



TOWN OF APPLE VALLEY

TOWN COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

To: Honorable Mayor and Town Council Date: April 10, 2018

From: Gina M. Whiteside, Director of Animal Services Item No: 9
Animal Services Department

Subject: PETS & PATRIOTS MONTH – PETS 4 VETS

T.M. Approval: _____ Budgeted Item: Yes No N/A

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the Town Council receive and file the Animal Services report on Pets & Patriots Month and Pets 4 Vets programs.

SUMMARY:

Over the last twelve (12) years, the Town Council has approved the implementation of numerous programs to help provide a *'Better Way of Life'* for animals in our community. As a result, the Apple Valley Animal Services (AVAS) Department offers a variety of authorized programs annually during designated months or year-round based on available funding. The department's purpose is to preserve and protect public health and safety and ensure the humane treatment and care of all animals. Programs that provide resources to decrease the numbers of animals in our Town's animal shelter are beneficial to reducing euthanasia.

In 2015, staff contacted Pets for Vets regarding participating in their program. Staff was told that their non-profit organization did not have a chapter in our area to work with the Town's Municipal Animal Shelter. In response to the rejection, staff proposed and the Town Council approved the implementation of other programs recognizing veterans in our community, including helping them adopt pet companions for free.

Sponsored programs such as Pets & Patriots Month and Pets 4 Vets offer additional solutions for increasing live release rates without reducing funding budgeted for the mandatory enforcement of animal related laws and daily operation of the Town's Municipal Animal Shelter.

BACKGROUND:

The Apple Valley Town Council has placed a high priority on meeting State mandates for animal control and sheltering by providing a Municipal Animal Shelter that has raised the bar for humane treatment/housing of stray and unwanted animals in our community. The level of care we provide is not only expected by our residents, it has been demanded by the citizens we serve and animal welfare advocates across the nation. Primarily, local taxes, animal related fines & fees and donations fund many of the amenities provided in our community by the Town of Apple Valley, including the Municipal Animal Shelter. Staff continues to offer programs that allow the department to minimize the costs of providing animal services for our residents while ensuring that not all taxpayers carry the burden of choices made by individual pet-owners.

AVAS activities to increase live release rates are generally incentives offered to pet owners that cover fees related to pet adoptions, reduce return-to-owner fines, offer emergency medical care assistance, and provide free or low-cost spay/neuter vouchers. Recognizing that offering incentives could negatively impact the funding available for the daily operations and maintenance of the department, the Town Council only authorized staff to offer the discounts when donations to fund the specific activity were secured.

It is important to note that revenues from State mandated and locally adopted fees cover some, but not all of the costs for rabies vaccination/dog licensing enforcement, investigating reported animal bites, ensuring humane treatment of animals in our community, handling potential dangerous animal calls, addressing public nuisance animals, supporting the District Attorney in animal cruelty prosecution, and providing animal sheltering services, including but not limited to costs for mandatory spay/neuter of adopted animals, vaccinations for incoming animals, and emergency after-hours response. To ensure that funding for the department's daily operation and maintenance is not negatively impacted, staff coordinates fundraising activities for proposed events to offset any loss in program fees that normally cover services provided by AVAS.

In 2015, staff contacted Pets for Vets regarding participating in their program. We did not have a copy of the original correspondence, which stated there was not a local chapter to work with the Town's Municipal Animal Shelter. Recently, staff submitted a second request to work with their group. Again, AVAS was told the Pets for Vets program is not available because there are no local chapters. Staff will be happy to work with a local chapter if one is ever formed by volunteers in our area. Given the level of involvement the non-profit Pets for Vets program requires, running a local chapter (branch of another

non-profit organization) is not an activity we could commit to with our existing staff. AVAS will continue to work with individuals, groups and organizations that provide the same types of services and recommend the use of our fundraising dollars to cover pet adoption costs for veterans.

Currently, one of AVAS's 146 rescues partners is the Las Vegas Animal Assisted Therapy. This non-profit 501c3 animal rescue provides outpatient mental health to individuals within Clark County, Nevada that are without medical/mental health insurance coverage, lack adequate insurance coverage or are otherwise ineligible to utilize non-crisis therapeutic interventions to increase their overall psychological wellbeing and welfare, e.g. the homeless population of Clark County, Nevada and qualified/non-qualified Veterans of the Armed Forces. Las Vegas Animal Assisted Therapy concurrently provide services to individuals, families, couples, groups, adults and minors from the ages of four to eighty-five years old, including hands-on therapy for children on the spectrum. Las Vegas Animal Assisted Therapy trains and utilizes animals from recognized rescue organizations for therapeutic purposes. All animals are handled and cared for by the volunteers committed to creating a bonding experience between animal and human in a therapeutic setting. As a licensed clinical practice, certification for animals to function as Emotional Support Animals (ESA) is also be completed in their programs. On 3/16/18 our rescue partner pulled four (4) dogs to train for us as therapy dogs and companions for veterans.

Pets & Patriots Month
September 2015
Apple Valley Patriot

Apple Valley Animal Services (AVAS) is recognizing September 2015 as **Pets & Patriots Month**. During the Month of September 2015, any active duty or retired military member, law enforcement, or fire personnel (First Responders) are being offered discounted adoption fees in recognition of their public service. *Valid ID Required*

\$25 Adoptions

This is in tribute to September 11th and in honor of the American patriotism that evolved following the tragedy of that event. AVAS believes that one of the greatest healing powers is the love of a pet. Pets have a way of providing unconditional love, companionship, and a sense of personal value.

Thank You for your Dedication to our Community and for your Service.

Pets 4 Vets

ADOPTION FEES WAIVED FOR MILITARY AND VETERANS

* License & Rabies fees may apply *

Open: Tuesday - Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
22131 Powhatan Rd. Apple Valley, CA | 760-240-7000 ext: 7555

PETS & PATRIOTS MONTH (Annually):

In September 2015, the annual Paws n' Claws Pet Fair was moved to October to take advantage of cooler weather. Therefore, staff recommended and the Town Council authorized Pets and Patriots Month to recognize "Apple Valley Patriots" including, veterans, first responders, politicians and everyday volunteers that have a bond with animals and share it with the public.

Adoption fees were lowered to \$25 for cats and dogs. During the first Pets and Patriots Month, \$825 in donations were received. This allowed AVAS to waive fees for twenty-four (24) cats/dogs that were adopted by military members (active/retired), law enforcement and fire personnel. A total of 138 pets were adopted during this same month, which was a 44% increase compared to the same month the year prior.

PETS 4 VETS (Throughout the Year):

Given the success of Pets & Patriots Month, staff used the remaining donated funds to launch Pets 4 Vets on November 1, 2015. This in-house program provides funding resources to cover all of the costs related to AVAS adoption fees, including spay/neuter surgeries, microchips and vaccinations. Focused fundraising for Pets 4 Vets takes place between November 1st and Veterans Day. As of February 2018, a total of twenty-six (15 dogs and 11 cats) have been placed through this adoption effort.

Pets 4 Vets is a free pet adoption program offered by AVAS that differs from a pet matching service provided by a non-profit 501c3 organization called Pets for Vets. The non-profit 501c3 depends on volunteers to open up local chapters, match rescued animals with qualifying veterans and train the pet to be a “skilled companion”. Skilled companions are not service dogs. A “skilled companion” is a pet that provides unconditional love, comfort and support to its owner. Pets for Vets does *“not have a facility to board dogs awaiting adoption. Instead, [they] visit rescues and shelters to find a specific pet for a Veteran depending on his/her needs.”* (Source petsforvets.com)

CONCLUSION:

Thanks to Pets & Patriots Month and Pets 4 Vets, fifty (50) cats/dogs have already been adopted from our shelter by qualifying individuals. Apple Valley Animal Services is dedicated to continuing free adoption programs that provide loving pet companions for veterans and military personnel that serve our country.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funds for Pets & Patriots Month and Pets 4 Vets are made available from the Apple Valley Community Resource Foundation Animal Services' fundraising activities, including but not limited to Cruisin' Fur Critters, Furball and other private donations. All discounts in fees are fully covered by fundraising dollars. This helps to ensure that there is not a negative impact to the operating budget of the Animal Services Department that would reduce other levels of mandatory service.