

Animal Welfare League searches for new director

By KAYLA GLEASON
STAFF WRITER

The Charlotte County Animal Welfare League and its one-time executive director, Sharon Thomas, have parted ways after 10 years.

"We were all in a good position. It was an amicable parting of ways," said Aggie Aguila, operations manager at the AWL. Thomas was not available for comment.

Now the nonprofit is searching for its next director.

"We're putting together a profile, somebody with manager experience, somebody who loves animals," board member Nanette Leonard said. "This is an award-winning shelter and the commitment that the volunteers have here is incredible; they are extraordinary people."

Anyone interested in applying or volunteering at the AWL would certainly be joining a group of local renown. In fact, the Charlotte County Clerk of Court's office admires the shelter so much they recently raised over \$2,000 for it. As a part of National Pet Month in April, Roger Eaton and his team held bake sales, created raffle baskets and placed pet supply donation bins at both of their offices, earning \$2,530.90 to donate to the AWL.

The money was presented at a check ceremony at the shelter earlier this month.

"We really wanted to find a



SUN PHOTOS BY KAYLA GLEASON

Roger Eaton and members of the Clerk of Court's office present a \$2,530 check to AWL Operations Manager Aggie Aguila and the board.

way to give back to the community and this was a great cause," said Eaton. "It's local and everybody loves animals!"

The Clerk of Court's office dedicated many hours and manpower throughout April to promote their cause.

"To raise the money, we formed a committee and came up with ideas like the breakfast bake sale. The clerks donated everything for the fundraising events," said Criminal Courts manager Stacey Minnsohn.

The committee made T-shirts — which they wore every casual Friday — and fliers for the different events to ensure they raised as much money as possible for the AWL. Eaton also hopes he can

work with the shelter again next year, with an even larger check being the goal.

As an organization that runs entirely on donations, the AWL met the gesture with many thanks, inviting staff and board members to the ceremony.

"I think it's fantastic, we depend on the community and local businesses and these animals really deserve it," said Aguila.

The AWL also recently took part in the Community Foundation of Sarasota's Giving Challenge where they raised over \$27,000 in just 24 hours.

All of the donations the AWL receives go straight to improving the lives of their



Alberto Vargas, a kennel technician at the AWL, sits with Mary, an American Terrier Staffordshire mix. Mary came into the shelter with mange and was completely emaciated. Now, she's so energetic, she can barely sit long enough for a picture!

animals, big or small. Aside from daily expenses like food and housing for 230 animals, many of their furry guests come in needing intensive care, surgical procedures or daily assistance that adds up quickly in terms of time and money. The team is also there for animals in times of natural disaster and local emergencies.

During Hurricane Irma, for instance, the shelter had to evacuate 300 pets and was able to successfully foster all

CHARLOTTE COUNTY ANIMAL WELFARE LEAGUE

WHERE: 3519 Drance St., Port Charlotte
HOURS: Open daily, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
INFO: Adoptions stop at 3:30 p.m.
PHONE: 941-625-6720
WEBSITE: www.awlshelter.org



While the AWL mostly takes in dogs, cats, bunnies and guinea pigs, they made sure to find a special place for their resident pig, who is often spoiled with lots of love and leftovers.

of them. Some of them even turned into "failed fosters," a term the AWL staff uses lovingly to refer to animals who were ultimately adopted by their foster families.

"It's a team effort," said Aguila. "Everybody shows up and we get the job done."

For more information on how to adopt a furry new family member or volunteer with the Animal Welfare League, visit www.awlshelter.org.

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