

Humane Society of Elmore County News – 1 Mar '21
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We are essentially a year into COVID and all the changes that have resulted. For Shelters across the country there have been a lot of lessons learned from operational changes that may stay permanently.

Here is what we have learned after a year of shifting to doing intake by appointment and adoptions through an application and appointment process – it WORKS!

Doing intake by appointment allows our staff to be prepared for what is incoming – there is a big difference between taking in one puppy, versus three momma cats and 12 kittens, versus two large adult dogs, versus feral cats in traps. By knowing what is coming in at a specific time we can have the space ready and the staff can respond as needed. Without appointments we worked in a constant reactionary state and that makes doing workload planning challenging at best.

Another phenomenon of intake by appointment is that by having a kind of cool down period, more than a few owners have re-thought, came up with different plans, or regrouped on training, and chose to NOT surrender their pet – that is a win-win for the pet, and the Shelter.

Adoptions this past year were at their highest percentage ever compared to previous years and returned adoptions were at their lowest. How is that possible with the Shelter no longer allowing the public to just walk in at any time? First, our staff and volunteer Photographers work diligently to ensure that all of our pets available for adoption are kept current on the online pet adoption sites like [Petfinder](#), [AdoptaPet](#), our [website](#) and a host of other pet adoption sites. With more time to do better evaluations, we can put even more information on each pet so that potential adopters can see if that pet might, indeed, be a good fit. Not all pets fit into every situation so this gives the public the opportunity to search based on their own criteria and see what is available that meets their requirements.

Once we receive an application and approve it, we can set up an appointment for the approved adopter to come meet the pet in question. With an adoption appointment we have more time to help adopters meet the pet they are interested in and then if that pet is just not quite right, and knowing all of their parameters, we can suggest others that might be a better fit. We have staff with many years of experience in this field who love playing ‘matchmaker’ as that results in pets leaving us to new homes and happy adopters.

We also work to find approved adopters what they are looking for via their application we keep in our “Wish List” file. With the information from their application, we are able to notify them if we have a pet that might be a ‘match’ and that method has resulted in a number of adoptions.

You may still doubt but we also know this – coming into a Shelter is overwhelming for many people and seeing ALL of the pets very often results in potential adopters being unable to make a decision so they leave without adopting. Having too many choices is actually harder than a defined few which Psychologist Barry Schwartz calls “choice paralysis.” He argued that more choices make us less likely to take action, and to be less satisfied with our eventual decision. So please trust us when we tell you that these changes have very much been to the positive – for our pets, for our adopters and for our staff.