



Free Spay/Neuter for Prince George's County Pets

Project #
18-336

County: Prince George's County

Number of Cats Spayed:	121	Number of Dogs Spayed:	128
Number of Cats Neutered:	115	Number of Dogs Neutered:	150

Amount Received: \$41,055	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0
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Project Synopsis:

Our free spay/neuter program targets low-income pet owners in nine designated Prince George's county neighborhoods (East Riverdale/Bladensburg, Langley Park, Hillcrest Heights/Marlow Heights, Glassmanor/Oxon Hill, Suitland/Coral Hills, Kentland/Palmer Park, Woodlawn/Lanham, Forestville, and Silver Hill. Additionally, we offer free spay/neuter to county citizens who are on public assistance or who meet the Maryland Free Lunch income guidelines, and to owners of at-risk pets who are referred by our local county Animal Control Officers. The project provided free surgery to 514 pets.



Project Description:

Founded more than 40 years ago, the SPCA/Humane Society of Prince George's County (PGSPCA) is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to local animal welfare. We have three main objectives: to reduce pet overpopulation; to prevent animal cruelty, neglect, and suffering; and to promote animal-friendly public policy.

In 2001, we opened the area's first low-cost spay/neuter clinic and we've altered over 22,000 animals, many at no charge (because even our lowest prices are still a barrier for some pet owners). In an effort to reach more pet owners and to impact whole communities, we agreed to collaborate with Prince George's County government's Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative (TNI). The county's TNI program focuses on uplifting nine specific neighborhoods (see list above) facing significant economic, health, public safety and educational challenges. Statistically, the pets in these neighborhoods are at higher risk, so we provide free surgeries (and rabies vaccines) for these and other at-risk pets. Depending on the mix of dogs and cats altered, we planned to alter more than 500 animals under the MD Spay and Neuter Grant.



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Summary of Approach:

Our spay/neuter clinic currently operates for special events only and utilizes contracted veterinarians and veterinary technicians. For years we ran quarterly spay/neuter events for the pets of low-income County residents, who qualified for free surgeries by income levels or as recipients of public assistance. In 2015, we added a monthly spay/neuter day to target pet owners residing in the county's designated TNI neighborhoods (originally there were six, now there are nine). We promoted the program first through the USPS EveryDoorDirectMail (EDDM) service, then later by distributing fliers and online announcements. We had no shortage of clients, altering over 250 animals (178 for free) in that first grant period. regularly receiving more appointment requests than we can accommodate. We have no shortage of clients and in fall 2017, we added a second surgeon to our monthly events so we could complete twice as many surgeries.

In 2018, we doubled our surgery capacity again by added a second two-surgeon spay/neuter day each month. In the summer of 2018, we also added two single-surgeon weekdays a month in an effort to accommodate more clients. In the 2017-18 grant period, we've altered more than 600 animals, 514 of them funded under the MD State Spay/Neuter Grant.

Potential clients complete an online application (appointment request) and a volunteer calls to screen them for eligibility for free surgery. Those who qualify (on the basis of low income, receiving public assistance, or living in a TNI neighborhood) are scheduled for the next available spay/neuter date. We refer those who don't qualify to other providers of low-cost surgery, or they may choose to pay our low fees (if we have room for them in our schedule). Our volunteers gather all the needed information about the pet, then instruct the pet owner about when and where to bring their pet, and about fasting their pet the night before. We also give them a reminder the night before the surgery date.

On the day of the surgery, all pets are checked in between 7:30am and 8:30am. If we have no-shows, we try to fill those spots by calling clients on a standby list. Rabies shots are included with the free surgery, but clients can also choose to purchase other services (such as distemper shots, ear cleaning, nail trims, or microchipping). Surgeries are performed throughout the day while volunteers prepare the invoices, rabies tags and certificates, and receipts. Owners pick up their animals from about 4:30pm to 6:30pm and receive full discharge instructions plus information on where to call if they have questions or need help. The cost of each qualifying surgery is charged to the grant.

Accomplishments:

We have altered 514 animals (236 cats and 278 dogs) with the help of the MD Spay and Neuter Grant during this period. 309 pets were given a free rabies shot, each charged at \$5 to the grant. In addition to the grant money expended on surgery costs, we were awarded \$1000.00 to promote our program, which we did with print and online advertising.

We are particularly pleased that our cat numbers are going up: during our last grant period, cats represented 41% of the animals we altered. Now a full 46% of our patients are cats. We have prevented many future litters, educated pet owners, and improved the overall health of many pets. Along with spay/neuter surgery, we've been able to provide other needed veterinary services, diagnoses, and treatments. Pet owners with better information can take better care of their animals, and we're proud of the role we play in those improvements.

Having more events means we're able to serve more customers, but it also means more convenience for them. There is more flexibility in when they can schedule their pets, and we have more options for accommodating a booster schedule (for distemper shots). Through a partnership with a local clinic that is open every day, we can refer our clients for timely low-cost postsurgical rechecks if needed.

Lessons Learned:



Though the weekday events were popular with certain clients, they proved difficult to staff (for both veterinary staff and our volunteers), so we had to discontinue them after a few months. We'll continue to explore our options for weekdays.

After much research and experimentation, we believe we've found a good solution for clients who need transportation assistance. We have an arrangement with a pet taxi service who can transport both the client and their pet, to our clinic in the morning and home from the clinic in the evening. We plan to seek donations and grants to fund that extra cost; it is a valuable service, without which some our most needy clients would not be able to access our services.

Attachments:

2017-18 MDA Grant Data

For More Information Contact:

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