

Spay Day USA, Hooray!

Spay/neuter clinics across the country find a lot can be accomplished with a little tenacity—and good night vision

BY ALEXANDRA KLEINKOPF



When a blackout hit Davis, Calif., during Spay Day USA sterilization events, some dedicated veterinarians just neutered in the dark.
HECTOR AMEZCUA/THE SACRAMENTO BEE

“Oh, Spay Can You See?” was the anthem at the South Davis Veterinary Center (SDVC) when stormy weather struck just in time for the center’s Spay Day USA sterilization event in late February.

“When the storm came in, we thought the only thing that would happen would be people wouldn’t show up,” says Cara Bradley, D.V.M., co-founder and veterinarian at the Davis, Calif., center. “It’s hard to find your cat when it’s stormy.”

But the surprisingly high turnout was overshadowed, quite literally, by a surprise blackout—while the first of 21 male cats was still on the table. Luckily, nearby vet hospitals participating in Spay Day still had power and were able to take the clinic’s spay patients. The ambitious team of SDVC vets then pressed on in the

dark for the next two hours, performing the remaining kitty neuters by the light of miners’ headlamps!

“The funny thing was, right when we finished the last cat and were cleaning up, the power came back on,” laughs Bradley. Despite the impromptu blackness, she says everything was very organized, and all the neuters were successfully completed. In fact, she says, “It was a great day.”

In Cookeville, Tenn., the Humane Society of Putnam County (HSPC) held a Spay-ghetti dinner on Valentine’s Day; the event raised nearly \$2,300 in one night, half of which went directly to subsidizing spay/neuter surgeries in the community. “It’s just a fun, different way of looking at something,” says HSPC board

president Linda Clemons, who admits she “stole” the idea from an animal welfare conference about nine years back, and has successfully been hosting the event ever since. With 221 tickets sold, the evening featured door prizes, donations, and *lotsa pasta*.

Spay Day hit the road in Ohio, where the RASCAL (Roaming Animal Sterilization Clinic at Low Cost) made a pit stop at the Gratis Volunteer Fire Department in Preble County to sterilize dogs, cats, and even rabbits. “The people are so appreciative of [RASCAL],” says RASCAL unit organizer Thora Smith. “They think it’s the neatest thing when the van pulls up and they see all the animals lined up getting ready to be fixed.”

In February alone, RASCAL sterilized 50 animals. "We're having a big turnout," Smith says, adding that even farmers have hopped on the spay/neuter wagon, bringing RASCAL their barn cats for surgery.

Sterilization at low cost has proven effective in Virginia, too. The Charlottesville Albemarle SPCA, working in conjunction with Voices for Animals and the Angels of Assisi mobile unit, fixed 63 animals on Feb. 11 and 12, and the organization sterilized a total of 4,460 animals in 2007.

"It's fantastic how many we're able to do now," says building administrator and spay/neuter coordinator Beth McPhee. The organization offered free cat sterilizations in February and March. During those months, McPhee explains, "We did mass advertising on it; we're taking oodles of phone calls, and we're really hoping it's going to reduce the numbers coming in our door this spring and summer season." CASPCA has also run free pit bull sterilizations over the past couple of years, with funds from grants, donations, and help from PetSmart Charities.

From coast to coast, Spay Day USA was a success in the land of the free surgeries and the home of the brave participants. The HSUS sends a big "thank you!" to sponsors Nature's Miracle and Zoombak! For more on the event and ideas on how you can participate next year, go to spaydayusa.org.

Around the World in 80 Spays

Spay Day crossed borders this year, too: Through Humane Society International, animal welfare groups from all over the world shared their spay/neuter event results and competed for prizes in the first ever Spay Day International. From Venezuela to Lebanon to South Africa, participants went sterilization wild—in South Africa alone, events ranged from an educational booth held at a biker rally to sterilization surgeries performed by a barefoot veterinarian. International participants spayed or neutered more than 400 cats and dogs and reached countless people. For more on participating organizations and their work, visit humanesocietyinternational.org. AS



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