

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

During the holidays, reap the benefits of pet relationships

By Frank Bryce

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We are heading into the cool-weather holiday season including Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's celebrations.

This is a reminder to include and provide socialization and involvement for the part of the family we often take for granted — our pets. The companionship, security, protection and enjoyment our family pet companions provide extends far beyond just being part of the expected home decor.

Recent articles in a number of magazines, newspapers, television reports and stories on the Internet all attest to the positive effects of these loving critters, especially dogs.

While some companion- animal attributes reach obvious high levels with their contributions to detect changes in body chemistry related to diabetes, signaling on-coming seizures and sniffing out cancer cells in their human family members, there are significant contributions from just sharing our world with them which affect our health and happiness.

The following six benefits have been reported associated with the relationship between pets and people. Family companion animal owners apparently suffer less from depression than those families without such companions. Pets seem to contribute to a person having lower blood pressure from stress than persons with no pets. Two chemicals — serotonin and dopamine — needed to calm and relax us are possibly elevated through playing with our pets.

The indicators of heart disease, both triglyceride and cholesterol levels, appear lower with pet owners than non-pet owners.

Pet owners suffering heart attacks live longer than patients without pets. Senior citizens with pets also have 30 percent fewer doctor visits.

That is information you can live with, don't you agree?

You have the opportunity to socialize with your special animal companion friends during the upcoming festivities and we encourage you to get involved in all the activities.

A big event this weekend is the "Dogaplooza" at Horse 'N' Hound Feed 'N' Supply at 991 W. Amador Avenue in Las Cruces. Several nonprofits will gather at the store to provide information concerning spay and neuter, dog training and adoption information, and the store will have discounts on treats and toys.

Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley will offer low-cost microchipping and registration for spay and neuter services. The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico will be offering Halloween pet photographs with characters in costume for \$10 donation. Activities and materials will be available to encourage more socialization with pets during and after the event.

Bring your dog out and get some great tips and tricks on training, nutrition, spay and neuter, flea and tick control and enjoy the demonstrations conducted hourly by special organizations from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The enjoyment and fun will be good for your dogs and for you.

Watch for other pet events during this fall and winter and take advantage of all of them. This will help you, your animals and will benefit the organizations that support community and animal welfare.

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