



**Marshall on a roll**  
Herd tops N. Texas,  
80-73, at the Cam  
Sports / 1B

A taste of spring  
**5540**  
Weather / 4A



**Tackett's Shootout**  
Fairland girls fall to  
South Webster, 58-46  
Sports / 1B



# The Herald-Dispatch

Huntington, West Virginia

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SEVING THE TRI-STATE FOR  
**106**  
YEARS  
**SUNDAY**  
February 8, 2015



## The language of love in an opera

With Valentine's Day less than a week away, these are not days to tread lightly into love. Thus, the Marshall Artists Series has sounded the alarm and will host a performance of Giacomo Puccini's opera "La Boheme" at the Keith-Albee on Tuesday. **Life / 1D**



## Looking for a 'pour-fect' cup of coffee?

Pour-over coffee is about the details. Bittersweet Coffeehouse on the corner of 20th Street and 7th Avenue in Huntington is offering much more than just a plain cup of joe. **Business / 9A**

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## COMMUNITY: ANIMALS

# New strategies could help local shelter



Volunteer Brandi Ashley pets Raja, a cat available for adoption at the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association on Thursday on Greenbrier Street in Charleston.

## Neighboring shelters improving with community support

By **CURTIS JOHNSON**  
The Herald-Dispatch  
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HUNTINGTON — Newly appointed director Scott Iseli believes the Huntington-Cabell-Wayne Animal Control Shelter stands on the brink of a new day, as animal advocates across the region watch with hope that local leaders can turn around a shelter broadly criticized for poor management and high euthanasia rates.

Many of Iseli's ideas have produced results elsewhere, but those finding such success warn the blueprint could take time, and a recent analysis by The Herald-Dispatch shows it would begin with a shelter already lacking in resources for the number of animals it takes in.

The newspaper's analysis found the Huntington-Cabell-Wayne Animal Control Shelter operates with fewer dollars per animal and far fewer volunteers than similarly sized shelters in Charleston and Parkersburg.

Please see **SHELTER/14A**



A dog peers out from a kennel at the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association on Thursday.

"We have to put our differences aside, let the past be the past and let's move forward."  
**Scott Iseli**  
Director of Huntington-Cabell-Wayne Animal Control Shelter

## W.VA. TRAFFIC FATALITIES

# Targeted patrols reduced '14 deaths

Focus was on areas with high DUI, fatality rates

**The Associated Press**  
CHARLESTON — The West Virginia State Police is crediting targeted patrols with helping to reduce traffic fatalities during 2014. Officials said Friday that there were 271 fatalities in 240 car crashes during 2014, down from 332 fatalities in 305 crashes in 2013.

The numbers are down even further from 2012 when the state recorded 339 fatalities in 318 crashes. While there are many factors involved, there seems to be a direct relationship between an increased police presence and a reduction in fatalities, officials said.

Law enforcement officials relied heavily on grants from the Governor's Highway Safety Program to fund special patrols.

It allowed troopers to work the patrols of between two and six hours on their days off, during vacation time and before or after their regular shifts. Those patrols focused on distracted driving, work zone safety, DUIs and seatbelt and child restraint enforcement.

For the past couple of years, police targeted patrols in areas with high DUI and fatality rates and conducted patrols during peak travel times and seasons.

In addition to reducing the number of traffic fatalities, 90 fugitives from justice were apprehended and 542 felony arrests were achieved during special patrols in 2014.

Officials said improvement in highway safety and significantly falling traffic fatalities is important to law enforcement officers both professionally and personally.

"The horrors associated with a fatal crash scene do not end immediately following impact of a vehicle, nor does it end following the subsequent clean-up of the roadway. In fact, it just begins for many, including those in law enforcement," West Virginia State Police Lt. Michael Baylous said in a statement.

"Law enforcement officers have the task of notifying family members of the deceased. Can you imagine having to inform someone that their loved one has been killed and won't be returning home? This is absolutely one of the most difficult tasks that troopers perform."



Baylous

# Play becomes a healing therapy for kids at TLC Services

By **TAYLOR STUCK**  
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HUNTINGTON — For most children and adults, playtime is a way to pass the time and use your imagination. For Katrina Jefferson and the children and families she serves at TLC Services in Huntington, play is a way to heal.

Play therapy, as Jefferson describes it, is a way to get into the child's world.

"Play is essential to human growth, development, relationship development and learning," said Jefferson, the play therapist and play therapy supervisor at TLC. "Play therapy allows you to get into that world with the child and create a safe rela-

**Photos Online**  
Check www.herald-dispatch.com for more photos.

tionship with them in the play therapy room. You are sharing an experience with them."

A good example is a sand box. "It's therapeutic for kids," Jefferson said. "You are in the moment when the sand falls through your fingers, instead of being on a cell phone."

In celebration of National Play Therapy Week, TLC Services hosted a Play Date Saturday at its office on Mahood Drive in Huntington. Crafts, games and activities were available for all to play.

Jefferson said it's all about

promoting the value of play, especially in today's world with constant technology use.

Play therapy is an effective tool in helping with behavioral issues and mental health disorders such as trauma, ADHD, autism and depression. In stead of using words, the toy becomes the tool used to express how they feel.

"Hands down, this is the best therapy I have ever seen," Jefferson said. "I've been doing this for 20-25 years and play therapy works for children and adults. It's a whole brain activity that helps you heal those internal conflicts and move on. It's really beautiful."

Please see **PLAY/15A**



Bishop Nash/The Herald-Dispatch

One-year-old Maveryck Newlon plays in the sand as TLC Services in Huntington celebrates National Play Therapy Week on Saturday in East Pea Ridge.

**ST. MARY'S ER** Huntington · Ironton  
**When it's serious, it's St. Mary's**

COMMUNITY: ANIMALS

Shelter

Continued from 1A

Its comparative data more closely resembles shelters that receive approximately half as many animals in Winfield, West Virginia, Ashland and Ironton.

Specifically, Huntington's reported volunteer base of just 20 people falls beneath the roster of Lawrence County, Ohio, a shelter which cares for less than half as many animals with approximately 29 percent as much revenue secured largely through the sale of dog tags.

Those realities are not helped by the shelter's battered image, drying up donor funds and available volunteers, leaving the Huntington shelter with still more animals, limited space and more euthanasia.

But Iseli said the falling dominoes must stop.

"It's going to take a lot of work," Iseli said Thursday. "We have to put our differences aside, let the past be the past and let's move forward ... Today is a new day."

Iseli, promoted from interim director last month, committed himself to change in acknowledging the shelter's higher-than-desired euthanasia rate. That begins with revising sterilization policies to benefit rescue groups, implementing a catch-and-release program for cats, and better volunteer coordination.

Such changes have revolutionized animal shelters in Charleston and Ironton, where the percentage of animals euthanized fell from 70 to 90 percent as late as five years ago to less than 12 percent in 2014.

The Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association experienced change with Chelsea Staley's hiring as executive director in September 2013. She instilled a philosophy that eliminated euthanasia as a remedy for overpopulation.

Such a mandate forced the self-described marketing person to get creative increasing the shelter's dependence upon rescue groups, waiving adoption fees in times of near capacity and more recently scrapping its volunteer roster for one with more coordination and training.

Those moves and other initiatives won community support, increasing contributions to the Charleston organization by a half million dollars. Staley looks upon that success as a combination of small victories, all of which started with one government official congratulating her inheriting of a hornet's nest.

"Right now all eyes are on Cabell (County)," she said of Iseli and the Huntington shelter. "I'm dead serious ... Cabell has a significant opportunity to change and be a better shelter right now, and I just hope they take it."

Staley went further, pledging her help and guidance if called upon, saying everyone is fighting for the same goal — to save animals.

"Nothing we have done is proprietary," she said. "Every program we have rolled out, we have copied from someone else who did it first."

Prospect of privatization

The Huntington-Cabell-Wayne Animal Control Shelter operates on approximately \$144 for every animal it received in 2014, according to its total volume of animals and its annual budget of \$594,000, as provided by Iseli and shelter board liaison Chris Tatum.

That falls well short of Charleston's donor-induced figure of \$243 per animal, but ahead of government-run shelters in Winfield at \$124, Ashland



Exterior of the Huntington-Cabell-Wayne Animal Shelter on Friday in Huntington.

Photos by Sholten Singer/The Herald-Dispatch

2014: Area animal shelters by the numbers

	Htn-Cabell-Wayne Animal Control Shelter	Putnam Co. Animal Shelter	Kanawha-Charleston Humane Assoc.	Humane Society of Parkersburg*	Boyd County Animal Shelter	Lawrence County Dog Pound
<b>Total volume (annual)</b>	4,126	2,465	5,347	3,731	2,037	1,691
<b>Dogs</b>	2,144	997	2,967	NA	988	1,337
<b>Cats</b>	1,982	1,468	2,331	NA	1,040	354
<b>Other</b>	0	N/A	49	NA	9	---
<b>Total euthanized</b>	2,597	1,740	495	848	913	203
<b>% overall</b>	63%	71%	9%	23%	45%	12%
<b>Dogs</b>	1,087	408	136	NA	93	112
<b>% of volume</b>	51%	41%	5%	NA	9%	8%
<b>Cats</b>	1,510	1,332	357	NA	820	91
<b>% of volume</b>	76%	91%	15%	NA	79%	26%
<b>Total adopted/other</b>	1,529	620	4,138	1,807	1,144	1,358
<b>% of overall</b>	37%	25%	77%	48%	56%	80%
<b>Type of organization</b>	Government	Government	Nonprofit	Nonprofit	Government	Government
<b>Annual funding</b>	\$ 594,000	\$ 306,551	\$ 1,300,000	---	\$ 249,000	\$ 175,000
<b>Area served (sq miles)</b>	787	345	901	366	159	453
<b>Population served</b>	138,570	56,650	191,275	86,569	48,886	61,917
<b>Total volunteers</b>	20	15	185	440	3 to 4	25-30
<b>Total employment</b>	13	8	33	19	5	4
<b>Facility size</b>	5,264 sq. ft.	10,000 sq. ft.	8,500 sq. ft.	NA	2,607 sq. ft.	NA
<b>Facility capacity</b>	170	130	239	NA	82	85
<b>Facility built - Year</b>	1971	2013	1996	1958	1961	1991

Source: Compiled by The Herald-Dispatch from interviews with individual shelters

\* Note: Statistics for 2013/2014 fiscal year. Exact breakdown by type of animal was not available.

"Right now all eyes are on Cabell (County). Cabell has a significant opportunity to change and be a better shelter right now, and I just hope they take it."

**Chelsea Staley**  
Executive director of the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association

at \$122 and Ironton at \$103. Budget information was not provided for the Humane Society of Parkersburg.

Oversight stands as a major difference setting apart Huntington from nonprofit operations in Charleston and Parkersburg, both of which operate off private donations and grants with limited government aid.

Instead, Huntington operates as a government entity with nearly three-quarters of its budget, or \$425,000, provided by the Cabell and Wayne County commissions as well as the city of Huntington. It receives another \$20,000 from neighboring Lincoln County and \$105,000 through fees collected and miscellaneous revenue, Tatum said.

Huntington Mayor Steve Williams expressed a desire for some level of privatization last month. Such public-private partnership seemed to have yielded success in Charleston and Parkersburg.

Those operations contract with county and city governments to provide sheltering.

They have similar agreements for animal control with their respective counties, while incorporated cities decide for themselves whether to hire their own humane officers or contract with the shelter.

For instance, the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association operates with an estimated \$1.3 million budget, which includes \$280,500 in county and municipal contracts.

It's a relationship dating back many years for Staley's organization, and it's one she wouldn't change, even though it strips her shelter of turning away animals found in the "absolute worst of the worst" situations.

"We wouldn't have it any other way," she said. "I love being over animal control because those animals need us the most. Those animals can be the worst of the worst, they can be in the greatest need, and that is where I want to spend my time."

Many share Staley's passion for such animals, and she said that love can support the shelter's broader fundraising effort to ensure euthanasia touches as



The interior of the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association on Thursday in Charleston.

few animals as possible.

The Charleston shelter operates with an estimated \$1.3 million budget built heavily upon private contributions and grants. Staley credited such success to a donor base dating back decades as well as several fundraising events throughout the year.

Charleston's biggest fundraiser has been a gala, referred to as Tuxes and Tails. It built upon the success of an event, formerly called Furball, which raised \$20,000 to \$30,000 annually.

With a new title, a more elegant setting and the promise of a large buffet at Embassy Suites, Staley said she now believes it will bring in \$75,000. That one event stands in sharp contrast to the \$44,000 in private donations Huntington's shelter will receive in a given year, a figure which Tatum said includes one donor's \$20,000 trust.

The donation-based approach also has worked for Little Victories Animal Rescue in Ona. The private, no-kill shelter operates with no government assistance on an annual budget of \$400,000 — an amount equal to two-thirds the budget of the Huntington-Cabell-Wayne facility just 20 miles to the west.

Little Victories executive director Rebecca Crowder and Staley believe proximity of the Huntington and Ona shelters should not impact the government-run facility should its leaders seek privatization or a push

for more donations.

Crowder said the two groups have different missions each with passionate supporters. Staley agreed, even speculating a shelter that euthanizes could have more success.

"In my opinion, the animal shelter needs it more," she said. "An animal shelter can only save what they have the means to save. So I think the public would welcome donating to Cabell-Wayne because the stakes are much higher."

Iseli supports looking for ways to boost private donations and grants never pursued by his predecessors, though he said the nonprofit status of humane societies such as Charleston's give those groups wider latitude.

Despite that roadblock, Iseli seemed hesitant when asked about switching Huntington's shelter to a nonprofit. He said that decision rests with Williams and two other board members, though he believed improving the shelter's image and its relationship with area nonprofits can reach many of the same goals.

"It's just there's all kinds of avenues out there that were never looked into or tried before," Iseli said.

Putnam County Animal Shelter director John Davis also expressed skepticism about public-private partnerships. It stemmed from a private group's desire to run his shelter and make personnel decisions with

full funding by the county.

Davis said a nonprofit model resembling those in Charleston and Parkersburg could work, though he did not have experience with their operations.

A volunteer army

Charleston and Parkersburg shelters manage the individuality of their volunteers with a structured orientation program. Both credit such organization with helping boost their rosters into triple digits.

The Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association started its program just last year. They did so with help from the Humane Network, which provided guidance through a grant from a nonprofit geared toward controlling the cat population.

Those efforts led to the founding of a class dubbed Volunteer 101. It meets twice a month with the association's volunteer coordinator. The mandatory training is required before anyone helps at the shelter.

The protocol includes the class presentation, a personal tour and mentoring by paid staff, Staley said.

Those lessons are important to prepare prospective volunteers for what they may encounter and ensure they align with the shelter's mission, which includes the potential for euthanasia if the dog is aggressive or diseased.



The interior of the Putnam County Animal Shelter.

## COMMUNITY: ANIMALS

## New approaches could help reduce euthanasia

By CURTIS JOHNSON  
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HUNTINGTON — Surrendering your dog to an animal shelter in Charleston, Huntington or Ironton may be the first step in getting the canine a one-way ticket to a family as far away as Minnesota, Michigan or New York.

Reliance upon such out-of-state rescue organizations represents just one way animal shelters in Charleston and Ironton drastically reduced dog euthanasias, and the Charleston facility now uses a catch-and-release program for similar success with cats. Expanded use of both initiatives is high on the priority list of Scott Iseli, the newly appointed director of the Huntington-Cabell-Wayne Animal Control Shelter.

Its euthanasia percentage ranks among the highest of seven shelters reviewed by The Herald-Dispatch, though Iseli points to a dramatic decline since 2011. Other solutions yielding success in the region include a retention program in Charleston, the opening of a low-cost spay and neuter clinic in Parkersburg and expanded use of the Internet everywhere.

Charleston, Ironton and, to a much lesser extent, Huntington rely upon out-of-state animal rescues. Each facility, as well as the Boyd County Animal Shelter in Ashland, also works with local rescue organizations to remove dogs from the risk of euthanasia.

Lawrence County pound keeper Melissa Nicely said without the help of some 40 rescue organizations her shelter's canine kill rate would return to 90 percent, a measure which made the Ironton pound Ohio's deadliest in 2011.

The Ironton pound moved 1,095 dogs through adoption or rescue 2014. That contrasts with just 112 euthanasias, approximately 8 percent of the 1,337 canines that arrived and many of those killed were old dogs whose families benefited from the pound's low-income euthanasia program.

Nicely further illustrated the pound's dependence upon rescues saying a good week routinely yields five to six adoptions in comparison to 30 rescues.

"Every time I turn around we're adding a new group," she said. "It's



Sholten Singer/The Herald-Dispatch

Ricky Hawkins, right, receives his new dog "Jasper" after filling out adoption papers at the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association on Thursday in Charleston.

because we're willing to work with them and we have the interaction."

The Ironton shelter's commitment to a Michigan rescue this past week necessitated its switch to a more expensive vaccine, while the Kanawha-Charleston Humane Association routinely needs shelter volunteers to drive its canines twice a month to a groups in Maryland, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York.

Iseli said similar changes are necessary for Huntington to maximize its use of rescue groups. The chief issue is adopting a sterilization program that results in every animal being spayed or neutered before it leaves as opposed to the shelter awarding each adopted owner or rescuer a voucher for the operation.

For instance, Iseli a Pittsburgh

group already takes six dogs a month. He believes the sterilization change would mean other groups start taking 20 to 40 dogs a month — 240 to 480 a year.

Iseli also supports the use of a catch and release program for feral cats. A similar initiative in Charleston, known as trap, neuter and return, spared the lives of 392 cats in 2014, according to the shelter's executive director Chelsea Staley. That enabled it to euthanize just 357 cats, equal to 15 percent of those taken in by the shelter in 2014 and far less than other shelters in the newspaper's analysis.

Such a program drew criticism from Putnam County Animal Shelter director John Davis. He believed it creates a disservice to taxpayers who view feral cats to be a nuisance,

to which Staley said sterilization favorably changes the cats' behavior.

"We have been catching and killing cats for 50 years at least and they still exist," she said.

Staley also touts her shelter's retention program in reducing the number of animals surrendered to its care. It involves a help desk manager inquiring as to the reason every owner wishes to surrender their pet. His goal is to answer every reason with a solution, whether it is obedience tips or opening of the shelter's pet food bank to alleviate a financial burden.

Michelle Earl, shelter manager for the Humane Society of Parkersburg, said her organization hopes its low-cost spay and neuter clinic will reduce intakes. It opened without residency or income restrictions in

October 2013 and led to the sterilization of 6,176 dogs and cats last year.

The Putnam County shelter hopes to use donated funds to start a similar sterilization program, albeit with income restrictions, later this year. Davis said officials remain in negotiation, but hope it results in fewer puppies and kittens being surrendered.

Iseli, unaware of retention program and Parkersburg clinic, said both initiatives were worth looking into. The Huntington director also said his shelter looks to increase its usage of Facebook and revamp its former website to provided additional opportunities for adoption.

Follow reporter Curtis Johnson at Facebook.com/curtisjohnsonHD and via Twitter @curtisjohnsonHD.

## Shelter

Continued from 14A

"We tell them the truth about the shelter — good, bad and ugly," she said. "Pretty often if you know two facts and not the middle ground, you're assumptions fill the middle. Our volunteers don't have those assumptions because they understand how we operate."

Staley believed in the program so much she scrapped the Charleston shelter's entire roster in October 2014. It already has been replenished with 185 volunteers. They walk dogs, clean cages and work adoption events among many other tasks, such as serving as greeters and driving dogs multiple states away for rescue.

Parkersburg shelter manager Michelle Earl said her facility uses a similar program. Experienced volunteers coordinate orientation and then schedule its roster of approximately 440 volunteers for various tasks.

Crowder's group also uses an application process and orientation at Little Victories. She and a board member administer the program, which she estimates has more than 50 regular volunteers.

That's more than double Huntington-Cabell-Wayne's roster of 20 volunteers, according to numbers provided by Iseli. That ranked second to last in terms of volunteers per animal served in 2014, followed by Boyd County's roster of three to four volunteers, according to The Herald-Dispatch's analysis.

Iseli has submitted new volunteer protocols for board approval. It will include better advertising of the need for volunteers, scheduling of orien-



Sholten Singer/The Herald-Dispatch

An interior photo of the Friends of the Shelter barn project at the Huntington-Cabell-Wayne Animal Shelter on Friday in Huntington.

tation classes and education as to different areas of potential service.

His proposed protocols are based upon standards set by the National Animal Control Association and a shelter in Washington County, Maryland. He most recently visited the Maryland facility a year ago and spoke to them within the past month.

## Rehabbing public image

The Huntington shelter's public image may be its largest obstacle.

That includes recent complaints of distemper, its high-than-desired euthanasia rate and prior reports the shelter provided a diseased dog to an area rescue.

Iseli said he has combated that reputation by reaching out to the rescue group affected, proclaiming his shelter distemper-free before board members last month, and releasing euthanasia statistics showing the number of animals killed down from 6,109 dogs and cats in 2011 to 2,597 last year.

"I want to be transparent," he said. "I don't want us to stay where we used to be. I was here through all of that other and I want to move forward. I want the shelter to be the best one in the state."

Lawrence County pound keeper Melissa Nicely and Staley said running a healthy shelter is fundamental. Both have heard previous reports of disease and said such issues will keep volunteers away and dissuade potential adoptions and rescues.

Staley said the only way to regain the public's trust is action.

"I think a lot of people in our county wanted to see better things," she said of the Charleston shelter. "They since have and now open their hearts, homes and wallets to our cause ... Nobody wants to volunteer at a shelter when you know your favorite dog is going to be euthanized the next morning."

The Putnam County Animal Shelter rehabbed its image with a new building. Its construction replaced a rundown, 30-year-old facility located in a wooded area out of the view from the main roadway.

The new facility sits across the Kanawha River from Winfield along W.Va. 34/62. Animals no longer sit behind caged fences, but instead behind clear windows. Davis said its larger capacity also allows the shelter to hold more animals, some for six to seven months at a time, thus reducing its euthanasia rate.

"We have a lot of good feedback on just how inviting the place is," he said. "We have it more set up like a pet-shop feel as to an animal shelter. A lot of people feel better about coming in."

Putnam County's new facility costs \$2.5 million in taxpayer funds. Private donations chipped in another \$300,000 for furnishings, Davis said.

Iseli admits a new animal shelter would be a huge benefit for Huntington, but he cited money issues in saying any such project is not feasible.

A cheaper option involves the use of volunteers. Staley and Nicely credit their knowledgeable volunteers with providing a voice to respond to any criticism.

Follow reporter Curtis Johnson at Facebook.com/curtisjohnsonHD and via Twitter @curtisjohnsonHD.

## Play

Continued from 1A

Luci Shuler, of Barboursville, has a 9-year-old daughter and a 7-year-old son in play therapy. She said, without a doubt, it is the best therapy for them.

"My daughter is relatively shy and I don't think she would be able to express her emotions with a regular therapist," Shuler said. "My son was diagnosed with selective mutism. He can talk perfectly normal, but he doesn't like to in school and other places. So regular therapy wouldn't do them any good. This has allowed them to express their emotions."

"It's the perfect type of therapy for them."

Jefferson works closely with families as well. She said the family is a system, and she will be starting a parenting group in March to work with families more.

"I thought in the beginning, 'Oh, they are just playing. What are they getting out of it?'" Shuler said. "But I talked with (Jefferson), and she explained what was happening. I've learned a lot from her." There are only five play therapists in the state. Jefferson is currently looking for mental health therapists who would like to train in play therapy.

Anyone interested in learning more about play therapy or TLC Services can contact Jefferson at 304-634-0274 or tlc4change@gmail.com.

Follow reporter Taylor Stuck on Twitter @TaylorStuckHD.



Jason Courts, 6, Emma Fluharty, 6, and Gabrielle Courts, 9, fill in coloring pages as TLC Services in Huntington celebrates National Play Therapy week Saturday in East Pea Ridge.

Bishop Nash/The Herald-Dispatch