Recent Dunn County Humane Society addition helps cats thrive

By Pamela Powers
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MENOMONIE — Two new community rooms with toys, cat condos and shelves for cats to sit and look out windows are part of the new addition at the Dunn County Humane Society.

The nearly 1,400-square-foot addition is almost completed and humane society staff have moved cats into the addition built to help alleviate overcrowding at the shelter.

The humane society has an average population of about 140 cats a month and the original shelter built in 1997 had space to provide shelter for about 60 cats.

Four or five cats live together in each of the nearly 10-by-10-foot community rooms.

“They are able to socialize with each other, and they can live cage free,” said Dunn County Humane Society executive director Josh Dalton.

One of the rooms is for cats with feline immune virus, where adoptions take longer.

“They love to look out the windows,” Dalton said. “It’s nice to finally have a space for some residents without cages. We feel we’re finally going to be able to serve the community and the homeless cats in the area. We feel like we will be able to give them the temporary home they deserve.”

The addition also has four socialization rooms, allowing potential adopters to meet cats, play with them and get to know the potential feline family member. Three of the rooms are about 8 by 10-feet and one is about twice that size to allow for families to interact with a cat or cats, Dalton said. The rooms also allow volunteers to interact with and socialize cats.
UW-Stout Student Construction Association members helped with the addition, gaining experience but also saving the humane society more than $30,000 in construction costs.

The addition cost about $130,000. The entire project has been funded, and the next goal is to raise money to repair the original parking lot.

As part of the addition, cats no longer have any wire cages. The Milwaukee Area Animal Control donated plastic kennels to the shelter that are larger and give each cat more space, Dalton said.

Another part of the project included remodeling the entrance to the building at 302 Brickyard Road. The former lobby is a private adoption and surrender area, Dalton said.

Dunn Energy Cooperative donated skylights in the cat addition, the James E. Dutton Foundation donated insulation for the project and Petco Foundation donated equipment in the kitchen area to better bathe and care for dogs and cats.

Cat numbers were down to about 70 last week but are expected go back up with spring.

However, with new state laws allowing for the adoption of stray pets in four days rather than seven days, Dalton believes cats will be adopted quicker at the no-kill shelter.

About 1 to 2 percent of stray cats that come into the shelter are claimed by their owners, Dalton said.

The shelter recommends placing a microchip on pets. A clinic is planned from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. April 16 at Keyes Chevrolet, 303 Oak Ave., Menomonie. Cost is $10 per dog or cat.

Humane society board of directors member Michele Register said it was fantastic to see the new cat addition become a reality.

“It is beyond amazing to see these guys have this room to strut their stuff and be free,” she said, gesturing at the community rooms. “There was just absolutely a need.”

Board member Nancy Dimberio agreed. “It is wonderful and it was much needed,” she said. “The overcrowding of cats was very unbearable for staff and the cats.”