

On the Positive Side: All I want for Christmas is a few good volunteers

By Dr. Judy Long

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As 2011 hurtles toward its close, we in Las Cruces have much to be thankful for, in terms of animal welfare. Rescues and adoptions, veterinary care, spaying and neutering, a free rabies clinic, humane education and a rabble-raising weekly newspaper column are a few of the active efforts we can claim.

Throughout the year I have written about the activities of individuals and groups all across Las Cruces and Doña Ana county that rescue, mend and re-home animals. Today I am going to focus on the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico: a year-end summary and a wish list.

My Christmas wish list for the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico says volunteers, volunteers and more volunteers!

Dear Santa, the cat adoption program, headed by Evelyn Hancock, has been very, very good: more than 100 cats adopted during this year. Eligible cats are maintained at PetSmart, where they are cared for by cat-loving volunteers. If you, dear reader, are interested in joining this select circle, contact Evelyn Hancock at (575) 650-6746.

Frank Bryce has been fostering dogs and cats, available for adoption, at Doggie Dude Ranch and Cat Farm at 1428 Burke Road.

He has volunteers working with him on Thursday afternoons, and would welcome a few more. With Frank's supervision volunteers have the opportunity to socialize, groom and train the animals. Personal attention can shape the behavior of foster animals and facilitate their adoption.

(Put Doggie Dude Ranch on your wish list if you want reliable pet boarding. My dogs are particularly well-behaved after a day at Doggie Day Care at Frank's).

The HSSNM Pet Help Line is a true lifesaver. People call in and send photos, and often we can link them up with their lost pets. Often kind-hearted people have taken in abandoned or neglected animal, and need help finding them a permanent home. They call the Help Line. Many callers have questions about animal health or behavior, and the inquiries are answered, too.

This facet of our program is understaffed, and Bill Smith is ready, willing and able to train anyone who would like to make this contribution to animals in need of help. Contact him at (575) 523-8020.

HSSNM offers several Humane Education projects. These programs reach the next generation of responsible pet owners with content concerning pet care and responsibility, the environment and wildlife that surround us. Activities include games and story-telling.

The Critter Connection is based at the Boys & Girls Club of Las Cruces. On Wednesday afternoons children meet ambassador dogs from Therapaws and learn about the work these dogs do in hospitals and care facilities in Las Cruces, or hear other educational presentations.

Roots & Snoots, another program for children, emphasizes pet overpopulation and spay/neuter activity.

To get involved in Critter Connection or Roots & Snoots, call Jean Gilbert at (575) 522-2529.

The weekly newspaper column, On the Positive Side, tries to deal in depth with issues of animal welfare bearing on our local community. This is a two-way street: my readers are also my writers. One of the most valuable aspects of

the column - call it community journalism - is expressing the diversity of experiences in our locale. Some of the most effective stories are personal accounts by our faithful readers. If you have a story to tell, or an issue to raise, I invite you to e-mail me at pipsqueak2@comcast.net.

For the sake of the animals, do call and volunteer to keep the work going.

Judy Long is a member of the Board of Directors of the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico.