

ON THE POSITIVE SIDE

Coalition for Pets and People collaborates for the sake of animals

by Frank Bryce

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Over the past two weeks, the cooperating organizations of the Coalition for Pets and People made presentations to the Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners and the Las Cruces City Council detailing the achievements of their collaborative efforts toward the "Zero in Seven" collective goal. Sandwiched between deserving recognition and proclamations for a wide range of community efforts by organizations and individuals, outgoing cochair Tom Townsend, and incoming co-chair Joanne Ferrary led a series of short vignettes by the coalition partners. Since its inception about three years ago, the groups have made tremendous progress toward reducing the euthanasia rate at the Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley and increasing its live release rate.

The partnering organizations may have somewhat varying missions and goals, but County Commissioner Billy Garrett accurately stated the work is complementary and becoming cumulative. The organizations reporting were Action Program for Animals, Big Kitty Fix, Spay Neuter Action Program, Humane Society of Southern New Mexico, FCamp, Cat's Meow, Doña Ana County Animal Control and the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley. The numbers and services reported are too massive for inclusion in this article, but a few minutes at each website will show the depth and breadth of the work being done. Much remains to be done, but momentum is growing, thanks to these organizations and their hard work. And they need the support of the communities throughout the county.

Additionally, the Doña Ana County Commissioners passed a proclamation making April "Animal Control Officer Appreciation Month."

Often the first responders on the scene, the officers frequently find themselves in dangerous, volatile situations. A call concerning an injured dog turns out to be an incident of domestic violence. A welfare check on two cats leads to the discovery of animal and child abuse. On any given day, ACOs are called upon to assist animals and people in myriad situations.

From recovering a cat trapped in a storm drain to calming and carefully freeing a horse entrapped in a cattle guard, from ordering a dog's owner to unchain his animal to rescuing a calf mired in mud, ACOs are there to help.

These officers speak for the animals who have no voices, reminding us that animals deserve to be free from hunger, thirst, discomfort, pain, injury, disease, fear and distress. For their hard work, dedication, patience, compassion and ingenuity, the staff of Animal Protection of New Mexico applauds the officers of animal welfare departments throughout New Mexico.

With the growing rapport and understanding between the animal advocacy groups, the coalition partners and animal control here in Doña Ana County and its communities, this appreciation and recognition is well deserved.

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Interested guest authors can contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.

