

Animal shelter shows Chamber it's 'open to business'



Wood Green Animal Shelters has installed a large interactive billboard that will promote local businesses to its 400,000 annual visitors - and raise much needed funds.

Members of Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce were first to see a demonstration of the innovative technology - provided through a partnership with Cambridge firm Visual Planet - at a networking meeting held at the Godmanchester site.

The 50-inch billboard welcomed more than 80 attending member companies to the event with a banner running along the screen. Delegates could access further information about the Chamber and fellow members, by simply pressing a finger against the specialist holograph glass.

Users were also invited to go on a virtual tour of the popular animal shelter and its facilities. Colourful images of animals, maps and messages guided them around the vast site at a touch of the screen, and introduced the charity's varied services.

The Chamber meeting was held in WGAS's restaurant, one of three professional conference, training and exhibition facilities available for hire.

Tina Bloomsma, Trading Manager at WGAS, believes the display is a novel way to generate revenue for the charity. She adds: 'We can offer sponsorship slots on the screen and can guarantee that they will be seen by key audiences. Our large arena, which holds up to 3,000 people, is in use every weekend. We think our interactive billboard will be of great interest to those attending events and offers great profile raising opportunities for businesses.'

Funds generated will go towards operational costs of the charity, which rehomes thousands of animals each year, and aim to assist in plans to increase capacity.

Barry Mason, Executive Director of Cambridgeshire Chamber was very impressed with the facilities; the chamber meeting was the first of three events to be held at the centre aimed at supporting members in the 'middle ground'.

He said: 'The Chamber has been very successful in Cambridge and Peterborough, we now intend to provide additional benefits to members in areas such as Huntingdon, St Neots and St Ives.'

He added: 'WGAS is an excellent location for a networking event. Additional features such as the interactive display provide added value to a meeting, offering an opportunity to present a variety of promotional and informative material in the background without it being a distraction.'

Vernon Spencer, technical director of Visual Planet, the company that developed the technology, says: 'Visual Planet is delighted to be working in partnership with such a progressive animal charity. We believe that sight is our most powerful sense, and this billboard will help Wood Green Animal Shelters to communicate effectively with visitors.'

Wood Green Animal Shelters offers for hire three quality conference, training and exhibition facilities, attended by thousands of corporate and public sector users each year. . The Britten Arena, the largest conference facility of its kind in East Anglia, can hold up to 3,000 guests. It is hired out for conferences, dinner and dances, and auctions and has been used by companies including HSBC bank, and Cheffins Auctions. The Margaret Young Meeting Room, fully equipped training and meeting room. WGAS Restaurant, large conference and exhibition area, with optional catering service.

Visual Planet develops, designs and implements dynamic, interactive, bill boards. It is based at St John's Innovation Centre, Cambridge.

Its technology - called 'Broad Screen Interaction' - extends the scope of proven techniques such as touch screens, streaming media, projection and holography, thus enabling large screen dynamic displays to be created in reception and conference areas, shop windows, airport lounges and at-point-of-sale.

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