

## For this issue's Coffee Break, we asked you what features you would include if you were building a new animal shelter, and why you think they're important for your community's pets.

You responded with a variety of elements that you feel are important in a modern, progressive animal facility: a "senior citizen center" for older pets, an indoor walking track for volunteer dog walkers, a maternity ward for newborns and their nursing mothers, and more great ideas.

To see the answers we couldn't fit into print, go to [animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak](http://animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak).

**A senior citizen center**, where older and special-needs dogs can have one-on-one time with a volunteer, get a massage, a brushing, a 15-20 minute soft-word session, cuddle time away from all other dogs, crowds, staring people, crashing cages, and water puddles. Maybe it could be nice and soundproof, with an inexpensive sound machine. I have one I paid \$20 for; it emits sounds like waves, chirping birds, whatever calms my dogs down. One of my dogs especially likes Bach. I developed a spa at home, and to this day, each of my dogs gets special time each day with me, whether it's brush time, cuddle time, or alone time. It works wonders, and they each sleep like babies as a result. Remember, it's the little things. They need all the love we can give them in their short lives.

—Ellen Tuttle, volunteer dog groomer  
City of Tallahassee Animal Service Center  
Tallahassee, Florida

**We are actually in the design phase** of a new shelter right now, and a few things that we wanted to make sure we included were multiple, separate ventilation areas; outside runs for all dog areas, including isolation and rehab; natural light; and lots of storage space. We even tipped the bucket more, and included a maternity ward for cats and dogs. We can't wait to start building a better future for these animals!

—Rachel Dennis, assistant director  
Humane Society of Elkhart County  
Bristol, Indiana

**A room by the lobby with glass** windows set up as a "cat gym," where volunteers could bring caged cats for exercise, and the public could see cats out of cages being active! The room would have washable, disposable toys, polar fleece strips on a stick (the strips would be discarded after each cat) ramps, stair-stepped wall shelves for climbing, colorful wall decals, a tunnel to run through, and boxes to peek from. It's always about getting the dogs out—but cats need exercise too!

—Joan Laisney, president  
Kennel Comforters Association.  
Carlsbad, California



If you wanted to design the Taj Mahal of animal shelters, what features would you include?

**Outdoor and indoor training areas** including agility; a conference room for international speakers on animal welfare and reward-based training, to educate school kids on the animal welfare issues, and to hold volunteer inductions and doggy dancing; a pool for hydrotherapy; clean, dry kennels; enclosures for pet introductions; an herb garden for animals to scent and eat; a pet supply shop stocking humane training tools; a coffee shop with vegan milk/food products; screened kennels to reduce reactivity; a cottage with a caretaker to care for litters/kindles in a home environment; a library for use by volunteers, staff, and the public, [offering] science-based training; Bowen therapy and massage room; a vet clinic for reduced-price sterilizations; a counseling room for staff and volunteers to assist with reducing stress; fenced fields for dogs to play; a nice lunch area; a comfortable, warm, and private rehoming area to discuss client adoption questions.

—Emma Norton, trainer  
Paw Prints Pet Training  
Woodvale, Western Australia

**I'd include Chromalux light bulbs** (my cats can vouch that they're the next best thing to real sunlight) and bladeless fans (my dog loves to sleep in front of ours during hot weather). Bad, irritating florescent lighting and hot, stale air are intensified by being cooped up inside a cage or kennel. These are two easy fixes that would make a marked improvement in the environment for the animals as well as the people! And if there's money left over, get some soothing music!

—Eve Scarcell, volunteer

*Animal Rescue League of New Hampshire  
Bow, New Hampshire*

**I'd include a spay/neuter clinic** for not only all the animals at the shelter to get altered, but also to offer the community a place to get their pets and community/feral cats spayed and neutered at low cost, or for free (sponsored). The reason we all need shelters to begin with is because of overpopulation, so let's get to the root of the problem!

—Jourdan Parentau, feline fix coordinator  
*Pet Community Center  
Nashville, Tennessee*

**I would first create a lobby** that is fun and stimulating and comfortable. First impressions start when customers walk through the door. Even further, I would have a billboard right on the street in front of the SPCA to advertise we are here. Interactive toys and play areas for both cats and dogs. It would be air-conditioned, of course. Bigger play areas for dogs and cats, with lots of toys and enrichment options. A quiet room for dogs or cats that need some alone time to adjust. A great store filled with anything a pet owner would need. A large education room for events and classes open to the public, and for continuing education of staff. Many public-access areas for dogs and cats, so that potential adopters can get to know the ones they're interested in. A nice clinic for medical care, with state-of-the-art equipment. An event hall for hosting special events and fundraisers right in our own backyard.

—Cathy Houde, volunteer  
*SPCA of Central Florida  
Ocoee, Florida*

**I would design the shelter with bright colors and lots of lighting**, so people would be more inclined to come to a happy place. The adult dogs would have large indoor suites, heated floors, and central air conditioning. They would also have individual outside runs for daily exercise. The puppies and small-breed dogs would have large cages that they could stand up in, and a separate area for their food and water. They would have separate outside runs and areas to exercise. Adult cats would have access to jungle gyms and wall perches. They would live in cageless colony rooms with chairs and couches, a cat tree in the middle of the room to climb, a separate room for their food, water, and litter boxes, and another area with floor-to-ceiling windows to lie in the sun. Kittens would be in a separate room and have lots of condos to play on; their food, water, and litter boxes would also be in a separate room.

—Lea Turbert

*marketing and development manager  
Montgomery Humane Society  
Montgomery, Alabama*

**If I was designing a new shelter**, I would include an inside walking track not only for the dogs, but for the volunteers who walk them, as well as a place for the community to safely bring their dogs to walk during inclement weather. Along with that, I would build an inside play area for the dogs, for time when the weather is not appropriate for them to be outside. This area could also be used for socialization so the dogs aren't locked up in a cage all day, and potential adopting families would see how the dog gets along with other dogs. I would have an area where people can sit and relax, and really visit with the dogs, to be sure they are picking the right one to join their family.

—Betty Hicks, administrative assistant  
*Humane Society of Greater Dayton  
Dayton, Ohio*

**Congratulations to Lea Turbert, whose submission was selected in a random drawing from those published in this issue. Her organization, Montgomery Humane Society, will receive a free coffee break: a \$50 gift certificate to a local coffee shop. "Bone" appétit!**

Check out the latest Coffee Break question and submit your responses (150 words or less) at [animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak](http://animalsheltering.org/coffeebreak) or send them to Editor, *Animal Sheltering/HSUS*, 2100 L St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20037. **Your answer may be printed in a future issue of *Animal Sheltering*.** If your response is chosen for publication, you will be entered into a drawing to win a **free coffee break (valued at \$50)** for your organization. Responses may be edited for length or clarity; no donation or purchase is necessary to win. See [animalsheltering.org](http://animalsheltering.org) for contest rules, or send an email or letter to the above addresses to request a printed copy.