

Pet Responsibility Committee Hosts Pet Care Days

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Special to The Pilot

On a hot, quiet, early Saturday morning in June, the parking lot of the Robbins Elementary School stirred with a flurry of activity. Signs were placed at the entrance to the parking lot, pop-up tents and tables were strategically positioned.

Clipboards and forms, coloring books and crayons for the kids, bags of dog and cat food were piled onto tables. A “rabies station” was established under the overhang of the school building, complete with vaccinations, supplies, forms and tags. A mobile unit, generously loaned by the Sandhills Spay Neuter Veterinary Clinic, pulled into place to provide a temporary air-conditioned office for the vet.

One hour before the “Pet Care Day” was due to start, the cars were already lined up out into the street, pet owners securing a place in line.

This was the fourth Pet Care Day event of 2022, organized by the Moore County Citizens’ Pet Responsibility Committee (PRC). The three prior events were held at the Eagle Springs Baptist Church, the Crain’s Creek Fire Department and Highfalls Elementary School.

These events are a culmination of ideas and efforts that came to fruition during the pandemic experience.

When Moore County’s school doors were abruptly closed in March 2020, two- and four-legged volunteers from the PRC were in their 12th year of presenting a six-session Pet Responsibility Education Program for fourth-graders.

While PRC volunteers waited to be reunited with the fourth-graders in the schools, they met the needs of pets in our county in other ways that have proved invaluable. Realizing an increased need in the community, the PRC expanded its already existing Pet Pantry Program, distributing repackaged pet food for the pets of families facing hardship.

Each pet food package also contains information about access to free or subsidized spay and neuter procedures.

Taking this a step further, beginning in December 2020, the PRC began organizing Pet Care Days. Over the course of a year, from December 2020 to November 2021, six events were held and 400 pets were seen.

The PRC built on the experience gained at each event and investigated ways to expand the services offered.

Dr. Janice Baker of Veterinary Tactical Group (VTG), a mobile veterinary practice out of Vass, enthusiastically teamed with the PRC for the events, offering subsidized services.

Ruth Craig, the PRC’s grant writer, approached the Banfield Foundation’s Community Care Program with the results of the first three events, in the hope of securing some support. The Pet Care Day concept met their criteria for serving the pets of families in underserved and financially challenged areas. They generously supplied rabies and parvo/distemper vaccinations for the remaining four events of 2021.

By the final event of 2021, family pets could get either simply a free rabies shot or a subsidized exam by Dr. Baker, together with free rabies and parvo/distemper shots plus any additional needed vaccinations at a reduced cost. Additionally, for each pet that was examined, the PRC donated a topical application of flea and tick medication to last one month. Veterinary technicians showed the pet owners the correct way to apply the medication.

With 2022 events in mind, Craig worked with the Banfield Foundation on a Community Care Grant to fund medications. The statistics from the 2021 events helped secure a \$9,000 grant, along with almost 300 First Shield flea treatments for pets receiving only rabies shots.

This generous grant has allowed the PRC to plan eight events for 2022.

The Robbins event in June was the fourth event and, with the help of very supportive teachers from the Robbins Elementary School and the town of Robbins, exceeded expectations. Pets were registered between 9 a.m. and noon. Over the course of eight hours, the PRC team of 25 volunteers helped Dr. Baker and the veterinary technicians attended to 174 pets plus 11 puppies who simply needed deworming.

Charlene Fausz, the PRC’s prevention programs manager who spearheaded the event, worked with Paula Hoffman from Sandhills Spay Neuter Veterinary Clinic and a subset of volunteers to distribute free pet food and advise and assist pet owners in arranging spay and neuter procedures for their pets. Just 10



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Pet Care Day volunteer team in front of spay neuter mobile unit at a recent event held at Crain's Creek; right, Dr. Janice Baker provides a veterinary exam.

days after the event, 18 pets were on a PRC transport from downtown Robbins to the Sandhills Spay Neuter Veterinary Clinic in Vass. A total of 50 promising spay/neuter leads were secured at the event.

With limited access to veterinary services in the Robbins area, the event was an overwhelming success.

"We are truly grateful to the residents of the Robbins area for making the time to provide care and attention for their pets. We want to thank those who came with their pets for their patience and willingness to wait. Everyone was so polite and appreciative," a PRC spokesperson commented.

"With our continual focus on prevention, these Pet Care Day events are a natural evolution for our organization. We strive to give pet owners the information and access to resources they need to be responsible pet owners. For the most part, people want to do the right thing but often need advice, and sometimes help, to get it done.

"Our aim is to continue offering Pet Care Days in underserved communities in both the north and south of the county several times a year, becoming a 'fixture' event that people can count on. We are thrilled to be partnering with The Banfield Foundation and VTG for these efforts."

So far in 2022, 337 pets have been seen and there are four additional events scheduled to begin in September.

Additional event expenses are being covered by a grant through the local Aberdeen Walmart and by a grant from the Moore County Kennel Club, which



strives to improve the lives of all pets. Ongoing grants from the Emmanuel Episcopal Thrift Shop and individuals in the community complete the funding picture.

Over 1,800 pounds of pet food has also been distributed at Pet Care Days this year. This food is donated by the Walmart Distribution Center in Pageland, S.C. PRC volunteers make the trip down to Pageland to collect the food.

Free and discounted spay/neuter services are provided to qualified residents through subsidies from the county of Moore.

For more information about the Moore County Citizen's Pet Responsibility Committee's ongoing work in the community, visit www.mcprc.org. Other information is available at www.vettac-group.com, www.banfieldfoundation.org and www.spayurpet.org

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