

On the Positive Side: Another positive effort taking root in our county

By Frank Bryce / For the Sun-News

Posted: 03/08/2013 03:00:45 AM MST

For some time now, "On the Positive Side" columns have chronicled the efforts of individuals and organizations and, particularly the efforts of the Coalition for Pets and People (CPP) to expand spay and neuter programs. Spaying and neutering of cats and dogs is central to reducing the number of animals killed annually at our shelter.

The focus of discussion at the Operations Committee of the Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley (ASCMV) recent meeting was the investment of dollars and other resources to support expansion of local spay and neuter capacity to reach the goal of 1,000 spay and neuter procedures per month.

The committee looked at some important concerns. These included that the demand for spay and neuter services exceeds the organization's ability to meet expectations and requests for services demonstrated by the Chaparral initiative from the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico (HSSNM), the "Big Kitty Fix" and CPP spay and neuter events. One conclusion reached was that the best course to resolve many issues is a continuing and growing partnership between the public and private sectors.

Strategies to address the pet overpopulation problems included enhancing the ASCMV facility capacity to do more spay and neuter procedures, develop fixed spay and neuter facilities strategically throughout the county, and develop additional mobile surgical resources to serve the smaller county communities.

Increasing the surgical resources through any of the strategies listed has presented tremendous hurdles. The unsuccessful efforts to incorporate the Doña Ana County Sheriff's mobile surgical van for spaying and neutering, the constricted use of the ASCMV surgical suites and lack of available fixed sites and funding have limited service expansion to a single private sector mobile unit.

HSSNM is initiating an effort to expand the mobile resources with the recent donation of a 28-foot travel trailer. This unit when converted to a surgical mobile unit will significantly increase the availability of spay and neuter procedures. The unit will provide access to almost every community to affordable spaying and neutering services. If all goes as planned, work begins this week to remove the interior of the trailer and start the conversion process to provide a fully equipped spay and neuter unit.

With the generous donation of the trailer, the cost of the unit conversion should be about \$15,000 to \$20,000, almost one-tenth of the cost of a new unit. With the cost well over \$200 for each animal being taken to the shelter, regardless of outcome, this unit will save countless animal lives and literally thousands of dollars for county residents and local governments.

Chaparral participants of this past Monday's HSSNM spay and neuter event kicked off the fund-raising effort with \$55 toward the trailer conversion. While this may seem a small thing to many people, the efforts demonstrated by this small community is a tremendous first step taken toward solving a huge problem for Doña Ana County. Please join HSSNM and its supporters with a donation earmarked for the Spay and Neuter Trailer Conversion to the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico, P.O. Box 13826, Las Cruces, NM 88013.

Frank Bryce is president of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested guest authors should contact HSSNM at 523-8020.