

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

Public is getting the message

By Mike Hainer For the Sun-News

Article Launched: 07/27/2008 12:00:00 AM MDT

Thanks to the voice of people from all corners of the community the word is getting out about our pet overpopulation problem. The work of our county Animal Control Officers is in the nightly news and morning paper. The director of the Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley has gone on record about the numbers of animals being abandoned and those needing immediate adoption to save them from being killed. A national animal welfare magazine has showcased the Animal Control Reserve dedicated to helping with more than 14,000 calls annually over thousands of square miles. Prescription for Health weekly radio show in Las Cruces is sponsoring a "Pet of the Week" adoption to increase public awareness. Off-site adoptions are occurring at more locations to expand public awareness. Letters to the Editor in our two local papers are saturated with animal welfare issues. The mayor of Las Cruces is launching his pet overpopulation recognition campaign with a "Pet of the Week" at future council meetings. Wow! The public debate has begun!

In the past, many animal welfare concerns were stymied. Little reporting to the public occurred from our tax-funded community animal shelter. Dog and cockfighting had a safe harbor in southern New Mexico. Just a few years ago, animal cruelty and inhumane conditions were seldom newsworthy in Doña Ana County. Vocal citizens pointing to areas that required attention were often labeled as trouble-makers or animal-wackos by community leaders.

Now, the general public is grasping the magnitude of cost of our pet overpopulation to taxpayers, and to the quality of community life. Advocates, government workers, citizens and voters are now getting involved like never before. Kudos to them all!

Individual citizens and organizations can get involved by volunteering at the Animal Services Center of the Mesilla Valley for pet exercise, telephone reception, adoption counseling and other valuable roles both on, and off site. Training is available by contacting ASCMV at (575) 382-0018. They really need our help now to save as many healthy and treatable animals as possible. Off-site adoption events are another great way to make a difference if you are unable to go to our community shelter. Volunteers are needed for the HSSNM PetSmart cat adoption center to provide daily care. HSSNM is expanding our off-site adoption events pending approval by the ASCMV. Go to www.hssnm.org or call (575) 521-3642. Our annual members meeting is 6:30 p.m. Aug. 21, at our new offices at 403 South Melendres in Las Cruces on the corner of Amador Avenue. The public is invited.

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

Visit us online at www.hssnm.org or call 521-3642