

Animal shelter building named for the Smiths

Penny L. Pool
Staff Writer

Members of the Randolph County Animal Shelter community had long meant to recognize Chuck and Evelyn Smith for their work on behalf of the animals. At an annual party held to recognize volunteers the moment came.

Dugald R. and Nancy McMillan held the party at their house in Woodland and surprised the Smiths with a sign naming the shelter after the couple, "The Chuck and Evelyn Smith Building."

They said they felt very humbled by this honor. They have worked diligently for the past several years to make the shelter one of the finest in Alabama, but they said this would not have been accomplished without the ongoing support of the people of Randolph County who love the shelter as much as they do.

They were not surprised when they saw their daughter, Allyson Mauter, and two of their granddaughters, Amanda Mauter and Breezy Mauter, there because they also have volunteered, Evelyn said.

"Chuck and Evelyn have just been so instrumental in all we've done. Their leadership, their passion, their drive, their ability to motivate people--it's just been the driving force behind everything we've done. We felt it was time to honor them," Dugald said.

"He sure surprised us. When we got there the children and grandchildren were there. I thought they were there because they volunteered with the Paddlin' for Paws fundraiser. Then they unveiled the sign--I almost cried," Evelyn said.

They have developed relationships with rescues elsewhere who are good about taking the dogs and cats. Many of them are up north but are also in Florida, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Their success at adoptions here can be seen in the large paw prints on the entryway wall where adopters sign their names and the names of the newest addition to their families. June was a banner month for adoptions.

Dugald said Evelyn and Chuck were instrumental in

the county's going from nothing at all to today's beautiful shelter. Years ago when they went before the county commission and were told there was no money for a shelter the cadre of animal lovers had almost given up. But, Dugald said, by this point they had all bonded and kept slogging onward.

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Special place, people

With mascot Otto at the newly named Chuck and Evelyn Smith Building, the main building at the Randolph County Animal Shelter, are Evelyn and Chuck Smith.

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"The best thing that happened to the shelter was when Chuck and Evelyn joined," he said, noting two previous groups had failed.

"I feel we're one of the crown jewels of the county," he said of the animal shelter.

Patt High, also a committed volunteer, said, "There's no one more deserving of this honor than Chuck and Evelyn Smith, who give every day in every way to the animals."

The shelter opened Oct. 27, 2007, but including the time to get the land and everything else it has been about 15 years of work, High said. "They've been building the dream for that long," she said.

In a recent tour of the shelter Evelyn pointed out where money from fundraisers went, such as the breakroom for employees so they don't have to eat in front of customers and where the board of directors meets. An obvious highlight to her was a gorgeous stainless steel bathtub, which

makes it easier to wash the big dogs. It was such a chore to wash the big dogs in the sink but now they just walk up the ramp into the tub.

On this day Fincher Fence employees are working to enlarge the area at the front of Jake's Place. Evelyn said they are thankful for the big discount John Fincher has given them on the expansion.

Chuck said the area out front is something they wanted for a long time because the puppies and young dogs don't get the attention they deserve.

They do not put any animal down unless it is mean or sick, Evelyn said. Chuck will do just about anything before they put an animal down.

The shelter is packed with every kind of dog imaginable, of all sizes, with some enthusiastically wagging their tails begging for attention.

The cat room is packed with beautiful cats and kittens of all colors and sizes, some too young to adopt. Rescuers will take some of the beauties but they are already adopted before they leave the shelter. They carefully check out the rescues before the animals are sent to them.

They proudly point out they hit their 2,000th adoption on May 4.

About half of the workers at the shelter are volunteers and about half are paid. Two of the many committed volunteers include Sheila Fincher and Ann Boozer. They arrive every Wednesday at 9 or 10 a.m. to clean out the cat cages and have done so for seven years.

They name off many other dedicated volunteers who are there to do what needs doing.

There is a photo of the Folsom Head Start, which every year collects "Pennies for Paws" and presents it to the shelter. The last time they brought in \$360.26 in pennies.

At the volunteer get-together the board of directors thanked the Smiths for all they do, but Chuck and Evelyn said the shelter belongs to all the people of Randolph County and they are proud to be a small part of such an organization.