

# O'Malley plans fundraiser for low-cost clinic

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The O'Malley Alley Cat Organization and volunteers from the Nacogdoches Animal Shelter have scheduled a weekend event to raise money for a low-cost spay and neuter clinic.

"We said, 'Let's get our own clinic together,'" O'Malley's Diane Hensley said. "We know we are all on the same page, and that is what we are diligently working toward."

Called O'Malley Alley Pet, or Preventing Euthanasia Together, the clinic plans to offer spay and neutering for dogs and cats. For qualified animal owners, those services would cost nothing.

"There's a small application, and people on disability, Medicare, (SNAP), or on any sort of government assistance, they qualify. Previously, it was \$0 to \$20 depending on income level."

The animal shelter operated a similar clinic until last spring, when seven veterinarians across Nacogdoches agreed to spay and neuter pets for the shelter.

"We are just doing it a different way," said Tommy Wheeler, the city's animal control manager. "Instead of doing it

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on site, we are just sending the animals to different vets."

In May, Wheeler and other officials said the clinic was closing temporarily during "administrative changes." But on Thursday, he said moving the clinic was the only change the shelter has undergone since.

"There's not been any change, other than bringing more vets into the mix. We just worked with one vet before."

Still, Wheeler said, the O'Malley project is a good one.

"That is a great idea. I think it's wonderful. They are really a well-trained group of volunteers."

O'Malley Pet is expected to open its clinic by next year.

"But it's going to cost a lot," Hensley said. "In fact, we already have equipment available for sale that will set up a complete spay and neuter clinic. That entity wants \$20,000 for it, but it's \$100,000 worth of equipment, so that is a very good deal."

Other than hosting fundraisers, the organization plans to apply for grants. An investor is interested in acquiring a building for the clinic.

"But it's going to be a nice office building, something she can rent out or sell in the event we move our clinic elsewhere or we establish a mobile clinic," Hensley said.

O'Malley, which "traps, neuters and returns" cats to their familiar habitat, works with a Nacogdoches veterinarian for spay and neutering services.

"We have to fund a low- to

no-cost person to work at our (new) clinic, too," Hensley said.

"We are hoping to get it up by the first of the year. We have about 12 dedicated volunteers."

To spay or neuter pets with the Animal Shelter's participating vets, it costs \$45 to spay and \$25 to neuter. For dogs, it costs between \$40 and \$75, depending on the size of the animals.

"If you receive certain state or government assistance, you qualify for free services," said Jamie Shelton, supervisor of the Animal Control. "If you receive things like CHIP or are on an energy-assistance program, SSI or WIC, that is low-cost and the most anyone ever pays. If you don't receive any of this assistance, we go by tax returns. It's pretty simple."

The shelter, along with O'Malley, are also scheduled to host an adopt-a-thon during the fundraiser on Saturday at Pet-Sense in Nacogdoches.

"We are having a huge bake sale Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days," Hensley said. "And the shelter will be there (Saturday) morning also with dogs. I think we are going to have breakfast burritos and all sorts of wonderful things." Shelton said the shelter plans to offer about 30 animals for adoption.

"We usually do awesome at this adopt-a-thon, adopting out about half of them, which is excellent," she said.

So far this year, the shelter has adopted out over 1,000 animals, Shelton said. Last year, about 981 animals were adopted.