

**On the Positive Side: Let the chips fall where they may (and often)**

**By Frank Bryce / For the Sun-News**

**Posted: 04/19/2013 04:51:36 AM MDT**

The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico (HSSNM) has been extolling the virtues of micro-chipping pets for some time now and the benefits are becoming more obvious each day. A big step in this effort occurred when the Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley Board of Directors (ASCMV) was convinced to allow not-for-profit animal welfare groups to purchase and distribute microchips from the local shelter beginning December of last year. Being allowed to purchase these chips at cost plus a minimal administrative fee, HSSNM has provided almost 250 free micro-chips for dogs (and some cats) during its PetSmart Charities Targeted Impact grant operation in Chaparral. More importantly the micro-chip information that allows return of stray animals quickly and efficiently is immediately part of the animal shelter information system.

Donations from Chaparral participants have covered almost the entire costs of these chips. This is a phenomenal 66 percent rate of compliance for the 375 dogs spayed or neutered so far in this grant program. Recently one family, when informed of the opportunity for micro-chipping their dog, returned with enough quarters to make a \$7 donation to cover the chip costs. The micro-chip becomes a very effective and cost-saving insurance tool for pet owners.

Since the inception of a collaborative program last year, with their new micro-chip scanners, air cards and laptop computers, the city and county animal control trucks have returned about 200 micro-chipped animals from their trucks to the pet owners. This eliminates the need to take the animals to our local government shelter which suffers from tremendous overcrowding and all the issues that creates for pets, people and the government agencies involved.

This equipment, furnished substantially by the Coalition for Pets and People (CPP) and its use allowed by the wise implementation of the return policy by the city and animal control departments, has saved perhaps as much as \$40,000 to date in animal control, shelter operation and pet owner costs not to mention the pet lives saved and disease prevention.

At the most recent council meeting of the Coalition for Pets and People, the various animal advocacy group representatives voted to purchase 200 micro-chips through the ASCMV shelter for free distribution to pet owners. The decision to provide these chips to the public demonstrates a strong commitment by the CPP and its supporters, including HSSNM, to reduce the intake to the shelter thereby reducing the overcrowding and euthanasia numbers.

To kick off what hopefully will be more such events the CPP will host its first free micro-chip event today (April 19) from noon to 5 p.m. at the Branigan Memorial Public Library, 200 E. Picacho, in Las Cruces. Free micro-chipping will be available on a first come, first served basis as long as supplies last and time allows. Dogs should be vaccinated and leashed (muzzled if appropriate) and cats should be vaccinated and crated for safety. This is your opportunity to protect your pet. Take advantage of it. Hope to see you there.

Frank Bryce is president of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested guest authors can contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.