

St. Louis Animal Shelter Wins Online Competition

A \$1 million prize will fund shelter expansion.

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Prize money will help kittens, cats and dogs at Stray Rescue of St. Louis move into a new facility. An extreme makeover of Stray Rescue of St. Louis will be made possible by a \$1 million grand prize, awarded to the shelter Wednesday. The shelter beat out 973 other participants throughout the country in an online contest.

Randy Grim, Stray Rescue of St. Louis founder, learned the news from Richard Thompson, multimillionaire founder of Zootoo, a pet information website that launched the First National Shelter Makeover Program in October. The shelter, with its \$800,000 annual operating budget, rescues and rehabilitates cats and dogs from the streets.

The grand prize includes money, goods and services provided through Zootoo. Contestants earned points by rallying their communities to become active members of the website by writing reviews and discussing news.

"Stray Rescue of St. Louis," Thompson says in a journal entry on the website, "met all the criteria we were looking for in terms of need, community commitment, best practices and efforts to get more animals adopted.

"Many of the top 20 did. But what gave Stray Rescue of St. Louis a bit of an edge was the way they've taken the initiative to gather resources throughout their community to be helpful to their shelter."

With the newfound income, Stray Rescue of St. Louis will undergo an expansion into a 16,500-square foot building donated in November. Two runners-up also will receive cash prizes: Humane Society of the Ohio Valley in Marietta, Ohio, (\$20,000), and Jefferson County SPCA in Watertown, N.Y., (\$10,000). A second makeover contest is planned for summer.