To the townspeople of Holyoke:

I was given the chance to visit your town a few weeks ago and fell in love with it. Everyone that I got to meet was just wonderful. Everything that you would expect in a small town.

There was one thing that made my heart break—it's what happens to strays after 10 days. Without someone to claim them, the animal is shot!!! No gas or needle is used, just a bullet. The cheapest and most cruel way to put an animal down.

How could such a loving town put animals down when there is nothing wrong with them? Why is there no shelter to drop off strays? Heck, with the low crime rate, you could use the jail as a shelter.

To keep them from breeding, why not have some low-cost animal care to fix the strays? Local vet schools might be able to give a discount. Holyoke could have a drop site for animals that are no longer wanted, where someone could get background info on the animal and keep it using a foster care system until a new home is found.

What about a no-kill shelter like the Humane Society? Call them to see if they could build a shelter for the areas around Holyoke. There has to be more that can be done to save the lives of these unwanted animals.

The reason for my letter is that, when I was in your town, I got to meet "Andy," a young dog who loves, and who was going to be put down for no reason except that there is no place for him in your town. I got put in touch with Dana and we decided that I would bring Andy back to Denver to go to a no-kill shelter.

Upon my return home, a couple that I know fell in love with him and took him home. So from living on the street and being passed around, Andy is now living the high life.

This couple had waited eight years for another dog and that dog was Andy. Had it not been for April, Mary and Dana, Andy would be dead for nothing. To think Dave and Sherri may never have gotten this chance for giving love to another dog. Andy was theirs even before they met him for the first time.

There are many people who fell in love with this dog (and I understand why), including the Police Chief, but could not help him. Why? Something needs to be done to change this 10-day rule your town has. Holyoke is such a great town with great people, but your rules need to be changed. Remember that the people of Holyoke have big hearts. Please use your big hearts to help both man and animal.

Cynthia Bakke-Harrelson

P.S. Mrs. Smith, your food was great, and I appreciate all the people I met who told me where to go in town. The library was the best!