



PACFA Facility Highlight: Riverdale Animal Shelter



The Board of County Commissioners approved the new facility in 2016, and as design and construction got underway, Wilde challenged the staff to continue to elevate the care of animals despite the shortcomings of the current facility. Shelter Operations Manager, Angel Williams, with her extensive knowledge and passion for animal behavior, took on this challenge, and has since led efforts to improve and standardize what has evolved into the shelter's Every Pet, Every Day enrichment program. Just like the name implies, dogs and cats, and even small animals, receive a variety of enrichment each day.

Knowing enrichment allows animals to express species-specific behaviors, ultimately lowering stress and improving well-being, Williams' team of animal care staff and volunteers use monthly calendars to rotate offering animals a variety of novel items to create cognitive, dietary, and sensory enrichment. Dogs receive their morning meals in puzzle feeders and are introduced to a variety of outside play yard activities after their daily walks. Daily quiet time, complete with soothing music in the background, also gives shelter animals time to decompress. More recently the shelter staff even created a six-week enrichment calendar for kitten foster parents. The rotation not only includes novel items, but encourages new behaviors, as the kittens reach different milestones between two and eight weeks of age.



Continuing to lower stress and increase the well-being of animals is one of the primary goals for the new shelter. The RAS project's principal architectural firm, G Squared Design, partnering with Blue Skye Animal Care Architecture, worked closely with Adams County leadership, shelter staff, and community stakeholders to design a facility that would enhance animal care, as well as service to the public. Amenities includes spacious, brightly lit animal housing spaces, walking trails, private adoption counseling rooms, and a state-of-the-art health clinic.

Although the new RAS facility will be significantly less stressful for shelter animals, Williams said Every Pet, Every Day enrichment program will continue. "We believe that enrichment is just as essential to our animals' welfare as proper nutrition and veterinary care," said Williams. "Our new facility just gives us a greatly improved space to continue our work to protect, nurture, and care for them."