

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Opinion: Benefit art auction helps no-kill-community goal

By Mike Hainer For the Sun-News

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The "For the HeART of Animals" benefit art auction on June 20 was just one positive way the community is coming together to move us toward our no-kill-community goal. Kudos to more than 100 artists, 250 attendees and to our many generous sponsors and community volunteers who came together to raise both community awareness and funds for spay and neuter, foster and adoption services and provide humane education. Community support to animal advocacy organizations can be a cost effective means of reducing companion animal overpopulation and unnecessary killing of animals that are healthy or treatable, but without a home.

Many citizens spoke out at recent city council and county commission meetings regarding the absence of meaningful community input into the joint powers agreement created between the city and county to operate our public animal shelter, the Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley. Voters believed that community involvement in crafting an effective agreement with a strong community advisory and oversight board was essential to a better future for humane animal services at the center. As a result, the agreement will be revised. Community involvement in this quality of life issue will result in a better joint powers agreement and a more effective board for operation of our public animal welfare services — another positive step toward our shelter goal.

Las Cruces and Doña Ana County have a serious pet overpopulation problem and tax dollars are being used in an ineffective catch-and-kill system that does not invest adequately in spay or neuter services throughout our county. The newly created board overseeing animal welfare services at the center must convince our leaders to invest in widespread affordable spay and neuter services as well as increasing the convenience and numbers of altered animals adopted from our center. Long-term community education regarding the tremendous social and economic costs of pet overpopulation must also be a board focus in order to avoid a catastrophic increase in the number of animals arriving at our center as Doña Ana County's population rapidly grows.

Wonderful dogs and cats of all sizes and breeds are available for adoption now at the city/county operated shelter on Highway 70. Those interested in adoption can also visit two off-site adoption events sponsored by HSSNM: Adopt a shelter dog every Saturday morning at the Downtown Mall Farmers Market from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., or find shelter cats at the Lohman PetSmart store adoption center.

Visit the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico's Web site at www.hssnm.org for events, activities, news and opportunities to volunteer and make a better community for both animals and humans.

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