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## Livingston animal shelter selected for prestigious fellowship

By Whitney Bernes • Chronicle Staff Writer Mar 22, 2018



Executive Director Steve Leach and Development Director Alicia Davis introduce two of their new canine residents in an outdoor play pen at the Stafford Animal Shelter on Wednesday, March 21, 2018. The shelter was recently selected for a fellowship through the University of Wisconsin.

[Rachel Leathe/Chronicle](#)



The Stafford Animal Shelter in Livingston was recently selected for a prestigious fellowship that will help staff better take care of its critters.

“It’s a big deal,” said Steve Leach, Stafford’s executive director. “It’s a resource that we couldn’t create on our own. It’s the cutting edge of animal medicine in the shelter environment. So it’s something we feel is very important to us.”

The shelter announced it was recently accepted into the University of Wisconsin-Madison Shelter Medicine Program’s Northern Tier Shelter Fellowship. Stafford Animal Shelter was one of only four shelters in seven states in the northwest to earn the fellowship.

The program, created in conjunction with the University of California-Davis, aims to help local shelters advance their work and promote animal welfare, assisting shelters in a number of ways such as on-site consultations, outbreak assistance, diagnostic testing and workshops.

As part of the fellowship, Leach will travel to Wisconsin for three days in June. Stafford staff will then put together a program to institute at the shelter, which could be anything from creating new protocol for certain outbreaks to changes to quarantine procedures.

After introducing whatever new program to the shelter they come up with as part of the fellowship, staff will track results over the course of the year before returning to Wisconsin to present the results to the fellowship members.

Leach noted that shelter medicine differs from clinical veterinary medicine. Shelters have high numbers of different animals, many with unknown health histories. So a fellowship such as this can help improve how Stafford deals with any health issues

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that arise.

“It’ll make us a lot better,” Leach said.

Leach said the shelter has worked with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Shelter Medicine Program in the past when they’ve needed guidance, saying it’s a leading veterinary program for shelter medicine in the country.

Earning a spot in the fellowship is “a real feather in our cap,” Leach said.

“More importantly,” he added, “it’ll help the pets we’re entrusted with caring for.”

Between November 2016 and October 2017, Stafford took in more than 1,000 animals that came from Park and its surrounding counties. It returned or adopted out more than 950 critters in that same time period, mostly in Livingston and Park County, but also to a large percentage — nearly 40 percent — to Gallatin County folks.

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Whitney Bermes covers cops and courts for the Chronicle.

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