



Free Spay/Neuter for Prince George's County Pets

Project #
19-436

County: Prince George's County

Number of Cats Spayed:	107	Number of Dogs Spayed:	78
Number of Cats Neutered:	87	Number of Dogs Neutered:	97

Amount Received: \$28,015	Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA): \$0
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Project Synopsis:

Our free spay/neuter program targets low-income pet owners in nine designated Prince George's county neighborhoods (East Riverdale/Bladensburg, Langley Park, Hillcrest Heights/Marlow Heights, Glassmanor/Oxon Hill, Suitland/Coral Hills, Kentland/Palmer Park, Woodlawn/Lanham, Forestville, and Silver Hill). Additionally, we offer free spay/neuter to county citizens who are on public assistance or who meet the Maryland Free Lunch income guidelines, and to owners of at-risk pets who are referred by our local county Animal Control Officers. The project provided free surgery to 369 pets (more cats than dogs for the first time ever!).



Project Description:

Founded almost 45 years ago, the SPCA/Humane Society of Prince George's County (PGSPCA) is an all-volunteer 501(c)3 nonprofit organization dedicated to local animal welfare. We have three main objectives: to reduce pet overpopulation; to prevent animal cruelty, neglect, and suffering; and to promote animal-friendly public policy.

In 2001, we opened the area's first low-cost spay/neuter clinic and we've altered nearly 23,000 animals since, many at no charge (because even our lowest prices are still a barrier for some pet owners). In an effort to reach more pet owners and to impact whole communities, we agreed in 2015 to collaborate with Prince George's County government's Transforming Neighborhoods Initiative (TNI).

The county's TNI program focuses on uplifting nine specific neighborhoods (see list above) facing significant economic, health, public safety and educational challenges. Statistically, the pets in these neighborhoods are at higher risk, so we provide free surgeries (and rabies vaccines) for these and other at-risk pets. Depending on the mix of dogs and cats, we hoped to alter up to 400 animals under the MD Spay and Neuter Grant.



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM



Summary of Approach:

Our spay/neuter clinic currently operates for special events only and utilizes contracted veterinarians and veterinary technicians. For years we ran quarterly spay/neuter events for the pets of low-income County residents, who qualified for free surgeries by income levels or as recipients of public assistance. In 2015, we added a monthly spay/neuter day to target pet owners residing in the county's designated TNI neighborhoods (originally there were six, now there are nine). We promoted the program first through the USPS EveryDoorDirectMail (EDDM) service, then later by distributing fliers and online announcements. We had no shortage of clients, altering over 250 animals (178 for free) in that first grant period. regularly receiving more appointment requests than we can accommodate. We have no shortage of clients and in fall 2017, we added a second surgeon to our monthly events so we could complete twice as many surgeries.

In 2018, we doubled our surgery capacity again by added a second two-surgeon spay/neuter day each month. We altered more than 600 animals (514 for free). In the summer of 2019, we added a third surgery day each month for ferals only. Though not covered by the grant, this extra surgery day increased the number of spots available on our regular surgery days. In the 2018-19 grant period, we've altered more than 680 animals, 369 of them funded under the MD State Spay/Neuter Grant.

Potential clients complete an online application (appointment request) and a volunteer calls to screen them for eligibility for free surgery. Those who qualify (on the basis of low income, receiving public assistance, or living in a TNI neighborhood) are scheduled for the next available spay/neuter date. We refer those who don't qualify to other providers of low-cost surgery, or they may choose to pay our low fees (if we have room for them in our schedule). Our volunteers gather all the needed information about the pet, then instruct the pet owner about when and where to bring their pet, and about fasting their pet the night before. We also give them a reminder the night before the surgery date.

On the day of the surgery, all pets are checked in between 7:30am and 8:30am. If we have no-shows, we try to fill those spots by calling clients on a standby list. Rabies shots are included with the free surgery, but clients can also choose to purchase other services (such as distemper shots, ear cleaning, nail trims, or microchipping). Surgeries are performed throughout the day while volunteers prepare the invoices, rabies tags and certificates, and receipts. Owners pick up their animals from about 4:30pm to 6:30pm and receive full discharge instructions plus information on where to call if they have questions or need help. The cost of each qualifying surgery is charged to the grant.

Accomplishments:

We have altered 369 animals (194 cats and 175 dogs) with the help of the MD Spay and Neuter Grant during this period. 309 pets were given a free rabies shot, each charged at \$5 to the grant. For the first time every, we altered more cats than dogs under the grant, and that is a real milestone. We also altered more than 100 free-roaming cats (not covered by the grant). Given that Prince George's County has a serious cat overpopulation issue, we are very proud of this impact and hope to do even more in the coming years.

We have prevented many future litters, educated pet owners, and improved the overall health of many pets. Along with spay/neuter surgery, we've been able to provide other needed veterinary services, diagnoses, and treatments. Our pet taxi contract has enabled us to serve even more clients. Pet owners with better information can take better care of their animals, and we're proud of the role we play in those improvements.

Having more events means we're able to serve more customers, but it also means more convenience for them. There is more flexibility in when they can schedule their pets, and we have more options for accommodating a booster schedule (for distemper shots). Through a partnership with a local clinic that is open every day, we can refer our clients for low-cost advance bloodwork and timely low-cost postsurgical rechecks if needed.



Lessons Learned:

We are getting better at maximizing our surgery schedule by using a waitlist, and at serving clients who don't speak English by using translated materials and multilingual volunteers.

Attachments:

2018-19 MDA Grant Data

For More Information Contact:

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