

It's a new day for the dogs and cats in Calvert

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Local officials and family members attend ceremony at the Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter in Prince Frederick.

Prince Frederick, MD - Tuesday, Oct. 9 marked another major milestone in the Calvert County legacy of Linda L. Kelley. Nearly 20 months after her death, the animal shelter Kelley had lobbied so passionately for was unveiled during a mid-afternoon ribbon cutting ceremony. The 12,910-square foot facility off Hallowing Point Road—the Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter—will officially open in early November.

"We stayed the course, we stayed on schedule," said Calvert Department of Public Safety Director Jackie Vaughan, who made mention of the complex' numerous amenities. Many of the county's stalwart animal advocates were wowed when they saw the finished product.

"It's fantastic," exclaimed Jean Radeacker as she and other animal organization members went from room to room to see what a state-of-the-art animal shelter looks like. The main building, which will serve as a headquarters for Calvert Animal Control Unit, includes rooms designated for "daycare," "healthy holding/maternity," and "behavioral evaluation." There are also "cat condos" and "cat porches." There are also designated rooms for stray dogs, dog quarantine, treatment, surgery and exams. Many of those areas will aid staff in adhering to the mandate of making the shelter a "no kill" facility. The routine euthanizing of unwanted domestic animals was always a bone of contention with dog and cat lovers at the Tri-County Animal Shelter. Calvert had been one of the three jurisdictions utilizing and funding the 58-year-old facility in Hughesville. Calvert officially secedes from the Tri-County Animal Shelter Nov. 1.

"It's a great day," said Huntingtown High School (HHS) business teacher Lynne Gillis, who accompanied 10 of her students to the ceremony. "This is where they [students] are going to be volunteering," said Gillis, who supervises the HHS Humane Society Club.

"Linda, more than most, understood that animals were truly a part of our everyday lives and it was those animals that brought great strength and comfort to many," Calvert Commissioners' President Evan K. Slaughenhaupt Jr. stated. "Linda's vision, which we share, is that through this facility, we'll humanely treat all animals. Only under the professional care of a veterinarian would a precious creature be relieved of terminal pain."

Members of Kelley's family—husband Tom and great grandson Trenton De Pompa—briefly addressed the audience. Delegate Jerry Clark, who served with Kelley for eight years on the Calvert Board of County Commissioners recalled meeting her for the first time when she was rescuing feral cats in Dunkirk. "She had respect for animals and human beings," said Clark, noting, "not too many days go by that you don't hear somebody talk about Linda Kelley." Clark was one of the four state lawmakers Slaughenhaupt thanked for supporting the board's request for bonding authority allowing the county to skirt the leasing of the facility from Marrick Properties and own the shelter outright.

Eric Bailey of Marrick Properties commended the commissioners for its "vision" and enthusiasm for a proposed "public-private partnership" that led to construction of the shelter and its ancillary facilities.

"When Rick Bailey of Marrick Properties approached Linda Kelley about the possibility of entering into a public/private partnership, which ultimately yielded this facility, I know Rick and his team viewed this as a win-win endeavor," Slaughenhaupt stated. "Public/private partnerships are creative alliances formed between a government entity and private developers to achieve a common purpose, typically in a more cost-efficient, transparent and expeditious manner. The biggest winner is our taxpayers, who in the end, acquired a first-class facility."

Vaughan also expressed confidence in Animal Shelter Division Chief Crystal Dowd, who was hired before ground was broken on the new facility in order to get ahead of the administrative curve. "Crystal's done a fantastic job," said Vaughan. "She is an excellent hire."

In addition to the main building, the Linda L. Kelley Animal Shelter includes a 1,380-square-foot barn to house livestock. There is also a pavilion at the entrance where local volunteer organizations may gather for special events.

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