



Dorchester County Cats in the "Cracks"

Project #
18-328

County: Dorcheser

Number of Cats Spayed: 52
Number of Cats Neutered: 48

Number of Dogs Spayed:
Number of Dogs Neutered:

Amount Received: \$5,000.00

Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0.00

Project Synopsis:

The project targeted residents of Dorchester County for whom the cost to spay/neuter their cats was prohibitive.

No-cost cat spay/neuter/vaccination services were offered to these cat owners in all areas of Dorchester County not specifically targeted by existing grants; or where grants exist, but the grantee is unable to provide special assistance typically needed by low-income cat owners: transportation and flexible scheduling for drop off and pick up to support rigid work schedules.



Project Description:

TomCat Solutions (TCS) is an all-volunteer group committed to removing cost as a barrier to cat owners on the Eastern Shore who want to spay/neuter/vaccinate their cat(s). Experience has shown that the greatest barrier to low-income cat owners wanting to get their cats sterilized is their inability to afford even low-cost spay/neuter services and also to find help with other limitations associated with low income: lack of transportation and rigid work schedules.

This project allowed TCS to offer no-cost spay/neuter/vaccination services, over a one-year period, to any resident of Dorchester County for whom the cost for these services was prohibitive, and

- who reside in an area of Dorchester County not specifically covered by an existing grant, or
- who are covered by an existing grant, but the grantee cannot provide special help needed for transportation and flexible scheduling for drop off and pick up to support rigid work schedules.

The project targeted Dorchester County because: 1) the County ranks in the bottom third of U.S. census figures for income per capita in Maryland, 2) the only shelter in the county is a private no-kill shelter with limited intake, funding, and equipment, and 3) the County does not provide animal control services for cats.



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SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM



The 100 cats sterilized as a result of this Project have a direct impact on intake not only for the single shelter in Dorchester County, but also for shelters in the adjoining counties of Caroline and Talbot that are often impacted by desperate owners crossing county lines.

Summary of Approach:

With only a posting on the TCS Facebook page, a few flyers, and word of mouth from cat owners who came to TCS for help, TCS exhausted its project funds five months after its initial announcement. Cat owners sharing the positive impact of this Project with their neighbors and friends facing similar "cat challenges" are truly our most effective outreach.

Cat owners calling TCS for help are provided counseling on available services and are interviewed to determine whether any flexible accommodations need to be made in order to encourage owners to schedule sterilization(s) and follow through on the arrangements.

Accomplishments:

In Dorchester County, options are extremely limited for owners of unsterilized cats for whom the cost of spay/neuter/vaccination is prohibitive. They can: 1) surrender their cat(s) to the local no-kill shelter [if space is available] or an adjoining county shelter [for adoption or euthanasia], or 2) leave the cat(s) to multiply and add more kittens to the shelter intake problems.

Each of the 100 cats sterilized as a result of this project has a minimum 1:1 direct impact on these intake/euthanasia problems. If the number of kittens prevented by these 100 sterilizations is factored into the equation, the ratio of impact is exponential.

Upon returning sterilized cats to their owners, TCS encourages the owners to share their experience with neighbors and friends facing similar problems. Each of the households impacted by this Project has increased the number of "spay/neuter ambassadors" that keep the TCS phone ringing--a no-cost accomplishment in itself.

Of the 100 cats sterilized using grant funding, TCS paid \$518.80 for additional medical expenses to assure all cats were returned healthy and comfortable. This included flea treatments, antibiotics and wound treatments where needed, and one eye-removal (pictured above).

Lessons Learned:

Historically, TCS has spayed/neutered ~200 Dorchester County cats per year for the past seven years. TCS should have proposed enough funding to address that many cats during the year-long Project, but instead opted to request funding for only 100 cats. Unfortunately, historic need for funding proved to be applicable to 2017, and all Project funds were exhausted only five months into the Project.

Attachments:

List of 100 cats spayed/neutered utilizing the MD DOA 2017 Spay and Neuter Grants Program Funding

For More Information Contact:

Name:

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