

Humane Society of Cedar Creek Lake Faces Numerous Challenges

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CEDAR CREEK LAKE-- Facing increased costs and the opening of the new Kaufman County shelter, the Humane Society of Cedar Creek Lake (HSCCL) is asking for increased funding from the supported cities and counties.

Since Kaufman County has recently opened a new animal shelter HSCCL is facing a 50% funding shortfall. "What we are facing now are the continual effects of increased labor, supply and medical cost. But what is hitting us harder is the 50% reduction of funding now that the Kaufman County shelter is up and running," says HSCCL Board President Lanette Ainsworth.

With this cut in funding, along with the significant increases in payroll expenses, medical expenses and animal housing and supplies, HSCCL needs additional funding from the remaining cities and counties they support. This funding is critical to not only remain open but to continue operating in a humane way for the 3,000+ animals that are taken in annually. HSCCL's goal is to focus on finding forever homes versus the bleak alternatives.

HSCCL has asked for increased funding to all the cities and counties they support. They hope that our community supports our lifesaving mission and will step up to the new challenges we face by either calling their local officials and/or offering financial support.

In addition to requesting increased city and county support, the Board of Directors is also actively working on grant proposals, planning fundraisers and asking our community to support our operation with financial donations.

The daily cost to run a shelter is a bit of a moving target right now says Ainsworth. "The 2019 yearly expenses were \$419,000 and for 2021 we were at \$510,000. For example, in 2019, the 2019 cost for labor was \$228,000 and for 2021 it was \$293,000. For medical costs, we were at about \$100,000 for 2019 and for 2021 we were at \$126,000," she states. The cost to spay and neuter has almost doubled from 2019 and as you can imagine, these costs are still increasing.

The length of time that an animal spends at the shelter has also increased. Before the nationwide shelter crisis, the average time for an animal to be with us was a month, now that has increased to three months, explains Shelter Director Monika Allen.

HSCCL is actively using its surgery facility, which was funded by a significant grant from the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), to spay and neuter the shelter pets before or immediately after adoption. These spay and neuter costs are a major expense, especially when operating on large adult dogs which means more time and complications compared to younger dogs and cats. The monthly medical cost runs about \$8,500 a month with labor running close to \$25,000 which does not include the cost for food, supplies and everything else needed to run the shelter.

Other than local city contracts and generous donors, there are no additional funds coming into the shelter from national animal organizations. In addition to the funding from the cities and counties HSCCL provides services to, HSCCL also applies for grants, hosts fundraisers and rely on the community for donations. "We use all that funding to support each city and county's stray animal population in a humane way," says Ainsworth.

The Board has also asked for expanded support from multiple state animal welfare organizations without success. "HSCCL is not alone in its struggles. Other shelters and rescue organizations, both in Texas and throughout the United States, are still in a crisis. Some of these organizations are closing their doors due to lack of funding, increased cost and staffing challenges. Our shelter has also worked very hard in partnering with out-of-state shelters to transport our animals. These opportunities have unfortunately slowed as receiving shelters are also over capacity," says Allen.

Allen says she answers an overwhelming amount of calls from residents who find stray animals dumped, residents with unexpected or abandoned litters and pet owners who can no longer care for their pets. HSCCL has not been able to accept owner surrenders for months because adoptions have slowed significantly.

"We know it is annoying to have to deal with increased costs and know every city and its citizens are facing increased costs however, we have a common goal of keeping our community safe and we are hoping we can build from that common goal," says Ainsworth.

HSCCL says they offer review meetings with cities and counties that have contracts with HSCCL to review in detail the budget, expenses, animal intake and make sure all their questions are answered. It takes a partnership to run a community animal shelter. "We have met with other cities and counties to review our budget and get an understanding of the cost, money coming in, gaps and additional funding needed," says Ainsworth.

"We are grateful for everyone's support of our mission to rescue, nurture, adopt and continue to save the lives of Henderson County and various municipalities' pets that are mistreated or abandoned. We are grateful for any calls of support to city and county officials," says Allen. If you would like more information or to make a donation, please visit hscl.org.