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By **Nneka M. Okona**  
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Helping furry friends in need is second nature to Fayette County Humane Society volunteer Sherry Vernick.

The Fayetteville resident extended a hand when a colleague came to her with a concern.

"A young lady that worked for me had a female dog that was not spayed and got pregnant," said Vernick. "The dog lived outside and that is where she had the pups."

It was during the cold winter months that the puppies were born and soon after, their mother took off, never to return.

"The pups were only a few days old and I knew they wouldn't make it if something wasn't done," said Vernick. "I called the Fayette County Humane Society and asked for advice and help."

Fayette County Humane Society has been in existence since 1973, dubbed "the oldest nonprofit humane organization," per its website.

In simplistic terms, the organization addresses a need of decreasing the overpopulation of dogs and cats, many of which, when placed in shelters, are killed.

The National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy recently found that number to be a staggering 64 percent.

Vernick suggested the economy might have something to do with the problem locally.

"In today's world, we try our best to donate food to people in Fayette and surrounding counties that love their animals but have lost their jobs and feel the need to give them away because they can't afford to feed them," she said.

A discounted spay and neutering program is offered, in addition to an extensive intake process for all unwanted and abandoned pets.

Fayette County Humane Society currently does not have its own animal shelter, although some of their pets are currently housed at Doggie Daycare, also in Fayetteville.

For Vernick, her time with the organization has been meaningful.

"I feel privileged to be a part of such a meaningful organization," she said. "The reward is not always a thank you or a pat on the back, but you receive it when one of the animals you have helped looks up at you with a pair of loving eyes."

The organization hosts pet adoptions every Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sunday from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at PetSmart, 2701 Hwy. 54 in Fayetteville.

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