

## **On the Positive Side: Wrapping Up With the Holidays**

**by Vanessa C. Bryce**

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As we reflect upon this time of year, the Humane Society of Southern New Mexico's Board of Directors, members and volunteers would like to wish you and yours a wonderful holiday season. This is a time for gathering of family and friends, two legged and four legged alike. HSSNM had a paws-itively uplifting final event for the year with its pet photo with Santa display at our local PetSmart. The Santa "Claws" photo sessions with over 100 pets demonstrated the strong bond established between companion animals and their family.

From Chihuahuas to Pit-bulls to Shepherds and kids, HSSNM had the opportunity to see devotion between companion animals and their families at its best. There were some pets and children who were hesitant to sit on HSSNM's volunteer Santa's lap, but it was an uplifting event for all those involved. The size of family varied from one to five companion animals. In talking with pet parents, it was quite amusing to hear and reflect on stories of past pictures with Santa and HSSNM, some dating back to the beginning four years ago and one parent even carrying the previous year's photos in their wallet.

One such family, the Barnett's welcomed two year old "Lucky" to their family. Having just lost their beloved Maltese, the Barnett's looked at the HSSNM website ([www.hssnm.org](http://www.hssnm.org)) and saw Benji. Benji, a miniature poodle mix - smart as a whip, had been found south of Las Cruces by a family leaving for Los Angeles that same day. Unable to keep Benji, the family contacted the HSSNM helpline. HSSNM took Benji into their foster program where he remained for several weeks. When the Barnett's saw Benji's story on the website, they immediately contacted HSSNM and adopted Benji that day. About this time, HSSNM set up and began their Pet Photo with Santa display. The Barnett's were eager to have their picture and Benji's - now named "Lucky Dog" - taken with Santa. We are told that this beautiful family picture was shared with extended family and friends this year. It appears Lucky Dog fit in perfectly with his new family.

The joy of seeing parents, siblings and companion animals gathered together during this holiday season has given us time to "paws" and reflect upon those accomplishments and miracles that happen every day with community involvement and our organization. HSSNM is wrapping up a successful year and looks forward to an even more successful 2012 - Happy New Year!

Guest author Vanessa Bryce is an HSSNM Volunteer, Owner of the Doggie Dude Ranch and Cat Farm, Inc and a Fourth grade teacher with the Las Cruces Public Schools. Interested guest authors should contact Humane Society of Southern New Mexico at 575-523-8020.