



## Embedded Community Outreach in Baltimore County

Project #  
FY17-217

County: Baltimore City

Number of Cats Spayed:	168	Number of Dogs Spayed:	48
Number of Cats Neutered:	142	Number of Dogs Neutered:	51

Amount Received: \$23,640	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0
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### Project Synopsis:

Charm City Companions helped facilitate 409 spay/neuter surgeries over 16 months in Baltimore City impoverished neighborhoods in East Baltimore, zip codes: 21202, 21205, 21213, 21224, 21231. Surgeries were provided at no cost to the owners of 310 cats and 99 dogs. We were able to facilitate over a third more surgeries than projected due to discounted surgeries being granted by the MD SPCA.



### Project Description:

Charm City Companions is a community wellness organization that contributes to healthier neighborhoods through pet wellness. For the last 16 months and because of this grant we were able to continue offering free spay/neuter with rabies vaccines for those pets that needed them (98%). In addition to the spay/neuter 'packet' we also provide transport and loaner carriers to anyone needing these services (99%). Through our partnerships, we were also able to provide free booster shots for Parvo/Distemper vaccines, microchipping with free lifetime registration and food to supplement when clients were going through a tough time. Our work is done exclusively in under-served neighborhoods in East Baltimore that fall within one of our five zip codes that define our Area of Focus (21202, 21205, 21213, 21224, 21231). We provide a critical service to the communities in which we work since 85% of the pets we meet are unaltered and through our program we are able to alter the strong majority or about 90%.

The spay and neuter surgeries we helped facilitate we consider 'high value'. Many of the pets, cats in particular, are free roaming and often males and females reside in the same home. A significant number of our clients have taken pets in, especially during the winter months, because they relate personally to suffering and



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hunger. Providing spay/neuter is the only reason many of our clients were able to keep a pet. Again, this applies especially to outdoor, unowned cats. Once we spay/neuter a cat that someone has been feeding, almost always, the cat becomes welcome in the home fulltime.

While a key part of pet wellness is spay/neuter, we consider our organization a community wellness provider. We are starting to see more people out walking their pets and able to keep their pets. We are also contributing to significant decline of dogs and cats entering the shelter from our zip codes. In fact, we have seen a direct correlation in the increase of spay/neuters facilitated through Charm City Companions and the decrease in shelter in-take within the areas we work.

CCC's mission is to elevate community health through pet wellness and we were able to do that as a result of this grant. Furthermore, because of this grant and the consistently climbing number of spay/neuter surgeries we continue to gain the attention of important community partners both within and outside of animal welfare, as well as the press and media. We are also able to leverage this work to gain more funding.

### **Summary of Approach:**

Our approach is simple - go to the pet owners - meet them where they are in every sense. Most important, we employ a genuinely non-judgemental approach which has gained us deep trust with our pet families and the community at large.

While we now receive many referrals and calls from our clients with new pets, our traditional approach to meeting people is door-to-door canvassing Saturdays and/or Sundays for 2-3 hours. We have more recently started to populate our volunteer positions with people from the communities we serve, adding to the community wellness by giving people a positive work experience and creating even more trust within the neighborhoods.

In addition to canvassing and referrals we have also been partnering and attending events hosted by other animal/social welfare and social justice organizations serving people in our Area of Focus.

We have also continued to identify and train community ambassadors who are outfitted with T-shirts, spay/neuter vouchers and magnets that contain our contact information so people can spread the word everyday in the community.

To be successful with our appointments we employ a rigid follow-up and reminder process where we call clients with pets scheduled every week up to the night prior. The night prior we call once again as a reminder for the appointment and other instructions such as no food for pet after midnight that night. Once the surgery is complete we call our clients the following day or two to check on their pets. This has been a successful approach to further solidify our relationships.

### **Accomplishments:**

We were able to facilitate 409 surgeries over 16 months, which consisted of 310 cats and 99 dogs. The majority of cats (54%) were female and the majority of dogs were male (51%). Nearly all pets received transport (99%) from the CCC team.

As we transported to the MD SPCA each week, we further strengthened our relationship and had meetings throughout the year with the spay/neuter clinic manager and medical director to brainstorm ways to best support each other. We were given special permission to get dogs outside of the clinic policy (under 5lbs, over 85lbs, senior) spayed/neuter with approval from the medical director who offered to do them herself if necessary. The MD SPCA and BARCS have also contacted CCC to seek consult on how they can further serve the community and work together in 2018. We met with the MD SPCA Executive Director, Medical



Director and Community Affairs Director to discuss their 2018 strategic plan and how we can work together more moving forward. In June we are meeting with BARCS with the same agenda.

We also secured resources through both MD SPCA and BARCS for supplemental food and cat litter for clients in need and established a relationship with Finding Knox where we are able to now microchipping pets with free lifetime registration at no cost to our clients.

Finally, we have been able to add our first fulltime position, Executive Director, which has elevated our position in the community as a serious wellness organization with aggressive plans to grow over the next 5 years. We have a parttime community outreach person who will be paid as soon as funds allow. She has agreed to start working parttime without pay.

### **Lessons Learned:**

Achieving 100% show rate 100% of the time is nearly impossible. Whenever we 'waste' one of our spots at the clinic we have a team meeting of how we could have filled the spot. This is an ongoing problem in under-served communities as people have serious, life threatened issues they deal with daily, which is common. We have figured out a nearly 100% fail safe process which involves overbooking and constant communication to create clarity. We are grateful to have an incredible partner in the MD SPCA as they have been more than understanding and helpful in solving this issue.

Our program is no longer sustainable with 100% volunteer staff. The work is too demanding (physically and emotionally) and involves a deeper level of commitment than most volunteers can give. That said, we will continue to work with volunteers and especially those from the community. We plan to add a component where people re-entering following incarceration are able to join our team in effort to provide experience through volunteer work for resumes. We've recently learned of Prison Dog Programs where inmates train and care for dogs. The skill gained through this program are ideal for CCC volunteers and staff.

While we've been successful transporting in our own vehicles, this is not sustainable. We are looking to gain access to or buy a van in 2018 to make the transporting of animals more organized, safe and less damaging to volunteer vehicles.

### **Attachments:**

CCC\_2017\_Spay/NeuterSurgeryClientDetail  
CCC\_FY17\_217\_Final Report Images (Could not embed in this document)  
Spay/Neuter Map

### **For More Information Contact:**

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