

ARFS looks to 'cash push' to complete shelter plans

BY JOEL STEVENS
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The Animal Relief Fund for a Shelter (ARFS) is a third of the way to its financial goal of raising \$600,000 for an animal shelter south of Glenwood on 221st Street.

ARFS kicked off its fundraising campaign in June. By August the group had raised more than \$200,000 in cash and in-kind donations for the planned 6,000 square foot shelter that will be capable of housing 24 dogs and 40 cats.

If all goes well, said ARFS President Jane Susgin, the group will get the "shell" of the building up by the end of November so inside work can be done over the winter.

"Ideally to make everything work and keep our costs down, we think if we can get the shell of the building up then get the in-kind (labor) donations in there during their slow season in the winter, we can really get rolling," said Susgin.

ARFS has already received local in-kind labor donations for the electrical, plumbing and carpentry work.

Susgin added, with a "cash push" heading into the fall, the building could meet its planned summer 2008 grand opening.

"Once we get the shell up it will be something visible," she said.

Dr. Bill Rishel of the Glenwood Veterinary Clinic and an ARFS board member agrees, a physical presence donors can see will go far in stirring the donation pot.

"We need enough to get the pad and the shell up," said Rishel. "Once we get that, then the inside work can get done. People have seen the site (at the future location) for some time. We just need a little push now to get us over the hump for the building to



PHOTO BY JOEL STEVENS

From left ARFS President Jane Susgin, Dr. Jeff Rodgers and Dr. Bill Rishel are hoping to have the funds raised on a county animal shelter to break ground this winter.

get going."

ARFS plans to approach about 250 "prospects" for donations. About 140 have been contacted in-person already. The group is also seeking several endowments and grand funds for the project.

Dr. Jeff Rodgers of the Glenwood Veterinarian Clinic said, as is often the case in getting a non-profit shelter underway, sustainable funding is often easier to come by than start up funding.

"These projects, historically, have a hard time getting rolling but when you do get up and going, money sort of rolls in," Rodgers said.

When the shelter is up and running it will serve as animal control for the county, offering pet licensing and adoption services. Mills County, which sold the 2.2 acres to ARFS two years ago, has pledged \$10,000 to the project.

ARFS has met with the city councils in Glenwood, Silver City, Malvern and Emerson and all four are

considering donations.

"We've had a wonderful response," said Susgin of the ARFS' visits to local city councils. "They're not telling us they're thinking about donating, they're thinking about how much they will donate."

"They all recognize there is a problem in the community and they want to do something about it."

The shelter will be a humane shelter, but not necessarily "no kill." When animals are brought to the shelter they will have their health and temperament evaluated by a veterinarian to determine if they are indeed "adoptable." All animals will also be vaccinated, microchipped, licensed (dogs only) and spayed and neutered before adoption.

"The plan is to adopt out 100 percent of the adoptable animals," said Rodgers.

The ARFS hotline currently gets more than 20 calls a week for everything from stray dogs to feral cats.