

FAA says city owes \$33K in damages 8

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Edited by Cara DiPasquale
(cdipasquale@tribune.com)
and Drew Sottardi
(dsottardi@tribune.com)



Paula Fasseas, founder of PAWS, stands at the future site of the group's \$6.5 million no-kill animal shelter.

DAVID KLOBUCAR/TRIBUNE

A safer shelter

Group hopes to save animals' lives with \$6.5M no-kill facility

Chicago Tribune

The plans have everything a homeless pup could want in an abode: a comfy couch for dozing, room to romp, a little Beethoven playing in the background.

Chicago's newest venture in pet sheltering, to be built in Lincoln Park, follows a nationwide trend that takes cats and dogs out of cages and puts them in faux mini-living rooms that don't smell like, well, a roomful of animals.

Pets Are Worth Saving Chicago, a non-profit organization dedicated to animal welfare, will break ground Thursday on the \$6.5 million facility. The new facility is part of PAWS' larger goal of creating a Chicago where adoptable pets aren't euthanized.

"The animals are compelling to us. They

have no voice, no funding from the government," said PAWS founder Paula Fasseas. "They are suffering, and the methodology of our society is just to kill them."

The new building, expected to be open by fall 2006, will feature a rooftop playground and spa for the pets and a coffee station for the humans.

It is another brick in reaching the no-killing goal, Fasseas said. PAWS began laying those bricks in 1997, wanting to spread the word about the number of animals being put down. That year, more than 42,000 shelter animals in Chicago were killed.

The group kicked off with an annual adoption event called Angels with Tails at upscale boutiques along Michigan Avenue, and continued with information and adoption campaigns. In 2001, it established what it considers to be its top weapon in curbing overpopulation: the Lurie Family Spay/Neuter Clinic in Little Village.

In 2004, PAWS operated at a loss of about \$400,000 in providing the spay and

neuter service at a discount or free to pets of low-income families.

PAWS and other groups deserve credit for combating pet overpopulation problems, said Melanie Sobel, spokeswoman for the Chicago Animal Care and Control Shelter. But her group deals with a different reality, Sobel said.

"For there to be no-kill facilities, there has to be a full-service animal organization that doesn't have the luxury of picking and choosing the animals that it takes, that has to do the dirty work of society," she said.

The dirty work—euthanasia—often comes down to simple math: too many animals, not enough homes, she said.

Nationwide, the number of pets killed in shelters has been declining for about 35 years, said Merritt Clifton, editor of Animal People magazine. Clifton measures the rate that shelters euthanize animals against the human population.

He classifies cities that kill five dogs and cats per 1,000 people as no-kill areas. Chicago

kills about 10 pets per 1,000 people, Clifton has determined. New York City and San Francisco, two cities considered leaders in the no-kill movement, are each at about 2.5 animals put down per 1,000 people.

With no cages, the PAWS program is based on the concept that the animals can remain at the shelter indefinitely. In Chicago, the PAWS building will be located at 1997 N. Clybourn Ave., the site of a structure that will be mostly demolished.

When done, the 13,000-square-foot building will house up to 60 dogs and 75 cats, Fasseas said.

She said PAWS has about \$3 million more to raise for the building, which she hopes will become a tool to make Chicago a no-kill city.

"We're not going to adopt our way out of the problem. We're going to sterilize our way out of it," Fasseas said. "People want to give money to Fluffy, not to a surgery. The adoption center will be a way to educate people about that."