

Health & Well Being

THE LAS CRUCES
Bulletin
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Groups help animals find homes

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By **Marissa Bond**
Las Cruces Bulletin

For animal welfare groups in Las Cruces, it has been both a busy and productive year.

This year, ACTion Program for Animals (APA) has rescued more than 700 animals from shelters, exceeding their 2014 goal of a 50-percent increase in rescues. Even with a maximum facility capacity of just about 30 animals, APA has been able to help approximately 670 animals find homes.

The overwhelming majority of these animals have been taken in by APA out of the municipal shelter, freeing up needed space in the shelter kennels.

When it comes to dogs, the APA looks for animals difficult to adopt out of shelters. Pit bull and Chihuahua mixes are common but difficult to adopt out, so volunteer director Michel Meunier said the APA focuses on those breeds to give them a chance they likely would not have.

In order to facilitate adoptions, the APA opened the APA Furrever Home and Education Center at 800 W. Picacho Ave. The center has both cats and dogs available for adoption.

The Cat's Meow, a cat-only, no-kill adoption center, recently opened at 2211 N. Mesquite St. A group of cat lovers seeking to fill a need in the community, The Cat's Meow volunteers have created a beautiful space and a well-run program.

What is striking is how well-socialized and relaxed the cats seem. A shelter environment can be stressful on an animal, and can bring out fearful or aggressive behaviors not accurate reflections of the creature's personality. By building a safe facility with loving volunteers who give the cats regular exercise and socialization, the animals are healthier, more relaxed and better prepared for a new home.

Unlike APA, The Cat's Meow receives most of their animals from individuals who can no longer care for their pets but want to keep them out of the shelter system.

Toonces finds his forever home with Dr. Nick Kennedy at the APA Furrever Home Adoption and Education Center.

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HOMES,

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“Everyone connected with this place is an avid cat lover,” said Kathy Billing, the volunteer coordinator for The Cat’s Meow.

The group has space for about 30 cats and fosters approximately 25 more in homes. Like the APA, though, the Cat’s Meow is at full capacity, and always looking for good homes for the cats in its care.

The new adoption centers and welfare groups have made great strides in getting animals out of the shelter, but the need for permanent homes

remains high. Lorna Harris, executive director of The Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary, appreciates what the APA has accomplished but recognizes the need to alter its approach with the sudden influx of new adoption facilities. The Safe Haven Animal Sanctuary is located about 10 miles out of town and provides the animals with 3 acres of space to remain happy and healthy.

For the next year, Safe Haven is looking to promote more events through its thrift store, located at 840 El Paseo Road, and provide more opportunities for off-site adoption. In order to ac-

complish its goals, however, the shelter will need help from the community – both in donations and volunteers.

Animal welfare groups all emphasize the only way to ensure a viable long-term plan to prevent unwanted pets is for people to spay and neuter their animals. Groups such as the Spay Neuter Action Program (S.N.A.P.) provide low-cost spay/neuters for pets in qualifying low-income households.

Broken Promises SW is primarily focused on spaying and neutering animals. The group is active as a TNR (Trap, Neuter, Release) program, finding feral

cat colonies and spaying and neutering them to mitigate the population increase. If the cats they find are not feral but have been dumped, Broken Promises SW will foster them and try to find them homes. Broken Promises SW does not have an adoption center but can be reached at 680-1955 or broken_promisesw@comcast.net.

The community can help these groups by volunteering, providing donations or opening up your home to a new, four-legged family member.

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Michel Meunier, volunteer director of the ACTION Program for Animals, stands in the offices of the new APA Furrever Home Adoption and Education Center.