

# Citizens organize to support animal shelter

Posted: Friday, August 16, 2013 11:30 pm – Mount Pleasant Daily Tribune

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## Animal Shelter Speaker

TRIBUNE Photo by Lou Antonelli

A long-time veterinarian in Nacogdoches, Dr. Blount discussed how a community spay and neuter campaign can stop Mount Pleasant's pet overpopulation problem.

Approximately 30 concerned citizens as well as local veterinarians held a half-day workshop Thursday at the Mount Pleasant Public Library to learn about and discuss how the community can

organize to support the animal shelter.

Volunteer Sandi Luttrell said they were there to draw upon the expertise of each other as well as their guest presenter, Dr. Wendy Blount of Nacogdoches.

Police Chief Wayne Isbell kicked off the program by explaining that in his position he is officially in charge of animal control.

The shelter has a formal agreement with the City of Pittsburg, but practically speaking, "we take animals from everywhere," despite the fact it is the shelter for the City of Mount Pleasant; "we are the only shelter around," he said

The Mount Pleasant shelter is strapped for space and money, he said, and the three employees are overworked. "It's like a dungeon," said Isbell. "I've got a crappy facility."

Since taking over administrative oversight of the shelter in May 2012, he's tried to increase the adoption rate and decrease the euthanasia rate.

Last year the shelter took in 3,248 animals, and adopted 377. The euthanasia rate is too high, he said, and although so far this year it is 40 percent lower than last year, it is still a serious problem.

"We need as a community to be doing better than we have in the past," he said, adding he was happy to be part of the group's organizing meeting; "I'll be there to support you."

The key to cutting down on the animal problem is a strong spay and neuter campaign, he concluded – comments echoed by the guest presenter, Dr. Blount of Nacogdoches, who was warmly introduced by Dr. Jerry Skidmore of Mount Pleasant.

Blount said Nacogdoches as a community has many similarities to Mount Pleasant, and Nacogdoches was where Mount Pleasant is ten years ago.

The key to decreasing shelter intakes and the euthanasia rate is a targeted campaign to help people who love their pets but can't afford to spay and neuter them, and to educate people who don't care about spaying and neutering.

If 30 to 80 percent of the pets in a community are spayed or neutered in a year, that breaks the breeding cycle and starts the improvement for the community's pet overpopulation problem, she said.

After a lunch break, the presentations and workshop continued until 2 p.m.

Chief Isbell said Friday the volunteer group has lofty goals and a lot of interested citizens, and he expects they will meet regularly, "they're off to a good start."