

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE: Bringing together seniors and pets

By Mike Hainer/For the Sun-News

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Read the No Kill Revolution blog: <http://nokillrevolution.blogspot.com/>

Therapy animals are proven to bring a smile to people, reduce depression and increase activity for people who have become inactive or withdrawn. The right companion animals also are proven to reduce stress in their owners including those with high blood pressure. Pets often are the connection that get able-bodied people out of the house for a walk, or that provide comfort and companionship for people who may be homebound. Senior citizens often are at risk for depression, reduced social interaction, isolation or loneliness. For many senior citizens the right companion — cat, dog, bird or otherwise — can enrich the day with bright moments.

The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico's On Golden Paws "Seniors for Seniors" Adoption Program is all about rediscovering the joys of senior citizens having the right companion animal in their life, while saving the life of a senior cat, older dog or adult bird from our local shelter, sanctuary or rescue group. These are usually adult animals that are accustomed to a slower pace of life and need a new home with a slower pace. Senior animals are not as adoptable from our shelter or foster home as is the cute puppy or kitten often sought out by a family or by an active adult wanting to train their own companion.

We will work to help place senior cats and dogs who are typically over five years of age with senior citizens 60 years of age or older. Adoption counselors, all trained HSSNM volunteers, are available to help a senior citizen find the right senior animal suited to their life. We help with the legwork. This can be at home, assisted living, or even in nursing facilities. HSSNM's counselors for On Golden Paws "Seniors for Seniors" will discuss your lifestyle, living situation and health issues as it relates to making the best match for you and the dog or cat that you desire. We can even agree to help with placing your companion in the event that you can no longer care for them. This is all about enriching the lives of senior citizens and senior animals with our help.

HSSNM launched On Golden Paws, "Senior for Senior" this weekend at the 10-year anniversary celebration for The Village at Northrise, a senior continuum of care community. If you are looking for the right companion for a senior citizen, or if you want to participate as a volunteer for this fun service, please call HSSNM at (575) 523-8020 or visit www.hssnm.org. Dianne Hammond is our captain for this great community service. Wow, what a positive step forward!

Mike Hainer is president of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico.