



FY2018-308

Project # MDA-1398

County: Baltimore City

Number of Cats Spayed:	1258	Number of Dogs Spayed:	0
Number of Cats Neutered:	1242	Number of Dogs Neutered:	0

Amount Received: \$75,000	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): 0
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Project Synopsis:

This project provided spay/neuter surgeries for 2,500 community cats in Baltimore City’s low income zip code neighborhoods where we have been tracking the results of cat colonies since 2012 through our successful TNR (Trap, Neuter and Return) program.



Project Description:

The Baltimore Animal Rescue and Care Shelter (BARCS) is the largest open admission animal shelter in Maryland. BARCS takes in 11,000 dogs and cats and approximately 1,000 exotic, wildlife, and other small mammals each year. BARCS serves as a resource to the community for citizens and their animals in need. In just a few years, BARCS significantly increased the number of animals saved from 240 dogs and cats in 2005 (under Animal Control) to over 9,000 dogs and cats saved in 2018. Since our inception in 2005, there has been a 3,200% increase in lives saved. The city-run shelter euthanized a heartbreaking 98% of the animals it received and now BARCS has reduced that to just 10%.

BARCS serves as a resource to the community for citizens and their animals in need. The shelter’s services include; providing housing and lifesaving care to homeless animals, public education and outreach, tracking lost and found pets, offering low cost vaccinations and microchip clinics, pet licensing, free lifetime dog training for any dog adopted from BARCS, and the Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) of community cats. BARCS also provides families and individuals the opportunity to adopt a loving companion animal that is spayed or neutered and vaccinated at BARCS.

To address the proliferation of unwanted animals that often become homeless, BARCS provides spay/neuter surgery for all of its adopted cats and dogs before they leave the shelter. But that is not nearly enough to stem the tide of continued live cat births adding to more unwanted pets in Baltimore City. BARCS was at the forefront of legalizing Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) in Baltimore City. We initiated conversations about legalizing TNR with government authorities and testified as to its importance during those hearings.



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There are woefully few resources dealing with the enormous problem of outdoor cats in Baltimore City. In 2013, BARCS was the only shelter in the nation to receive the Best Friends Animal Society and PetSmart Charities grant funding for the TNR of 10,500 outdoor cats in Baltimore City over a 3-year period.

Once that grant funding concluded it was critical that BARCS seek funding to continue this significant lifesaving program. Thanks to the Maryland Department of Agriculture and the Petco Foundation, BARCS is able to sustain a small staff of three (3) employees that TNR 2,500 community cats annually.

Year after year, we continue to see measureable success from this program. During the grant period we saw an amazing reduction in feline euthanasia by 75% and feline kitten intake (under 6 months old) by 64% compared to our pre-TNR baseline year of CY 2012. Additionally, there was a 20% decrease in kittens and neonates entering the shelter during this grant period as compared to the same time period of the previous year and a 75% overall decrease compared to the baseline year.

Summary of Approach:

The three BCCP employees are an integral part of training and recruiting citizens to help trap outdoor cat populations, providing free spay/neuter surgery and health assessments for each of 2,500 outdoor cats annually, which in turn helps Baltimore City to humanely control our community cat population so there will be fewer cats over time. The program also reduces the number of cats euthanized by keeping them out of BARCS, minimizes nuisance behaviors, plus improves the health of cats and neighborhood relations.

In addition to managing the TNR and tracking of more than 1,500 outdoor cat colonies in Baltimore City, the three BCCP employees also teach community members how to properly care for and reduce the population of their outdoor colonies.

To reach the goal of 2,500 outdoor cats, the process is ongoing with trapping and spay/neuter surgery happening every week when feasible. It is much more than just spay/neuter surgery-- each individual cat needs to have its information logged and a complete medical exam needs to be performed with the results documented, plus each cat needs to be transported to BARCS for spay/neuter surgery and then returned to its colony the next day. Each cat is assessed for the best possible outcome, whether it is returned to its colony, or if it's friendly, brought to BARCS for adoption or placed in the BARCS Working Cat Program and placed in a business or barn to live its life out as a mouser. Those cats with medical issues are housed at BARCS and cared for by the three BCCP employees, which also entails daily feeding and cleaning their cages. Additionally, when trapping in any neighborhood, the three BCCP employees need to find time to build trust in each neighborhood, as well as distribute door hangers.

October - December 2017: Shortly after the hiring of our Administrative Assistant after a long, 6-month vacancy, but before her January start date, our Trapping Assistant decided to pursue other opportunities. Due to the demanding nature of the work, we found it necessary to raise the salaries of both Assistant positions to attract and retain a dedicated staff. Very shortly after raising the salaries, we were able to recruit an internal hire for the Trapping Assistant position.

January - March 2018: Shortly after the January start dates of our two (2) new, full-time employees, we unfortunately lost 3 of our most dedicated volunteers to life circumstances. Our first priority was to recruit and train volunteers to help with animal care, surgery recovery, and public trap loan/drop off appointments. Volunteer assistance is essential, as these duties can take a minimum of 5 hours per day; leaving only 3 hours per day for our staff to attend to administrative and trapping duties.

April - June 2018: In late spring to early summer, we continued the recruitment of volunteers to assist our small team with the demanding work of serving a city of over 600,000 residents. Several volunteers were trained to monitor our text and email hotlines and assist with data entry. Our schedule shifted to the grueling, alternating day/night shifts to accommodate for the increasingly nocturnal behavior of the cats in the warmer weather, as



well as our responsibilities during BARCS' open hours. We also requested an extension to December 31, 2018 to be able to reach our goal of 2,500 cats for this grant cycle.

July - September 2018: After requesting a change to our surgery schedule to allow for greater flexibility for trapping and receiving drop offs, we were able to increase our number of trapping sessions per week and accept more public drop offs without negatively impacting the flow of surgeries for adoptable animals.

October - November 2018: The grant extension enabled BARCS to meet our goal of 2,500 cats. In addition to our hands-on fieldwork, we have also used our database to connect caregivers who live near to each other and unknowingly have been feeding the same cats. This allows them to coordinate their efforts and increases their chances of trapping cats that have been difficult to catch. Our schedule shifted back to more traditional hours with the cold weather.

Accomplishments:

Thanks to the Maryland Department of Agriculture's grant funding of 2,500 spay/neuter surgeries for community cats, BARCS was able to sustain the 2nd year of our lifesaving TNR program after the conclusion of the three-year Best Friends Animal Society/PetSmart Charities TNR grant that ended in August 2016.

Our accomplishments include:

The coordination of 1258 spays and 1242 neuters, for a total of 2,500 altered outdoor cats during the grant period with an extension to December 31, 2018.

During the grant period we saw an amazing reduction in feline euthanasia by 75% and feline kitten intake (under 6 months old) by 64% compared to our pre-TNR baseline year of CY 2012. Additionally, there was a 20% decrease in kittens and neonates entering the shelter during this grant period as compared to the same time period of the previous year and a 75% overall decrease compared to the baseline year.

The internal hiring of 2 experienced, long-time BARCS employees from other departments, forming our most cohesive and efficient Community Cat Program team to date.

The recruitment of 11 new volunteers (and return of two (2) of our long-time volunteers, who had left on a temporary basis), bringing our program's volunteer count to 15; our highest volunteer count to date.

Our field work in underserved areas of the city has given us the opportunity to educate residents on proper pet care, the importance of spay/neuter and vaccinations, and to provide information on other free or low-cost programs for their pets. This prevents future litters and reduces shelter intake.

Many complainants have been satisfied with our free, humane deterrents, and education on why TNR is the most effective solution.

We have identified new colonies of cats by increasing our door hanger distribution initiatives and attending community meetings. Using our colony database, we are able to connect like-minded community members so that they can coordinate their efforts to spay and neuter the cats in their neighborhoods.

Working with our surgery team and Assistant Director of Veterinary Operations to allow more flexibility for additional TNR spay/neuter surgeries without negatively impacting the spay/neuter of BRACS adoptable animals, which is essential to reducing their length of stay and opening cages for incoming surrenders.

Lessons Learned:

Our challenges remain largely the same over the years, and include:



Weather: Most cats come out during the day in colder weather and in the evenings or overnight in warmer weather. The weather this year has been very inconsistent and has increased the difficulty of pinpointing the times that most cats will be active. We also have learned that our projected numbers should reflect times that we are rained or snowed out on a planned trapping day.

Previously altered cats: Each month, a number of cats that come through our program are found to be previously altered, but not ear tipped. These cats are still trapped, sedated, vaccinated, and cared for by our staff, but do not count toward our surgery goal.

Dangerous Areas: Many areas with high numbers of unaltered cats are challenging due to drug activity or violent neighborhoods. Sometimes for safety reasons, our staff and volunteers need to leave the field. Their work is based on building trust in these areas, so they cannot seek help from the police or Animal Control without compromising their reputation and safety. This prevents us from finishing colonies in certain areas and also makes it more difficult to recruit and retain new employees and volunteers.

Reaching our Goal: Due to the overlap between the conclusion of the Best Friends grant and the start of the Maryland Department of Agriculture grant, the August 2016 spay/neuter surgery numbers had to be included in the final Best Friends statistics. This started us behind for one month of surgeries for our first year of receiving the Maryland Department of Agriculture grant, that was already shortened to less than a 12 month grant period. We were able to make our goal, thanks to a generous grant extension, but that unfortunately started us out behind for our 2nd year. Our goal was reduced from 3,000 to 2,500 cats to allow us to catch up, but due to staffing issues we required another extension. Now, starting our third year with an experienced team of committed BARCS employees, we expect to make our goal despite the minor setback of the extension.

Public Participation: In 5 years of offering free spay/neuter services for Community Cats, we have made many lasting relationships with caregivers and advocates across the city. The arisen challenge is that a large portion of the most motivated and supportive citizens have already sought out our help. This is a huge accomplishment, but it also means that we have exhausted much of the "low-hanging fruit." A majority of the many remaining colonies require more detective work. We have to identify and make contact with colony caregivers who are not always willing to cooperate or make themselves known, for a number of varied reasons. Baltimore City struggles with many social issues and our team often finds themselves in a similar position to social workers, offering supplies, resources (for animals and their human caregivers alike), and a listening ear. The additional time taken to gain the trust of residents who are most in need is not easy or always effective but, despite being one of our biggest challenges, it is also the most rewarding

Attachments:

For More Information Contact:

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