

When looking for an affordable show hall venue, think outside the box – a little further outside the box!

Fort Worth Cat Club and Ozark Cat Fanciers had decided to do a 6X6 show in January 2012. However, the venue we had used for several years was unavailable for 2012. As a veteran show manager and show treasurer, I knew all too well the scarcity of animal-friendly, affordable halls in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas. Our show date also falls during the Fort Worth Stock Show, so we have to steer clear of the immediate Fort Worth area.

Fort Worth CC President Cheryl Pedigo took on the role of show manager and started scouring the internet. She found a website for a small-city convention center in Cleburne, about 14 miles west of Interstate 35W south of Fort Worth and about 90 minutes from Dallas-Fort Worth International's terminals. Cheryl contacted the center for information. Coincidentally, I had visited the center in April 2011 for an Iris show, and the facility looked perfect for a cat show: a very clean building, less than 2 years old, numerous fast-food places within walking distance (great for exhibitors). Several months later, I returned for a convention and saw the center's staff interacting with the convention crowd. By then, we had reserved the center's 10,300SF exhibition hall. It was just a little further out than what our cat clubs were used to. But that was only a minor hurdle – one to go around.



The center is a marriage of the city and chamber of commerce: The city owns the facility, the chamber (located across the center's parking lot) manages it – and both are very hungry for business. This would be Cleburne's first cat show and its introduction to CFA. Cleburne is a city of about 40,000, strong on

agriculture but also with many residents who commute to jobs in Fort Worth, and a tollway between the two cities is under construction.

Eager to help our clubs, the chamber of commerce located stewards, helped promote the show locally and found a local limo service with a decent rate for zipping Sunday's judges to DFW Airport. They also offered to negotiate hotel rooms for us, but Cheryl already had that under control.

While I judged for Ozark's show on Saturday, my husband worked the gate. He later told me that a spectator had commented about spotting the local school superintendent and his family at the show. Vicky Edwards, my clerk, said one spectator said that it was the best \$4 (senior charge) she had ever spent. Gate and raffle combined, we covered our 2 ½ days of rental with \$105 to spare.

Spectators who had been to our previous venue compared the two, and the new place was a hit. Exhibitors liked the facility, as did judges. At least one more show has been booked at the center: Gulf Shore Region's fundraiser show in October. More will come, I'm sure.

So, think outside the box – a little further out – when searching for new show halls and locations. The perfect, affordable show hall is elusive today – at least in our own back yards. Go to someone else's back yard and be pleasantly surprised. Just go around the hurdles.