**Barking Echoes Drive Dutchess County SPCA Residents (& Staff) Wild**

*WSDG acoustic fix soothes animal occupants and staff*

**Hyde Park, New York, April 22, 2021 —**The Dutchess County SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) of Hyde Park, New York is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to providing shelter and services for adoptable companion animals. Originally established in 1871, the organization moved into an expanded headquarters in 2015 to accommodate its growing animal population and programming needs. Unforeseen issues with the new building’s acoustics escalated as the resident population increased, and the level of noise began to have a dramatically adverse effect on the quality of life for the shelter’s animal charges. In an effort to alleviate the issue, global architectural acoustic consulting and design firm WSDG (Walters-Storyk Design Group) – based locally in nearby Highland -- volunteered the design expertise they’ve honed in creating renowned schools, recording studios and performance venues around the globe to ameliorate the center’s hallway echos and restore the calm, soothing environment that DC-SPCA had worked so hard to establish for its animal population.

**A calming environment**

DCSPCA offers a wide variety of support to both animals and pet owners in Dutchess County in addition to its main purpose as a tranquil, nurturing environment for the animals under its care. These additional services, which include community outreach, educational classes, and emergency medical services, prompted the organization to upgrade to its current building. “The shelter isn’t a warehouse for unwanted animals,” explained DCSPCA Executive Director Lynne Meloccaro. “We see our job as supporting the community as it supports its pets, and we want to be able to offer whatever support we can in the form of education and medical services in addition to boarding.”

Although the new building was designed to be spacious and aesthetically pleasing, an unintentional side-effect of some of the design choices created an echo chamber in the shelter’s hallways which produced an adverse effect on the quality of life for the dogs and cats in the shelter’s care, an issue that Meloccaro says is often ignored when designing spaces to shelter animals. “Dogs and cats have very sensitive hearing and the sonic qualities of a space heavily contribute to their ability to feel safe and calm,” she said. “The stress of the noise and reverberation from the echoes in the hallway was really becoming too much for them.”

“We’d wanted to do something about it from the beginning,” she continued. “but it wasn’t until WSDG got involved that we were able to accomplish that change.”

**“The difference was incredible”**

WSDG co-founder John Storyk and Partner/Project Manager Jonathan Bickoff volunteered the firm’s resources to correct the problem and create a more controlled acoustic situation in the building. Using acoustic measurement tools to gauge the reverberation time of the hallways, they designed an elegant solution that utilized vinyl coated wall-treatments and hanging ceiling baffles that complimented the facility’s original design to eliminate the unwanted echoes. The final installation was donated by local builders Baxter Building Corps. “We were careful to choose materials that wouldn’t call attention to themselves,” explained Bickoff. “That way we could achieve the desired effect of a calm, quiet space while preserving the ambiance and feel of the shelter.”

Once the materials were in place, Meloccaro says the change was instantaneous. “Suddenly our biggest, most anxious dogs were walking calmly down the hall without fear,” she said. “The difference was absolutely incredible.”

“It’s really saving the lives of these dogs because the longer a dog stays in a shelter, the more their temperament can deteriorate if the shelter isn’t properly equipped,” she continued. “We try to do everything in our power to keep them comfortable, and this acoustical correction introduced a real, immediate practical benefit to them. It’s impossible for us to express how grateful we are to WSDG for making this possible, it never would have happened without them.”

For WSDG, the story wasn’t quite over. During the course of his work with the shelter, Bickoff developed a relationship with Rosie, one of the dog’s in the shelter’s care. He adopted the dog after the project concluded and has made her a regular fixture at the firm’s dog-friendly headquarters in Highland, NY.

“Our decades of experience in acoustic design has taught us that the sound of a room can truly have an enormous impact on its inhabitants – be it a major recording studio or a private residence,” said Storyk. “We always say that sound changes lives, and we’re proud that our work has been able to impact and save some of the most vulnerable ones in our care.”

For more information about Dutchess County SPCA, please visit <http://dcspca.org/>

For more information about WSDG, please visit: <http://www.wsdg.com/>

**ABOUT WSDG, LLC**
For over 50 years, acoustic consulting and A/V integration firm [WSDG](http://www.wsdg.com/) has designed nearly 3,500 media production facilities worldwide and counting. Projects range from Jimi Hendrix’s Electric Lady Studio and Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York, to broadcast facilities for The Food Network, CBS and WNET, over 20 teaching studios for The Art Institutes, and corporate clients such as Sony, IBM and Novartis. Recent credits include Jungle City in New York, The Church Studios in London, private studios for Green Day, Jay-Z, Bruce Springsteen, Alicia Keys, Jack Antonoff, J Cole, Harry Connick Jr., and Academy Award-nominated film composer Carter Burwell. WSDG has collaborated with such noted architects as Frank Gehry, Philippe Stark, Rafael Viñoly, Santiago Calatrava, Grimshaw, and Norman Foster.  An 11-time winner of the prestigious pro audio NAMM [TEC Award](https://www.tecawards.org/) for outstanding achievement in Acoustics/Facility Design, WSDG maintains U.S. offices in New York, Washington, DC, San Francisco and Miami and global offices in Barcelona, Basel, Berlin, Belo Horizonte, Buenos Aires, Guangzhou, Mexico City and Mumbai.

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