



## Westside Spay & Neuter Program (WSNP)

Project #  
17-205

County: Baltimore

Number of Cats Spayed:	343	Number of Dogs Spayed:	211
Number of Cats Neutered:	292	Number of Dogs Neutered:	238

Amount Received: \$45,528	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): 0
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### Project Synopsis:

The SWSN project was initiated to provide local access to free spay/neuter services to low income zip codes on the West side of Baltimore County. These communities were identified as being areas for high intake of animals to the Baltimore County Animal Services (BCAS) open-admission shelter. The project goals of sterilizing 1,084 animals were met within a 17-month period. The six month extension granted by the MDA was much appreciated as BCAS struggled with advertising the existence of the clinic and the importance of spaying/neutering pets.



### Project Description:

This project provided, free of charge, a complete wellness and spay/neuter package to 1,084 domestic dogs and cats in targeted low income communities on the West side of Baltimore County. Each pet received a full physical exam, sterilization procedure, plus core vaccines and deworming as needed based on any prior veterinary records. Each pet also received a permanent microchip with free registration and a Baltimore County pet license.

The goals of the SWSN project were to decrease the number of unplanned litters, decrease the intake to BCAS and of course allow for a population of healthier, safer pets in these communities. With the anticipated decline in stray and surrendered pets from these areas, BCAS also hopes to appreciate lower euthanasia rates.

### Summary of Approach:

BCAS developed flyers and online campaigns including social media to begin spreading the word about the availability of free spay/neuter services at the new Southwest Area Park location. BCAS partnered with local community organizations and businesses in the targeted, low-income communities. BCAS also partnered with



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other County agencies, such as the Fire Department, to go door-to-door distributing program information. Baltimore County Council members also continue to share BCAS information with their constituents.

The Spay/Neuter Customer Service Coordinator and other BCAS staff members visited communities and engaged with local organizations in an effort to share the benefits of spaying/neutering pets while soliciting their help in promoting the free SWSN program. The Coordinator assisted pet owners with the online scheduling platform and other administrative concerns.

As it became evident that the SWSN grant would not be as easy to complete as previous grants received from the MDA, BCAS brainstormed other ways to entice owners to utilize these services. PetSmart gift cards in the amount of \$20 were awarded to owners who successfully brought their qualifying pets in for surgery. The request for an extension was granted and BCAS was able to fulfil the SWSN project within 17 months.

### **Accomplishments:**

Completing this grant project required a great deal of perseverance, creativity and collaboration. For the first time, BCAS experienced resistance to free spay/neuter procedures. Past success on the East side of the County had pre-conditioned BCAS into thinking that appointment slots would book themselves. BCAS is proud to have spayed/neutered 1,084 pets in communities that, prior to the SWAP Spay/Neuter Center, did not have a free or low-cost option to receive these services.

### **Lessons Learned:**

The strong cultural objection to the alteration of pet dogs, and to some degree pet cats, was not thoroughly anticipated. Especially with the neutering of dogs, many owners were reluctant to appreciate the benefits that these services provided their pets. The financial burden of providing this important veterinary care was not the only factor preventing owners in these communities from having their pets altered.

BCAS learned was that success at one location is not always automatically duplicated in another, even within the same County. The physical location of the clinic on the West side, Southwest Area Park, is much more secluded than the Dundalk Spay/Neuter clinic which is located within the same building as Human Health Services. The ESNP seemed to advertise for itself as clients and staff shared social media posts and word of mouth enough to book out appoints sometimes months at a time. The demand for the SWSN appointment slots was low in comparison so the veterinary team was forced to switch schedules around in order to keep staff busy.

Probably the biggest lesson learned was that the new surgical facility built by Baltimore County on the West side will not actualize its fullest potential if it's focus remains on pet spay/neuter services alone. To maximize the use of this facility, BCAS will likely shift the focus to Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) clients. By providing free TNR to Baltimore County community cats, it is the hope of BCAS that this facility will be busy. This may even include the offering of TNR services free of charge to community cats and caregivers outside of Baltimore County. Preventing litters of kittens and vaccinating these outdoor animals against rabies is paramount to the public health initiative. Microchipping of these animals ensures that rabies vaccines and animal locations can be tracked if needed.

We are grateful to the MDA for the opporunity to provide these important veterinary services to the pets within our communities.

### **Attachments:**

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

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