

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

On the Positive Side: Many involved in making positive impact

By Frank Bryce

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In the last column of "On The Positive Side," I congratulated County Commissioner and outgoing cochair Billy Garrett, and Ann Markman, incoming co-chair of the Coalition for Pets and People, for the work accomplished so far by the coalition's participating animal welfare groups.

Recently a drop in the euthanasia rate at the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley shelter was reported in the media. There was some reference to the work accomplished by "private groups such as the Coalition for Pets and People" and "through a network of animal advocate groups."

The importance of the work by these unnamed outside advocacies and the impact they have had not only on the significant improvements at the shelter, but on the communities throughout the county and with cooperating agencies cannot be overstated.

It has been said that our county capacity for pet adoptions is nearing saturation as a reason for fewer shelter adoptions. However, it can be argued strongly that the tremendous effort of the animal advocacy groups — in their efforts for offsite adoptions and rehoming of animals that never have to be adopted from the shelter — may well account for fewer adoptions at the shelter. In fact, not enough has been taken into account concerning the number of cats and dogs that have surely increased with local and county-wide population growth and the burgeoning reproduction potential of cats and dogs during the past few years.

The efforts just described along with intensified microchipping and spay/neuter programs supported by the animal advocacy groups have contributed tremendously to the results being stated. Often, city and county pet owners are chastised with a broad brush for being irresponsible and uncaring, but that is not true of the many who are involved, who support animal welfare and who provide safe and loving homes for their companion animals.

We are a long way from the goals we seek, but more and more folks are aware and involved, and they deserve credit for their efforts and contributions.

Next week, the City Council of Las Cruces will vote on revision of the city's animal control policies.

City residents are encouraged to let their councilors know they support the revision. The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico along with the Coalition for Pets and People supports the revision as suggested.

The revision addresses the issue of better alignment of the animal-control ordinances with recently adopted county animal control ordinances, including the much needed decriminalization of "community cat management." The revision, allowing a more effective and humane method of community cat management, provides opportunities for grants and other assistance to mitigate community cat reproduction, nuisance cats and wildlife predation.

The County Animal Control Department deserves quite a hearty congratulations for reporting 167 cats and dogs returned in the field from the trucks to their owners during the month of February. Using the equipment furnished in part by participants of the Coalition for Pets and People and "dogged" determination, the county officers kept about 30 percent of the city and county monthly total of animals picked up from being taken to the shelter. This saves money for the county, the pet owners and the shelter, while creating a safer environment for the animals picked up and those already being held at the shelter. Unfortunately, for whatever reason, the city only reported returning only 12 animals from city trucks to their owners out of about 250 animals picked up in the city during the same period.

Frank Bryce is President of the Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested guest authors may contact HSSNMat 575-523-8020.