

## **On the Positive Side: Movement to resolve pet overpopulation continues**

**By Frank Bryce**

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The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico wants to sincerely thank Doña Ana County Commissioner Billy Garrett for his service as co-chair for the Coalition for Pets and People. The CFPP effort has united animal welfare organizations, government entities and private individuals to work together for mutually beneficial goals. While there have been peaks and valleys of cooperation and collaboration within this unique mix of animal advocacies, the results are showing vast improvement across a broad range of animal-welfare issues when compared to the singular efforts prior to the formation of the CFPP.

Garrett has provided leadership, guidance and support since the inception of this coalition. Without his involvement, perhaps we would still be less effective multi-directional groups tackling small pieces of a larger problem. Thanks to him, the CFPP today provides focus and cooperation that did not exist before.

While remaining active with CFPP, Garrett has relinquished the co-chair reins to Ann Markham, a recognized and dedicated animal advocate who has been involved with the coalition essentially from its inception about two years ago. Markham holds a degree in sociology and psychology from the University of Vermont, worked three decades in the insurance business with Met Life, retired to Las Cruces in 2007 and shares a home here with her husband, Richard, who is a graduate of NMSU and alumni adviser to Alpha Gamma Rho.

A large part of her current activities involve serving as co-partner with the Doña Ana County Big Kitty Fix to provide low-cost feline spay and neuter services throughout Doña Ana County. She has been an ardent supporter and spokesperson for the development of a more effective and humane "Community Cat Management Program."

The CFPP participants are in apparent agreement that Markham is an obvious choice to successfully fill the shoes of Garrett and provide the leadership to continue the much needed efforts of the CFPP.

HSSNM welcomes and supports her in this new role.

On another front, the city of Las Cruces introduced the first reading of the revised animal control ordinances at the recent City Council meeting. A vote by the Las Cruces City Council on April 17 can provide positive culmination of the work of a broad range of interested stakeholders.

An initial goal for the revision was to more effectively align the county and city animal control ordinances, but a major change is the decriminalization of private citizens managing outside cat groups. Frequently referred to as "Trap, Neuter, and Return," the new approach is to assist community cat management areas to better address a currently illegal widespread practice. It aims to provide assistance for the health of the cats, insure public safety and reduce impacts to wildlife. Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners has already adopted the revision to decriminalize this activity. HSSNM and the Coalition for Pets and People has specifically given their support to the effort and it is hoped the general public will acquaint themselves with the new animal control ordinances and express their support to the City Council for its passage.

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