

# LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

## ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Commentary: Cooperation among animal groups key to success

By Mike Hainer For the Sun-News

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Doña Ana County and Las Cruces are growing and changing. So must our animal welfare services.

Friends of Leo, People United for Pets, the Animal Advocacy Coalition and others created community discussion and activism on animals taken from often unacceptable situations to face yet another in our animal care system. For the first time in years, a request for proposals was issued for operation of the shelter with public funds.

The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico was formed and submitted a competitive proposal to attempt change in the treatment and outcomes for animals arriving at the shelter. Public meetings, newspaper articles, community events, radio, Web sites and dialogue with elected and public officials continue.

Residents are working together to acquire action by city, county and state officials in order to dramatically improve this system.

Positive changes have begun. The shelter on Highway 70 is now operated by the city and county was recently renamed the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley.

A city/county joint powers agreement is in the works for future operation of the center. A community board will steer the future of humane services that meet the needs of the city and county, current animal services standards and the community's requirements for humane animal treatment and lifesaving.

An agreement between the city, county and the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico has been promised for HSSNM initiatives, including Farmers Market dog adoptions and PetSmart Charities cat adoptions through the many HSSNM volunteers.

Veterinarian Beth Vesco-Mock has been hired as the director of the Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley. This week, Vesco-Mock announced the center's intention to work toward no-kill status. Many community members welcomed Vesco-Mock at a public reception hosted last Tuesday evening by HSSNM. The center is now taking steps to include community veterinarians in health services at the center.

HSSNM is dedicated to bringing the community together for the animals and ending the social and economic costs of unnecessary euthanasia of healthy and treatable animals. A better future for our community, our families and our animal companions is on the horizon.

Save the date for HSSNM's art auction and benefit gala to fund our many programs June 20 at the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum.

You can go to [www.hssnm.org](http://www.hssnm.org), e-mail [memberhssnm@zianet.com](mailto:memberhssnm@zianet.com) or call (575) 522-2529 if you want to contribute to the lifesaving work.

Mike Hainer is president of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico.