Canine caretaker Nia Challenger plays with Bianca, left, and Benedict, two dogs being fostered until they can be transported to other no-kill shelters for adoption on Thursday at Acadiana Animal Aid, a no-kill animal shelter in Carencro.

Under a cloudless sky, Benedict and Bianca, 9-month-old Airedale terriers, chased each other within a fenced field at the animal shelter complex in Carencro. With their tails wagging and tongues hanging out of their mouths in goofy grins, the canine siblings on Thursday celebrated their newfound freedom. A day earlier, they were both at a kill-shelter in Jennings.

These are just two of the lives saved by Acadiana Animal Aid, which plans to send the two terriers to a no-kill shelter somewhere else in the country where they can be adopted rather than face being euthanized in Louisiana.

"In the month of September, we transported 175 dogs to other no-kill rescues," said Acadiana Animal Aid Director Carley Faughn. "Because of our transport efforts that began last July, we have been able to triple the number of lives saved since July 2013."

A recently acquired dog looks out of an isolation area Thursday.

How to help
Information on volunteering with or donating to Acadiana Animal Aid can be found on its website, which still goes by its prior name, LAFAYETTEANIMALAID.ORG. To contact the organization, call (337) 896-1553 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. The shelter complex is located at 142 Le Medicin Road in Carencro.
Acadiana Animal Aid Executive Director Carley Faughn pets Amber, a blind and diabetic dog available for adoption, Thursday at Acadiana Animal Aid, a no-kill animal shelter, in Carencro.

SHELTER

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A total of 15,000 animals in 2014 were euthanized in animal shelters within a 25-mile radius of Lafayette, said Acadiana Animal Aid board President Melinda Falgout.

The AAA shelter in Carencro is looking to start transporting cats to areas that are not overpopulated with felines.

"Pet overpopulation is a huge, huge problem in the South," Faughn said. "They don't see these types of issues in the areas we transport to, mainly because of spay/neuter laws and breeding control laws. So what we have figured out is how to get more of these animals out of Louisiana."

In the past year, Animal Aid's shelter has been growing exponentially to offer different services to animals and to become more involved with the community.

"To reflect this growth, it recently changed its name from Lafayette Animal Aid to Acadiana Animal Aid.

"We are doing more than focusing on the Lafayette area. We have expanded to rescuing animals from 20 other shelters in the state of Louisiana. We go as far up north as Bossier City and over to Lake Charles, Baton Rouge and places like that," Faughn said.

Acadiana Animal Aid's shelter cares for about 100 dogs and 120 cats at any given time at its facility in Carencro, and it also cares for another 50 animals in foster homes.

Acadiana Animal Aid formed a legal advocacy team last year to try to tackle overpopulation with spay/neuter laws, which do not exist in much of south Louisiana, and for basic animal cruelty laws to be enforced.

"Prior to 2012, we were just a dog, a cat. We were saving them, but the root of the problem was still there. We weren't changing those numbers of the dogs and cats that were euthanized," Falgout said. "So until we do a bigger picture and tackle it, we're not going to make a difference."

As a nonprofit organization, the operation is funded entirely through donations, and almost all of the care given to the animals, as well as the physical maintenance to the facilities at the complex, are driven by volunteers.

"We're also educating the youth, getting to the root of the problem of overpopulation with our legal advocacy team and really trying to educate our community," Faughn said. "By spreading compassion for animals, you're spreading compassion for humankind as well."