

On the Positive Side: Ones who do heavy lifting often overlooked by Frank Bryce August 19, 2016

Most often this column reports on events and activities affecting the big picture of animal advocacy and change needed in our communities and county. However, we also need to take a moment and express gratitude to those who work to bring about that change. Recently the director of the Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley reported to the Coalition for Pets and People that the shelter was euthanizing 20 to 30 cats a day. Alarming as that is, there would be even more cats dying without the tremendous effort of nonprofit organizations and their volunteers.

These unsung heroes work diligently and against tremendous pressure with little recognition. Organizations such as Action Program for Animals, Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary, FCamp at NMSU, Big Kitty Fix, Broken Promises SW, and others rightly deserve mention and merit, and the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico wants to particularly thank the volunteers of its own cat adoption program supported by our PetSmart store partner. HSSNM's cat adoption partnership with Pet-Smart Charities has been ongoing since 2008, resulting in hundreds of adoptions of cats and kittens going into caring homes. Authorized fosters care for felines in home environments and at the PetSmart store where adoptable furballs are showcased in cat condos with HSSNM volunteers providing continuous care and socialization. Rebecca Stanger, the Adoption Cattery Captain since 2013, modestly describes the volunteers and their efforts in the following.

"Our volunteers give their time each week to come into the cattery to clean and socialize with all the cats. They do the usual with scooping boxes and cleaning condos, the fun with playing with the cats, and more important communicating with the public answering questions, counseling adoption efforts and promoting successful adoptions. As the Cattery Captain and a volunteer, I do all the same along with coordinating and training volunteers while managing adoptions and intake of cats. "There is a team of ten of us currently, including Ruth Wiley, Aline Fisher, Becca Smith, Vivian Nevarez, Jasmine Kilpatrick, Michael-Ray Vallejos, Vince Kebabjian, Trish Grimm and Luis Castro, Jr. The folks I work with are amazingly dedicated and wonderful people. They come into the adoption cattery in their free time to love and care for homeless animals. We appreciate so much that they share our passion for saving lives.