

On the Positive Side: Coalition for Pets and People Breaks More Ground

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A general meeting of the supporters of the Coalition for Pets and People met Monday evening, May 14th, and reviewed the status and progress of the cooperating organizations and individuals involved. Despite the bumps in the road, the concern for organizational and individual goals and agendas, networking twists and tangles, this fledgling cooperating and collaborating group has made remarkable and positive progress toward the goals set forth in its 12 point plan.

Although recently there have been numerous heart-warming individual stories involving animal welfare that fit the On the Positive Side, perhaps none hold such important and far reaching potential as the developing Coalition effort. A resolution to support the Coalition proposed to the Board of the Animal Services Center of Mesilla Valley (ASCMV) was adopted at the Board's last meeting and the resolution will soon be presented for approval to the Doña Ana County Board of Commissioners and the Las Cruces City Council. This resolution sets forth the Coalition's plan for increasing public health and safety, enhancing animal welfare, and increasing the effectiveness of public expenditures.

With county, city and ASCMV support, the Coalition will continue to address how the current animal welfare system results in the premature deaths of thousands of animals, how the situation can be corrected, and how the accomplishment of the Coalition's objectives requires participation by animal advocates, Animal Control Department officers and the ASCMV. Requiring investment of time and fiscal resources beyond current levels, the effort may take as long as seven years to see anticipated results. Hence the objective "Zero in Seven" to reach the goal of a shelter animal save rate of 95 percent. The killing of healthy and treatable cats and dogs would be reduced to zero by 2019 or sooner.

The Coalition meeting reviewed the progress that has been made in the first 90 days of 2012. This includes adoption of the resolution by ASCMV and provision to present the resolution as soon as possible to city and county officials. The Coalition has begun establishing the beginning protocols for needed baseline information and selecting targeted areas for pet owner education, public outreach, return to owner programs, reduced surrender practices, sterilization efforts, and owner assistance. Microchip readers and computer upgrades for animal control trucks are being developed, and information sharing capabilities established between the shelter and animal control. A logo, slogan, and branding message are in place and a website is being developed and implemented to support the Coalition.

The group looked into the future and by the end of 2012 hopes to have everything in place involving funding, agreements for facilities, staffing, etc. needed to increase sterilization procedures to 1000 per month. Additionally, the Coalition hopes to increase adoptions, rescues and fosters from the shelter by 15% over 2011 numbers and decrease surrenders to the shelter by 10%.

To make this work your help is required too. Owners must accept their responsibilities and be accountable for their pets. The pet population must more closely reflect the availability of homes for the cats and dogs. The unintended consequence of high euthanasia numbers must be minimized through public policy and enforcement keeping in mind public health and safety. Join the Coalition, support the animal welfare organization of your choice and get involved.

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