



The Maryland SPCA: Providing High-Quality Free Spay/Neuter Services for Low-Income Residents of Baltimore City

Project #
FY18-319

County: Baltimore City

Number of Cats Spayed:	417	Number of Dogs Spayed:	83
Number of Cats Neutered:	427	Number of Dogs Neutered:	93

Amount Received: \$62,060	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): 0
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Project Synopsis:

With support from the State, the Maryland SPCA provided free spay/neuter services in select zip codes located in Baltimore City. These surgeries are shown to have a greater impact on surrender and euthanasia rates because they are targeted and free of charge. By providing this service, we work to decrease the potential homeless animal population and the number of animals coming into shelters, specifically from eight zip codes: 21201, 21202, 21213, 21215, 21216, 21217, 21218, and 21223.



Project Description:

Our mission is to improve the lives of pets and people in all the communities that we serve. The Maryland SPCA (MD SPCA) takes life-saving measures to give unwanted pets in our care every opportunity to thrive and find their forever home. We are proud of our 94% live-release rate for 2018 that demonstrates our commitment to this goal. The free spay and neuter program is important to the work that we do, contributing substantially to the more than 6,500 surgeries performed in our Spay and Neuter Clinic in 2018. Our clinic provides services to residents throughout Maryland and represents one of our most sought-after services.

In 2018, with support from the State of Maryland, the MD SPCA provided free spay/neuter services to residents in select zip codes located in Baltimore City, qualified based on their income level. By doing so, we decrease the potential homeless animal population and number of animals coming into shelters, specifically from eight zip codes: 21201, 21202, 21213, 21215, 21216, 21217, 21218, and 21223.

Summary of Approach:

The MD SPCA has a proven track record of promoting our spay/neuter services in underserved neighborhoods. Year over year, interest in our program continues, and we secure additional funding to provide as many free surgeries as possible to those in need. In 2018, we continued our efforts to distribute flyers within targeted neighborhoods and promote the program via email and social media. In 2018, we undertook a new initiative that direct mailed DAG flyers to veterinarian hospitals and grooming salons in the immediate areas



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around DAG zip codes, and we received several client communications indicating they got our flyer directly from one of these targeted vendors. Thanks to the generous support of the Mueller Foundation, Stand Up for Pits, and an anonymous donor, the MD SPCA provided 131 additional surgeries in our targeted neighborhoods. Committed to the necessity of this program, we re-directed monies from our Shearer Fund for Humane Education to cover the cost of surgeries after all other funding was expended. We were confident that the connection between our public awareness and education campaign regarding spaying/neutering and these surgeries justified the decision. By releasing these funds, we provided an additional 383 surgeries.

In 2018, we focused on strengthening our presence in communities that we serve. The MD SPCA explored new engagement models with Charm City Companions (CCC) and B-More Dog that could increase the efficiency and effectiveness of our community outreach programs. Through the summer and fall, MD SPCA and CCC staff jointly canvassed multiple neighborhoods in east Baltimore and interacted with 117 households, building long-term, empowering relationships with pet owners. The teams brought education and resources into underserved communities.

The MD SPCA participated in four large scale B-More Dog events held throughout 2018. These events enabled us to provide vital health and wellness services to a significant number of dogs in a relatively short period of time. Two events, held in the Penn North and Park Heights neighborhoods, fell inside our DAG focused zip codes, and in Penn North we were able to apply DAG funding to cover surgery costs which resulted in 18 spay/neuter surgeries. With DAG funding fully depleted in September, we leveraged outside funds to cover spay and neuter surgeries from the Park Heights event in October. In doing so, we were able to complete an additional 11 surgeries.

In our assessment, both models provide important services to the underserved communities of Baltimore, while increasing the number of people with whom the MD SPCA interacts. In leveraging existing partnerships, we provide direct access to necessary wellness and behavioral services. Over time as these partnerships grow, we anticipate an increase in spay/neuter surgeries ultimately leading to a decrease in shelter intake from these neighborhoods.

Accomplishments:

Because of the continued interest in our free spay/neuter program, the MD SPCA expended the Maryland Department of Agriculture (DAG) funding in September, three months ahead of schedule.

Through our partnership with Charm City Companions, the MD SPCA expanded our reach into Baltimore City's most impoverished neighborhoods. Annie Pruitt, CCC executive director and co-founder, canvassed with members of our veterinary and behavior team to determine the needs of the household and their pet(s). The immediate impact – behavioral issues addressed and medication and food provided – served to build long-term trust, which will have greater impact in the future, including, we believe, an increased willingness to seek the spay and neuter services.

B-More Dog events also extended the MD SPCA health and wellness service capability, as well as spay/neutering education messaging, enabling us to impact the lives of hundreds of pets in some of the city's most underserved neighborhoods. During our time at the Park Heights Bmore Dog event held in October, we saw many pets who were already spayed and neutered at the MD SPCA clinic as a result of past community outreach by Marcus Brown, whose position was previously funded under a prior DAG grant. We see opportunity for significant growth and look forward to participating in 2019 events.

Lessons Learned:

The demand for free and low-cost spay and neuter surgeries consistently exceeds available funding. Despite supplementing the DAG grant with generous funding from additional donors, the MD SPCA is still unable to meet the needs of the public. Director of Veterinary Services Dr. Karen Burks launched "Spay-it-Forward", a



program that invites fee-paying spay/neuter clients to donate funds to underwrite a low-income owner's pet surgery. Spay-it-Forward funded 43 surgeries between August and December and will be continued in 2019.

Given the crowded field of spay/neuter providers in our immediate service area, the MD SPCA is taking a deep dive into how the program should evolve to increase impact over time. We look forward to sharing our plans for the spay/neuter program in our 2020 application.

Attachments:

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