

On the Positive Side: El Paso shelter director shares no-kill goals

by Frank Bryce

Sept. 30, 2016

The Humane Society of Southern New Mexico was honored to have Kurt Fenstermacher, director of El Paso Animal Services, as the speaker at our recent annual meeting as he shared progress made toward El Paso's no kill goal and how those reforms apply to our objectives.

Fenstermacher reported the El Paso City Council were given findings and recommendations of a task force aimed at improving the live release rate of animals at the shelter. Recommendations focused on moving the shelter toward no-kill status. The national standard for a no-kill community is a shelter live outcome rate of over 90 percent of its animals. Fenstermacher said shelter methodology had not really changed in over four decades.

The recommendations resulted from more than four months of work by the task force, which visited and studied successful animal shelters achieving high live release rates. The task force sought input from residents with community meetings and met with animal rescue groups. Through its research, the task force identified the 11 characteristics and practices common among no-kill shelters.

These 11 identified goals are to be supported by recommendations of changes of their shelter leadership as well as additional personnel, facility enhancements, and policy changes, including elevating the Animal Services Division to department level status, additional budget for personnel of about \$1.3 million over the next three years, additional estimated operations and maintenance budget of \$550,000, investment of \$1 million over three years for facility improvements, and employing best-practices. With these changes, the task force believes the El Paso shelter can achieve no-kill status by fiscal year 2020. The work achieved since adopting the task force recommendations at the shelter is remarkable. El Paso Animal Services is now partnering with 30 animal advocacy groups locally and nationally.

On other front

Humane Society of Southern New Mexico reported almost 700 low cost and free spay-neuter surgeries provided or assisted by the group since the first of the year, including animals in targeted ZIP codes, partnering with the Coalition for Pets & People and other organizations. Expansion in services included low cost microchipping with about 3,500 provided since 2015. In addition, humane education services grew with about 270 animal welfare-themed books presented and donated to classrooms.

It is time to renew memberships or become a first time member of Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Learn more and get a secure online membership by Pay Pal at www.hssnm.org. You can also support our work by serving on the board of directors, volunteering in programs, and participating at events. Contact us at 575-523-8020, or message us on Facebook, about your interests.

And join us at events like our monthly Red Brick Pizza fundraisers and socials at 6 p.m. (fall fundraisers are Oct. 27 and Nov. 17).

Thank you for supporting HSSNM and being part of the remarkable progress we've made together expanding services for the animals of our community, region, and southern New Mexico. Please help HSSNM continue this vital work with your membership!

Frank Bryce is president of HSSNM. Interested guest authors may contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.