



**FY2018 Review of Programs & Activities  
Spay-Neuter Assistance Program, Inc.**



**Stop The Cycle.**



## **Spay-Neuter Assistance Program Review of Programs & Activities for Fiscal Year 2018**

The mission of Spay-Neuter Assistance Program, Inc. is to prevent the suffering and death of cats and dogs due to overpopulation and preventable diseases. Through free and low-cost veterinary care—with a focus on high-efficiency spay/neuter—we work toward a vision of a world with no homeless pets. We are currently operating in two major metropolitan areas: Greater Houston and San Antonio. These areas are comprised of sixteen Texas counties (Atascosa, Bandera, Bexar, Brazoria, Chambers, Comal, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Kendall, Liberty, Maverick, Medina, Montgomery, Waller, and Wilson). Again this year, project-specific grant-seeking has sought to secure funding which expands the geographical scope of our income-qualified subsidized services to include all Harris-adjacent and all Bexar-adjacent counties. In total, these service areas are home to almost nine million residents.

Historically, SNAP maintained two distinct tracts of service, with the stationary clinics exclusively offering low-cost spay/neuter and veterinary wellness care and the mobile clinics exclusively offering free spay/neuter and vaccinations. While this was an effective model in SNAP's early years, changing times and circumstances have rendered the model less effective, prompting us to re-evaluate the ways we use mobile services and the ways we define our projects and programs. Even though SNAP invented mobile spay/neuter, and our traditional mobile program is still part of a holistic solution, it is not a solution in and of itself. By equalizing the balance between free/subsidized and low-cost services across all of our clinics—stationary and mobile—we are able to maximize our resources and leverage our funding for greater impact, essentially erasing the outdated two-tract distinction.

In order to achieve this shift in service delivery models, in FY2016 SNAP set up the mechanism to continue to make subsidized services available to those who need them through an ongoing program we call **Empowering People & Pets** (EPP). EPP expands SNAP's founding program to provide free spay/neuter and vaccinations for dog and cat companions of people living below poverty level—people who otherwise would have no access to these services. People are empowered by being given the opportunity to provide a previously-unattainable level of care for their pets, develop a stronger animal/human bond, and contribute to the solution of animal overpopulation, homelessness, and neglect. Pets are given the chance to live their lives free from hormonal urges, preventable diseases, reproductive cancers, and the discomfort and dangers of giving birth. Evidence is showing that, even though fewer subsidized services are being done directly “on site” in low-income neighborhoods, the total number of clients who are receiving services through this program—with the same income qualifications in place—has increased significantly (41% increase in FY2018 over FY2017). This would indicate that having more flexibility in scheduling availability and location is of greater value to our clientele than was the former mobile-only delivery model.

Except where saturation in a particular neighborhood/community is needed, we are now using the mobile units as “satellite clinics” semi-permanently parked in high-need areas, thus increasing our geographic “footprint” and making access to SNAP's services available to people and pets in more communities. FY2017 saw the first implementation of this model in Baytown, Texas. In FY2018, we replicated the model in Fort Bend County and Lytle, Texas. In addition to making it easier to provide services to residents of these municipalities in fulfillment of our respective contracts, this enables us to make low-cost spay/neuter and veterinary wellness care accessible to the general public and subsidized services to income-qualified residents of these areas.

## 1. PROGRAMS:

All of our clinics—stationary clinics in Houston, Pasadena, and San Antonio, and multiple mobile satellite clinics—offer compassionate care through our three primary programs:

- ◆ **The Solution Begins Here**—low-cost spay/neuter,
- ◆ **Caring For Our Companions**—low-cost vaccinations and veterinary wellness care, and
- ◆ **Empowering People & Pets**—free/subsidized spay/neuter and veterinary wellness care for income-qualified clients.

## 2. ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

In FY2018 SNAP performed 28,080 spay/neuter surgeries. This is an increase of 1,127 (4.2%) over FY2017. 10,793 (38.4%) of these were done free of charge to their human custodians, empowering them to provide their beloved companion animals the care they otherwise would have been unable to afford and to contribute to the solution of animal overpopulation. These clients were also spared the expense of caring for unintended litters. Both humans and animals will benefit from an enriched quality of life through the deepening of the human/animal bond resulting from the removal of hormonal behaviors. These surgeries represent millions of births prevented—births of puppies and kittens, many of whom would have been unplanned and unwanted and would have been destined for lives of neglect, homelessness, and death on the streets or euthanasia. The generational ripple effect is exponential. (See *Estimates of Births Prevented* in the Stats-at-a-Glance table on page 8.) **The solution begins when the cycle ends.** In controlling the population of unwanted pets, SNAP reduces the burden placed on shelters and rescue groups and allows them to focus on the animals already in need of care. Veterinary wellness care was provided at affordable prices to an additional 16,332 animal patients. Many of our clients live below poverty level or are income-challenged; their visit to SNAP is often the only time their pets are seen by a veterinarian.

Grant funds from PetSmart Charities and The Greater Good helped SNAP provide services on location at the NRG Center evacuation shelter to the people and pets of the Greater Houston Area who evacuated their homes due to the flooding during Hurricane Harvey in August of 2017. Conditions at the center were very crowded, so containing communicable diseases was vital, as was treating conditions which resulted from the evacuation.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster, a total of 84 animals received veterinary wellness care at the major evacuee shelter. Clients & patients came from across Greater Houston—a metropolitan area with massive urban sprawl. As much as 30% of Harris County was underwater. Surrounding counties were also heavily affected. Of the patients receiving care, 49 were female dogs, 30 male dogs, 2 female cats, and 3 male cats. Most of the patients came for preventative care, though other conditions—such as eye infections and vomiting—were treated as well. There were 52 human clients; 15 of these had multiple animals, with the greatest number being 6. It is clear that changes to laws & regulations taking affect since Hurricane Katrina in 2005 requiring transportation & housing accommodations to allow companion animals access in natural disasters have had an impact on the number of animals who are evacuated with their human caregivers.

**Edward S.’s** home in Spring, Texas (a suburb north of Houston) flooded during Hurricane Harvey, and he was forced to evacuate, along with his rescue Labrador mix named Chelsie Marie. Having no means of transportation, Edward and Chelsie Marie eventually made their way to a

bus terminal to take a Metro bus to the evacuation shelter which had been set up at the NRG Center. As soon as the Spay-Neuter Assistance Program (SNAP) team was able to safely navigate one of their mobile satellite clinics to the NRG Center, they stocked the vehicle and got prepared to offer vaccinations, flea preventative, and microchips (along with other veterinary wellness care, when needed) to the companion animals of evacuees at the shelter. Once the clinic was up and running, Edward took the two-year-old dog to the clinic for treatment and microchipping. While Edward and Chelsie Marie were there, the SNAP veterinarians and support team told Edward about the availability of subsidized spay/neuter for people who had been displaced by the flooding, and he gladly made arrangements to get Chelsie Marie spayed, as well. Having Chelsie Marie by his side helped make the disruption and chaos of suddenly becoming homeless somewhat easier for Edward to cope with, and having access to the services SNAP was able to offer through this grant funding made the whole affair much safer for his steadfast companion.

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The SNAP team at the evacuation shelter at NRG Center checked in **Evelyn P.**'s three Chihuahuas (all three shelter rescues) and two rescued cats at the SNAP mobile satellite clinic which had been parked there to offer vaccinations, flea preventative, and veterinary wellness care for evacuees of Hurricane Harvey. As they took down Evelyn's personal information and information about each of the five animals (the old-fashioned way—with pen and paper—since Internet connectivity was unreliable, at best), they learned that Evelyn had been forced out of her home when the flood waters began to engulf her west Houston neighborhood. Making a quick exit from the danger zone with Snow, Annie (23 years old!), Sandy, Molly, and Jinksy—and the few essentials she could pack—had been no small feat. Even though Evelyn was glad to be safe with her furry companions, with so many people and animals in close proximity Evelyn was worried about the spread of diseases and was anxious to get vaccinations, flea preventative, and dewormer for her babies and to get them microchipped in case they should get separated from her in all of the turmoil. She was grateful for the compassionate care the SNAP team provided her beloved companions.

In April of 2018, SNAP became a partner with other local animal welfare agencies through the Coalition to Save Houston's Pets, launched by Best Friends Animal Society. This coalition, part of Best Friends' efforts to achieve "no kill" nationally by the year 2025, encourages cooperation among partner organizations to fill in the gaps to create solutions to reduce shelter killing of healthy, adoptable pets.

### **3. OUTCOMES:**

It's very hard to definitively quantify the impact we are having on animal overpopulation and euthanasia rates in the Greater Houston Area (private shelters handle a large percentage of shelter animals, and most of them do not disclose live release/euthanasia rates). However, data over many years have consistently shown spay/neuter to be the most effective solution. It is certainly the most humane, and also has the advantage of being the most cost effective. In San Antonio—where a coalition of municipal agencies, nonprofits, and foundations have

worked for over a decade to reduce the stray animal population and the number of animals killed in shelters—a major milestone was recently reached when the city became the largest “no kill” city in the nation. SNAP is very proud to have played a significant part in that success. Best Friends Animal Society and the Coalition to Save Houston’s Pets are working to increase transparency in area shelter statistics and to replicate San Antonio’s success in Houston/Harris County.

As a result of the services provided by the Spay-Neuter Assistance Program in FY2018, 28,080 cats and dogs will live happier, healthier lives free from hormonal urges, reproductive cancers, and the dangers of giving birth. By mitigating undesirable hormone-driven behaviors, the bond between humans and companion animals will be enhanced—affording all the benefits to physical, mental, and emotional health which have been proven in a multitude of studies. The likelihood of relinquishment of these cats and dogs to animal shelters and rescue groups will be greatly reduced. The 36,708 rabies vaccinations and boosters given by SNAP this year will diminish the threat and incidence of rabies in our communities. And the quality of life will be improved in neighborhoods as a result of fewer roaming animals and fewer animals killed by cars. Formulas for predicting dog and cat reproduction rates vary drastically, but by any measure, sterilizing almost 30,000 cats and dogs prevented the births of millions of kittens and puppies in the first year alone. This number grows exponentially when forecast over six or seven years’ time.

We also have maintained very high standards of care for the animals in our charge. All surgeries carry risk, so our large number of surgeries virtually guarantees that there will be occasional deaths. The generally-recognized “acceptable” rate of mortality for healthy animals is 0.11% for cats and 0.05% for dogs. Sadly, we lost eighteen patients in FY2018—twelve cats (0.09%) and six dogs (0.04%). Of course, that number is still too high, and—when the owners grant us permission—we have independent necropsies performed at the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory and try to glean information which will help us prevent future deaths. Of those animals who were necropsied, some were found to have underlying medical issues, so the mortality rate of “healthy” animals is even lower than the percentages cited above.

#### **4. SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES:**

SNAP is having to find ways of adapting to the changing landscape of the low-cost veterinary wellness market, as we have lost (at least temporarily) some of the market share in this area. Some major for-profit corporations are getting into this market (e.g. Banfield Pet Hospitals in PetSmart retail outlets and Thrive Veterinary Clinics in Petco stores). Spay/neuter has always been a “break even” venture for SNAP, with veterinary wellness services being a steady revenue generator, so this shift has a significant impact on SNAP’s financial wellbeing.

Another challenge which faces the entire field of high-efficiency spay/neuter is a shortage of veterinarians who are trained in this focused proficiency and/or who wish to work in a nonprofit, high-volume environment. Veterinary schools are just beginning to develop programs for shelter medicine (including high-efficiency spay/neuter), so most veterinarians enter the work force with very little knowledge or experience in this field. Recruiting and training veterinarians is expensive and time consuming, and a large number of shelters and spay/neuter clinics are all vying for the same small pool of candidates. As an international leader in high-efficiency spay/neuter, SNAP hopes to develop intern/extern programs to create a pipeline for entry into this field, not only to help with our own staffing needs, but also to help address this need for the larger animal welfare community.

## 5. FINANCIAL HEALTH:

Even though recent changes are expected to improve productivity and allow for more scalability in capacity over the long term, the period of transition as our *Three-Year Plan for Reorganization and Revitalization* was implemented caused a temporary drop in productivity—both in terms of earned revenue and in overall surgery numbers. On the heels of this slow down in fee-for-service revenue, a major fire and multiple catastrophic weather events both created unplanned expenses and caused clinic closures, further reducing income. Eradicating the consequent debt load is the largest obstacle we face currently. Under normal circumstances, the progress we have made over the past three years would have resulted already in a steadily-improving bottom line. Faced with multiple natural disasters, however, this progress (combined with sheer tenacity) was just sufficient to survive the additional challenges.

We are, however, seeing a steady upward trend in clinic revenues and number of surgeries performed. In spite of a few “blips” along the way\*, clinic productivity and revenues are now resulting in monthly income exceeding monthly expenses. This has allowed us to slowly, but methodically, chip away at outstanding debt. This debt burden (currently around \$800,000 including accounts payable, lines of credit, and loans payable) is the greatest obstacle we face, preventing us from moving forward in a sustainable way. Eradicating the debt will give us the cushion needed for unforeseen expenses and the ability to invest in increased capacity. Funds are being actively solicited to address this need. A “Facing the Crisis Together” donor appeal has brought in over \$50,000, and pledged/anticipated unrestricted foundation funding currently totals \$400,000 (with a potential additional grant of \$200,000).

## 6. CHANGES IN ORGANIZATION OR PROGRAMS:

Now in its third year of implementation, *Empowering People & Pets*—which erased the previous delineation between subsidized mobile services and fee-for-service stationary services—has seen a marked increase in the number of subsidized services provided organization wide. The higher capacity of the stationary clinics make this model much more practical than the former one. Additionally, freeing up some of the use of the mobile units allows us to seek new ways of using them more efficiently. One of the results of this has been the ability to semi-permanently park the units in high-need areas and create “test markets” to determine if a particular location might be a good choice for a future bricks-and-mortar facility. It also allows us to create a new revenue stream of mobile fee-for-service wellness care and better compete with the growing for-profit low-cost wellness market.

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*\*For instance, even though surgery numbers were up significantly in April, a large percentage of these surgeries were free to the client. While these subsidized surgeries are grant funded, no \*new\* income is coming in for these surgery slots. Our failure to “throttle” the scheduling so that a sufficient percentage of daily surgeries are fee-for-service based made controlling cash flow difficult. In addition to not having program service fees flowing in a predictable manner, clients who qualify for subsidized surgeries are less likely to opt for ancillary services like microchipping, heart worm testing, flea preventative, etc., further reducing the daily clinic revenue. We now have a more scientific scheduling protocol in place so that subsidized services are metered out in a more sustainable manner.*

## 7. GOALS FOR THE COMING YEAR

Our primary goals for the coming year are:

- ◆ continuing to stabilize our financial position,
- ◆ hiring/training additional veterinarians,
- ◆ increasing the number and frequency of services offered at our mobile satellite clinics,
- ◆ growing our spay/neuter capacity by an additional 2,500 surgeries.

For SNAP, our mission is our “project.” We exist solely for the purpose of saving and improving the lives of companion animals and the humans who love them, especially in low-income areas. For almost twenty-five years, we have been successfully carrying out that project. A healthy, vibrant SNAP is essential to the people and pets of the Greater Houston Area. We want to move into our next twenty-five years with the capacity for growth and scalability, so that we can continue to meet increasing demand as we move our community closer to our vision of a world with no homeless pets. That can only happen through partnership with funders who see the vital need for investment in SNAP’s mission.

## FY2018 Stats-At-A-Glance

	SWH	SWP	MOH	SWS	MOS	TOTAL
Rabies Vaccines	13,118	11,157	698	9,859	1,876	36,708
Dog Spay	2,686	2,369	221	2,671	319	8,140
Dog Neuter	2,624	1,935	173	2,030	202	6,568
<i>Total Dogs</i>	<i>5,310</i>	<i>4,304</i>	<i>394</i>	<i>4,701</i>	<i>521</i>	<i>14,708</i>
Cat Spay	2,603	1,864	180	2,108	384	6,961
Cat Neuter	1,979	1,532	109	1,527	210	5,284
<i>Total Cats</i>	<i>4,582</i>	<i>3,396</i>	<i>289</i>	<i>3,635</i>	<i>594</i>	<i>12,245</i>
Total Surgeries	9,892	8,439	787	8,145	817	28,080
	Houston Area		19,118	SA Area	8,962	28,080
Subsidized Surgeries	3,983	1,777	737	3,539	757	10,793
	Houston Area		6,497	SA Area	4,296	10,793
% Subsidized	40%	21%	94%	43%	93%	38%
	Houston Area		34%	SA Area	48%	38%
EPP	1,452	1,334	250	2,091	124	5,251
	Houston Area		3,036	SA Area	2,215	5,251
Community Cats	709	427	4	448	91	1,679
	Houston Area		1,140	SA Area	539	1,679
% Community Cats	15%	13%	1%	12%	15%	14%
	Houston Area		14%	SA Area	13%	14%
Pregnant	194	126	15	140	19	494
% Pregnant at Spay	3.7%	3%	1.9%	2.9%	2.7%	3.1%
Wellness Care	6,896	5,118	19	3,703	1,075	16,811
	Houston Area		12,720	SA Area	4,646	16,811
Total Animals Helped	16,788	12,333	806	11,848	1,892	44,891
	Houston Area		31,151	SA Area	13,740	44,891

## Clinic Codes:

SWH—Houston Spay-Neuter &amp; Animal Wellness Clinic

MOH—Houston Mobile Clinics

SWP—Pasadena Spay-Neuter &amp; Animal Wellness Clinic

MOS—San Antonio Mobile Clinics

SWS—San Antonio Spay-Neuter &amp; Animal Wellness Clinic

## Estimates of Births Prevented\*

	Community Cats	House Cats	Dogs	Total Births
End of Year 1	3,380	36,938	45,794	86,113
End of Year 7	1,970,694	195,099,124	157,275,753	354,345,571

## \*Assumptions

*The numbers of animals directly affected are exact numbers, recorded in our computerized database. The number of births prevented is estimated using research-based formulas derived by National Pet Alliance researcher Karen Johnson, assuming 50% of the offspring would have been female.*

- The formula for feral ("community") cat reproduction rate is 2.1 litters per year with an average litter size of 4.25 kittens and an infant mortality rate of 62.5%.
- The formula for house cat reproduction rate is 2.1 litters per year with an average litter size of 4.25 kittens and an infant mortality rate of 33%.
- The formula for dog reproduction rate is 1.45 litters per year with an average litter size of 5.5 puppies and an infant mortality rate of 25%.

None of the three calculations takes adult mortality into account.