

## **On the Positive Side: Coalition for Pets and People grant nears end**

**by Frank Bryce**

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LAS CRUCES - A grant from PetSmart Charities to the Coalition for Pets and People in cooperation with the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico is finally seeing light at the end of the tunnel.

The grant for about \$47,000 to cover the cost of spay and neuter surgeries for dogs from six targeted ZIP codes throughout southern Doña Ana County has perhaps one more scheduled event for November to reach its goal of 760 dogs.

The purpose is to reduce the high number of homeless or otherwise abandoned dogs in these ZIP codes being transported to the Animal Service Center of Mesilla Valley by county animal control.

While spay and neuter services have been continuing for cats and dogs throughout the county, the grant areas were selected by animal control authorities to have the highest immediate impact.

Initiated in spring 2014 with a deadline of one year, the grant effort began to recruit participation in the ZIP codes to provide low cost spay and neuter surgeries from both private mobile veterinary clinic support and the Animal Service Center shelter.

Due to the difficulty of recruitment of participating dog owners and the unforeseen scarcity of veterinary surgeons, the program lagged behind the intended numbers to meet the grant deadline. To continue the work and complete the grant, the Coalition for Pets and People sought and received two six-month grant extensions which were provided by Pet-Smart Charities.

When it was understood what was at risk in losing unused grant funds and the possible repercussions of failing to meet required recruitment to complete the grant, supporting animal advocates intensified their efforts. They helped recruit from the ZIP codes with "door to door" campaigns and free hot dog cookouts to gain additional participation.

The result, along with radio and newspaper publicity, posted fliers and word of mouth, has brought the grant to within perhaps a dozen or so surgeries to fulfill the grant.

Thanks goes out to volunteers from Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary, Spay and Neuter Action Program, Humane Society of Southern New Mexico and those caring individuals who provided their time and energy in support of the Coalition for Pets and People and Animal Service Center's work.

The number of unwanted and abandoned dogs arriving at the shelter in future years will definitely be reduced by this great effort. More such work needs to be accomplished in areas throughout the county, so please support the animal advocacy organizations working to address this and other animal welfare issues.

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