



The Lifesaver Spay/Neuter Program

Project #
15-0130

County: Garrett and Allegany

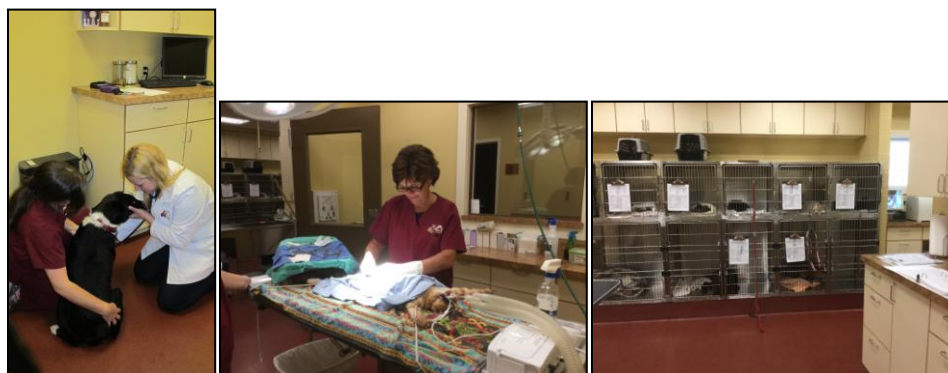
Number of Cats Spayed:	262	Number of Dogs Spayed:	152
Number of Cats Neutered:	196	Number of Dogs Neutered:	154

Amount Received: \$42,345 Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): 0

Project Synopsis:

The Lifesaver Program targeted low-income pet owners in Garrett and Allegany counties. The objective of the program was to provide no-cost surgeries for 400 cats and 275 dogs, as well as rabies vaccinations. At the end of the year, HART had performed the required number of surgeries but still had funds due to the number of clients who did not show up for their appointments. HART requested an extension to January 31, 2016, which was granted on January 8, 2016. A copy of that approved extension is attached to this report.

The HART Lifesaver Program spayed/neutered 764 animals as of January 19, 2016, and used the entire amount of \$42,345. The 4th Quarter Report has been revised accordingly and resubmitted.



Project Description:

HART for Animals is an animal welfare organization in Garrett County. In 2009, HART began a low-cost spay/neuter clinic to reduce the number of homeless animals arriving at the county shelters. The clinic was the first of its kind in Western Maryland and successfully sterilized 5,000 animals. In spite of that success, there were many in the region that could not afford even the low-cost co-pays. Garrett and Allegany counties are two of the four poorest counties in Maryland, lagging behind the nation in recovering from the 2008 recession. HART applied for a grant from the Maryland Spay and Neuter Program with the objective of targeting those people in the community that would never take their pets to the vet due to the expense. Since HART already had a low-cost program called HARThelp, it offered the Lifesaver Program to anyone whose annual income was 10 percent below the WIC guidelines. The program has been a success in attracting the target audience and bringing 764 animals to the veterinarian for the first time.

Under its low-cost spay/neuter HARThelp, HART has spayed/neutered 5,760 animals since 2009. The benefit of those surgeries was a 19% drop in the number of animals impounded at the county shelter seen the third year after the program began. Through its extensive campaign for spaying/neutering owned pets, HART has created an atmosphere of 'accessibility' to a veterinarian to people who routinely never took their pets to a



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM



doctor and - most dangerously - never vaccinated them for rabies in an area known to have rabies in wildlife and unvaccinated pets. HART's accessibility has also empowered the county's poorest residents to come to the HART clinic and feel comfortable as clients in a friendly atmosphere.

Summary of Approach:

December 2014 - Configured the program, created the application, and set up the process so that the HART staff would be able to answer inquiries when people called in at the beginning of the year.

January 2015 - Began Radio Public Service Announcements and advertising the program on HART's web page. Appointments were filled almost immediately after the announcement came out in the newspaper and radio. Twenty-nine surgeries were performed.

February to May - A total of 284 surgeries were performed, with appointments made until the end of May.

May - Submittal of 2016 grant application to MDA.

June - Applications were updated with the new WIC Guidelines. Since the initial announcements, the Lifesaver program has not advertised since its surgery slots are booked months in advance.

September - Interviewed by James Hettinger, writer and editor for Animal Sheltering, HSUS, about the Maryland Spay and Neuter Program. Brief article will appear in 2016.

March, July, September, December - Submittal of quarterly report to MDA Spay and Neuter Grants Program.

December - Submittal of Final Report to MDA. An extension of time was requested and granted, which allowed HART to utilize all the grant funds by performing an additional 33 surgeries.

2016 - There is currently a waiting list of 50 animals.

Accomplishments:

1. Performed 764 surgeries (as of January 19, 2016)

2. Assisted Montgomery County and Allegany County by providing information about HART's approach to the implementation of Lifesaver.

3. Through social media, web page, and word of mouth created a user-friendly resource for information about low-cost spay/neuter and the benefit to animals. Dispelled fears about the negative effects of sterilizing pets through HART's Spay and Neuter Myths and Facts on its Facebook page.

4. Introduced many new people to the idea that veterinarians are there to help them with their pets and gave them a resource when they do not know what to do.

Lessons Learned:

1. People who may not have a great deal of money HAVE a lot of love for their pets. It is truly heart-warming to see an entire family of hard-working people come after work in their dusty work clothes to gently carry their post-surgery pet back home.

2. Treating all clients as if they are equally important, regardless of their ability to pay. This has resulted in our low-cost and no-cost clients writing positive reviews on our social media pages.



3. People who do not have many resources may not show up to their appointments because they do not have money for gas, may have to work, or may have a sick child. And they won't call in advance because they are ashamed to say why they can't come.

4. Despite reminders by phone call, people fail to show up for appointments, resulting in lost time and money. In 2016, HART will begin to send reminders by text message as well as calling.

5. It is important to communicate with everyone clearly about the specific goals of the program: reducing pet overpopulation results in less animals being relinquished to shelters, and less euthanasia. Animal rescue many times means helping humans to do the right thing. Of equal importance is the courteous treatment of all clients since many of our no-cost clients express their appreciation at being 'treated just like everybody else'.

Attachments:

Complete list of patients neutered or spayed during 2015 and January 2016, as of January 19, 2016.

Summary Sheet with surgeries broken down by month, gender and species

PDF of the HART application for the Lifesaver Program

Copy of the approved extension of time

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SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM

