



## City Manager's Update December 15, 2023



**To:** Fircrest City Council  
**From:** Dawn Masko, City Manager  
**Date:** December 15, 2023  
**Subject:** City Manager's Weekly Update

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### Honorable Mayor and City Councilmembers

Below is an overview of upcoming events, meetings, and other items of interest for the City. The update includes reports from City departments on various programs, projects, and achievements.

#### 1. Whittier Park Master Plan

Whittier Park is a much-loved 13-acre neighborhood park at the corner of Elm Tree Lane and Contra Costa Avenue. Developments to Whittier Park have occurred over time, and many improvements are nearing the end of their functionality and are either requiring major maintenance rehabilitation or replacement. Before moving forward with these maintenance or replacement projects (which do not currently have any identified funding), the City has chosen to undergo a master planning process. The City hired AHBL to lead us through the planning process and engage the community in an effort to update the long-range vision for Whittier Park based on resident preferences and prioritize future improvements as funding becomes available.

The second public engagement meeting for the Whittier Park Master Plan was held last night. Consultant AHBL presented insights gathered from the previous open house and examined the three concepts crafted based on previous community input, focusing on park amenities like nature access, play areas, and drainage considerations. Participants were asked to vote on the concepts based on their preference order and were also given four dots to place on the concept boards identifying a design element that they felt should be included in the final master plan. Attendees were also encouraged to utilize Post-it notes to explain further why dots were placed where they were. Another board allowed attendees to jot down comments, new ideas, or any other suggestions. This valuable input from the community will be used to help gauge community preferences and guide the formulation of the Whittier Park Master Plan, ensuring it aligns with the desires and needs of Fircrest residents. Please keep in mind that we are still in the development phase of this process.

Staff are looking at dates in early 2024 to host another open house. Residents are encouraged to scan the QR code to take the Whittier Park survey if they have not already done so. More information is available on the City [website](#) and the [Whittier Park Master Plan project page](#).



#### 2. Upcoming Meetings – Week of December 18<sup>th</sup> – December 22<sup>nd</sup>

- City Council Study Session (*Executive Session Only*)      Monday, December 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM

### **3. December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - Council Meeting Recap**

Action items at the Tuesday, December 12<sup>th</sup> regular City Council meeting included:

- Honored Judge John Miller with a Resolution of Appreciation for 28 years of service.
- Confirmed Meagan Foley as the new Municipal Court Judge, effective January 1, 2024.
- Adopted an Ordinance approving the third 2023 Budget Amendment.
- Appointed Councilmember Shannon Reynolds as the City representative to the Pierce County Regional Council (PCRC) and Councilmember Nikki Bufford as the alternate representative. Councilmember Reynolds is the Chair of the PCRC, and Councilmember Bufford was recently appointed as a PCRC representative to the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Growth Management Policy Board.
- Appointed Councilmember Hunter George as the City representative to South Sound Housing Affordability Partners (SSHAP) and Mayor Brett Wittner as the alternate representative. Councilmember George was the Chair of SSHAP for 2023.
- Approved a Resolution extending the professional services agreement with Greenleaf Landscaping, Inc. for landscape maintenance services through December 31, 2024.
- Approved a Resolution authorizing a professional services agreement with Tacoma Daily Index for legal publishing services.
- Approved a Resolution extending the professional services agreement with RWJ Consultants for project coordinator services through March 31, 2024, and amended the fee schedule.
- Approved a Resolution authorizing Change Order #1 to the professional services agreement with Desco AV for the Council Chambers audio-visual system replacement project.
- Approved an Ordinance increasing Water Utility rates by 4.5%, effective February 1, 2024.
- Approved a Resolution extending the professional services agreement with Robert W. Droll, for the Fircrest Park Athletic Field Improvement project, through December 31, 2024.
- Approved a Resolution authorizing an agreement with the Humane Society for animal sheltering and related services for 2024.
- Approved a Resolution authorizing a contract amendment with KBH Construction for the Fircrest Park Athletic Field Improvement project through July 31, 2024.
- Approved a Resolution authorizing a professional services agreement with SCJ Alliance for engineering design services for the Emerson West Sidewalk project.
- Approved a Resolution authorizing a construction contract with Pape & Sons Construction for the 44<sup>th</sup> Street Sewer Lift Station Upgrade project.
- First Reading of an Ordinance amending the 2023 Annual Budget.

### **4. Administration**

Administration highlights of the past week include:

- The City received the Notice of Intent to Proceed from Alliance Realty Partners today for the Prose Project. The Notice of Intent to Proceed deadline was today per the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding between Alliance and the City of Fircrest.
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- The Wellness Committee did an outstanding job with the annual Employee's Wellness Lunch today. Thank you to Sierra Lee for coordinating the wonderful food and to all of the committee for their hard work in making this a successful and fun event.
- City staff had multiple meetings this week regarding the Draft Sewer Transfer Agreement. Mayor Brett Wittner, City Manager Dawn Masko, City Attorney Bob Zeinemann, Public Works Director Tyler Bemis, and Project Coordinator Bob Jean also met with Pierce County Executive Bruce Dammeier and a team of Pierce County staff to discuss the agreement.
- To best serve our business owners' needs, the City Clerk's office is transitioning the business licensing function to the Planning and Building department.
- City Manager Dawn Masko continued working with City attorneys on various personnel issues.
- The City Clerk's office continues to work through records management and contract indexing. This past week Acting City Clerk Arlette Burkhart identified eighteen expired contracts to be moved to the expired contracts file pending destruction at a future date per the Washington State Archives' retention schedules. Notification will be provided to the City Manager and department directors prior to their destruction.
- The Civil Service oral board for lateral police officers occurred on December 14<sup>th</sup>. The eligibility list was released today. There is a mandatory five-business-day waiting period for inspection and a seven-day protest period per Fircrest Civil Service rules. The Civil Service Commission will certify the eligibility list at their January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024 meeting. Please note that the regular meeting was changed from January 1<sup>st</sup> due to the New Year's holiday.
- City Manager Masko continued reviewing contracts and professional agreements that need to be renewed and/or renegotiated for 2024.
- To date, the City has received 253 public records requests. At the same time last year, the City had processed 216 public records requests.

## **5. Police Department Update**

- Fircrest officers responded to 176 calls for service this past week, including 81 traffic stops, which generated 54 notices of infraction. Officers also wrote three parking tickets, issued seven criminal citations, and conducted five security checks. Officers also responded to various calls, including seven vehicle prowls, four disturbance calls, three suspicious vehicles, three complaints of unwanted persons, and one motor vehicle collision. Officers had 33 community policing events (foot patrols, citizen assists, security checks, COP activities, welfare checks, and suspicious people and vehicles), worked on five follow-up investigations, conducted four special emphasis patrols, and assisted with three outside jurisdiction responses. There was one felony and six misdemeanor arrests.
  - There has been an uptick in vehicle prowl complaints in the last several weeks. We ask that people remove valuables from their vehicles and secure the locks when vehicles are unoccupied.
  - We have identified seven families to receive holiday food baskets. These families were identified via Wainwright Intermediate and Whittier Elementary schools, office staff, and our officers. The food baskets were picked up Thursday morning, and our staff will be delivering them next week. Thank you to the Sumner Food Bank for providing us with the great baskets.
  - The Santa Sleigh Around Town was a big hit! Thank you to all of our staff members and volunteers for organizing this great community event.
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- A Civil Service oral board was held on Thursday to interview two lateral candidates. We are grateful to retired local law enforcement leaders Chief Don Ramsdell, Chief John Cheesman, Undersheriff Rob Masko, and Detective Bob Deal for their expertise on the oral board.
- Police Chief Ron Schaub met with regional leaders and Pierce County Co-Responders on Wednesday afternoon. The topic of discussion was how law enforcement and mental health crisis workers can partner more effectively.
- Chief Schaub has begun working with South Sound 911 to explore the 800 MHz radio option.
- Detective John Roberts donated three eligible bicycles from our property room to Marine View Presbyterian Church. The donated bikes were cleaned, repaired, and distributed to those in need.

## 6. Parks & Recreation

Parks & Recreation highlights include:

### *Projects*

- Fircrest Park Athletic Field Improvement Project – At this stage of the project, the athletic field work is almost finished. During the punch list walkthrough, RWD Landscape Architects noted the problematic areas on the field. Unfortunately, the current saturation of the field makes it challenging to address most of these areas adequately at this time. As a result, KHB Construction will delay any corrective actions until the first dry spell.

### *Community Events*

- Lights of Fircrest – Fircrest is looking **Merrier** and **Brighter** than ever! The first round of judging was held December 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup>. Final judging will occur on December 18<sup>th</sup>, with winners announced on December 20<sup>th</sup>. Paper copies will also be available at the Fircrest Community Center. 2023 contest categories are best decorated outdoor tree, best use of holiday characters, best use of animation, the North Pole Award for the brightest & merriest street or cul-de-sac, and the coveted Griswold Award because you can never have too many lights!!

The **Lights of Fircrest** map route is now published and accessible [online](#). We are thrilled to have 50 impressive entries this year! You can find the participant address list, turn-by-turn instructions, and the map on our [website](#). For those who prefer using their phones, the Google Maps link is [Lights of Fircrest 2023](#). Printed copies are also available at the Community Center.

All of these stunning displays are set up in our neighborhoods, creating a fantastic walking or biking experience. We kindly ask everyone to respect the speed limits and drive with caution and care while enjoying the light displays. An electronic list of participating homes will be available on the City website and the Fircrest Parks and Recreation Facebook page for self-guided tours.



### *Recreation Programs*

- There will be no Tot Story Time during Winter Break from December 19<sup>th</sup> to January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Story Time will resume on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Tot Story Time is typically held on Tuesday mornings at 10:30 AM in the Multipurpose Room at the Community Center.

- Snapology offers engaging STEM/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) programs designed for children aged 4 to 14. The instructors use hands-on activities to teach a range of subjects, including robotics, coding, and design challenges using LEGO® bricks, K’Nex, and technology. These activities not only foster learning but also build skills that benefit children both in school and in their future careers. We are offering some exciting winter break classes in the coming weeks! You can find more information and register at <https://www.snapology.com>.
- Registration for Creative Movement Ballet classes is now open. Led by Damaris Caughlan, the Artistic Director at Metropolitan Ballet of Tacoma, these classes offer a unique approach to helping young dancers express their inner joy of movement. Ms. Caughlan focuses on teaching disciplines like self-control, listening skills, and patience, combined with the fun of basic ballet in this creatively enriching class. Accredited through Columbia Virtual Academy, our winter session kicks off on January 11<sup>th</sup>. You can sign up for this program using our [Fircrest RecDesk online registration system](#).
- January Senior Trip – Registration is now open for the January Senior Trip happening on Thursday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024. The [Tour of the State Capitol](#) is happening on Thursday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Discover the awe-inspiring history and architectural wonders of the Washington State Capitol on the January Senior Trip. The Capitol Building is home to the WA State Legislature and the offices of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, and State Treasurer. The tour of the Capitol includes the North Foyer, Rotunda, State Reception Room, and Legislative Galleries. Afterward, we will head to Meconi’s Italian Subs for lunch, with an additional stop across the street to go to Wagner’s European Bakery. Departure time is 9:45 AM from the Community Center, with an expected return time of 3:30 PM. Registration for this trip is \$35.  
  
There are only 12 spots available for the senior trips. These trips sell out quickly, so sign up as soon as registration opens! For more information, please get in touch with Raquel at [rlapointe@cityoffircrest.net](mailto:rlapointe@cityoffircrest.net).
- Our Weekly Schedules [webpage](#) includes a comprehensive list of activities and programs for all age groups. Information about our adult programming can be found at [Adult Classes & Sports](#), and youth programs can be found on our [Youth Programs](#) webpage.

Please call (253) 564-8177 or visit the City’s [Parks and Recreation Department](#) website for events and program information, class registration, facility rentals, questions on Parks & Recreation activities, and volunteer opportunities. Want to know more? Like us on Facebook at “City of Fircrest, Washington.”

## 7. Planning & Building Update

- The Planning Commission met on December 5<sup>th</sup> to review and provide comments on the [Draft Missing Middle Housing Model Ordinance](#) and [User Guide](#) published by the Department of Commerce. A study session presentation to the City Council on this ordinance and the various new housing laws passed in 2023 is planned for February 2024.
  - The Planning Commission also reviewed the Year 1 Update provided by BHC at the November 20<sup>th</sup> City Council Study Session and broke down the Draft Elements into work groups for internal review to provide feedback to staff.
  - Staff are continuing to investigate a code enforcement case regarding an abandoned vehicle at the 500 block of Golden Gate Avenue.
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- Community Development (CD) Director Mark Newman assisted [AHAT - Affordable Housing and Treatment](#) with finding a grant for the renovation of existing affordable housing stock.
- Permit Coordinator Kristin Rosario and CD Director Newman spread some holiday joy by decorating the Permit Counter and Planning & Building office for the holidays.
- CD Director Newman attended the Pierce County Climate Conversation along with Councilmember Hunter George on December 15<sup>th</sup>. The quarterly meeting focused primarily on Electric Vehicle (EV) grants and incentives.
- CD Director Newman advocated for the City of Fircrest to receive [Climate Pollution Reduction Grant](#) funding through the Department of Commerce, EPA, and Pierce County. As part of a regional priorities list, this would focus on electric vehicle charging infrastructure planning and implementation.
- Thinking of a home renovation project? Please be advised that the City of Fircrest will be adopting the 2021 building code on March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, as required by the State. This code will change building code regulations which will increase energy efficiency requirements for construction projects. Any permits submitted on or after March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024, will be required to use the 2021 code. Staff is preparing to present an Ordinance to the Council in February 2024 to explain more about the 2021 updates.

## **8. Public Works Update**

Public Works is operating under winter hours from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.

Highlights include: (in addition to routine daily tasks)

### ***Utilities – Water, Sewer, Streets, and Stormwater***

- Water meter reading was completed on December 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Additional sweeping and catch basin cleaning is continuing to occur in response to rainy and windy conditions.
- A full inspection of the old bucket truck was conducted in preparation for selling it. Dielectric testing is tentatively scheduled for the week of December 25<sup>th</sup>, weather dependent.

### ***Maintenance – Parks & Facilities***

- Roof and gutter cleaning was done at all City facilities.
- The stairs and walkway at Public Works were pressure washed.
- Sheetrock patching and painting occurred at the Community Center.
- A facility lighting walkthrough was conducted with the Energy Audit company.

### ***Project Updates***

- Well #7 (Claremont)
    - We received the structural assessment report and recommendation for repairs. We are awaiting repair estimates to present to the insurance company.
  - Fircrest Park Maintenance Facility Structure Upgrade
    - We are awaiting construction estimates to present to the City Council.
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- 44<sup>th</sup> Street West & 67<sup>th</sup> Ave West Lift Station Upgrade
  - A construction contract with Pape & Sons was approved by Council on December 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Storm Water Pre-Treatment Outfall Grant Project – Emerson Street & Estate Place
  - Final close-out Progress Reports and Payment Requests are in progress.
- Emerson Street Sidewalk Extension (south side) – Woodside Drive to 67<sup>th</sup> Ave West
  - The engineering design contract was approved by Council on December 12<sup>th</sup>.
- AMI Water Meter Exchange Program
  - Program completion is at 49%. Exchanges have been put on hold due to inclement weather response efforts.

TOTAL BY YEAR	
2019	11
2020	143
2021	444
2022	283
2023 YTD	295

PROJECT UPDATE	
Total City Meter Connections	2,402
New Meters Installed	1,176
Remaining Meters to be Installed	1,226
Percentage of Completion	49%

- Claremont Street Grind & Overlay TIB Grant
  - The City was awarded a Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) grant in the amount of \$677,409 for the Claremont Street Overlay project. The City’s local grant match requirement is \$124,543.
  - Grant agreement documents will be brought forward to the Council for acceptance on January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- Regents Blvd (west) Grind & Overlay – Alameda Ave to 67<sup>th</sup> Ave West
  - We are communicating with PSRC and WSDOT regarding the funding shortfall.
- South Orchard Street Grind & Overlay – TIB Grant Funded
  - Design is in process for construction in 2024.
  - City of Tacoma staff are identifying funds for this project.
  - Fircrest engineering consultants are coordinating with Tacoma engineering staff.
- Electron and Contra Costa Intersection Improvement – Legislative Funds
  - We received a \$153,000 appropriation of funds from the State Legislature.
  - The Construction Readiness form has been completed.
  - We are coordinating with the Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation (DAHP).

## 9. Westside Disposal – 2024 Calendar

The 2024 calendar is available for the City of Fircrest garbage, recycling, and yard waste pickup. The calendar also includes the Spring and Fall cleanup dates: April 6<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> and October 5<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>. The calendar is available online at [Calendar \(westsidedisposal.com\)](http://Calendar(westsidedisposal.com)).

## 10. School District Winter Break

Both Tacoma Public School and the University Place School District winter breaks begin on December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023. Students return to school on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024.

## **11. Small Business Security Grant Program**

The Pierce County Council approved an Ordinance establishing a Small Business Strengthening and Security Grant Program to increase the viability and security of small businesses in unincorporated Pierce County and its small cities or towns with a population of less than 8,000. The Pierce County Executive must now sign the ordinance before the program commences.

Under the program, eligible small businesses in Pierce County can apply for the reimbursement of 50% of eligible costs, up to a maximum of \$10,000 grant reimbursement. Eligible expenses include any capital purchase, such as equipment, appliances, furniture, or the cost of facility improvements or expansion. In response to recent business concerns about security, the program also specifically highlights potential capital expenditures related to improving security, such as lighting, alarms, cameras, secure entrance doors, bollards, fencing, or other devices. This is a matching grant program, meaning the cost must be matched by an equal amount from the business. Eligible businesses must have been operating for at least two years and not have more than 20 full-time employees. More information will be available pending approval by the Pierce County Executive.

## **12. Tacoma Public Utility Rebates**

Thermostat Rebates - A thermostat may seem like a basic feature of your home, but it can impact your utility bills. Usually, about half of your electric use is attributable to heating and cooling your home. Newer thermostats give you greater control and help you save money, conserve energy, and increase comfort. Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) has two thermostat rebate offers available right now. If you heat your home with baseboard or wall heaters, a programmable line voltage thermostat is what you need. When you buy a line voltage thermostat, you can get a \$25 rebate for each new thermostat installed. If you heat your home with a furnace or heat pump, a smart thermostat is the smartest way to control the temperature of your home. When you buy and install a new smart thermostat, you can get a \$75 rebate. Terms and conditions can be found at [Thermostats - Tacoma Public Utilities \(mytpu.org\)](https://www.mytpu.org/thermostats).

Water Heater Rebates – If your water heater is more than ten years old, now is the time to replace it. Standard electric water heaters are the second largest energy user in your home. They use more energy than your refrigerator, dishwasher, clothes washer, and dryer combined. Replacing your electric water heater with a hybrid version can save you a lot of money and lower your utility bill – about \$350 each year, which equals \$3,500 over the life of the water heater. For a limited time, TPU is offering a \$750 water heater incentive when you replace your standard electric water heater with a hybrid version. Visit [Hybrid Water Heater - Tacoma Public Utilities \(mytpu.org\)](https://www.mytpu.org/hybrid-water-heater) for more details.

## **13. Senior/Disabled Property Tax Exemptions**

The Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer office recently announced updated household income limits to qualify for the senior/disabled property tax exemption in 2024. The maximum household income limit is increasing to \$64,000 per year (based on 2023 income). Those with incomes under \$55,000 and \$46,000 will see even greater property tax reductions. You must apply to the Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer, supplying all required information, to begin receiving this tax reduction.

Applications should be submitted online using a fillable form with scanned attachments. You can apply as soon as you've received proof of your 2023 total income. Proof includes year-end statements and 1099's for all forms of income, and your 2023 Federal income tax return, if filed. The online application and additional information are available at [Senior Citizen/Persons with Disabilities Exemption from Real Property Taxes](https://www.mytpu.org/senior-citizen-persons-with-disabilities-exemption).

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#### **14. Pet Vaccine & Wellness Clinic**

A free pet vaccine and wellness clinic is being held on Saturday, December 16<sup>th</sup>, from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at the Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County, located at 2608 Center Street in Tacoma. This clinic, provided by Petco Love, is for low-income pet owners and provides low-cost vaccines, microchips, and parasite prevention.

#### **15. Families Unlimited Network – Community Christmas**

The holiday season is a time for family and friends to get together and celebrate togetherness. It can also be a time of stress and struggle for families who try to find ways to enjoy the holidays on a tight budget. Community Christmas 2023 exists to help relieve stress for families by connecting organizations and groups to families looking to have a little boost during the holiday season. Community Christmas is a program offered through [Families Unlimited Network](#), a service located in University Place that provides access to food and resources for local families.

If you are a family with a child in the University Place School District, contact your school counselor to register your family for this program. If your children are too young to be in school, please contact the Families Unlimited Network office directly at 253-460-3134 for eligibility verification. After you are registered, you will be contacted by your sponsors and will be able to receive gifts for your children and Christmas meal boxes.

If you are interested in becoming a sponsor or sponsor group/organization, contact Families Unlimited Network at 253-460-3134 or [admin@familiesunlimitednetwork.org](mailto:admin@familiesunlimitednetwork.org) and let them know you are interested in supporting one or more families. They will provide you with a brief orientation and expectations for providing for your families.

#### **16. Pet Food & Supply Pantry**

The Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County's Pet Food & Supply Pantry provides pet food and supplies to those who are in temporary need of dog or cat food and supplies. The Pet Food & Supply Pantry is open every Wednesday and Saturday from 12:00 – 4:00 PM. Proof that your pet is spayed or neutered is required. The Pantry is located at 2608 Center Street in Tacoma.

#### **17. 28<sup>th</sup> Legislative District Community Meetings**

Representative Mari Leavitt from the 28<sup>th</sup> Legislative District is hosting a pre-legislative session town hall meeting in Fircrest on Thursday, January 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024, from 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM at the Roy H. Murphy Community Center, located at 555 Contra Costa Avenue.

Town Hall questions can be sent in advance at this link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MHFVJLJ>.

#### **18. Free Movies for Seniors**

Pierce County Aging and Disability Resources (ADRC) offers a free monthly film series for seniors, adult caregivers, and adult care receivers. The movies are shown at the Grand Cinema, located at 606 Fawcett Avenue in Tacoma. The 2024 movie theme series is “Senior Strength in Solitude,” featuring movies that demonstrate the power of one person confronting their most difficult challenges. The January movie – *Darkest Hour* - is showing on Saturday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 10:00 AM. Advance registration is required at [www.pierceadrc.com](http://www.pierceadrc.com). On the left side of the ADRC home page, scroll down to click on “Special Events,” or visit [Grand Cinema Film Series | Pierce County, WA](#), or call 253-798-4600.

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## 19. Family Craft Night

The Humane Society for Tacoma & Pierce County is hosting Family Craft Night on Monday, December 18<sup>th</sup>, from 4:00 to 6:00 PM. During this family-friendly event, children will have the opportunity to engage in an interactive adoption process, “adopting” a toy dog, cat, or rabbit, while learning about the essentials of pet care, health, and safety. After the “adoption,” kids can unleash their creativity at craft stations, decorating their pet’s carriers and crafting heartfelt cards or letters for shelter pets. Participants are encouraged to bring approved items from the shelter’s [Wishlist](#) to donate to the furry residents.

This unique and educational experience suited for families with children in grades K-6 promises fun for the entire family while supporting pets in need. RSVPs are not required but are encouraged to ensure that enough supplies are available. To learn more and RSVP, visit the shelter’s website at [Family Craft Night - The Humane Society](#).

