



"Cats in the Cracks on Maryland's Eastern Shore"

Project #
19-417

County: Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot

Number of Cats Spayed:	97	Number of Dogs Spayed:	0
Number of Cats Neutered:	105	Number of Dogs Neutered:	0
Amount Received: \$10,000	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0		

Project Synopsis:

The Project targets residents of Caroline, Dorchester, and Talbot Counties for whom the cost to spay/neuter their cats is prohibitive. No-cost spay/neuter/vaccination services are offered to these cat owners throughout the three counties who are not specifically targeted by existing grants; or where grants exist, but the grantee cannot provide special assistance typically needed by low-income cat owners: transportation and flexible hours for drop off and pick up their cat(s) the day before and after surgery to support rigid work schedules.



Project Description:

TomCat Solutions (TCS) is an all-volunteer group committed to removing cost as a barrier to cat owners on Maryland's Eastern Shore who want to spay/neuter/vaccinate their cat(s). Experience has shown that the greatest barrier to low-income cat owners wanting to get their cats altered is their inability to afford even low-cost spay/neuter services and also to find help with other limitations associated with low income: lack of transportation and rigid work schedules.

While shelters do GREAT THINGS, they cannot do EVERYTHING. The Project focuses on utilizing the flexibility of an all-volunteer group, operating out of private facilities, to sterilize 200 cats that otherwise might fall into the "cracks of available assistance" at local shelters.

The three counties included in the project were targeted because: 1) the combined total population poverty level is 14.2 percent and 2) the eight years of operational experience documented by TCS shows these are the counties generating the highest number of calls for assistance from residents unable to afford even low-cost spay/neuter services.

Summary of Approach:

Utilizing only no-cost advertising (flyers, Website, Facebook, word-of-mouth, and referrals from both shelter staffs and TCS clients), TCS exhausted its total project funds slightly more than mid-way through the one-year project. TCS encouraged cat owners benefitting from the Project funding to share their positive experience with



their neighbors and friends facing similar "cat challenges." These satisfied customers were truly the most effective no-cost advertising that kept the phone ringing and the Project advancing.

Cat owners calling TCS for help are provided counseling on available services and are interviewed to determine whether any flexible accommodations need to be made in order to encourage owners to schedule sterilization(s) AND, just as important, follow through on the arrangements.

Accomplishments:

The 202 cats sterilized as a result of the Project have a direct impact on intake at shelters in each of the three targeted counties. At a minimum, each cat sterilized can be counted as not INCREASING current intake. If one factors in the unborn kittens of these 202 sterilized cats, the potential number of cats/kittens not adding successive generations of offspring to shelter intake numbers is exponential! Additionally, as successive generations of offspring prevented by this grant do not increase intake numbers in the years to come, a positive impact on overcrowding-based euthanasia statistics is expected.

Upon returning sterilized cats to their owners, TCS encourages the owners to share their experience with neighbors and friends facing similar "cat problems." Each of the households impacted by this Project has increased the ever-accumulating number of "spay/neuter ambassadors" that keep the TCS phone ringing--a no-cost accomplishment in itself.

TCS paid \$1,419.77 for additional medical expenses to assure the 202 cats were returned healthy and comfortable. This included flea, ear mite, and worm medications; antibiotics; wound treatments; and testing or medical/surgical treatments when needed.

All-volunteer operations, use of existing equipment, no-cost advertising, and donated supplies and transportation allowed the Project to be accomplished with ONLY the cost of spay/neuter services charged to the Project.

Lessons Learned:

If grant funds are exhausted prior to completion of the Project, establishing a cooperative effort with other groups still having MDA grant funds available advances the missions of all parties--MDA, TCS, and the other MDA grant recipient. That's a WIN for everyone, INCLUDING pet cat(s) and their owners.

Attachments:

A list of 202 cats spayed/neutered utilizing the MD DOA 2018 Spay and Neuter Grants Program funding is attached.

For More Information Contact:

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