

# LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

## ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

COMMENTARY: Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary a no-kill option  
By Lorna Harris Special to the Sun-News  
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On any given day, Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary receives 20 or more calls from people who either need to relinquish their pet or who have found a stray cat or dog that they want to find a home for. Our small size doesn't permit us to accept all these pets but we do have some wonderful success stories.

Founded in 1996, Safe Haven practices a "no-kill" policy. Since that time, the community has grown as has the demand for our services. The number of abused, abandoned and unwanted animals has skyrocketed. Spay-and-neuter education is improving but to achieve a goal of "no more homeless pets," our community has far to go.

The mission of Safe Haven is to find loving homes for the animals that come through our gates. To that end, we carefully screen pets that we take in for adoptability. Turning animals away is no easy task. However, we have limited space and must evaluate each cat and dog individually with the intention of finding a forever home for them.

We are located on three acres of land and house a maximum of 26 dogs and 31 cats. It seems we are at capacity on almost any given day. The dogs are housed in large outdoor pens with shade structures and doghouses for each one. The cats are able to free-roam in an indoor/outdoor facility. We do not have an infirmary and isolation pens are few so it is important that we take in only healthy animals and those with known history.

Volunteers groom the pets and walk the dogs. Socialization is done on a regular basis and, under the guidance of the manager, training technique and behavior modification is carried out. Safe Haven pets are very healthy.

When visitors come to adopt, there is a screening application process that must be met. We encourage people to interact with the dogs or cats prior to making a decision. Follow up home visits are done by volunteers once the pet is adopted and is settled in a new home. Microchipping is now available.

Lately, Safe Haven has begun accepting dogs from the Animal Services Center as space permits. Through a collaborative effort, we have been able to offer a second chance to dogs whose fate might otherwise have been euthanization.

As part of our humane education program, Safe Haven encourages field trips by children and teachers and other civic groups. We encourage volunteerism by vet students from NMSU and any other segment of the community.

Safe Haven relies solely on contributions from the private sector and receives no government funding. To donate, adopt or volunteer, visit our Web site at [www.safehavenanimalsanctuary.net](http://www.safehavenanimalsanctuary.net).

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