

# LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

## **On the Positive Side: Web of animal welfare initiatives grows**

**By Frank Bryce**

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Recently, it seems there are many initiatives being implemented, nurtured or considered across and throughout Doña Ana County to address the animal welfare issues we face. The Doña Ana County Animal Control Department officers continue with really tremendous efforts to return stray animals with owner identification right away in lieu of taking them to the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley shelter.

For the months of February, March and April, the county officers returned a reported total of 508 animals to their respective homes. During the same period, the Las Cruces City Animal Control Department reported returning 84 animals. It is anticipated these numbers will increase dramatically as more pet owners understand the value of microchipping and other pet identification, and animal control officers become more proficient and diligent in their efforts to return animals in the field.

In an effort to expand the needed services of the communities in the county, the ASCMV Board of Directors approved a Memorandum of Understanding with Anthony, New Mexico for the provision of animal care services at the ASCMV. The ASCMV will be involved in picking up and transporting animals for spaying and neutering, training Anthony animal control officers and providing proactive outreach to pet owners. As part of this MOU agreement and effort, Anthony Animal Control has committed to return pets to owners in Anthony before sending the animals to the ASCMV and will do what they can to accomplish that aspect of the program.

It was reported the Anthony Animal Control department is equipped with and trained in the use of the microchip scanner. Additionally, microchip and vaccination clinics will be conducted. Anthony has long been a source of many of the stray animals that end up at the ASCMV not to be reclaimed for a variety of reasons.

The Doña Ana County commissioners did discuss the possibility of development of the Betty McNight Community Building annex as a holding facility for stray pets in Chaparral, New Mexico.

Used for a site facility for an extensive spay and neuter program by the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico from late 2012 to early 2014, roughly 1,000 dog and cat spay and neuter procedures were done in a collaborative effort between HSSNM and Doña Ana County. The facility offers many existing amenities required for a short or even long term animal shelter in the south valley with a minimum of conversion costs.

Another positive action is the recent request for proposal going out for bid this week for the completion of the Doña Ana Sheriff's Animal Control holding facility at the department's Griggs site. This site will provide a modern, safe holding facility for animal cruelty, animal abuse, hoarding and other court-ordered held animals while their cases are processed. Once the RFP is accepted, it was reported that it would take about six months to complete the structure. A drawing of the new facility has been posted in the lobby of the county government center building.

All of these initiatives, along with others, concern how to humanely address animal welfare, overcrowding and high euthanasia rates at the ASCMV, operational costs, public safety and pet owner responsibility.

Across the county, urban and rural residents are working collectively together to improve the way animals are treated. You, too, can get involved with the organization of your choice to help this effort.

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