

Shelter: Animal House opens

Contributed by Leah Kientz
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Go ahead and shout! Animal house is open.

A year ago, the door to Sandra Risler's future swung wide open and let her out.

"I came to a point in my life where I needed to find something to make me happy," said Risler, the 37-year-old CEO and director of the nonprofit Animal House dog rescue and grooming service.

"I realized volunteerism — the act of giving to someone else — can take you out of any funk you are in and makes you realize how good you have it," she said.

The vision of providing relief to overburdened shelters in the community and saving animals scheduled for euthanasia seemed natural when Risler met her business partner and Animal House groomer, Ali Eccleston.

"It's both of our dreams," Risler said. "We just saw there was a need. We are giving an opportunity for kill shelters to get the animals out because right now, the animals don't have a chance."

The dogs at Animal House are free of some of the stresses found in typical shelters because they have ample play time and are not caged during the day.

"We want to be as honest as we can be," said Risler. "We want to find these dogs a forever home. It's not about how many adoptions we do, it's about how many responsible adoptions we can do."

In addition to being an animal shelter and grooming facility, the hope is to eventually expand into a doggie daycare. This goal looks feasible to Risler, because the community has been generous so far.

"Seeing how the community has embraced us means more than anything," said Risler. "I cannot believe how amazing Fort Collins is. I call home and tell my mother about people in the community who all truly care for their animals."

When Animal House opens its doors for the first time on March 31, the community will be welcomed with an entire weekend of fun events.

"We wanted to show that this is a community place, and everyone is welcome," Risler said.

Diane Reese's students from TR Paul Academy of Arts and Knowledge painted pictures that are on the walls. Risler said she invited the students to do their work, "because of the innocence and unconditional love of children and animals. It shows that children are welcome here along with the community."

— — — TO GO TO THE SHOW

Animal House, dog rescue shelter and grooming center, grand opening
10 a.m.-3 p.m. March 31 and April 1
1104 W. Vine Street, at Shields

• During the two-day barbecue, guests will be able to play with the adoptable animals while meeting other local dog-based businesses including: Good Dog Forever pet behaviorist, Bones Du Jour Bakery, Canine Massage, Shure Pet Pupperware, Pooch Mobile, Camp Bow Wow and a low-cost Home Again micro-chipping service.