

On the Positive Side: Animal Safety Net Grows Stronger

by Frank Bryce

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The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico gets multiple reminders each day via its Petline telephone service and the animal advocacy group e-mail system demonstrating how the safety net for companion animals is growing stronger. The calls and emails involve dogs, cats, horses, and other critters concerning rehoming, adoptions, fostering, lost, found, medical assistance and abuse. While the number needing help is often overwhelming, many, many of these animals find help through an array of rescuers, fosters, adopters, direction for medical and legal help and situation counseling from organizations and individuals.

A most recent demonstration of a collaborative occurred Saturday, when a dog was reported to HSSNM wandering and possibly injured near University and Triviz. The incident was called in to HSSNM by Jamie, a new HSSNM foster parent, who was passing through the area on her way to a therapy dog session with "Lola", her beautiful and gentle pit bull. Jamie moved to Cruces about six months ago from California and had worked with therapy dogs and rescues in California. Jamie just recently rescued an emaciated but loving little Chihuahua and while it was micro-chipped the former owners had failed to reclaim the dog. Jamie accepted the responsibility of bringing the Chihuahua, now known as "Nacho", back to health and working with HSSNM to get its shots and neutering done in preparation for adoption. Now in an attempt to save another animal, Jamie stayed in the area and tracked the dog until help could arrive.

While Jamie watched the dog, HSSNM notified the dispatch office who in turn contacted a Las Cruces Animal Control Officer. Meeting up in the area, the Animal Control unit and the HSSNM representative used their vehicles in an attempt to keep the dog from crossing the busy University Avenue. Fortunately, the dog elected to enter a drainage pipe on the west end of the local shopping mall area. Rather than leave the animal which may be injured, the HSSNM person working with the Animal Control officer and Jamie managed to coax the dog to one end of the drain pipe and they were able to capture the dog. A quick scan of the dog indicated it was probably not injured and it was loaded onto the animal control unit. While a microchip scanner was available on the control truck, the batteries were dead and a scan would have to be performed at the shelter.

The dog was perhaps a cattle dog mix weighing as much as forty to fifty pounds, mostly white with brown and dark patches. Hopefully, the owners will have already found the dog at the shelter and have taken it home. Thanks to the concern and compassion of Jamie and the quick response of the animal control officer, the dog at least got a chance to get back home safely. There are still many gaps in the safety net that is developing but all of us can contribute similarly when we see an animal in distress, by keeping our companions vaccinated and identified, and by providing appropriate food, water, shelter, medical care and containment so we set an example for our friends and neighbors.

Frank Bryce is President of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested guest authors should contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.