

# LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

## ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Opinion: Ending pet breeding vital to community

By Mike Hainer For the Sun News

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Today we continue to kill as many or more animals than ever at our community animal shelter, the Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley. Lack of shelter space, foster homes, ability to treat minor illnesses and the unmanageable number of animals flowing into the shelter each and every day is the cause.

Our "catch and kill" public policy plus the drop-off of unwanted animals is out of control. More than 17,000 animals a year flow into the ASCMV, which has a rational capacity of only 200 to 400 animals. There is no strategic plan yet from our public officials. More than 70 percent of the animals will be killed and transported to the landfill regardless of their condition, adoptability or our community intentions.

Of course, this is unacceptable public policy and a huge waste of taxpayer dollars.

Widespread spay-and-neuter of companion animals and ending the breeding of pets in our community is essential to ending our severe pet overpopulation. On the positive side we have two established organizations that have started the work.

The Spay Neuter Awareness Program in Las Cruces provides financial assistance for low income families to alter their dog or cat. You can contact them at (575) 524-9265. Income verification is required and a co-pay is expected.

Our local Free Spay Neuter Program also operates regular spay-and-neuter voucher fairs throughout Doña Ana County. The public can receive vouchers for local veterinarians to alter dogs and cats. Call (575) 647-1416.

On Oct. 11, a voucher fair for 50 vouchers will be held at the Horse N Hound, 991 W. Amador Ave., from 9 a.m. to noon. Lines form well before the start, so get there early and bring proof of residency in Las Cruces or Doña Ana County. No income documentation is needed and donations are very welcome.

Multiple lifesaving strategies are needed to reduce the killing of healthy and treatable pets in our community. Widespread spay and neuter must now occur or we will continue to kill most of the pets entering our community shelter.

Demand that our public officials develop public policy to expand spay and neuter services and reduce pet overpopulation. Contribute to the hard working volunteers at FSNP and SNAP. Attend the SNAP 10th anniversary gala event on Oct. 25 at the Rio Grande Theatre in downtown Las Cruces.

Call and get your ticket and save lives while you have fun and make new friends who also love animals. Visit the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico Web site at [www.hssnm.org](http://www.hssnm.org) for more local animal welfare information.

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