**About Friends Of Strays**

Friends Of Strays, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit no-kill animal shelter located in Princeton, Illinois. Founded in 1994, by Bonnie Doty and a small group of dedicated volunteers, Friends of Strays Animal Shelter provides rescue, rehabilitation, shelter and adoption services for more than a thousand abandoned, neglected or abused animals annually, primarily dogs and cats. Friends of Strays also works with local veterinarians and animal control to curb the unnecessary killing of adoptable pets by taking those scheduled to be euthanized and caring for them until a new home can be found. Friends of Strays serves the needs of unwanted, neglected and abused animals primarily in Bureau, Putnam and LaSalle Counties in Illinois, although, when the need arises, its volunteers, resources and space are available beyond those boundaries.

The organization and its work have grown with the need; fifteen years ago, the number of rescued pets was much smaller. In 1994, the Shelter housed the community’s neglected, abused and unwanted cats in a small building, a former corner grocery store owned by a Friends of Strays member; dogs rescued from similar circumstances were housed at private foster homes until appropriate adoptions could be arranged. Many of the initial volunteers remain active within the organization.

In the first ten years of its work, in addition to direct help to improve the lives of pets in need, the Shelter’s volunteer staff worked hard to build community ties, provide programs on responsible pet ownership, and diligently raise funds. Space was limited in the building; as community awareness of the group’s mission grew, so did the number of calls reporting animals in need. The Shelter took over two more rooms of the little building, to help meet this need.

In 2004, Friends of Strays moved into a new building especially designed for a Shelter operation. This construction and land purchase was made possible by continuous fundraising over the years, and a bequeathal from a long-time supporter of the organization. The 6,500 square foot Shelter building has three feline isolation rooms; a "Kitty City" Adult Cat intake room, a "Meow Mix" Kitten Intake room, and a "Furry Memorial Hospital" room. Both the "Kitty City" room with 16 cages and "Meow Mix" room with 24 cages, provide space for animals not yet tested, vaccinated, or spayed/neutered. The Hospital room, with 30 cages, houses cats/kittens being treated for illness or injury. The Shelter is considered "cage-less;" once cats and kittens are healthy and ready for adoption, they are moved into one of three large, bright open rooms.

It is the policy of Friends of Strays to take any animal if space is available, without caveat of breed, medical condition or adoptability. Because of this policy, some animals stay at the Shelter for a lifetime and Shelter volunteers become the animal’s families. Friends of Strays is one of only a few shelters that provides a "home style" life and care for feline leukemia positive (FeLV) cats/kittens and for feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) positive cats/kittens; in fact, Friends of Strays currently houses several FIV cats rescued in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, while others rescued from that disaster, have been adopted. Both the FeLV and the FIV cats/kittens enjoy life in open rooms, with sunny windows, cat-friendly furniture and nurturing volunteers.

Friends of Strays Animal Shelter is home to many dogs and cats who have physical disabilities, that make them less likely to be adopted but still deserving of a quality life and care. Some of these animals are older animals with medical issues related to age, others carry the effects of trauma, tail paralysis, amputation, sight limitations, or the residual effects of infection that occurred before coming into the Shelter’s care, e.g., neurological effects of infection before birth, middle ear issues. All of these animals are comfortable and enjoy a high quality of life despite these medical issues. These special needs pets are housed in open rooms that best meet their needs.

The Shelter has an open "Purrie View" room for the comfort of geriatric cats, another, known as "Tiny Tigers" for cats under one year, and also an open room, "Purrinceton Pussycats," for adoptable cats over one year of age. In addition to these open rooms, the Shelter has a large open area, "Catnip Central," for cats who are not quite ready for adoption but do not require cage space; these cats may be shy, or may require monitoring because of past health issues. These open rooms allow for exercise and entertainment and eliminate the depression and mental stresses often seen with long-term cage confinement.

In addition, primarily during the spring of each year, a number of temporary crates are in set up in an area at the rear of the Shelter to accommodate the many, many orphaned "bottle babies" kittens that Friends of Strays raises to adoption age. The kittens require close monitoring and frequent feedings. By housing them away from intake and hospital room residents, the Shelter staff provides a safer area, away from possible contagion, for these very frail newborns.

The Shelter building has an Adoption Center "get acquainted room" for cats/kittens to meet with perspective adoptive families/individuals, a small gift and pet supply shop that features high-quality pet foods, pet supplies and unique gifts, and the office area.

Shelter dogs, in "Dog Country" are comfortably housed dogs in 24 kennels that provide both indoor and outdoor space. The outdoor area has a sun/rain/snow shield. Dogs enjoy additional exercise and playtime in the four large, grassy play yards; these yards are great spaces for perspective adopters to play with Shelter dogs. The Dog Adoption Center provides additional "get acquainted" opportunities for pets and people. The kennel area also includes a kitchen for preparation of dog meals. Puppies are primarily housed in various areas of the main building depending on their specific needs, with an emphasis on facilitating early socialization and health monitoring.

The building also has a huge laundry area, a garage and an additional storage building on the property.

Last, there is a room set aside for our future Low/No Cost Community Spay/Neuter Clinic. This facility, when equipped and staffed, will serve low-income and senior pet owners by making affordable spay/neuter surgeries available for their pets. In addition to the public, the Shelter clinic will provide economical and convenient surgeries for animals in the Shelter’s care, which will make it possible to perform surgeries for more animals, and to ready pets for adoption to permanent homes, more quickly. As space permits, the clinic will also offer low-cost surgeries for animals in area shelters other than FOS. The clinic will be a giant step forward in ending the suffering and death of unwanted pets by helping to prevent pet overpopulation and adult pet relinquishments. It is a proactive approach that serves pets, pet-owners and the community.

The Shelter clinic is an ambitious goal. Our largest fundraiser, Art...Well-Groomed 2008, generated the first funds for the project. In addition, the Shelter was awarded a grant from a private foundation to purchase two anesthesia machines. Financial challenges have been a part of the organization since its very first days; as in the past, the motivation to meet that financial challenge is the knowledge that the clinic is a necessary step to a more humane future. With the help of informed and concerned individuals we will accomplish that future together.

Because Friends of Strays Animal Shelter is a no-kill facility, it has always been the Friends of Strays policy to not accept public funds which could impact on the "no-kill" policy that underscores the Shelter’s ethical philosophy. Relying completely on private funds and fundraising, the Shelter has grown from serving over 500 pets in its first year, to placing more than 400 pets in 2006, and housing at any given time, approximately 300 kittens/cats and 40 to 60 puppies/dogs. All pets offered for adoption are vaccinated, spayed/neutered, and micro chipped; puppies/dogs are also tested and placed on heartworm preventative. Perspective adoptive families/individuals are carefully screened; perspective adoptive families/individuals must agree to keep cats/kittens indoors; dogs/puppies must be "house" dogs.

Friends of Strays adoptive pets can be seen at the Shelter's Adoption Center, via [petfinders.com](http://www.petfinder.com/pet-search?shelterid=IL78&sort=pet.Identifier), on the Shelter’s website and at adoption centers at the Davenport, IA, East Peoria, IL, and the Peoria, IL PetSmarts.

The Shelter publishes a monthly newsletter featuring animals ready for adoption as well as special needs pets that are also featured in the Shelter’s [Share/Care program](http://www.friendsofstraysshelter.org/sharecare), a project that promotes adoptions and generates long-term support for lifetime residents.

**Friends of Strays in the Community:**

Friends of Strays, Inc. supports humane work with humane education. Shelter volunteers visit with school groups and community groups to present the need and benefits of responsible pet ownership and the importance of spay/neuter procedures.

Friends Of Strays, Inc. partners with many groups in the community. The "SAFE Program" involves a partnership with a local domestic violence shelter by caring for the animals of abuse victims free of charge for a specified length of time.

The Shelter also works with "[Pets For Seniors](http://www.petsforseniors.org/)" to match a special animal with an older person looking for a lifetime companion.