

Pet friendly license plates raise funds

Pet overpopulation crisis targeted

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The Madison County organization SNIPs (Spay Neuter Illinois Pets) is asking residents to consider purchasing a pet-friendly license plate to help reduce the pet overpopulation crisis.

It is estimated by the U.S. Humane Society that 3 to 4 million cats and dogs are euthanized every year in shelters across the United States – approximately 5,000 pets were euthanized in Madison County in 2007.

SNIPs is trying to help reduce the overpopulation problem by encouraging residents to spay and/or neuter their pets and thus reduce the need to continually euthanize millions of unwanted pets.

One way SNIPs said the community can help support the cause is by purchasing a pet-friendly license plate.

The state of Illinois offers a variety of Specialty License Plates. The plates are designed to increase awareness about certain organizations or causes and also many offer a means to help that cause through a specific fund.

In 2002, one of those plates became the Pet Friendly plate. Proceeds from these plates are placed into a pet overpopulation fund to provide money for spaying and neutering companion animals in Illinois.

According to SNIPs, when the state of Illinois pet overpopulation fund recently released the money from the fund, a majority of the money did not come from animal control fees, but rather from the statewide pet-friendly license plate program. An increase in pet-friendly plates will also mean an increase in pets across the state that can be altered and thus a reduction of future unwanted offspring.

SNIP Alliance President Kelly Meier said she believes the plates make the reality of lower euthanasia rates throughout Madison County and the state of Illinois that much more of a possibility.

“Knowing that such a large amount of funding is accrued from the sale of these license plates is quite promising,” Meier said. “It’s just one simple way that members of the community can make a difference in the lives of so many animals.”

The state of Illinois also does have a law – Anna’s Law – to help pay for the spaying, neutering

and vaccinating of ferals and the pets of low-income residents. Residents on food stamps or Social Security Disability are eligible to get their pet spayed or neutered at a reduced rate. (To learn more about the program, contact the Madison County Health Department at 692-8954).

SNIPs said the state received the most requests for financial assistance to alter a pet from Madison County.

SNIPs, a non-profit Alliance created in 2008 by a group of concerned citizens from Madison County, helps educate the public about the problem and encourages them to spray or neuter their pet. The organization's future goals do include developing a low-cost spay and neuter clinic. But like all non-profit organizations it is dependent upon donations and fund-raising.

There are many benefits to spraying and neutering a pet.

Saving money. According to Humane Alliance, the U.S. spends \$1 billion annually (Madison County taxpayers spends more than \$1 million on animal control annually) to pick-up, house and destroy companion animals. The organization adds, if only 5 percent of that \$1 billion was allocated to spay and neuter, 250 clinics could be opened in the U.S. and sterilize more than four million cats and dogs every year.

And health benefits. There are also several health benefits to spaying and neutering your pets (visit www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/why_you_should_spay_or_neuter_your_pet.html).

To learn more about SNIP Alliance, visit www.snipalliance.org or call 618-488-2656..

For more information about pet-friendly license plates, visit www.cyberdriveillinois.com or call 217-785-5215.