



Embedded Community Outreach in Baltimore City

Project #
FY16-127

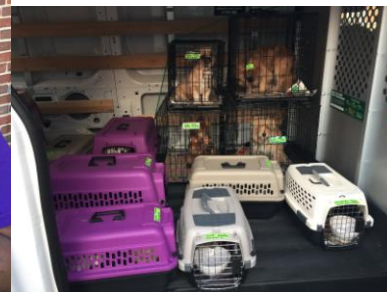
County: Baltimore City

Number of Cats Spayed:	122	Number of Dogs Spayed:	35
Number of Cats Neutered:	72	Number of Dogs Neutered:	45

Amount Received: \$17,160 **Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0**

Project Synopsis:

Charm City Companions continues to implement an embedded outreach program to target under-served communities to share information and connect pet owners to wellness resources, especially spay and neuter services, at no cost. In year two, 2016, we met more than 200 pet families and spayed/neutered 194 cats and 80 dogs for a total of 274 more altered and vaccinated pets in and around 21205 zip code, a community where a strong majority of the pets are unaltered. CCC transported 99% of the pets altered through us in 2016.



Project Description:

Charm City Companions shares information with pet owners and provides free resources to increase pet wellness for cats and dogs in under-served communities in Baltimore City. In 2014, we started our efforts by conducting a comprehensive Community Assessment where we identified Baltimore's most impoverished neighborhoods based on a variety of indicators. Once we selected our Area of Focus, zip code 21205, we started our work. We knocked on our first door in McElderry Park, the westend neighborhood of our eastside zip code. In our first year we were able to meet over 300 pet families and using MD DAG Year 1 grant funds we altered 241 pets. After surpassing our estimated number of surgeries in 2015, we were granted funds to help another 200 plus surgeries in 2016. While it became necessary for us to extend our initial time frame of nine months for this 2016 grant, we were able to alter 14% more surgeries than in 2015 (plus Dec 2014) for a total of 274. This is 37% more than estimated for the funds granted due to low cost discounts from our partners. In 2016, our work spanned our Area of Focus as well as sections of the adjacent zip codes in East Baltimore.

We selected our Area of Focus primarily because a third (34%) of the residents and a quarter (26%) of families with children live below poverty (\$23,550 for a family of four). There are also no veterinary practices or spay/neuter clinics in our entire zip. Since we know the two biggest barriers cited among the strong majority of those who do not spay or neuter their pets are cost and access, it's of no surprise our services are greatly needed and appreciated.



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The majority of people in our neighborhoods do not have reliable transportation so we have incorporated transport to and from the clinic as a service needed for 99% of our pets to date.

Charm City Companions continues to be focused on developing on-going relationships with our clients and their pets. Through these relationships and by collaborating with local animal care providers such as MD SPCA, BARCS, BMORE Dog, Rescue Well/ReLove, Baltimore Community Cat Project and others, we continue working to shift the norm to the majority having vaccinated and altered pets.

As part of our program we also continue to identify and engage community ambassadors. These individuals (or families) are well-known community members that often connect the neighborhood with information and resources. CCC community ambassadors are also 'animal people' and usually hold helpful insights about the animals in the neighborhoods. In 2016 we were especially engaged with these community members by participating in 'Back to School' events and holiday coat and toys collections for local churches.

As our program matures we will begin to track and compare our benchmark metrics for shelter in-take, percent of community pets altered, and eventually pet adoption. We plan to impact all of these numbers for our local shelter and spay/neuter providers moving forward. We will remain narrow in our focus until we see sustainable, measurable impact within the communities where we work.

Summary of Approach:

Our approach revolves around genuine desire to help pet owners increase pet wellness in under-served communities. Essential to our approach is the lack of negative judgment or assumptions toward our clients or colleagues. CCC is not solely a spay/neuter program so we are not focused on only achieving goal numbers of surgeries. Rather we are an on-going resource for our clients long after they decide to alter their pet or not. We have found that by not 'pushing' spay/neuter, but simply sharing information (CCC to client/client to CCC), naturally, the surgeries follow.

Our approach also involves 'meeting people where they are' both physically and mentally on all things pertaining to their pets. CCC teams are in our neighborhoods 2-3 times a week, every week of the year, when possible. In 2015, our teams were in the neighborhood at least once, canvassing, visiting or providing transports for our pet families 44 out of 52 weeks. By having a constant presence we demonstrate to the community we are committed and will be around long-term.

Within our launch neighborhood (McElderry Park), community members now know and trust CCC's intentions and regularly refer clients for spay/neuter and general pet wellness questions and services. More are volunteering their time to walk the blocks and talk to people with us and most have shown interest and want to give back.

Important to our success is our consistent and reliable schedule. This has been key for both our clients and for securing solid, committed volunteers. This has also (along with providing transport) been important in maintaining a consistent 'show rate' for our spay/neuter providers.

Our schedule every week throughout the year is as follows:

Saturdays, 9a-9:45a: Outreach planning for the day, including mapping visits to current clients as well as repeat block or new block door-to-door outreach. New outreach volunteer training also takes place during this time for those doing community outreach that day.

Saturdays, 10a-12:30p/1p: Outreach begins with visits to any current clients, if needed. The time usually ends up split in half with visits until 11:30am and resuming with door-to-door outreach on blocks where people were not home previous weeks and then covering new blocks once we've met and served any pet we can on the current 'block of focus'.



Saturdays, 2p-3p: Data entry from outreach.

Sundays, before 4p: Contact all people met the day prior (during Saturday outreach) and connect with all clients to remind them of Monday appointment, pre-op instructions and transport logistics.

Mondays, 7a-9a, 3:30p-5:30p: Transports to and from MD SPCA. We currently have reserved space for 4-6 pets on Mondays.

Tuesdays, afternoon: Contact all people who had pets altered the day prior to check in.

Wednesdays, before 4p: Contact all people met the day prior (during Saturday outreach) and connect with all clients to remind them of Monday appointment, pre-op instructions and transport logistics.

Thursday days, 7a-9a, 3:30p-5:30p: Transports to and from MD SPCA. We currently have reserved space for 10 pets on Thursdays.

Fridays, afternoon: Contact all people who had pets altered the day prior to check in.

[Once a month]

Fourth Thursday, 5a-9a, 2p-6p: Transports to and from Spay Spa & Neuter Nook, Davidsonville, MD. Since September 2015 we have been working with this partner and plan to continue in 2016 once a month for small (<10lbs) and flat-faced dog breed transports (25-30 pets).

By following a consistent schedule we find ourselves working efficiently and enjoying the process. We have also been able to establish boundaries so our clients understand our schedule and when we can be available for none emergent issues. That said, we always make ourselves available for anyone that has what they believe to be an emergency whether we can help resolve or just act as support in a crisis.

We are looking for more relationships with veterinarians who will volunteer with CCC by visiting our clients to provide booster shots for our pets and other minor services at no cost. We also have a veterinary practice (Erdman Animal Hospital) we work located within an adjacent zip code. Erdman is a third generation legacy veterinary practice that was established specifically to provide 'affordable' vet care to pets in under-served communities. As funding allows, we are eagerly planning to assist pet families with more regular vet care outside of spay neuter in 2017. We are dedicated to these partnerships as we have made collaboration with interested veterinarians a priority.

Accomplishments:

Throughout the grant period CCC met over 200 families and their 324 pets. Of those pets, 92% were unaltered when we met them and CCC was able to alter 96% through our program. Note these percentages are higher than in 2015 because of the significant increase in referral as a way of meetings pet owners versus more embedded door-to-door outreach.

As already mentioned, we continued to engage our clients and encourage many to become community ambassadors. In 2016 we worked with nine new outreach volunteers that are also CCC clients.

In 2016, we also connected and solidified relationships with property owners and managers of low-income 'project' communities and high-rise apartment buildings where pets are allowed.

Developing relationships within the animal welfare community has also been a critical milestone for CCC. Specifically, working with MD SPCA and SS&NN as surgery providers, has strengthened our relationship with these organizations and will continue in 2017. These providers are professional and organized but more importantly, they understand our clients and pets and regardless of what we present, they go above and beyond, holding back any problematic judgment. Securing these relationships is a significant accomplishment for CCC.



We were also able to gain more attention from press, funders and local stakeholders. We were approached by the Baltimore Sun who ran an article featuring one of our board members and one of our first pet families in April. We were also approached by Galaxy Foundation to be their September 'Monthly Mojo' non-profit where we were featured on their website, promoted and given the opportunity to share stories weekly about our clients and work. We were also contacted by The Humane Society of the United States Animal Sheltering Magazine and asked to author and submit a blog about CCC. From this blog we were contacted by a local restaurant in the market that set CCC up as the non-profit beneficiary of proceeds donated from a monthly business networking happy hour over a three-month period.

Aside from the relationships we've established, we have been able to promote other resources beyond what we offer. We have referred all of our clients to BARCS for low-cost shots, to BMORE Dog free shot clinics, and have shared with all spay/neuter clients that the State of Maryland Department of Agriculture has granted these funds to pay for these services. Our clients are impressed and appreciative of this information and the services for their pets. We see this growing positive image for all of these organizations an accomplishment and important part of our work.

Lessons Learned:

One area of key learning is the need for a consistent schedule. While this was more confirmation of what we already know, maintaining this regularity makes our work fluid and reveals early on when issues could arise.

We also learned that our clients get new pets regularly. We are beginning to receive more calls and contact from clients than the year prior. Pet owners continue to take pets in and with the help of CCC they are able to bring in free roaming cats, in particular, that they had been caring for outdoors.

Another key learning is that a rigid and more serious approach is needed to finding and maintaining volunteers for this work. Volunteers need to be highly responsible and committed as the work is demanding and overwhelming at times during the day-to-day work. We have found that the lifestyle of those living in low socioeconomic neighborhoods is drastically different and unknown to many volunteers, making it especially challenging for training and keeping people on track emotionally. We have also found volunteers from within the community have more difficulty holding back judgment on their neighbors in regard to some pet care practices.

Finally, we confirmed that most of our clients do not have transportation and therefore, providing pet transport will be key to our success moving forward. This involves additional coordination and volunteer time, which we have incorporated into our plans for 2016 and beyond.

Attachments:

- 1] Spay/neuter surgery detail spreadsheet
- 2] Results Info-graphics
- 3] Additional images see following dropbox.com link: [CCC 2016 Images](#)

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