A fun project with a noble goal

SHSU photo students take pictures of animals in hopes of boosting adoptions at Rita B. Huff

By Tom Waddill tomwaddill@itemonline.com  May 3, 2017

Photography students from Sam Houston State University had lots of laughs last week while dressing cats and dogs like humans and taking pictures of the animals for a class project.

Volunteers at the Rita B. Huff Adoption Center told the students to make themselves at home in the animal shelter near Bowers Stadium. The students set up a makeshift studio inside the shelter, they put up props in the backyard and snapped hundreds of photos of the animals they briefly turned into movie stars.

Folks at the Rita B. Huff Adoption Center hope the project entitled “Huntsville Narratives: A Photography Exhibition featuring the animals of Rita B. Huff Humane Society” will help some of their four-legged friends find loving families and forever homes.

A similar project done by a photographer and an Arkansas animal shelter boosted pet adoptions big-time. That’s the main goal of the collaborative effort being done here by SHSU professor Rebecca Finley, some of her talented photography students and eager helpers at Rita B. Huff.

“The project in Arkansas was very successful,” said Carol Smith, a board member with the Rita B. Huff Adoption Center. “Becky walked into our office one day and said her photography students wanted to photograph our animals. We wanted people to take pictures of our animals and help us out, so this was a perfect fit.”

One thing led to another and a project, complete with a photo exhibit and reception, was planned.
Some students created their own narratives by presenting the animals as part of a fictional scene. Finley and her students hope the images that will be hung this week in the Satellite Gallery will promote adoption and community awareness of the excellent work being done by the Rita B. Huff Adoption Center.

Photos of the dogs and cats will be installed at the Satellite Gallery in downtown Huntsville on Thursday, and a reception is scheduled on May 9 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The photos will remain on display until May 13.

The fun stuff with potential pets will be shown in Gallery Two. In Gallery One, students will be exhibiting work from their personal artistic series focused of photographic storytelling. These projects represent a wide range of subjects from documentaries to fictional and personal narratives.

Huntsville Narratives features work by Ashley Boyles, Michelle Dudley, Jaycie Frazier, Holly Gray, Chase Miller, Miguel Parra, Oasha Patterson, Alison Schmidt, Emily Schuetz, Miranda Stubbs, Chelsea Taylor and Kaleigh Treiber.

Photographic Narratives is an Academic Community Engagement, or ACE-designated course. Each year, students partner with nonprofit organizations to create photographs in order to promote and educate the community about these organizations. Students in the class created a mix of formal studio photographs with each animal in costumes, candid shots of the animals at play and interactions with humans.

The Satellite Gallery is located at 1216 University Ave. in downtown Huntsville. Gallery hours are 4 to 8 p.m. on Thursdays, noon to 5 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, or by appointment. For more information, contact Finley by sending an email to bfinley@shsu.edu.