

The Samantha Yates Humane Shelter Memorial Fund

In 2004, the Samantha Yates Humane Shelter Memorial Fund was established by Dave and Kim Bowyer in memory of their daughter, Samantha Yates. The purpose of the fund is to support the charitable intentions for the care of animals in Fulton County.

At the time, the Fulton County Animal Adoption and Education Center was not yet fully formed. Previously, a kennel system had been in place, which housed animals. When this entity was no longer in place, it was important for the Fulton County Animal Center to find a new building in order to house and care for these animals. The Manitowish Training Center generously provided the building.

According to the Center's Director Opaljean Rogers, the moving process was far from easy and required working 12 to 18 hours a day to finish in time. "It's not just 'Get a new building and move in,'" she said. "There are so many zoning laws and codes to follow."

The building was remodeled in just two weeks, thanks to the help of a \$27,000 grant from the Fulton County Community Center for the Center's start-up costs, along with materials given by numerous donors and help from the community. The Fulton County Animal Adoption and Education Center was then opened in October of 2011 with the capacity to hold more than sixty animals that are available for adoption.

The Fulton County Animal Adoption and Education Center is currently the only animal shelter in Fulton County.

With the money from the Community Foundation, the center was able to purchase kennels and to install air conditioning, heating, and a filtration system.

The Fulton County Leadership Academy (FCLA), which first posed the idea of establishing a shelter in the county, was also an important part of the process. As part of their requirements, each class in FCLA must work on a certain project. For the class of 2007-2008, a passion for animals combined with a growing need for a shelter in Fulton County led to a perfect project—an animal shelter.



For the next few years, even after graduating from FCLA, the group, including Mary Heal, Todd Montel, and Karen Vojtasek, continued to work toward their dream. With the help of the Community Foundation and the Samantha Yates Humane Shelter Memorial Fund, the dream became a reality.

“The Fulton County Leadership Academy helped so much,” said Opaljean, who was also part of FCLA. “This project really helps you to understand how a business works. We also learned a lot about Fulton County.”

Two other funds at the Community Foundation also support the center. The Fulton County Low-Cost Spay/Neuter Fund provides money to spay and neuter animals adopted from the center, and the Olive Jane Hathaway Animal Center Supply Fund provides support for supplies, food, and other expenses.

In addition to taking in and finding homes for these animals, the Center also offers other programs, such as Jog-With-A-Dog, where people from the community can go jogging or walking with a dog, and Senior-For-Senior, where senior citizens are matched with a dog or cat that is 5 years or older. The center encourages those of all ages to volunteer their time to help with the animals.

The Samantha Yates Humane Shelter Memorial Fund continues to support the charitable efforts of the Fulton County Animal Adoption and Education Center.

For more information, or volunteer opportunities, contact the center at 574-223-PETS, or look for the Fulton County Animal Center page on Facebook. A list of adoptable pets is also available on Facebook or at PetFinder.com.

