

On the Positive Side: Visiting vet clinic makes dent in pet overpopulation

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by Frank Bryce

A total of 120 cats and dogs were spayed and neutered just last week as part of a mobile veterinary program. If unchecked these pets could have produced about 1,700 offspring in the coming year and roughly 100 times that many offspring in six years. If many of these offspring made it into our local animal shelter as could be imagined, the cost to the city and county would be astronomical.

To help address this concern, the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico in cooperation with Operation SPOT-NM hosted and conducted last week's free spay-and-neuter event along with low cost vaccinations and microchipping. The participating pets were recruited through door-to-door contact, hot dog cookouts, fliers and other Spanish and English media spread across the county and in Las Cruces immediately preceding the event.

Usually conducted using a mobile surgical van, this was a first-time event using available veterinary space in the Pet-Smart store located at Lohman and Walnut in Las Cruces and a seasoned seven-person veterinary team, Asavet Charities of Tucson, Arizona. The team was supported by about 20 volunteers from various animal advocacy and welfare groups and community organizations as well as individuals.

Multiple businesses contributed to the event and its staffing: Ashley Furniture, Domino's Pizza, Peter Piper Pizza, Albertsons on North Main, Dunkin' Donuts, Out of the Blue Graphics, Insta-Copy, Rio Grande Estate Sales and Walmart. Additionally Hilton Inn & Garden provided two complementary rooms for Thursday- Saturday for the vet team and \$69 per night rate for the remaining two rooms, which is being covered by Humane Society of Southern New Mexico, making it effectively a full complementary hotel accommodations for the AsaVet team.

Kelly Barker, founder of Uncaged Paws and leader of the SPOT-NM effort, stated, "The Operation SPOT project was a great experience and the statistics are very impressive. There are many photos of the event, which are still being organized and I will post them to Operation Spot NM website, Facebook and other social media... . The accomplishment is something to bark about but with (thousands of) animals being killed in the Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley each year, there is more work to do."

Barker added, "A waiting list is well underway with (more than) 200 expressing interest, and that is growing quickly as it is being driven through the website and there is also information signage in PetSmart that easily allows people to get to the website and sign up for more information."

The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico continues to explore opportunities to expand spay-and-neuter efforts locally and statewide. Visit hssnm.org for more information on those efforts and how you can get involved.

Frank Bryce is president of HSSNM. Guest authors can contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.