possessed. They chose not to play on the stage like the other bands and insisted the audience join them in their dancing, clapping and singing along with the music. Most members of the audience eventually warmed up to the idea and soon much of the Hub was singing along in a call and response section of one song. This Is Energy left the audience in a good mood and was the right choice to end the concert.

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