



Fall 2007

Mews & Views

Free spay/neuter saves cats lives



These are some of the 1,700 lucky cats we've fixed so far this year. With the help of local vets we expect to do at least 3,000 by year end.

Our thanks to the many newsletter readers that placed our **Free Spay/Neuter** posters on bulletin boards last March. We had a big surge in activity and are on our way to having a record year — with 1,700 cats fixed during the first 7 months — almost as many as we did during all of 2006. We couldn't have done this without your help. We've enclosed another poster with this newsletter, hoping you'll post it too. This is a particularly important time to focus on spay/neuter — because the 2007 kittens will become sexually active this fall. The sooner they're fixed the better.

Free spay/neuter keeps cats in their homes

Our programs are totally decentralized. We work not to *rescue* cats but to enable their caregivers to keep them. The people we service are generally at a crossroad. They know they can't continue with the cats the way they are — *unsterilized* — but don't want to take them to a shelter to be killed. Typical calls we get from people feeding stray cats are that they're concerned that if they don't remove them, they'll multiply into a huge colony and their neighbors will object. If they're indoor pets, the concerns are that the male cats are spraying all over their home or the females are driving them crazy yowling because they're in heat.

Through the simple act of providing free vouchers, redeemable at a local veterinary clinic, their concerns about the cats go away and they can — *and do* — keep them. Control of their cat "problem" is left in their hands — but sterilization greatly facilitates the outcome. Indoors or out, cats are much easier to live with once they've been fixed.

The beauty of this program is that it leaves the cats in the community, improves their lives and their relationships with their

caregivers, while slowing down the overall number of kittens. It's a "win, win, win" situation. And, the educational value is tremendous — as it replaces traditional lethal methods of population control with compassionate care.

Animal "Welfare" versus Animal "Control"

This is just one example of how an *animal welfare* program differs from *animal control*. **The focus of animal welfare is in preserving life while containing numbers, while animal control essentially takes in cats and dogs independent of their ability to provide care for them, euthanizing the inevitable excess.** Before 1990, the animal control model was the national standard. But, since then, many communities have questioned the ethics of killing healthy cats and dogs just because they're at a shelter — and have developed animal welfare programs working at reducing and eventually eliminating their reliance on euthanasia. Typically this model involves a community collaboration of all shelters, rescues, vet clinics and concerned citizens working together to increase adoption rates — while reducing overall populations through pro-active spay/neuter. An essential part of this is returning animal control work to local governments so that humane organizations no longer broadcast blurry messages on the situational sanctity of cat and dog life.

Cat News You Can Use

County approves new animal control facility for Humane Society of Huron Valley

At their July 18th meeting, Washtenaw County authorized funding for a \$7.5 million animal control facility to replace HSHV's very old and tired 10,000 sq ft complex. The county will provide a \$1 million gift, and finance the balance through county-backed bonds.

This new top-of-the-line 30,000 sq ft facility will be built adjacent to their existing Cherry Hill Road buildings and will be titled to the county until HSHV repays the bonds over 7 years. Then it will belong to HSHV outright. Shelter capacity will double to house up to 200 animals. Washtenaw county's two animal control officers will be based there, and HSHV's full-service veterinary clinic, administrative offices, and public areas will be greatly expanded.

HSHV will look to the community for \$3 million (over and above the \$3.5 million already committed from major donors) to repay the bonds, and will also need considerably more to fund their increased operating costs. They now run about \$2 million annually. Included in this amount is about \$800,000 for animal control — the state-mandated responsibility of county taxes. Washtenaw County tax dollars reimburse HSHV for only about 1/4 of the total cost — with HSHV using general community donations to cover the balance.



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Bill would end cat de-claw rule for HUD

“Ohio Representative Marcy Kaptur really knows how to make the cats purr. Earlier this month she responded to a plea from HSUS by inserting anti-declawing language into a bill that finances HUD. The non-profit HSUS says “distracted citizens” have complained for years about public housing authorities that force residents to declaw their cats. It describes the procedure as unneeded and painful. It’s bad for the cats and it puts people who love their cats in a terrible position — turn away from housing they need or subject cats to a painful procedure.”



— From Newhouse News Service/AA News 7-22-07.

Our spay/neuter vouchers cannot be used on cats that will be declawed. For information on how to clip claws to keep them blunt, and how to provide good scratching alternatives for your cats, visit our web site and click on Cat Information Handouts.

Want a pet cat? Consider home-fostering.



For many people, a 20-year commitment to a new pet cat is unrealistic. You may be a college student unsure of where you’ll be living after graduation, or a baby-boomer nearing retirement and wanting to travel extensively when you do. There are many reasons a life-long commitment is not in the cards — but, don’t think that rules you out as a cat companion.

Most cat rescues, shelters and veterinary clinics find themselves with the need for temporary housing of cats they will adopt out. Generally they will cover the cost of any medical treatments and supplies if you are willing to provide temporary housing and care for their charges. This gives the cats a much better quality of life than they can receive in a cage, while they wait for someone to give them a permanent home. You benefit by having all the enjoyment of a cat without the stress of what will happen when you move on.

Foster volunteering can also be a good way for you to find out if you like cat care well enough to make a 20-year commitment to one of your own — and, while you’re fostering, you just may find the cat of your dreams and adopt him/her yourself!

Apply On-Line

Our web site now has all spay/neuter program information, including applications. Just fill out the forms on line, print them out to sign, and then fax or mail to us for faster processing.

Dear Friends,

It’s unusual to find a county being as generous as Washtenaw — voting to finance a brand new deluxe facility for HSHV. Historically they have never shown an active interest in their state-mandated animal control responsibilities — *euthanasia of stray animals, cruelty investigations, lost-pet holding* — opting instead to pay HSHV to perform them. They’ve partnered for many decades and today a county executive serves as HSHV president.

No question a new county shelter is long overdue, and, since it’s being funded through tax dollars and county bonds, it’s sad that the decision didn’t begin with a community dialogue on how we could best serve our companion animals. Once this shelter is built, Washtenaw County is locked into an animal control model for many years to come. This bucks the national trend to develop animal welfare models. If we had chosen that route, the county would have taken their million dollar gift and used it to build a functional animal control shelter and HSHV would have taken its private contributions to build a true animal welfare facility in which they could devote full time and full resources to their humane roots — being a voice for companion animals, protecting them and advocating for them — through pro-active adoptions, education, and veterinary assistance for the disadvantaged.

Will this new animal control facility reduce our euthanasia rate? Unlikely. **Increased adoptions do not come from increased shelter size but from increased cage turnover** — and this is achieved by bringing cats and dogs into the community, not amassing more in one location. **Lowering euthanasia rates can only come from developing an inclusive network — of all companion-animal-related parties — working together to increase adoptions while decreasing overall populations.** Putting *all* our community resources for *both* animal welfare and control in one organization in one location is counter-intuitive to that goal!

Kitty Zimmer