



## Sunshine says "Stop Littering", Spay/Neuter Your Pets

Project #

25-10049

County: Anne Arundel County, Howard County

Number of Cats Spayed: 182

Number of Dogs Spayed: 55

Number of Cats Neutered: 178

Number of Dogs Neutered: 55

Amount Received: \$35,000

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

### Project Synopsis:

This project funded part of a multi-year effort to reduce the number of homeless and unwanted pet animals brought in to the Anne Arundel County and Howard County animal control facilities. This goal is being accomplished through an aggressive, targeted campaign to spay/neuter pets owned by low-income individuals and families in Jessup, Hanover, Elkridge, and Brooklyn Park. We were funded to spay/neuter 360 pet cats and 110 pet dogs above and beyond our organization's regular pet-focused programs.



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Spay and Neuter Grants Program



## **Project Description:**

Sunshine's Friends Cat and Dog Rescue has been a 501(c)(3) non-profit charity since 2014 operating within 10 miles of our primary location in Jessup, MD. The area is a mix of light industry, warehouses, and residential neighborhoods, and the zones along the US Route 1 corridor and southern Baltimore beltway have a higher than average number of low-income residents who need help. This project, which ran from October 2024 to June 2025, managed to spay/neuter 360 pet cats and 110 pet dogs for low-income families within specific neighborhoods/zip codes in the area. As part of a multi-year effort, we have steadily reduced the number of unwanted pets surrendered to local county animal shelters due to an inability to afford veterinary procedures. The project funded the cost of spay/neuter surgeries and rabies vaccines for the pets. We supplied transportation when needed and covered vaccines, microchipping, and additional medical care if necessary to give the pets a good quality of life.

## **Summary of Approach:**

We start with advertising/outreach. We work with community associations, social service and local groups, speaking at meetings and going door-to-door with brochures. We post on social media and provide handouts to our partner vets and pet stores. We spread the word about spaying/neutering/vaccinating pets in general, and about our projects specifically. We use a dual approach, covering both pet- and feral-focused projects to maximize our effectiveness. Outreach runs continuously, even after completion of the MDA-funded projects. We partnered with 6 vet clinics with substantially discounted rates. Our organization also contributes the costs of extra medical care, vaccines, microchips, and flea treatment for people who can't afford them. This increases our effectiveness and keeps more pets with families and out of animal control facilities. We also provide transportation to/from vets to about 75% of pet owners because they lack vehicles, work odd hours, or cannot take time off from work.

## **Accomplishments:**

In just 9 months of a planned year-long project, we managed to spay/neuter 360 pet cats and 110 pet dogs under the MDA grant. These numbers are above and beyond the procedures and other emergency surgeries we provide through our regular in-house cat and dog programs. We prevented numerous potential pet surrenders due to unwanted litters of puppies/kittens or medical care that people could not afford. We also used our funds to cover the extra costs for testing, vaccinations, microchipping, and flea treatments for the pets spayed/neutered under the MDA project. We received comments from several pet owners stating that they were extremely grateful that this program still exists because it prevented them from having to surrender their beloved family pet to the county animal shelter where it would face possible euthanasia.

## Lessons Learned:

Demand for programs like these far exceeds the available supply. A nationwide shortage of veterinarians is limiting appointment availability. We had to reduce our in-person door-to-door canvassing and our on-line social media promotions to avoid overextending ourselves or being unable to accommodate the high demand. We are vigilant to ensure that very few of the precious vet appointments were missed, and called owners repeatedly to check that they are able to keep the appointment or schedule transportation. We also worked with partner vets to fill any extra vacancies they had. That close coordination allowed us to react quickly and avoid the typical 90-day wait for appointments.

## For More Information Contact:

Keith Burnham

## Organization Name and Address:

7406 Belclare Ct.

Jessup, Maryland 20794-9720

**Phone:** 410-960-2677

**Email:** [info@sunshinesfriends.org](mailto:info@sunshinesfriends.org)

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