

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

On the positive side

COMMENTARY: Get involved helping our animals

By Blair and Brock Hartley For the Sun-News

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Our parents try to teach us responsibility and to be aware of how we can make a difference in our community. As animal lovers, we think we have found a worthy cause. That is why we asked Mike Hainer to let us guest-write this week's column.

Just around the corner from our house, there are more dogs and cats than you can count. There are pigs, goats, two horses, a peacock, rabbits and a snake who has a light on him for warmth. No, we don't live on a farm. We recently spent two hours with Dr. Beth Vesco-Mock, who took us around the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley. As volunteers, we were only aware of the cats and dogs at the shelter. Our tour was an eye-opening experience. We wondered what we could do, and we decided to come up with a solution ourselves. We suggest a couple of things:

- First, go to your parents and tell them exactly when and where you will be volunteering for either the Humane Society, the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley or any of the many animal rescue groups here in the area — they need the help.
- Second, tell everyone you know who has a pet that they must have it spayed or neutered. If you make sure that your pet is spayed or neutered, you know that you are not contributing to pet overpopulation. If you know someone who cannot afford spaying or neutering, have them call the shelter at (575) 382-0018. There are programs for families who want a pet, but whose funds are limited.
- Finally, you can consider adoption. As we saw firsthand, the Animal Services Center is full of animals that are just waiting for their families to come and find them. These animals may have been surrendered by a family that could not take care of them. However an animal got to the shelter, each of them are looking for one thing: a family to love and take care of them.

Overall, it does not matter how "young" you are. You have a voice. Use it. Make a difference for our animals. You can volunteer, you can encourage everyone to spay and neuter their pets, and you can adopt your own furry friend. Consider the options, weigh them carefully, and take the first step. You, your parents, family members, and friends have nothing to lose and all the love in the world to gain!

The Hartley family, including John, Audrey, Blair and Brock, volunteers with the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico