

On the Positive Side: Continued animal welfare improvements in our community

By Frank Bryce / For the Sun-News

Posted: 01/25/2013 01:56:28 AM MST

Most often our stories about positive developments in local animal welfare are shared between outstanding private organizations and individual actions or the larger governmental improvements being implemented. Information was shared this week about efforts in the departments that fall between those two arenas and often are not recognized for their efforts. The difficulties, restrictions and time required to see improvements are frustrating to concerned individuals outside these departments but it should be recognized this is also truly frustrating to the staff of the department involved. The following are positive efforts on the part of these departments.

The following is information from Maryln Zahler, vice president of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico (HSSNM). Maryln has been actively involved in distributing pet toys to both the city and county animal control departments. The donations of pet toys come from the Good 360 Foundation and PetSmart Charities to HSSNM. Maryln stated "What joy there was as I delivered the boxes of toys to the animal control department staff of both Las Cruces and Doña Ana County. Animal control officers are able to provide pet toys to families throughout the county whose animals do not have toys. It's a way for the animal control officers to talk to the families regarding spaying and neutering, vaccinations, micro-chipping and prevention of pets straying while encouraging family time to socialize with pets.

These toys will hopefully promote more pet responsibility and humane treatment along with safety for both pets and family members."

The involvement of the animal control officers with pet owners is key to humane treatment of pets, compliance, safety and pet overpopulation issues. The use of the toys contributes to that work.

And just recently Maryln also provided toys to court ordered dogs that wait for a judge to decide what is to happen to these dogs as the cases are processed. These animals may be held months or even years under the care of the Doña Ana Sheriff's Department Animal Cruelty Investigation Unit.

"The animals just went wild when they were given the toys. They checked them out a bit warily before they grabbed them, shook them and then just had a ball with them," Maryln said. "A lot of improvement is being done at the Sheriff's Department animal holding facility including cinder block privacy walls to prevent aggressive behavior by unruly occupants and escapes by those who are more adept at climbing than one might imagine. A large play area is provided to give the dogs a place to exercise, sometimes socialize and simply get a different daily routine."

Maryln reported the facility does need a volunteer groomer to help with that aspect of maintaining the animals. If a groomer is interested in helping with these animals, they should contact the Doña Ana County Animal Control office at 525-8846 and leave their information for Curtis Childress, Animal Cruelty Investigation.

It is encouraging to hear all the improvements and positive efforts that are being accomplished at all levels but there is still much to do. Please help the animal welfare organizations of your choice and get involved wherever you can.

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