

Extreme Makeover

A shelter volunteer space gets a new look

BY KATINA ANTONIADES

You can't channel surf for long these days without seeing someone ripping out shag carpeting, ditching her '80s fashions, or getting a chin implant. But in southern California last December, TV viewers got to see a makeover show that did much more than help someone update her look. It made a difference for hundreds of people—and even some kitties.

It all started when Oakland Animal Services's Megan Webb sent a letter and photos of the agency's volunteer lounge to interior designer Lisa Quinn, host of the "House Doctor" segment on a regional talk show called "View from the Bay."

"I've always thought that I wanted to make the space for the volunteers more special because it was really just an empty room, very institutional," says Webb, the shelter's community outreach program manager. "It didn't really reflect how we felt about the volunteers."

Though 200 active volunteers help out at the shelter, they found little reason to stick around after finishing their dog-walking or cat-cuddling duties. Webb envisioned spaces for volunteers to relax and chat, mentor other volunteers, and attend training sessions.

To meet Webb's goals, the team painted the walls and added furniture, room dividers, and lockers. After Quinn rearranged

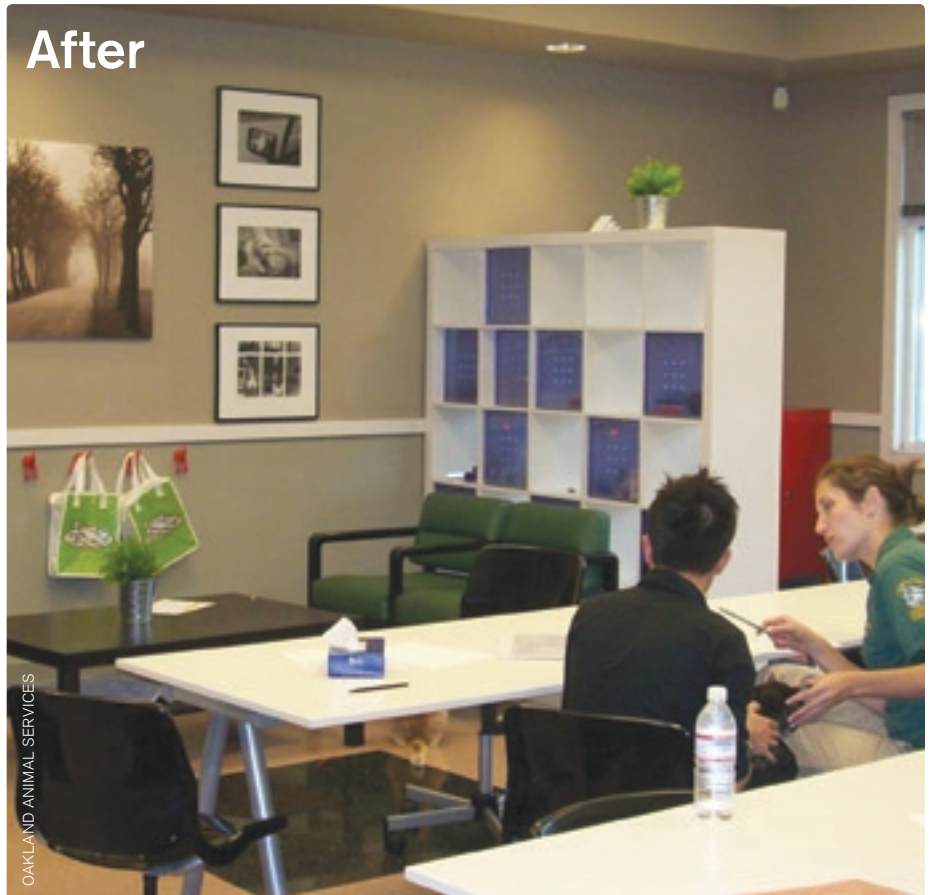
several framed photographs, some volunteers noticed the art for the first time, says Webb. The makeover had a practical side, too: Easily disinfected surfaces were a must because the agency also uses the room to socialize shy cats, help chubby ones burn calories, and give a change of scenery to long-term kitty residents.

Volunteers are enjoying their new digs and say it makes their shelter visits even more special. The makeover helped Webb inch further toward her mission to change people's perceptions of animal control agencies: After the segment aired on TV, several people called Webb to express interest in helping out. "They said, 'You must really care about your volunteers.'" AS



(Top) Before designer Lisa Quinn made over Oakland Animal Services' volunteer room, the space looked drab and institutional. (Bottom) Sgt. David Cronin tells Quinn he'd like the room to be a bit friendlier.

THE VIEW FROM THE BAY/ABC7NEWS.COM



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