

## **Muncie Animal Care & Services**

**To:** Dr. Allison Hitt

**From:** Anna Wainscott, Katelyn Jasinski, and Hannah Allen

**Date:** 5 November 2021

**Subject:** Report on Current Issues at Muncie Animal Care and Services

We are submitting the following report to give recommendations to Muncie Animal Care and Services on how they can improve issues with adoption rates due to overcrowding, limited supplies, and lack of volunteers.

### **Summary**

This report discusses Muncie Animal Care and Services' ability to operate at an optimal functioning level. Within this report, information about adoption issues in the shelter, Muncie community based survey responses, personal observations, and interview results, are discussed. Our group has critically examined what has caused the shelter to be struggling with adoption. We have addressed the issues they are struggling with and provided solutions that we feel will be most beneficial. These recommendations include: more community events promoting the shelter, creating an unpaid social media manager internship for Ball State students, posting more videos and live streams, hosting a free microchipping event for the Muncie community, reaching out to high schools/high school programs and colleges to find volunteers, and just improving overall in their networking capabilities.

### **Introduction**

Muncie Animal Care and Services works around the clock year round to save animals in the Muncie community by caring for them and finding them loving homes. The shelter is currently dealing with several issues due to the number of animals they have taken in. Our group decided to take a closer look at Muncie Animal Care and Services by doing extensive research to pinpoint their adoption issues and determine solutions for them. Animal shelters always fall short of the support they need in supplies and volunteers, so being able to show success in helping the shelter move forward will create better community morale and give more animals a chance to find homes. We constructed a survey for the Muncie community to give us an idea about what the community knows about the shelter. In addition to our survey, we also did an interview with Katie Wolfe, the Assistant Director of Muncie Animal Care & Services to gain a deeper understanding of the shelter and their needs. We also analyzed their social media accounts, news articles relating to the shelter, the shelter's Amazon wish list, and research regarding animal shelters nationwide.

After conducting our research, it appears that Muncie Animal Care and Services is currently struggling with low supplies, a lack of volunteers, and a low budget, all of which are impacting

their adoption rates. We propose that community events asking for volunteers and donations would benefit the animal shelter by bringing more awareness about the help they need. The shelter also has an Amazon wish list linked to their Instagram page for people to donate supplies. Advertising this at community events would also be beneficial and an easy way for the community to make an impact.

## **Body**

### ***Survey***

After our interview with Katie Wolfe, our group was curious as to how much the community really knows about the problems of the shelter or ways they could help. We sent out a survey specifically targeting Muncie citizens and students of Ball State University to get their input on the local shelter, and also coming to the conclusion of what the generic public knows about the shelter.

Our survey consisted of 10 questions, 7 being multiple choice and 3 of those questions being short answer to elaborate on a previous question. After receiving 18 responses, less on the option of short responses, we've come to the conclusion that those in the community, locals and students alike, aren't aware of all the issues/opportunities within Muncie Animal Care and Services. Along with this we have concluded that most responders don't have ethical issues with adoption, and all respondents agree that adoption helps the community. It's clear that those who responded wish that the shelter advertised for volunteer opportunities in ways that can catch the eye of the community, and that there is always room for improvement in terms of receiving supplies and offering more ways to help the shelter. (See Appendix A) Specifically, 72.2% of respondents think MACS can be improved and 77.8% of respondents are not aware of how they can help the shelter.

We proposed a question of improving the shelter, in which people gave thoughtful responses. In a 72.2% response of "yes" to how it can be improved, some responses include:

- Expanding their services to more than one building and increasing the staff.
- Spay/ neuter and release programs need to be expanded.
- I've personally considered volunteering but information on how to is hard to find.

This question posed the most short answer responses in the survey. We also asked if people were aware of certain adoption issues in the community, and 87.5% were the most aware of shelters being overcrowded and not having enough volunteers. Food shortages and medical supply shortages were each 56.3%. (See Appendix B)

In response to these answers, we decided to do more secondary research on adoption issues not only at Muncie Animal Care and Services but nationwide, and see what kind of similarities that not only the local shelter has, but also shelters all over the United States.

## ***Secondary Research***

Secondary research most applicable to the adoption issues at Muncie Animal Care and Services (MACS) included the analysis of MACS itself as well as animal shelters and pet adoption issues nationwide.

Analysis of MACS itself was conducted by looking at their social media accounts, Amazon wish list, and news articles related to the shelter. Looking at MACS social media accounts, it is clear that the shelter needs better social media management. While the shelter's Facebook page stays up to date, the photo quality of the animals is poor and the website to look up animals (petfinder.com) is faulty and hard to figure out at times. In addition to this, finding where to adopt animals online through MACS is difficult and could be improved to further encourage adoption. Additionally, the Facebook page advertised the programs of the shelter well, like their \$5 November Adoption Special. (See Appendix C) Facebook is not the shelter's only social media account, as they also have an Instagram (See Appendix D) and Twitter page (See Appendix E), but these pages have not been updated in almost a year now.

MACS Amazon wish list is attached through a link to MACS' website and facebook. (See Appendix F) The links are clearly displayed and easy to understand. Through this list it is clear that the shelter is in need of both medical and basic supplies for the shelter animals. Basic supplies include blankets, cages, food, food bowls, doggie beds, toys, etc. Medical supplies MACS needs include syringes, calming medication, etc.

News articles relating to MACS include an article written by Corey Ohlenkamp in 2020 for the Muncie Star Press. In this article, the director for the shelter, Ethan Browning, details how MACS was over their budget for 2020. Some of the biggest issues discussed were maintenance upkeep, tending to the animals, low staffing, poor adoption rates, and a dramatic increase of animals into the shelter. (Ohlenkamp 2020) In another article written by Nathan Hill for the Ball State Daily News in 2021, MACS was explained as starting their \$5 Adoption Special in September of 2021, which has now been expanded through November. This shows how the shelter is in desperate need for pets to be adopted and how their current events to promote adoption may not be working.

As far as looking into pet adoption and shelter issues nationwide, several issues were identified. In one article, it was found that several shelters are understaffed, have slowed down adoptions, are in need of money, and overcrowded which has resulted in some animals being euthanized to fix the overcrowding issue. (Daly 2021) Another article explained that the U.S. only has about 2,000 no-kill shelters. (Emma 2021) MACS is one of these shelters and while this is a great thing that they are not killing animals, it makes increasing adoption rates for the shelter even more important. And in more local news, Indianapolis animal shelter was also struggling with their

adoption rates and staffing. To help fix these issues they waived adoption fees, encouraged volunteers to come help, and encouraged fostering animals. (Jones 2021) Finally, the ASPCA states that around 6.3 million animals enter U.S. animal shelters every year and only about 4.1 million are adopted each year. This means that there are more animals going into shelters every year than going out through adoption, highlighting the adoption issues for animal shelters nationwide.

### ***Interview***

On November 17th, we interviewed Katie Wolfe, Assistant Director of Muncie Animal Care and Services. During this interview, we gained a lot of information that we wouldn't have known prior to the interview. Here is a list of the most influential questions we prepared:

- *Do you have specific needs at the moment? What are these needs?*
- *How can the community help the shelter?*
- *How did COVID-19 impact the shelter?*
- *What community events have you been planning? Do they help the shelter?*

When we went into the interview, we felt that the shelter's main need was probably money. During our interview with Katie, we quickly learned that while they do need money, there are a lot of other areas that need help first. The main thing that she emphasized the Muncie community can do is spay/neuter and microchip their pets. A microchip implant is an identifying integrated circuit placed under the skin of an animal. The chip, about the size of a large grain of rice, can show shelter's who the animal belongs to so they can call and get the animal home. Katie explained that when a pet comes in with a microchip, they can easily call and get them home. Unfortunately, sometimes owners will call about a lost animal that the shelter did find, but because the owner waited too long to call the shelter, the pet was already adopted and the original owner can't get the pet back. This issue goes away with microchipping. In addition to microchipping, spaying/neutering your pet makes them unable to reproduce if they run away. This will decrease the high volumes in the shelter.

MACS is currently working on a plan with the US humane society and Ivy Tech to have a free microchipping event at Southside Middle School here in Muncie. With enough advertising, this event should help more pet owners in Muncie microchip their pets and help decrease overpopulation in the shelter. The plan is still in the early stages of development, but we feel that continuing with this event will help the shelter tremendously. According to our survey, most of the Muncie community wants to help the shelter, but they do not know how. If Muncie Animal Care and Services informs the public how much this event would help the shelter, pet owners would certainly be inclined to attend.

Katie also shared with us how COVID-19 has impacted the shelter. She explained that they lost a lot of their fosters and volunteers. “We always need fosters,” Katie explained, “when COVID hit, a lot of our fosters pulled away because they were afraid of letting people in their homes to meet the pets.” Fosters are especially important for animals that need extensive care. Sometimes animals that are very young or ill need constant care. Without fosters, they can’t get the care they need. Of course, they also lost a lot of volunteers for the same reason they lost fosters. Less people were willing to come into contact with so many people and their animals. (Appendix G)

## **Conclusion**

The findings from our research into Muncie Animal Care and Services (MACS) indicate that MACS lacks a strong online presence, is experiencing low adoption rates, is running low on staffing and volunteers, is running out of money, and is running low on supplies. MACS’ social media pages are generally outdated, besides their Facebook, and the pictures displayed of the animals are poor quality. In addition to this, MACS is lacking strong promotion of their services and adoption website. This is particularly apparent in the amount of people in the community who said in the survey that they did not know how to help and did not know about MACS programs.

An analysis of news articles related to MACS showed how much the shelter needs volunteers, money, and people to foster pets. MACS is struggling with a low budget and low adoption rates are more daunting on the shelter as they are experiencing low staffing. Additionally, MACS is struggling with effective adoption programs and the interview with Katie Wolfe indicated that there are also issues with the adoption of pets that already have owners. This issue occurs when animals that are not microchipped run away and the shelter finds them and sells them before the owner realizes their pet is gone.

A lot of these issues are present not just in MACS, but in shelters nearby and nationwide, as evidenced by research into pet adoption and shelter issues nationwide. Shelters in Indianapolis are also struggling with low staffing and poor adoption rates, and shelters nationwide are facing adoption issues as well. MACS certainly has improvements to be made, but these are not just issues facing the shelter. A lot, if not all, of these issues threaten several shelters, pets, and communities nationwide.

## **Recommendations**

Our recommendations for Muncie Animal Care & Services are the following:

- Muncie Animal Care & Services should have more community events that cater to not only muncie residents, but Ball State students with pets as well. It would be beneficial to target this audience, since a lot of the Muncie population are students.
- Muncie Animal Care & Services should look into the possibility of a Social Media Manager to help fix their website, and promote their business on social media. Since their

website can be a bit overwhelming at a first glance, it would be beneficial to give it a more user friendly experience and make a place for all the dogs and cats to specifically be looked at and updated instead of using PetFinder. It could be an unpaid internship of a student, or even a volunteer.

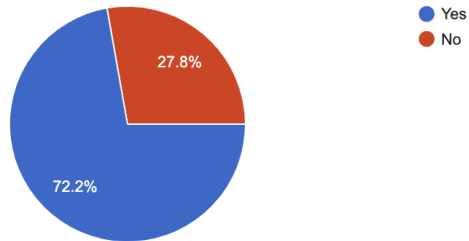
- Muncie Animal Care & Services should post more videos and live streams of their animals, it would help with exposure and having people actually see the way the animals interact with each other and people could give more of an influence on them actually being adopted.
- Since a major request of Muncie Animal Care & Services is to microchip pets, it would be beneficial to have more free microchip events to bring people in and get their pets microchipped so they don't have to worry about their pet getting lost and never being found again.

## Appendices:

### Appendix A:

Do you think Muncie Animal Care & Services can be improved?

18 responses



If you answered yes in the last question, please give your thoughts below

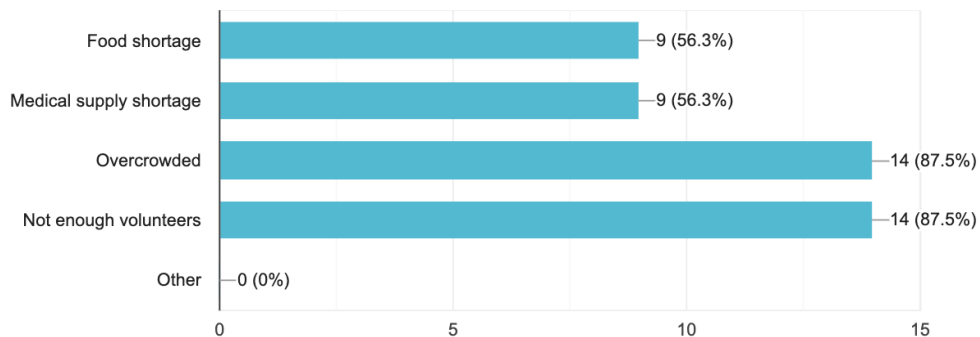
7 responses

- More donations + staff + more people adopting rather than shopping
- Every system can be improved. More individuals for a start
- I had no idea about any of these problems so they can do a better campaign raising awareness.
- I've personally considered volunteering but information on how to is hard to find.
- Spay/ neuter and release programs need to be expanded. My cat that I had adopted was accidentally overlooked and had worms. It wasn't severe and was solved easily but we were told he was dewormed. Maybe organization is the issue.
- I'm not really sure what Muncie has right now for animal care, but I am sure it can be improved upon.
- Expanding their services to more than one building and increasing the staff.

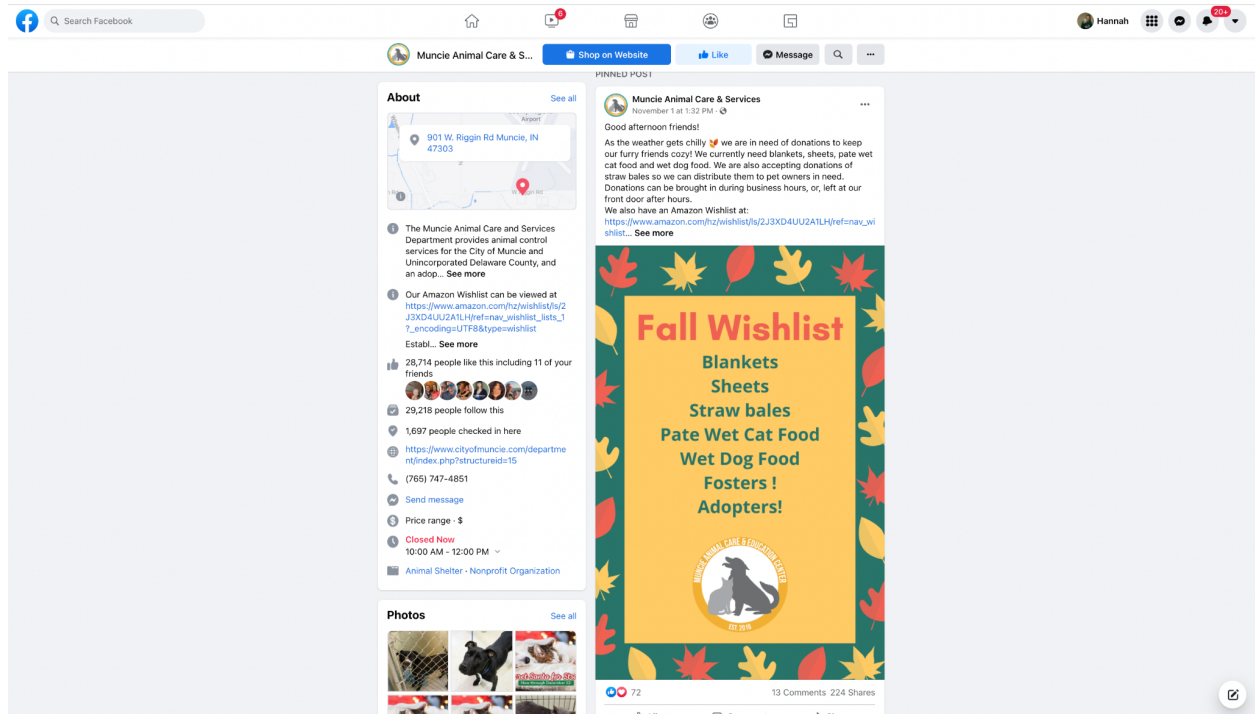
### Appendix B:

Of these adoption issues in the community, which are you aware of? Check all that apply

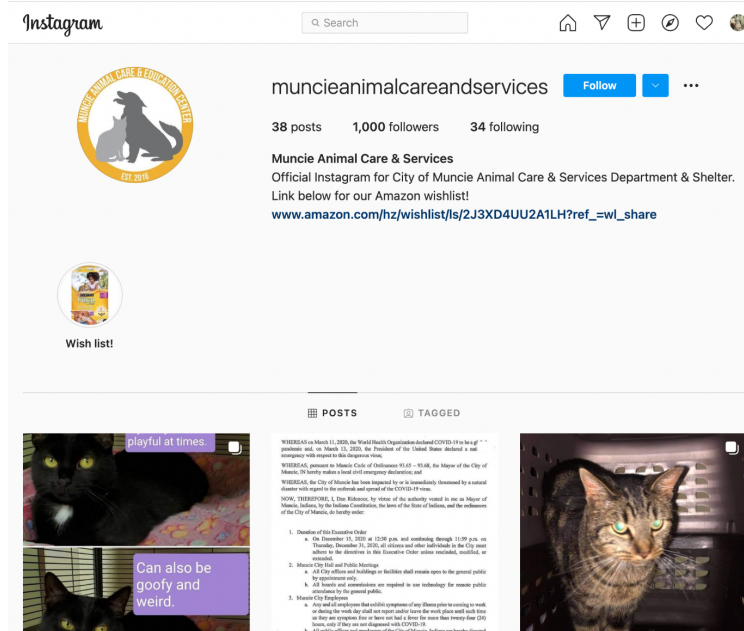
16 responses



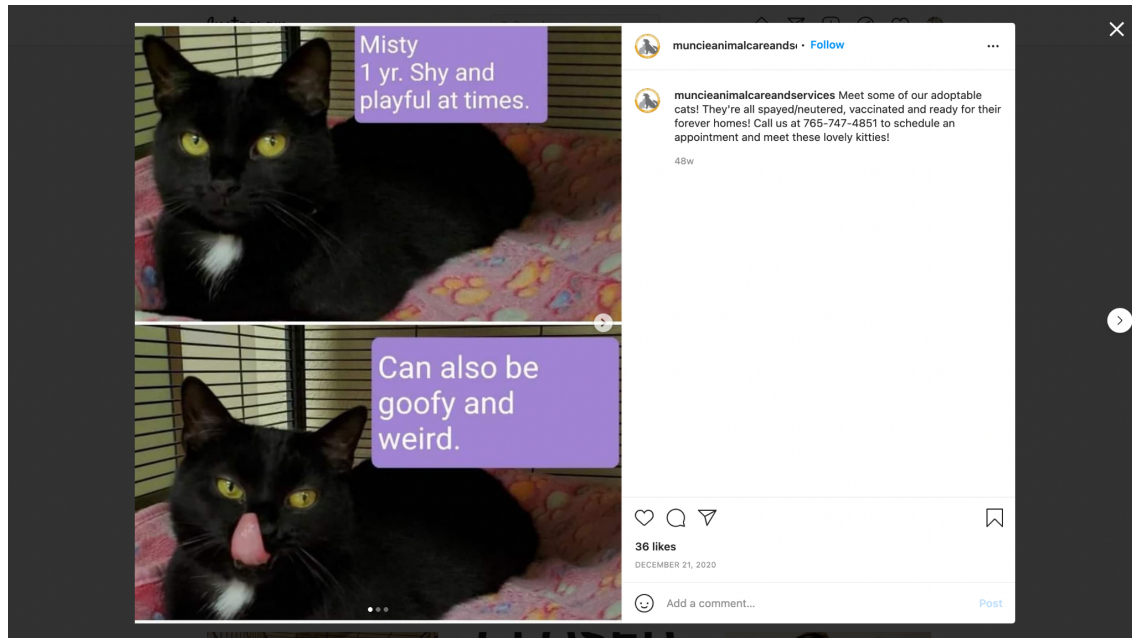
## Appendix C:



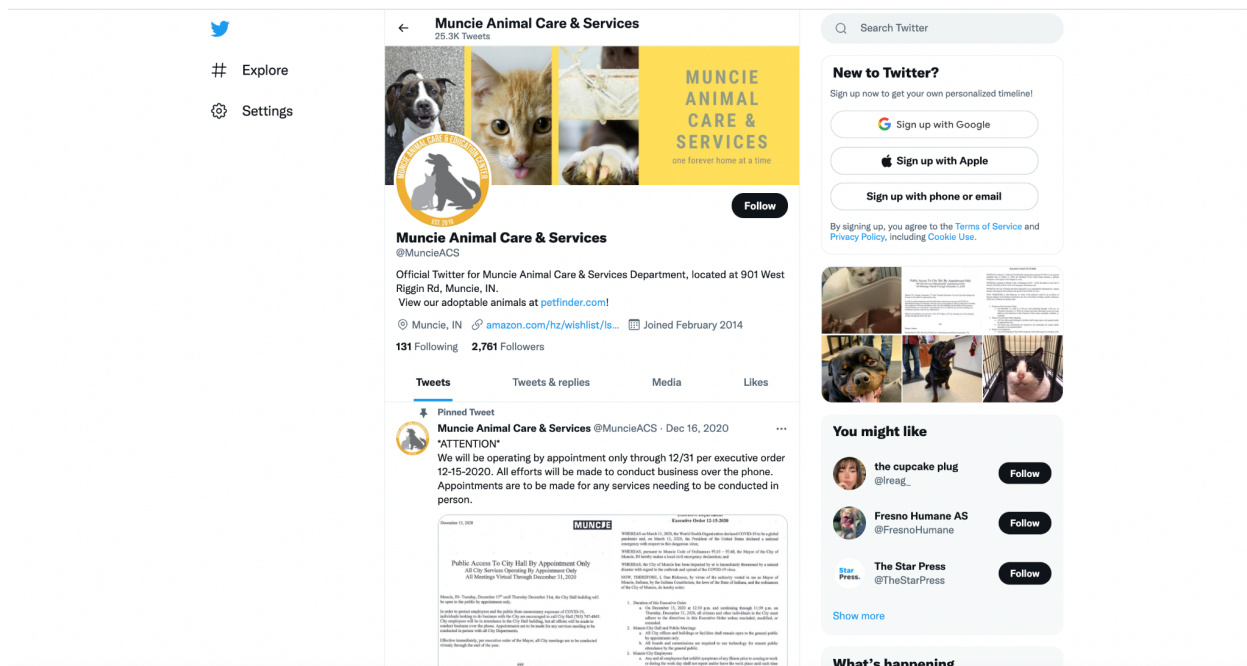
## Appendix D:







## Appendix E:



## Appendix F:



Katies: We could always use fosters. Fosters, rescue groups, just because you know we can take in one cat and then find out it's actually going to be 6 because nobody knew she was pregnant and now she's here and she has her babies here, and babies like that especially if they've lost mom, they have to be fed every 2 to 3 hours and we just don't have somebody sitting in here all night long just to feed newborns.

Anna: That makes sense. Has covid also impacted your number of volunteers?

Katie: Definitely, definitely. In fact, I put a call out on Facebook just before lunch to try to get some volunteers to help with laundry. Because she's got a blanket in there I've got some more kittens that are going to be going in here but the dogs you know have blankets and then they use the bathroom in their kennel and it all has to be washed every single day and we need people back there just to keep it going, get stuff folded for us, sort out toys, just all the things that go on behind the scenes.

Anna: If you had to pick if volunteers, fostering, or getting more people to adopt, which one would be the biggest issue you're having right now, which one do you think?

Katie: It's actually none of those. The biggest thing that I need from the people of Muncie is to microchip and spay and neuter their animals, because if a dog is running loose and it's not microchipped, then we put it out on Facebook and hope the owner sees it or somebody who knows the owner sees it, to come and get it. Where if it was microchipped, we make one phone call straight to you that says hey we have baby here, she's safe and warm, we close at 5:30. It would just streamline the process a whole lot more and then you know spay and neuters if a cat comes in, it's just one cat. It's hard to get people to understand that that is for care, it's not so we can track you. It is so much better for a cat to be spayed than to constantly be having litters of kittens.

Anna: We did try to post a survey to get feedback from people in Muncie about how they feel or what they know about the shelter, one of the responses someone had as to how they feel the shelter could be helped is they said that spay-neuter and release programs, which do you guys do that?

Katie: To an extent, the reason we rely on rescue so much is that they have their own spay-neuter, so we can send an animal that's not been here long enough to get on our spay-neuter list, but if we have a stray more than 5 days that's not been reclaimed, then we automatically start looking at the spay and neuter and then at that point it's adoptable. Sometimes people don't understand, you know I'm sorry your dog has been missing for three months, it's now somebody else's dog. Where if it was chipped, it'd still be your dog. Every dog needs a job and for beagles or hounds, it's tracking small furries. So if you don't have that fencing, even an electronic fence, you're doing your dog a disservice.

Anna: Next question is are your adoption rates maybe better this year than last year and I mean you're new so maybe you don't know.

Katie: They're actually a little lower, again because people have lost jobs. Sure, they may have the \$5 fee for adoption but they don't have money for the food. It's sad, everybody wants a fuzzy but you gotta be able to take care of it.

Anna: What kinds of events have you done for promoting your adoptions?

Katie: So in October we had our Halloween event where we actually had a dog costume contest and it gets people in the doors, we will have our photos with Santa on December 18th and that's going to be here. People can call, set an appointment, it's \$10 and then we'll send

you a digital copy of your little puppers with Santa. We actually just reached out to Southside middle school today to try to do a microchipping event. Working with the United States Humane Society and possibly Ivy Tech, and just providing free microchipping for the people of Muncie. You know come to Southside, we'll go through the gym, you can get microchipped, and there you go.

Anna: Do you think that the events that you have for the adoptions definitely help get more pets adopted?

Katie: I would say yes just because any time people can actually see our animals, (she gasps) I didn't realize it was so cute, you know because you might get one really good picture, but that cat sat still for just that moment. Like Charlie, she's been all over in there because she's awake now and some of the bigger ones, well there's a couple right out here that they're kind of digging having Santa stockings because then they're playing with them and making noise and just stuff you can't see in a photo.

Anna: It's hard to get a good picture sometimes, too.

Katie: Oh my gosh, yes.

Anna: Like they're always moving all over the place.

Katie: Yeah, yeah.

Anna: Do you think that posting more videos of the pets would help too, maybe?

Katie: That's what we're going to try to do, I've got to come up with a cute name for it but I would like to be doing more Facebook lives from kitten corner and our front lobby with our adoptable cats.

Anna: Yeah, I think that's a great idea.

Katie: Especially kitten corner because they're all loose and you can just sit there for a couple of minutes while I tell you about our kittens, and watch them interact with each other.

Anna: So would you say that the biggest thing that the community can do to help the shelter is donations?

Katie: Donations and volunteering. I think when you're actually in the building and, have you been to our dog adoption room before? So you know how loud. You know this at one time was a jail and then the juvenile detention center so it's all cinder block, so it just echoes and reverberates. I don't think people understand, as clean as my staff keeps it, and they bust their behinds, it's loud and echoey. If you're a dog and you've been back there for a while, yeah it's just like a person. If you're just like I could maybe donate \$5, come walk through, see what our pets, you know these are our babies. See what they need, sit back there and do laundry for two hours, and see how many linens we go through. I think people giving their time here would help educate them more as to what we do on a daily basis.

Anna: What's the main thing that you think you want the community to know about the shelter?

Katie: That we do not go out just scooping up animals. You know we are for some of these animals, their last chance. We don't want to take your dog unless it's not safe for your dog. And even at that, we're going to talk to you first. We're not coming by with a net and just picking people up right out of backyards, you know we are here to keep the community safe. If there's a rabid pit out at 11 at night, might be a 19-year-old kid coming out to pick him up, because that's who we have on the schedule for that night. So yeah it is for your safety and the cleanliness of Muncie. You know if you got 15 flea-ridden kittens running through your neighborhood, your cat or dog that is perfectly safe, is going to pick up fleas.

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