



Spring 2023

SNIPPETS

News from the SD West River Spay/Neuter Coalition

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Layout: Donnette Thayer

Jumpin' JehoshaCats!



Wow! Over 2,100 cats fixed in 2022 -- our best record so far! This number reflects an enormous amount of work by volunteers and the vets who make our efforts possible. And by the way, if you're looking for quality, loving care for your pets, please consider one of our participating veterinarians (list on last page). These generous folks kindly give their time and resources understanding that the best way to save cats' lives is through spay/neuter.

With help from our vets, we accomplished this record-breaking number of fixes by two means: reduced cost spay/neuter clinics and vouchers. Here's the breakdown:

2023	Total	Spays	Neuters	Kittens Prevented
Total Clinics	566	235	330	59,430
Total Vouchers	1,565	903	662	164,325
Total Spay/Neuter Surgeries	2,131	1,138	992	223,755

Contact us by mail or through our website or Facebook page

South Dakota West River Spay/Neuter Coalition
P.O. Box 286
Deadwood, SD 57732
605-593-5550
<http://spayneutercoalition.com/>



Like us on Facebook!
West River Spay Neuter Coalition

HAPPY TAILS



Trinity and her kittens: Trinity and her kittens: We received a call about a mom and five kittens in a mobile home park in Box Elder being harassed by dogs and kids. Volunteer Christy drove there, sneaked up on two of the kittens while they were eating and caught them. Mom

cat followed her kittens and Christy was able to snag her, too. Neighbors said dogs had killed one kitten, and Christy spent a week looking for the remaining two with no luck. She found a wonderful adoptor for the mom cat now named Trinity. Christy spent a couple of weeks socializing the traumatized kittens, and finally placed them in purrrfect homes.



Tiny abandoned kitten: One evening we got an urgent message through Facebook regarding a 2 to 3-day-old kitten found without a mom cat or other kittens. We posted an urgent plea on our Facebook page. That same evening a woman responded, saying she had recently rescued a cat that just given birth to three kittens. She came and picked up the kitten, and the new mom gladly accepted him. The Coalition arranged for all of the kittens to be fixed once they're old enough.



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Dumpster Kittens: Denise happened to notice a litter of 6 skinny 2-3 month old feral kittens scrounging for food around a dumpster. She searched, but did not find a mom cat. Denise put out food for the kittens every day, and after a month or so realized they had reached "that age," and contacted the Coalition.

A volunteer delivered traps and Denise soon caught the kittens. She drove them almost an hour each way to our Custer vet, Doc Splichal (LFC Vet Service), to be altered. Amazingly, it turned out that all six black beauties were females, and five were newly pregnant! Denise named them Mystic, Bubbles, Spotify, Truffles, Whiskers and PipSqueak.

Ingot: So desperate to be saved, Ingot jumped into Ginger's car while she was busy rescuing kittens. Ginger took the old guy to Salt Creek Vet Clinic, who said the cat was in his late teens, almost toothless, and weighed half of what he should. Ingot was adopted on New Year's Day, and now, several pounds heavier, he enjoys warm laps and lots of TLC. And contrary to our mission, Ingot still has his male parts, being too old to be neutered!



Church: You may have read about Church in our last newsletter. Although our volunteer Michelle originally hoped to find the perfect home for Church, she soon realized what a helpful, caring guy he is. So now he has a job, which is to comfort all the rescued kittens and cats that come into their home. And he's very good at it! Here's Church, the gray guy, doing his job cuddling various rescue cats. Michelle, Mark, and Jonah continue to monitor the colonies they feed in the Newell/Nisland Area.



Phyllis & her kittens: Bill felt sorry for stray cats wandering his neighborhood and built them a shelter. A few days later, he looked in the shelter and was surprised to see a mama cat with newborn kittens. The cat bolted, but later returned and moved the kittens. Bill called the Coalition and volunteer Jamie trapped the little family. The kittens had seriously infected eyes. After treatment they regained partial sight and were placed in loving homes. Bill named the feral mom cat Phyllis, and she now lives the good life in a heated shelter with lots of food. ●

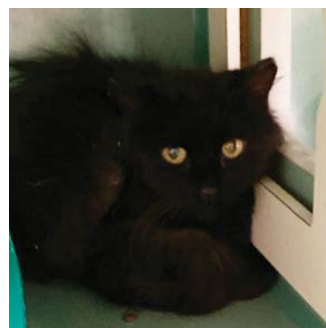


HAPPY TAILS - CAT COLONIES EDITION

Alkali Barn Cats: Nikki from Sturgis inherited several hungry barn cats when she moved into her new home, and immediately contacted the Coalition for help getting them fixed. In November, she trapped 11 cats and hauled them all the way to Custer to our hard-working vet, Doc Splichal. Nikki still had five cats left to be altered in December when we got a call from Operation Pets Inc. saying they had room for a few more feral cats at their upcoming clinic. Nikki took in the remaining cats, with the Coalition covering the spay/neuter cost. A few months later, two more females showed up, and she had them altered at the Cook Vet Clinic. Have you ever seen anyone so happy getting their barn cats fixed? Nikki continues to watch for newcomers.



Trail Track Colony: In 2020 we helped Janeen alter four tame pregnant cats someone had abandoned near her home that she willingly took in. Then in June of last year she noticed several new cats sneaking over to her barn for food. She noted the direction they were coming from, and discovered that a neighbor had moved, apparently leaving the unaltered cats behind. Of course Janeen fed the newcomers, and again called the Coalition for help. At the end of the year she had done TNR on 18 cats, all fixed by the Salt Creek Veterinary Service, and still had at least five more to go. "Anyway," she said, "What's a few more?"



Nancy's Valley Cats: Last summer while feeding her colony in Rapid Valley, Nancy heard a cat shriek, and spotted a small female dragging a kitten hanging by the umbilical cord. Being a vet tech, Nancy wrangled the exhausted feral and severed the cord.

Unfortunately, the mom cat escaped. Nancy searched and found another newborn kitten, and a few minutes later she spotted the mom cat with the umbilical cord still hanging from her. Nancy caught the cat and rushed her and the kittens to the Black Hills Animal Hospital where she works. Poor "Petunia," too young to safely have kittens, had immediate surgery for a prolapsed uterus. The next day she attempted to nurse her kittens, but it was too late, and they died. We are so thankful to the BHAH for saving Petunia's life. This beauty now lives happily in Nancy's well-cared-for colony.

A Surprise Colony: Sara and her family live on rural property in Piedmont. One day as she happened to glance out onto an adjacent field she noticed several little critters wending their way through the tall grass. Kittens! When she tried to catch them they scattered. The next day, Sara's mom spotted another litter of somewhat older kittens running across the field, and called the Coalition. A volunteer delivered traps and gave instructions. Within days Sara had caught two feral adult cats and seven half-grown kittens. The Cook Veterinary Clinic altered all the cats, which now reside comfortably in the family's barn. The mystery remains as to where these feral cats came from. Sara and her family keep watch for newcomers.



Pixie's Colony: Imagine buying country property in New Underwood and discovering you've inherited a barn full of hungry unaltered cats! Sadly, this is not an unusual story. Fortunately, the new owner loves cats, and found most of them to be friendly, especially Pixie, the obvious matriarch of the colony. Doc Splichal altered 18 cats from Pixie's Colony!

Newcastle Colonies and a special rescue: Ginger, our heroic Newcastle volunteer, trapped over 100 cats last year (39 were tame) from five different area colonies, and transported all of them to our amazing Salt Creek Vets to be altered. At one house near where she was doing TNR, Ginger noticed a skinny old orange male cat and a litter of 4 sickly kittens in a yard with no apparent shelter. She approached the resident and offered to take the



Continued on page 3

HAPPY TAILS - COLONIES EDITION

Continued from page 3



kittens and the adult cat as well, but the resident refused. Ginger suggested providing shelter for the kittens and giving the old cat some soft food since he was so thin. Several days later, Ginger happened to drive through the neighborhood and saw the kittens huddled outside with winter coming on. She again approached the

some soft food since he was so thin. resident who told her to "just take them." As she was picking up the kittens, the old orange cat jumped into her car! (see Ingot's story, p. 2). Sadly, two of the kittens died... ●

Rock on, Rushmore Office Supply!

In addition to fixing hundreds of cats and seeing to it that these cats have medical care, food, water, and a really nice shelter, we thank Carmen, Paula, and Bryce of Rushmore Office Supply (Sturgis) for donating the printing of this newsletter!

Please support this great local business. They care about our beautiful hills and everyone in it, even (and especially) the kitties that can't always help themselves.

We are proud to be an all-volunteer nonprofit organization. Last year, 97% of your donations directly funded spay/neuter surgeries.

Thank You, Volunteers!

Rapid City: Shari Rose, Heidi Herren. Christy Land, Jamie Al-Haj, Bonnie Curnock

Lead: Donna Watson

Deadwood: Sarah McEvoy, Donnette Thayer

Belle Fourche: Carol Markeson, Sandy Kringen, Beth Morey, Karen Hofmann

Sturgis: Carmen & Paula @ Rushmore Office Supply

Whitewood: Lori Tetreault

Newcastle: Ginger Field

Nisland: Michelle Braning

Yes, I want to help.

My gift amount is: _____

My gift is given (optional)

- In memory of (deceased - cats OK!): _____
- In honor of (living - cats OK!): _____
- I would like my gift to be anonymous.

Your name: _____

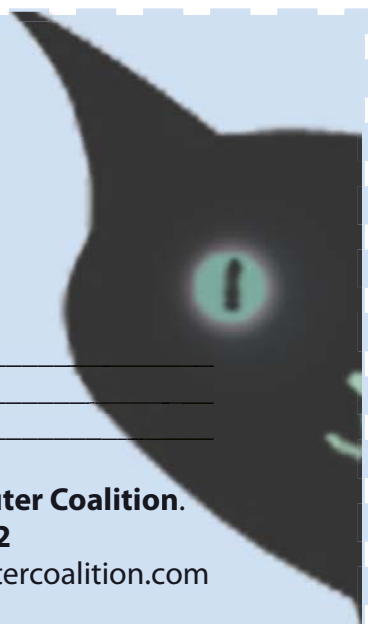
Address: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Please make your checks payable to **South Dakota West River Spay/Neuter Coalition.**

Send to: **The Coalition, P.O. Box 286, Deadwood, SD 57732**

Donate online at facebook.com/WestRiverSpayNeuterCoalition or spayneutercoalition.com



WINNER!

A huge TNR success

A standout TNR success story happened in the town of Winner, SD that serves as a great example for people in any small town who want to help prevent the suffering of homeless cats. This success is all because of one woman, Felicia Hughes. Alarmed at the number of skinny and diseased cats roaming the town's streets, she searched the internet and found the Coalition. Although Winner is well out of our geographic target range, we were impressed with Felicia's concern and dedication to help the town's abandoned cat population. So we reached out and obtained special funding for this project. In the meantime, Felicia approached a local veterinarians' office, Animal Clinic Ltd., about offering a reduced cost to alter the town's community cats. They agreed! And Felicia was off and running, or rather off and trapping! At the end of 3 months, she had fixed 100 cats, released approximately 40 ferals to monitored colonies, and re-homed around 60 domestic cats. She organized fun-



Felicia Hughes

draising and set out collection jars around town for miscellaneous vet costs. Felicia also initiated a Facebook page informing locals about the project's purpose, effort needed and opportunities for involvement. In addition, she dedicated countless hours to fostering, screening and finding permanent homes for tame cats and kittens. She keeps an eye on the controlled colonies that she and other Winner folks care for, while involved in ongoing trapping, releasing/adopting, and placement. She also actively promotes her TNR efforts locally in order to raise awareness, solicit funding for expenses, recruit volunteers, and save more homeless cats. She hopes the project will continue to gain momentum and community involvement in order to keep Winner's cat population humanely controlled. Cat by cat, Felicia does her best to make a difference for her community and the cats that call Winner home. ◆



"It turned out to be more than just TNR. We placed quite a few tame cats. Some of them were picked up as kittens, some were just sweet and abandoned, and a couple were special boys that went from tough Toms to friendly house cats. All of them needed our help, and we helped them." - Felicia Hughes

OUR BIGGEST CHALLENGES/SUCCESSSES



Garage Colony

Garage Colony: When an elderly Rapid City woman went into the hospital, shocked family members found her enclosed garage full of cats, some in cages, some loose, and all unaltered. The family contacted a local cat rescue, A Place for Meow, who in turn contacted us to see if we could help by covering the spay/neuter costs. Their volunteers immediately began transporting the cats to Noah's Ark, where Lynn Irons, DVM, altered all 61 of them. Their foster team evaluated each cat, found permanent or temporary homes for the tame ones, and placed those with antisocial tendencies in barn homes. Sadly, they found four cats that had gone blind due to the strong ammonia odor in the garage. For these cats, APFM contacted an out of state rescue group that kindly took them in. Eventually, 61 cats were removed from these deplorable conditions, and placed in acceptable homes or barns. The Coalition covered the spay/neuter cost for all of the cats.

Downtown Keystone Colony: Robin, a long time rescue person in Keystone contacted us about a community cat colony in downtown Keystone. She said she was moving and just couldn't deal with the newcomer cats. We reached out to Mary, a Keystone resident who has long been involved in cat rescue. Mary went to work, trapping 12 cats and transporting them to Salt Creek and LFC vets to be altered. She socialized the tameable kittens and placed them for adoption. Way to go Mary!

Spencer Farm Colony: A year ago, Cory Hagland, DVM, of the Spencer Veterinary Clinic in Spencer, Nebraska, contacted us about Violet, an elderly farm woman who had let her cat population get out of control. He asked if the Coalition could help. We asked for special funding for this project since Spencer is way out of our target area, and received an okay. So Violet went to work, and in 2022 trapped and transported 8 males and 5 females to Dr. Hagland. She continues trapping and hopes finally to have all the cats fixed in a couple of months!



Country Road Colony: This Rapid City road extends through a long stretch of country property, a prime location for discarding pets. There are several caretakers along the road that have set up feeding stations and shelters where they live. Over the past several years the Coalition has altered many cats from Country Road – in fact, 31 just this past year. We get

calls throughout the year regarding new cats that show up, some of course, with kittens. These caretakers keep watch for new cats and trap and fix the ones that show up. Caretakers include: Heidi, Nancy, and Kathleen. Nancy contacted us and said a large number of cats had appeared over a short period of time and here she is getting ready to trap.

Walnut Creek Mobile Home Park Colonies: Lori, our intrepid trapper/rescue volunteer in Whitewood, continued TNR in Walnut Park in Spearfish throughout the year, with 76 cats altered, adopted or placed in barn homes. Our thanks to the Sturgis Veterinary Hospital, Spearfish Animal Clinic and the Metzger-Holcomb Animal Clinic for altering all these cats. Lori continues with TNR, and hopes to recruit another volunteer trapper to help rescue some of the many cats that struggle to survive in this huge Spearfish park. (Pssst: If you live in Spearfish and are willing to do TNR, please contact the Coalition!) ●

Further Outreach: In addition to the Winner project, the Coalition subsidized spay/neuter surgeries for folks in or near the towns of Faith, Vermillion, Martin and Milesville; the Wyoming towns of Newcastle and Sundance; and the Nebraska towns of Gordon and Spencer. We greatly appreciate the generous veterinarians in these towns who have joined us in relieving the suffering of feral and discarded cats. ●

WORKING TOGETHER

Joining forces with other local non-profit groups to save lives



Operation Pets Inc.: OPI holds a monthly spay neuter clinic for dogs and cats, and occasionally when space allows, they contact the Coalition to see if we have clients with feral or barn cats that need to be fixed. OPI's location near Hwy. 90 is convenient for folks with barn and colony cats in that area to deliver cats to the surgery location. In 2022 the Coalition covered the spay/neuter cost for 56 barn and/or feral cats through OPI.



A Place For Meow Rescue: Last year we helped APFM with spay/neuter costs for over 200 cats. Basically a rescue organization, they also have a network of foster homes, an adoption program for domestic cats and an active barn home program for unsocialized cats that for a variety of reasons can't be returned to their colonies.



Battle Mountain Humane Society: Since BMHS, located in Hot Springs, serves primarily as a shelter for homeless pets, we were surprised when they reached out to the Coalition for financial help with spay/neuter for a TNR project in their area. This project involved an elderly woman with an ever

increasing yard full of cats that she couldn't afford to have fixed. Our Salt Creek Vet partner altered 15 cats in 2022, and a few more already this year. It is heartwarming to find shelter folks willing to go beyond sheltering to help with TNR.



Humane Society of the Black Hills: HSBH does the hard work of taking in any animal in need. As the only open-admission shelter in our area, their graciously-provided statistics give us a true benchmark for our effectiveness in saving lives through spay/neuter. We are pleased to note that compared to 2006, our first full year of operation,

live intake for cats at HSBH has declined by 36%, and euthanasia has decreased by a whopping 48%. This in spite of the fact that Rapid City alone has increased in population by 26.8% since the year 2000. We have provided HSBH with our contact information so that when people call asking about spay/neuter, they will refer them to us. We appreciate their hard work and dedication. ●

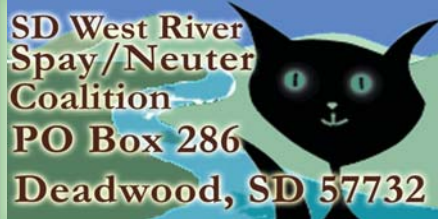
SPECIAL COALITION PROGRAMS & EVENTS

Cinco de Meow (2022): Our third annual Cinco de Meow fundraising event was held by Christy Land at the Wine Cellar Restaurant in Rapid City. Local businesses and individuals donated many wonderful items, including baskets full of fun stuff, art work, and gourmet food. Both KOTA and KEVN got in on the fun and ran stories about the event. Thank you to Christy, our wonderful, generous, kind volunteer and cat savior!



Feral Fix Program: We are excited that Lynn Irons, DVM, of Noah's Ark, has partnered with us specifically to help with feral cats and local colonies. In fact, she has already altered all 61 cats from the Garage Colony mentioned on page 6, plus another 22 feral cats that came in traps from various areas in Rapid City. Thank you, Dr. Irons! ●





Our Wonderful Vets!

Animal Medical Center	Gillette, WY
Belle Fourche Veterinary Clinic	Belle Fourche, SD
Cook Veterinary Clinic	Rapid City, SD
Faith Veterinary Clinic	Faith, SD
LFC Veterinary Service	Custer, SD
Milesville Veterinary Clinic	Milesville, SD
Noah's Ark Animal Hospital	Rapid City, SD
Northern Hills Veterinary Clinic	Sturgis, SD
Salt Creek Veterinary Clinic	Newcastle, WY

Spearfish Animal Hospital	Spearfish, SD
Spencer Veterinary Clinic	Spencer, NE
Sturgis Veterinary Hospital	Sturgis, SD

Welcome, New Vets!

Noah's Ark Animal Hospital - helping out colonies and feral cats.

Sturgis Veterinary Hospital - accepting vouchers for cats both domestic and feral. Joined us August 2022. They have done at least 150 cats 2022 through March 2023.

