

On the Positive Side: Fostering stray animals a part of the big picture

By Joy Miller / For the Sun-News

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Fostering animals came to me at first as a steady stream of accidents: a dog running through traffic, a litter of kittens in a cardboard box, an abandoned puppy by the river where I walk my own dog. I've always said that I try not to do any animal-rescues unless I literally trip over them. Problem is I so often do.

We have an atrocious pet overpopulation problem in Las Cruces and Doña Ana County. Those who know me know I've worked for more than 10 years with Spay and Neuter Action Program trying to reverse this trend. That's another article, but it's the same subject. Abandoned and homeless animals are everywhere in our neighborhoods.

Most of us animal lovers will scoop up and help the box of kittens. But if you haven't "tripped over" any homeless animals lately, there are rescue organizations that need your help. I'm currently fostering a dog for the Animal Services Center (animal shelter) and he goes out to their adoption events.

People ask, "Don't you get attached? How do you let them go?" Fostering is a discipline that requires a re-framing of thinking. Rather than thinking of foster pets as children whom I've "saved," I've learned to see them as new friends. My little friends go into the world and bring great happiness to their forever-families.

"I would want to keep them all" isn't a good reason not to foster. If your pet-family is already the right size for you, you'll know it and you'll continue to take the next step with fostering and placement.

People often say to me, "I don't know how you do it." To tell the truth, I really don't know how I do it, either. Fostering animals (dogs and cats) is stressful and sometimes draining. (Don't tell the little guys I brought that up. I don't want them worrying.) Fostering is also the most rewarding thing I do. How often do most of us get to say, "I saved a life today?"

Joy Miller has been an advocate for animals in Las Cruces since she moved to the area in 1997. She has served as a volunteer for Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary, the Animal Services Center and SNAP Spay and Neuter Action Program.