

On the Positive Side: HSSNM sharpens philosophy, programs

By MaryIn Zahler / For the Sun News

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Taking a positive direction for pet welfare was the goal of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico at its recent strategic planning session. Close scrutiny of the past year's accomplishments involving humane education, spay and neuter assistance, stray pet adoption, rehoming pets that had to be given up, and all the logistics surrounding these efforts was undertaken.

The results were gratifying, inspiring and daunting to new and old board members alike. Existing HSSNM programs were examined and refocused and organizational philosophy sharpened. A series of position statements were formulated and adopted to guide HSSNM activities and provide public awareness of HSSNM efforts.

First, the welfare of companion animals is the primary concern of HSSNM, and that concern is most effectively addressed by dissemination of humane education throughout the community. This has been successfully reflected in the efforts to take pet responsibility and awareness to local schools and youth organizations through Critter Connection Reading and "Adventures of Snooter" in connection with Jane Goodall's Foundation and its Roots and Shoots program.

HSSNM's humane educator and a cadre of volunteers are working tirelessly to reach students from kindergarten to high school. HSSNM provides printed material and telephone assistance to a wide range of audiences in the area.

Secondly, HSSNM supports the position that the entire community shares responsibility of humane treatment of companion animals, and that such responsibility includes, but is not limited to, increasing adoption of companion animals from shelters, the widespread and affordable altering of companion animals and facilitating implementation of best practices in responsible pet ownership and in the operation of our public animal welfare systems. HSSNM volunteers are involved in the successful and highly rated cat adoption center at PetSmart, sponsors dog adoptions at least monthly, assists with spay and neuter programs and again offers various types of help and guidance through its Pet Help Line, (575) 523-8020.

Third, discharge of community responsibility rests not only on awareness of needs but also on equitable public and private funding and on timely justice for abuse.

HSSNM is equally dedicated to supporting laws and enforcement that protect not only pets but are integral to family protection involving both human and animal abuse. The cooperation and collaborative efforts with the public and animal control have been rewarding and developing.

And lastly, accountability in meeting industry standards of best practices on the part of all involved in animal stewardship is essential. The application of acceptable standards of care and welfare is incumbent on all pet owners but should be shared, supported, encouraged and reflected by the community at large, along with government agencies and officials.

To learn more about HSSNM and hear heartwarming stories of rescues and rehabilitation, public and private successes and how you can help, join us from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nov. 14 at 403 S. Melendres St. for an HSSNM open house and pre-holiday sale of Christmas decorations and a magnificent doll collection recently donated to HSSNM.

MaryIn Zahler is the vice president of HSSNM.