

LAS CRUCES SUN-NEWS

On the Positive Side: Three paths are being plowed for progress

By Frank Bryce

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It is refreshing to look at positive paths involving animal advocacy being plowed even when the desired destination can appear far on the horizon.

Three major efforts that are crucial to reducing the pet population problems and euthanasia rates we face in Doña Ana county and the communities throughout have been continuing to take shape.

These three paths are no doubt positively impacted by all the compassionate programs initiated to increase adoptions of cats and dogs at local adoption events and sites or the transfer adoptable cats and dogs to other communities, some at tremendous distances and costs. However, as much as these are needed, the adoption rate and transfer opportunities cannot and will not provide the profound results expected from spay-and-neuter programs, the pet microchipping, "Field Return to Owner" efforts and the "Trap, Neuter, Return" management of community cats.

There has been a tremendous surge in the ability to provide spay-and-neuter resources for the coming year with a combined total funding of more than \$100,000 from Doña Ana County and PetSmart Charities to the Spay, Neuter Action Program, or SNAP, and the Coalition for Pets and People, or CFPP. While these programs are being developed to serve across Doña Ana County, a particular focus is placed on the south valley areas. And even though there is some procedural and cost differences to the programs, both are planned to provide low-cost, spay-and-neuter surgeries. As part of the overall effort to assist and accommodate compliance with rabies vaccinations and microchipping requirements, these will also be available through this effort. Details are still being worked out, but information for participation should be available very soon. Kudos go to the Las Cruces Chief of Police and the Doña Ana County Sheriff and their departments for their increased emphasis to support pet microchipping with purchases of new microchip scanners and efforts to increase the effectiveness of the "Field Return to Owners" from their animal control trucks. Increasing their return of pets from animal control trucks saves the lives of animals picked up, prevents overcrowding at the shelter, helps pet owners to comply with animal ordinances and reduces operational costs. To support this effort, organizations like the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico, or HSSNM, and others are providing low-cost microchipping events and opportunities. HSSNM can now provide microchips at \$6.35 per pet to assist county residents to comply with the new ordinance microchip requirement.

A very cooperative and collaborative meeting was recently held with Doña Ana County Codes and Animal Control Supervisor Mary Lou Ward and Las Cruces Codes and Animal Control Supervisor James Chavez, along with community cat-management advocates. The meeting discussed the direction that the Community Cat Management Program is currently taking in the county and how it may be implemented in Las Cruces if adopted by the city councilors. This program will be a multi-faceted program involving cooperation and mutual trust between the animal control departments, the nonprofit organizations and those residents who register and comply with all requirements of the community cat management program.

This program is designed to ensure public safety, reduce unwanted litters of kittens, reduce predation of wildlife and address complaints that may arise with community cat colonies.

In closing, to complete the HSSNM Halloween activities, you are invited to join costumed volunteers for pet "Frightfully Furry Fotos" at Horse 'N' Hound Feed 'N' Supply at 991 W. Amador from 3 to 6 p.m. A \$10 donation is requested. HSSNM will also be providing free pet costumes and toys for increased socializing opportunities for pets and their families.

Frank Bryce is president of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico. Interested guest authors should contact HSSNM at 575-523-8020.