

Minutes of General Meeting of Animal Companions of Las Cruces

Nov. 14, 2022 via Zoom

Attendees: Dawn Duncan (President), Nancy Sharp (VP), Miguel Marquez (Treasurer/Webmaster), Dara Parker (Secretary), Julie Basile (Member-at-Large), Cherri Hudson-Brown (Member-at-Large), Debbie Iles, Patti Knowles, Linda Mandel, Candis Stern, Geri Wheelis.

MEETING WITH LAS CRUCES VETERINARY STAFF IN CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS:

Dawn reported that a goal we've had since the beginning of our group 14 months ago was to have a meeting with the board and local veterinarians to find out what their needs were and how we could support them. Thanks to the Office of the Las Cruces Mayor working with us to reach out to the veterinarians and setting up a meeting, that goal was accomplished this Nov. 10. All the Las Cruces veterinary practices were represented except for two, one was dealing with emergency surgery for a pet and the other extremely short staffed. Dawn presided, and Assistant to the Mayor, Carolyn Horner, co-hosted. Our thanks to the Mayor's office and especially Carolyn for their work to make this happen.

These are the veterinary practices people who did attend the joint meeting: Animal Hospital—Dr. John Morrow and Cessie Ramirez, Practice Manager; Arroyo—Dr. Julie Gray; Jornada—Dr. Woodson Tucker; Large Animal Mobile Vet—Dr. Heather Ratzlaff; Large Animal Private Practice—Dr. Allison Stout; Paws in Life Relief—Dr. Cassie Hoisington, relief veterinarian and mobile vaccinations/euthanasia; Schumacher Veterinary—Katie Simpson, Lead Technician and Diane Thurston, Practice Manager; Zia Mobile—Dr. Lauren Short; Dr. John Wenzel, Cooperative Extension Service, NMSU.

What we learned through the meeting were the following:

- We need to do more education to help prevent emergencies. This work includes programs for pet parents as well as information for newcomers to the area who may not be aware of certain diseases or dangers for pets living in the area. We are looking into creating videos to put on YouTube and live events perhaps quarterly in parks and high schools.
- Clinics advertise but we need to sell Las Cruces as a place for veterinarians to move to. Externships for two to four weeks for veterinary students may be one way to attract them later.
- We need to raise much more money to help with debt relief scholarships. The average debt for a veterinary student is \$300,000.
- It would be good to have a central location to post jobs. Maybe we can put on our website a place for people to find job listings. The city may or may not be able to do something also.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS—Dawn reported that the Senior Amigos fair for volunteers is Thursday, Nov. 17. We will have a table from 2 to 5 p.m. There are potentially 400 volunteers who used to volunteer at Mountainview Medical Center who may be available to help elsewhere. Dawn and Nancy will work the fair.

ON-LINE AUCTION—Miguel reported that we've partnered with Mesilla Valley Estate Sales and will have an on-line auction Dec. 7 through Dec. 14. Pick up of items successfully bid will be 9 a.m. to noon Friday, Dec. 16 and Saturday, Dec. 17. Board members will greet and sign in winners, help assist locating items and check that items have been paid. The auction will be advertised on Facebook and Nextdoor. During the online auction, people may just make a monetary donation in addition or in place of bidding.

WEBSITE—Miguel is updating information on veterinary practices such as Paws in Life Relief which provides relief services and euthanasia. We will also be adding education to our goals and potentially have videos on vaccinations, diseases and other concerns.

DONATIONS—Miguel said that we have a total of \$63,200.13 from 109 donors (that's up from \$59,805.13 from 98 donors reported in October). When we take out the five percent administrative fee we pay to the Community Foundation of Southern New Mexico, and subtract printing and postage costs we have \$60,548.07 in our general fund. The foundation fee has a three-month lag. The last time we paid was in August.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION—Dawn said that because we have more money in our account our fee will be around \$3,000 a month so we may push to become a 501 3c on our own, hopefully in February. Dara will be working on our by-laws and other things we need in order to accomplish this. We will need a treasurer. Miguel has been our treasurer and web manager but will need to concentrate just on the latter. Patti Knowles is a professional accountant and indicated an interest in perhaps taking on the treasurer role. Dawn said we have a two-year contract with the foundation (we've been with them since January 2022), but we can leave if we give a month's notice.

VOLUNTEER HOURS—Dara, who is the one to report hours to), said that since we've been collecting the number of volunteer hours reported since September, we have had 12 individuals with a reported 785 hours and 45 minutes total for September and October. Those who haven't reported hours can do a good faith estimate of the hours put in. Keeping track of hours may help us with grants, such as showing volunteer hours as in-kind help value to monetary value.

ACTION ITEMS—These are the items Dawn highlighted:

—Get word of mouth and social meeting postings out about the auction.

—Encourage friends and family to donate or volunteer.

—Make a monetary gift in someone's name. Nancy has come up with a Season of Giving card idea for those who make donations.

—Consider hosting a veterinary student for two weeks for the student's externship with a vet.

—For your own vets, send them treats or a thank you note to let them know they're appreciated.

Dawn stressed that everyone has different circumstances and that just getting the word out about the auction would be a great help.

NEW BUSINESS—Linda asked about how contacts with vet schools has gone. Dawn said she has had good response from Iowa State and Texas A & M. Linda said the person she needs to contact at the University of Illinois has been out of the office. Linda hasn't been able to get a hold of the University of Florida, Gainesville person, but will try. Candis said she will call Michigan State. Dawn reminded people she has a template on what to ask university people. Debbie Iles volunteered to help make contacts.

EUTHANASIA AND PALLIATIVE CARE FOR PETS—Candis mentioned Dr. Kane's practice, "Gift of Goodbye". Dawn said we should contact Dr. Kane and add her information to our vet resources page. Geri said that you have to give Dr. Kane advance notice of when you would need her services. Nancy said Dr. Kane's answering message said she couldn't help until after Dec. 13. Geri said Lauren Short also makes house calls for euthanasia but needs advance notice.

YouTube version of the meeting: <https://youtu.be/mmRbtheT63s>