

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE: Animal organizations weaving a blanket of success

By Frank Bryce

FOR THE SUN-NEWS

Positive steps are being woven and expanded in many directions regarding the issue of too many cats and dogs going into our local animal shelter. The various organizations that have been fighting an uphill battle to achieve the reduction in the number of animals being taken to the Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley (ASCMV) can start to feel their hard work, sweat and, yes, tears are working.

Aside from the tax dollars it has taken to begin to correct deficiencies at the shelter, the activities outside the shelter are showing progress and success. Almost all organizations are conducting adoption, low cost vaccinations, spay and neuter, and now low cost or free microchipping on a weekly or twice monthly basis and much of this is done in a cooperative manner. Adoption events occur throughout Las Cruces and plans are being discussed to develop adoption outreach into the far regions of Doña Ana County.

These adoptions put animals needing homes into homes with their vaccinations, spay or neuter, and micro-chip identification making them more attractive to potential adopters. This helps ensure the animals are returned home safely if they stray and there are fewer unwanted and accidental litters of puppies and kittens.

The low cost vaccination clinics by ACTION Program for Animals help folks of all means to comply with county and city pet ordinances while protecting the public and improving the health of dogs and cats across the county and within the city. Everyone benefits from compliance and responsible pet ownership.

Spaying and neutering opportunities are more readily available. The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico (HSSNM) which began its spay and neuter program for 750 dogs in Chaparral late last fall is approaching the conclusion soon for the grant provided by PetSmart Charities. The response in Chaparral has been overwhelming and it appears the two-year grant appears will be completed in only 9 or 10 months. The Coalition for Pets and People, the Big Kitty Fix, Spay Neuter Action Program and enhanced public pet spay and neuter opportunities at the ASCMV shelter continue to provide low cost or free spay and neuter resources on an increased basis.

A program gaining tremendous traction is the collaborative effort supported by the CPP to provide free micro-chipping for dogs and cats throughout the county. With private donations the CPP has provided micro-chip scanners, computers and aircards to county and city animal control units and is providing free micro-chipping events to promote the use of micro-chips for pet identification and immediate return from animal control trucks.

The more than 400 animals returned from the animal control trucks since the inception of the program has an estimated value of more than \$90,000 in savings to the county, city and shelter. This also reduces overcrowding at the ASCMV, pet exposure to disease, cost to the pet owner and taxpayers and increases pet owner responsibility.

There are too many entities and individuals to identify in this short article's space but an important aspect without exception is the community – each of us as pet owners and responsible residents to support the organizations working on behalf of the pets – to help achieve the goal that will improve our communities in Doña Ana County.

Please do your part however large or small.

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