



## **ON THE POSITIVE SIDE**

### **GO bond will be good for animals held by courts**

**By Frank Bryce**

FOR THE SUN-NEWS

LAS CRUCES — The recent front-page Sun-News article explaining the up-coming GO bond in support of funding completion of the facility for seized animals hopefully moves our county voters to renew a property tax-backed bond that would provide \$800,000 for that project.

It has been a major concern for the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico to see the Sheriff's Animal Control Department develop adequate facilities and staffing for animals being held by court order. The project has been laying fallow for an inordinate amount of time.

HSSNM has supported and been actively involved with this improvement effort since the current facility's inception. Having worked on what was supposed to be a temporary facility and providing material including igloos, tools and construction material for caging improvement, HSSNM is well aware of the current shortcomings of the holding area including the dangers to both animals and staff. The more recent conversion of the very small available butler type building for holding cats is seriously inadequate, especially when large cat hoarding cases arise.

HSSNM has sat in on planning sessions with the architect, the county engineers and animal control staff to assist in any way the society could to promote and implement the needed improvements. Last fall it invited and escorted Commissioner Perez to tour the facility to revitalize the effort to complete the holding facility. At that time a capital campaign for private funding was even discussed since there has been difficulty with securing funding for such a special center as related by Commissioner Perez in the Sun-News article. It is a positive step that the GO bond offers a method to continue the work of this project and the expected benefits are impressive.

The health and welfare of animals held by the Sheriff's Department are of paramount importance, as they should be in any animal center. But because the animals are also evidence in court cases, their care can continue for much longer than that of those animals at public or private shelters. If held at other facilities, there is the resulting over-crowding, disease exposure and danger to the staff and even the public, to some degree. There is the added degree of responsibility for evidentiary animals that could be more easily compromised. The proposed completion of the new facility and already existing structure will address many, if not all, of the health, safety and legal concerns adequately.

Your support for this particular effort is important and can contribute to improved animal welfare for animals caught in the legal system, more effective and safe handling of animals for staff and others involved in the issues and set the stage moreover for greater pet owner responsibility. The needed \$800,000, while seemingly a great deal of money, is a very small part of the county budget and its use for this project can save much more than that in the long run and provide a significant and positive contribution to our county.

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