



Indy, an adoptable tabby, looks out from the nautical-inspired furnishings in one of the single cat rooms in the public area of the new RISPCA building. The nautical-themed cat rooms were built and donated by Rescue Rebuild. PHOTOS BY KRIS CRAIG/THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL

Already diggin' it

RISPCA's new HQ in Warwick is an ambitious pet project

Jack Perry Providence Journal | USA TODAY NETWORK

WARWICK -

The dogs will enjoy twice as much space in their new kennels, and the cats might never want to leave their nautical-themed playroom. ■ And don't forget the humans. Three staff members will no longer be crammed into a 120-square-foot office. ■ The Rhode Island Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is moving into its new 29,000-square-foot headquarters in Warwick this month, a \$6.5-million project that will provide the nonprofit agency with more room, updated technology and a central location, according to Wayne M. Kezirian, president and general agent.

"This is going to be a game changer for us," Kezirian said.

The agency, which finds new homes for about 1,200 pets each year, has operated from a 9,500-square-foot space in East Providence since the early 1980s. The current space was too small to house the agency's veterinary clinic, which operated from rented space nearby.

"We were about bursting at the seams in our Riverside location," Kezirian said.

New location adds space, services and increases animal well-being

The RISPCA purchased the building for its new headquarters from Plan International USA for \$2.4 million, according to Kezirian. The building was initially listed for nearly \$4 million, he said, but the RISPCA was able to buy it at "a very



The RISPCA's new headquarters encompasses 29,000 square feet, a big step up from the nonprofit agency's longtime 9,500-square-foot home in East Providence.

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Full veterinary services, with two tables, are available in the clinic in the new RISPCA headquarters in Warwick.



RISPCA President Wayne Kezirian with his rescue dog Lily.

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RISPCA

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reasonable price” because the girls’ rights organization likes the RISPCA’s mission.

Renovating the former office space added another \$3.5 million to the project cost, according to Kezirian, who now faces the task of rebuilding the organization’s endowment.

In a fundraising appeal on its website, the RISPCA says, “Following the renovation of the Plan Way facility, the society’s significantly expanded services to the community will include: humane law enforcement, animal adoptions, animal surrenders, veterinary services, hardship boarding and domestic violence support services, training, education and volunteer support.”

Besides law enforcement and adoption, RISPCA offers host of other services, like children’s summer camp

The RISPCA, which has about 40 full-time employees, expects to complete its move to 155 Plan Way on Aug. 21, but it’s already operating some programs from

the space, including its veterinary clinic and a children’s day camp, Kezirian said.

At camp last week, the kids learned to train chickens.

“I didn’t realize you could train chickens,” Kezirian acknowledged.

The children were also expecting a visit from a state police canine team, according to Kezirian, who noted the new facility will enable the RISPCA to expand its educational programming.

The 5,500-square-foot veterinary clinic provides a lot more room than the 1,700-square-foot space previously leased by the RISPCA.

The new headquarters’ heating and air-conditioning system will also allow for better control of air flow in the clinic and throughout the building, Kezirian said. In Riverside, the dogs are kept in 3-foot by 5½-foot kennels; their new kennels will be 6 by 6 feet and expandable, according to Kezirian.

(The RISPCA will keep using some of its kennel space in Riverside primarily to quarantine animals seized in mistreatment investigations.)

Don’t tell the dogs, but the cats may have the best deal of all.

The 4,000-square-foot “cat room” was developed by the rescue rebuild program of Greater Good Charities with



Slinky the ferret, with Critter Camp volunteer Faith Barlow, heads back to his home after a visit with the summer campers. Slinky is the mascot for the education program.

a \$300,000 grant from the Alex & Elisabeth Lewyt Charitable Trust.

It has a nautical theme, and the cats can climb, play and relax among piers,

boats and buoys “that look like something you’d see on Narragansett Bay,” Kezirian said.

“It’s going to be spectacular,” he said.