

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

On the Positive Side: Companionship is for keeps

By Win Jacobs For the Sun-News

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Mulberry pollen, wind and pink plum blossoms have been succeeded by seasonal pollen and record temperatures. Spring is gone, and summer is nearly over. Vacations are past and school is beginning. How are we doing with our springtime resolutions?

Part of my spring cleaning this year involved scouring magazines for quick ideas of what we might do and how we might do it, for new recipes or color schemes, for effective hints on discipline before going to grandma's house. And what did I find smack dab in the middle of homemaker heaven? Pages of counsel regarding companion animals! These popular periodicals are sending the message that the animals, too, are part of the family. We don't just feed them and clean up after them, now we fall in love with them.

I expect issues of animal well being to be addressed when I pick up a copy of Dog World or All Animals. But Ladies Home Journal? Martha Stewart Living?

I am looking for a better meatloaf and "Can This Marriage Be Saved" and I find how to keep my cat happy! When I read "Dear Abby" in the Sun-News, I'm looking for insight regarding my daughter-in-law, not the virtues of a senior human adopting a senior canine.

But there's something to this. We know a spouse or a child must be shown love, not just told about it. That is how a home is built. Doesn't it make sense that companion animals need the same? Their share of that home may be a spot on the bedspread or well-shaded outside run, but more and more, Americans feel their pets are family members.

Just as every child should be a wanted child, so every pet should be a wanted pet. We must show them they are wanted, not just tell them. Some special snacks, some variety in play, frequent petting and stroking pay off for both the giver and the receiver. Lowered blood pressure, pain relief and calm self-assurance are the animal's rewards. The human who gives this to his companion receives the same back.

In addition, we may well improve our health through exercise and increase our defenses against allergies and asthma thanks to our pets. As a bonus, we may be raising children who can put others ahead of themselves. Truly, the gifts that keep on giving.

Win Jacobs is a longtime civic activist, a board member of Humane Society of Southern New Mexico and the grateful pal of two senior dogs.

