

Sevier County child trades in birthday gifts to help animals

April Lamb ■ Updated: 7/12/2009 7:47:10 PM ■ Posted: 7/12/2009 6:30:58 PM

A Sevier county 7-year old girl is giving back, and the leaders of a local non-profit say she isn't alone.

The new trend for giving is helping the Sevier County Animal Shelter when it is most in need.

This year the economy has caused more owners to surrender their animals and donations to slow.

"I love animals and I want to figure out a way to take care of all the animals," said Savannah Gillispie.

Savannah wanted a puppy for her 7th birthday, but when her parents said no, a new idea was hatched.

"She actually wrote out something saying, 'This year instead of gifts for me, help me help the animals at the animal shelter,'" said her stepmother, April Gillispie.

Her party guests were happy to help.

"Dog food, and cat food, and bleach, detergent and hand sanitizer and stuff like that," said Savannah.

"People carrying bags of dog food on their shoulders, hey let me go to the car and get more, they thought it was a great idea," said April.

When Savannah delivered the goods she received a big thank you from the staff.

"They seemed very gracious and grateful to have those extra things," said April.

Shelter officials say more people are asking for donations in lieu of presents, which helps curb the \$20,000 in costs for supplies.

Savannah ended up with a surprise of her own; she got the puppy she asked for.

"So we made the decision last minute," said April.

The Sevier County Animal Shelter says the facility takes in more than 5,000 animals each year.