



Targeted Free Spay/Neuter For Low-Income Cat Owners In Rt. 40 Corridor Harford County, Md

Project #
19-439

County: Harford

Number of Cats Spayed:	234	Number of Dogs Spayed:	N/A
Number of Cats Neutered:	205	Number of Dogs Neutered:	N/A

Amount Received: \$12,800	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0
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Project Synopsis:

This project targeted community cat colonies along the Route 40 corridor in Harford County, from Joppa (ZIP code 21085) to Havre de Grace (21078) with the goal of altering 320 cats.



Project Description:

Best Friends in Harford County is an all-volunteer non-profit organization focused primarily on Trap-Neuter-Return in order to reduce the number of roaming cats. In performing TNR, we have learned that one of the main contributors to feline population growth is the lack of affordable sterilization options for low-income pet owners. Many of those pet owners have rescued one or more cats/kittens from the streets, saving them from TNR and life as community cats. Conversely, financial issues can cause some pet owners to abandon them to the outdoors without having been neutered, thereby increasing the roaming cat population. This project was intended to help the owners of pet cats obtain spay/neuter if they could not afford the surgery.

Summary of Approach:

We planned to reach clients through social services agencies, the Humane Society of Harford County, and community meetings. When agency referrals proved slow, we reached to our local legislators to explain the project and request their help in advertising it. We planned to attend events and meetings to promote the project, but the advent of Covid cancelled those opportunities. Instead, we produced and distributed postcards and flyers promoting the project and increased our use of social media. Dialog with individuals for whom we performed TNR also was productive in reaching pet owners with limited financial means. After we were allowed to widen the target area due to Covid's financial impacts, we had a substantial increase in clients from outside the original target zip codes. Changes of scope to add providers also helped us speed the project after April 2020.

Accomplishments:

With this grant, we were able to spay/neuter a total of 439 pet cats, more than our original goal and with slightly less funding than we originally requested.

Lessons Learned:

The biggest difficulty we encountered in launching this effort was effectively reaching the target population. Community assistance agencies were a source of clients but not to the degree we had anticipated. Broader



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and earlier outreach would have helped speed intake, even if it cost our organization to advertise. Our social media presence was not robust when we first started the project, but as it improved, we saw applications increase. Also, we found many clients who did not have appropriate carriers or transportation; we provided when we discovered the issue, making it easier for the target population to participate in the program.

Attachments:

Targeted area pet lists for 10 quarters

For More Information Contact:

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