

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Volunteers help adopt animals

By Mike Hainer For the Sun-News

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According to the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy Shelter Statistics Survey (1994-97), 72 percent of all cats entering shelters are killed, 23 percent are adopted and only 2 percent are reunited with their owners. This is the best national data, but our community faces similar challenges. The reality is that cats do not adjust well to being caught and taken to a shelter. Many trapped cats are feral. Others rapidly lose the socialized behaviors needed for being adopted when caged and isolated. Most cats arriving at the shelter are quickly labeled as feral because of these behaviors.

On the positive side, there are a handful of dedicated individuals leading the way in Doña Ana County to a better day for many cats needing a home. Evelyn Hancock is one of these local heroes. Evelyn has been the "team captain" for the cat adoption center at the local PetSmart store since April 2008. Seventy-five cat adoptions have occurred in the past year at this center and the popularity of this great adoption site is growing each month. She dedicates time, energy and seemingly inexhaustible amount of compassion and good judgment keeping the adoption center operating every day.

PetSmart Charities, the national operator of the PetSmart in-store adoption centers entered into an agreement with the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico after Terrence Moore, our city manager, invited HSSNM to re-start this valuable community service in conjunction with the city and county Animal Shelter. The agreement by HSSNM with city government leaders to rescue cats from our shelter was some of the early evidence of the new positive leadership by our city government in the past year's efforts for improved animal welfare.

Evelyn leads a team of daily volunteers who are screened and trained to provide excellent care and socialization for the adoption center tenants every day of the week. As a result HSSNM has an excellent adoption track record and the PetSmart store managers are very pleased with the leadership and quality of care supported by Evelyn and her dedicated team. This is one of the most positive examples of cooperation between the shelter and city leadership and community organizations working together to improve humane conditions and reduce the numbers of animals killed in our community animal control system and shelter.

Other locations where cats from our community shelter can be adopted include the Doggie Dude Ranch and Cat Farm on Burke Road, (575) 647-4471, or at off-site adoption events conducted by the Animals Services Center of Mesilla Valley at (575) 382-0018, or at the ASCMV at 3551 Bataan Memorial Highway. Another great place to adopt a cat is the Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary at (575) 527-4544 or 805-5338. A good lap is a terrible thing to waste and there are some wonderful cats available today.

For more information about HSSNM and community animal events, contact us at (575) 523-8020 or visit us online at www.hssnm.org.

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