

Humane Society sees benefits with PetHub deal

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WENATCHEE — Big things are happening at PetHub, a local company reinventing the art of quickly returning lost pets back to their owners using whiz-bang technology.

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Dawn Davies is a community builder at heart — someone who finds inspiration in bringing people together to solve challenges.

We chatted in her office while Burrito the office cat was lolling in Davies' inbox. On the shelf was a dog created using recycled newspapers. She calls him Rufus.

As executive director of the Wenatchee Valley Humane Society, it has always troubled her that community members tend to view pet licensing as an obligation or a tax rather than something that creates value.

Davies sees an opportunity to shift that mindset with a partnership PetHub, a fast-growing local technology company that has created a creative and fast solution to reuniting lost pets with their owners using attractive digital identification tags.

The system is proven. More than 200,000 pets are in the system and 22 municipalities across the country have contracts with PetHub, including a San Diego County and Miami-Dade County.

“The beauty of Pet Hub is that it will largely depend on neighbors being neighbors,” Davies said. “If they see a stray pet, they can personally help to reunite the pet with its owner. This is the stuff that makes my day — being the person who facilitates the reunion of a confused, beloved pet with its worried, desperate parent brings tears of joy from everyone involved.”

Davies has been eyeing the PetHub solution for several years, even before the company moved from Bellevue to Wenatchee.

She believes the partnership with PetHub will reduce costs at the shelter over time by creating the opportunity for the owners of licensed lost pets to recover them before they get taken to the shelter.

Citizens who find lost pets can scan the QR code on the tag with their cellphone, which alerts the owner immediately that it has been found, or they can call either the Humane Society during business hours or the call



center around the clock. The call center is another Wenatchee-based company, GTC Technical Support.

Davies hopes the beautiful green digital tags that will be used for pets in 2018 will become something that pet owners value as a valuable investment for pet safety. The PetHub system costs about the same as paying for metal tags, Davies told me.

Besides the hope for reduced cost of providing shelter services, the Humane Society also may see dollars back from PetHub for pet owners who sign up for premium services, which includes such things as an Amber Alert system for lost pets. It's a shared revenue arrangement, PetHub founder

Tom Arnold said.

Any revenue that is shared back to the shelter will be used to support its spay and neuter efforts.

Davies told me that she also hopes to see more community members licensing their pets because of this new safety system. The increased revenue would also support the finances of the Humane Society and keep costs down for the communities that are served by the Humane Society.

Animal control and shelter costs are rising because primarily due to the increasing minimum wage. The Humane Society has a staff of 37 people in Animal Care and Control, the shelter, Club Pet and its clinic, Davies said.

The net cost of the tags is about the same as metal tags, but the Humane is on the hook to distribute a high percentage of the new tags or they will have to reimburse some dollars to PetHub, Davies. She's confident they'll meet the targets.

I was also impressed by the strategy adopted by the Humane Society Board. The goal, said Davies, is "building a compassionate community for people and pets," which is a recognition of the meaningful connection between people and their pets.

Everyone's is going to be happier, Davies said, if they can get lost pets home without a trip to the shelter that costs the shelter and the pet owner money and is stressful for the animal.

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