

On the Positive Side: PetSmart Charities, HSSNM bring pets, people together

By Jean Gilbert / For the Sun-News

Posted: 10/11/2009 12:00:00 AM MDT

Since its foundation in 1994, PetSmart Charities has been a leader in best practices in animal welfare work with donations exceeding 88 million to qualifying nonprofit organizations or agencies serving companion animals.

PetSmart Charities has helped save the lives of more than 3.8 million pets through the corporation's 1,135 adoption centers inside PetSmart stores.

We are fortunate to have a PetSmart Charities adoption center in our town where homeless pets are promoted or showcased in the PetSmart store in prospect of adoption, viewed by the many customers and visitors to the store.

Participating local organizations who "partner" with PetSmart Charities include Dachshund Rescue, Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary and the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico (HSSNM).

In early 2008, HSSNM became an "adoption partner" with PetSmart Charities and began featuring cats for adoption in the kitty condos provided by the store's adoption center. Under the direction of HSSNM's cat adoption captain/volunteer Evelyn Hancock and in concert with the work and dedication of more than a dozen volunteers, the program has been extremely successful with the adoption of 200 rescue animals since its start. The adoption numbers comprise mostly cats featured at the store adoption center and include many dogs from HSSNM fosters attending promotional events sponsored by PetSmart Charities.

An interesting success story of a kitty who came to the HSSNM adoption program is that of Banjo - a 7-year-old, black-and-white, female, domestic longhair - who was declawed and brought to the shelter as an owner relinquishment and later transferred to the PetSmart Charities adoption center.

Banjo was a peculiar kitty for her split personality, giving a friendly appearance to visitors with a welcoming posture to be touched but frequently turning around to hiss or growl. And sometimes she lunged - but never to harm. She continued to display this "attitude" to visitors, causing volunteers to ponder the reason for such strange behavior. Finally, after some debate and pooling of resources by volunteers, it was decided Banjo would be examined by a veterinarian to see if a medical problem might explain the bizarre behavior. And sure enough, the veterinarian found three impacted teeth requiring extraction and an antibiotic to end the infection.

Following recovery, additional foster time and then promotion, Banjo found a forever home with a loving owner - destined at adoption to be the one and only pampered kitty in the household!

It happened first with the adopter seeing a flier of Banjo and then inquiring at the adoption center. After recognizing Banjo from the photo and description, the woman asked to see the feline and, following some introduction time, Banjo curled up by her side and purred contentedly. It was a match!

A hard-to-place kitty found love and security, after a six-month waiting period, thanks to the combined efforts of a dedicated foster and many volunteers working in the adoption program and to the adopter who ended the long waiting and gave Banjo a permanent home.

For information about HSSNM as an adoption partner in PetSmart Charities and to view photos and descriptions of animals available for adoption, go to www.hssnm.org

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