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Extreme Makeover: animal shelter edition

Heather Haemker | IDS | Date: 12/6/2007

@ E-mail Comment Print Editor

Pet-related Web site www.zootoo.com is sponsoring the first-ever national animal shelter contest, and the City of Bloomington Animal Shelter is in the running. Community participation will determine the winner.

The top prize will be a makeover worth up to \$1 million.

Laurie Ringquist, director of the City of Bloomington Animal Shelter, said the shelter received a packet of information describing the contest and encouraging the shelter to participate. Ringquist said any shelter can participate, and all her shelter had to do was register at the Web site zootoohouse.org. Zootoo House is the Zootoo branch dedicated to aiding pet shelters.

"We ask community members to go to (zootoohouse.org) and select our shelter and ... write reviews of products or local veterinarians," Ringquist said. The contest was created by Richard Thompson, former Chief Executive Officer of the cat food company Meow Mix. When he left the company, he started zootoo.com, the first user-generated, opinion-sharing Web site for the pet community, said Renee Lane, business development director of Zootoo. Thompson devised this contest as a way to give back to the pet community.

"We have created a platform to give the pet community a voice," Lane said. "Pet lovers and owners can go to zootoo.com to find out information on pets, pet products and pet services."

She said the contest was created to increase awareness, support and funding for shelters nationwide.

People wanting to help the shelter need to register only once, she said. From there, every time people post a review or comment, the shelter they selected earns credits.

The contest ends March 31, 2008, and the top 20 shelters will all receive a prize. Members of the Zootoo House Advisory Board will visit each shelter to evaluate their needs and assess how Zootoo House can best facilitate enhancements, Lane said.

While the shelter with the most points wins a shelter makeover worth up to \$1 million, the shelter with the second highest points will receive a \$10,000 cash reward. The 18 other shelters will receive \$5,000 each, Ringquist said.

The City of Bloomington Animal Shelter is currently ranked No. 39 of 3,840 shelters on the site.

"There is a limit to how many times per day (people) can go on and review, but (they) can go visit the site everyday."

Ringquist said the reason the City of Bloomington entered the contest is to win the shelter makeover.

She said the entire shelter is about 10,000 square feet and is evenly divided. The newer part opened in May 2003. The older part is 5,000 square feet. Ringquist said the shelter would like to knock down the old part of the building and completely rebuild it. Currently, the old part of the building is the area that houses sick animals.

ENLARGE IMAGE



A small dog sits in its cage at the City of Bloomington Animal Shelter on South Walnut Street Tuesday afternoon.
Colin Thompson • IDS

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"Part of our building is new, the other part is 30 years old," Ringquist said. "We would love to remodel that part of the building and do the best we can for the animals."

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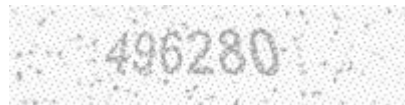
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