



# Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force

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## How-To Guide



*A Lesson in  
Changing  
Attitude*

# *Jean Is The SPARK Who Started It All*

*She Had  
A Dream*



*Her SPARK  
Will Change Our  
World Forever*

*Photo by: Erin Hollern*

## *Jean Atthowe*

Google “Jean Atthowe” and one finds evidence that she is one of the founders of Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force, an innovative and caring woman, dedicated to partnering with people to reawaken our connections to all beings, to the land, to our resources and to each other. One finds Jean quoted about the cycle of violence, statistics about dog bites decreasing in communities who have pet care events, the centerpiece of which is a spay/neuter demonstration clinic, and about working together as equals, not as teachers and students. There are quotes from and about Jean Atthowe in Animal People, Latham Letter, Spay/USA, Best Friends, and websites such as ASPCA Imagine Humane, and the Alberta Spay/Neuter Task Force. Groups from many states including Wisconsin, Texas, Oregon, Florida, as well as the countries of Mexico, Czechoslovakia, and Armenia work with Jean to develop their own Task Force model.

*What can we say to an intelligent, dedicated, fair-minded woman who gives and gives, partners and shares?*

*We Can Say – THANK YOU*

Prepared by  
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Task Force Logo.

*We are an all-volunteer organization.  
Your donations support spay/neuter for  
dogs and cats in need.*



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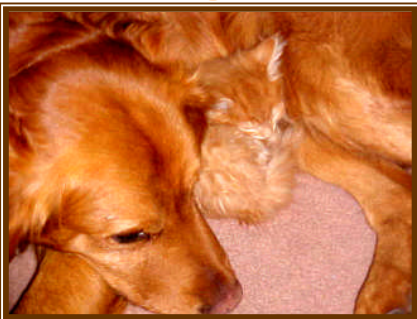
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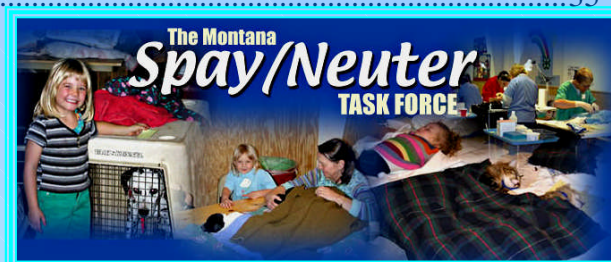


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### ACRONYMS

IRS	Internal Revenue Service
M.A.S.H.	Mobile Army Surgical Hospital
RC&D	Rural Conservation and Development
S.P.O.T.	Stop Pet Overpopulation Today
USA	United States of America



*"Let The Happily Ever After Begin"*



No worries for  
us!

*Why Mop Up The Mess?*  
*Turn Off The Spigot*

## **TASK FORCE MOTTO**

*Why Try To Mop Up The Flood  
Of Unwanted Cats And Dogs ??????*

*Turn Off  
The SPIGOT*

SPAY / NEUTER





## MONTANA SPAY/NEUTER TASK FORCE MISSION STATEMENT

*“Respect for life.  
Reverse universal acceptance of killing as a solution to pet overpopulation  
through education, low-cost spay and neuter,  
through community involvement.”*

**Goal:** Address circumstances that put burdens on community resources....resulting in less violence in our communities.

**Task One:** Use a community approach. Find community-wide solutions supported by the community and involving the community.

**Task Two:** Involve all entities.

**Task Three:** Provide a mobile spay/neuter service that Montana communities may invite to promote low-cost spay/neuter programs, activities and education efforts addressing this mission and goal.

**Task Four:** Promote, encourage, and lead efforts initiating and passing legislation supporting this mission and goal.

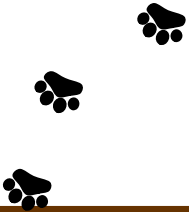
**Task Five:** Create a model animal care/control program for rural areas that will teach values stated in our mission.

**Task Six:** Develop a network of Montanans and other supports concerned about the welfare of animals in the context of this mission and goal. The network list will be used to effect pursuing this mission and goal.



**Task Seven:** Encourage communities in efforts that create local organizations supporting this mission and goal, and who will join in carrying out these tasks: promote support and funding from local elected officials.

- Each group may become a subgroup of the Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force, but must incorporate itself.
- Chapters should consider this mission and goal when undertaking tasks.
- Chapters must coordinate with a member of the Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force on any committee event using Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force name and resources.






*The hope is to create in you the reader a mind set that will influence your conceptualization. You can print the guide in color or black and white on 8 ½ x 11 paper and place in a ring binder so that any page can be removed and copied for use by your volunteers.*



Dear Reader,

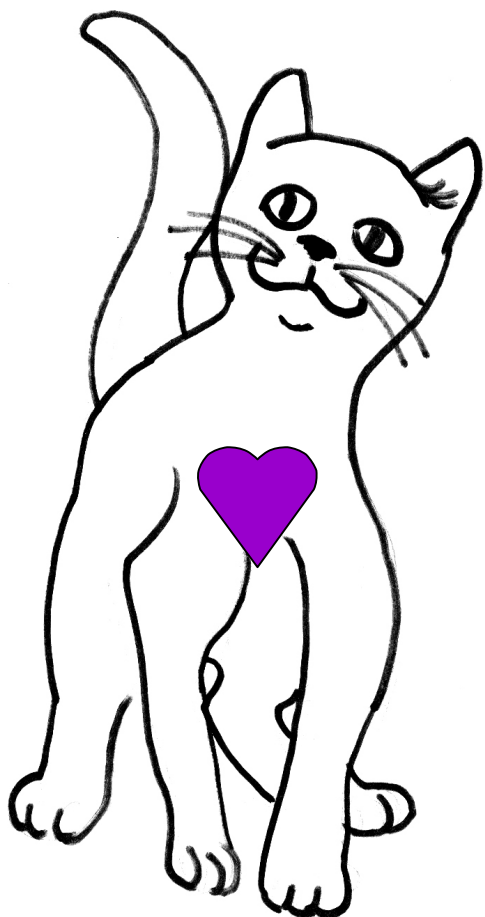
As you access the how to instructions following our introductory pages, please keep in mind the following thoughts that have guided the Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force.



## A LESSON IN CHANGING ATTITUDE

Many who open these pages will be thinking about spaying and neutering cats and dogs to reduce pet overpopulation, overcrowded shelters, overworked animal control programs and the mass killing of homeless but healthy, adoptable cats and dogs. So, one would envision a surgery table in the forefront of all the guidelines to be found herein.

But this Task Force How-to-Guide is about far more than the spay/neuter surgery provided at Task Force Community Pet Care events under the best circumstances that medical science can provide in a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital (M.A.S.H.) approach. Changing attitudes and behaviors is the major science practiced in creating and providing a Community Pet Care event. M.A.S.H. unit implies wars and emergencies. The Pet Overpopulation Crisis **IS** cause for war and emergency measures. War is one science. Mobilizing the population is another. A Task Force EVENT in itself **IS** an education. No matter the seeming chaos, it is organized “chaos”, scientific in the medical approaches provided AND in the organizing and running of the Event.



This How-to-Guide is a lesson in how to change attitude and behavior. Evidence indicates that education is a complex operation, not neat, squeaky clean, or looking overtly as efficient as a scientist's laboratory or, for that matter, the average veterinary clinic. A Task Force event is an education not only for pet owners, but for local community volunteers, elected officials, civic and business leaders and organizations and youth groups.

A goal of the Task Force is to bring about a change in behavior that will thus bring a change in attitude through respecting animals and then other living creatures including members of their own family, school classes, and community.

A sizeable body of literature has been accumulated in the fields of market research and social psychology about changing attitude and behavior. We now know through numerous studies that it is simplistic to think that “knowing” (cognitive change) leads to attitude change which leads to long-term behavior changes. The process is much more complex. Combinations from the following list must be present to change behavior and thus change in attitude.

This **how-to guide encompasses a puzzle**, which the reader is asked to solve. After reading the following list, try to recognize in the pages of this guide those elements needed to bring about change in behavior and thus attitude.

## SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SPAY/NEUTER?

### IT'S NOT ABOUT THE MONEY BUT ABOUT THE COMMUNITY'S FOUNDATIONS

within which can be provided those elements needed to **Bring About Long Term** attitude and behavior change

**Social capital:** *a measure of how closely people in a community are interconnected, how much people there feel responsible for each other*, as Robert Putnam, Harvard University, explains. Levels of social capital predict the quality of the schools and other community institutions and thus the effectiveness of that community in bringing about change. The problem with an external agent, governmental or non-governmental, handing down largesse - (giving the building of bridges, roads, schools, or, for that matter, trucking in of vaccines for the dogs and cats or a mobile spay/neuter event) - is that it runs counter to everything known about how social capital grows. And, without social capital, societies fall apart, even if the roads are smooth and the trains run on time, and the dogs are not running at large. And sadly, numerous studies show that even if external agents, governmental or non-governmental, have a tough time helping social capital grow, they can - and regularly do - cause social capital to decline. Such external organizations, reports Anirudh Krishna of Duke University, can do virtually nothing to build social capital - they can build bridges, but they cannot build connections between people. "You cannot build social capital from above," he says.

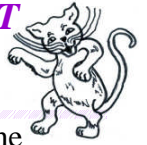
**"It can only be built by the people involved."**  
*Social capital theory suggests that local citizens need to feel not only that they are the ones making decisions, that diverse groups are willing to work together, but that they are the ones who actually carry them out, even if projects take much longer to complete.*

**HERE IS WHERE THE ELEMENTS NEEDED TO CHANGE ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOR COME IN.** (When one takes into account the perspective of the receiver, **HOW** one "gives" (largesse) is as complex as **HOW** one "instills knowledge."



*These concepts are not the easiest to capture, but skill in doing so makes the reader a leader and a trail-builder within the community he or she wants to change.*

## ***ELEMENTS OF A PERSUASIVE MESSAGE THAT MAKE THE MOST IMPACT***



- ☐ 1. The message comes from many/multiple sources of high credibility – which have in the community – power, trust, expertise, similarity.
- ☐ 2. The message is repeated often and consistently.
- ☐ 3. The message is a multiple media message at accessible times and locations.
- ☐ 4. The message is accompanied by a high level of personal involvement with the issues and is consistent with related attitude and value structure.
- ☐ 5. The message has a high level of social support or acceptance in the receiver's environment.
- ☐ 6. The message affords opportunities to give expression to other newly formed attitudes (i.e. opportunities to act out the new behavior)



## ***FACTORS NEEDED TO CONTRIBUTE TO LONG-TERM BEHAVIOR CHANGE***

- ☐ 1. The message must target specific behaviors to be changed.
- ☐ 2. The message must address or create a desire, or motivate a desire.
- ☐ 3. The message must provide multiple/many alternative behaviors to replace the old behavior.
- ☐ 4. The message must show concern for making the social environment supportive.

## ***MASS MEDIA PROGRAMS THAT WERE SUCCESSFUL IN EFFECTING BEHAVIORAL CHANGE DID THE FOLLOWING:***

- ☐ 1. Incorporate information pertaining to behavioral alternatives and skills development within the message itself.
- ☐ 2. Provide positive interaction with receiver of the message.
- ☐ 3. Supplemented a mass communication-type message with a face-to-face follow up.
- ☐ 4. Mobilized community resources to make alternatives more easily available.

To ease the reader's mind in this assignment, the last page of this Guide provides a crib sheet for the desperate.





## HEAVY WORDS! ....BUT

Ultimately, you will find to your surprise that “All I was doing was petting the cat” or “All I did was welcome the kids who brought their puppies” was more than simply “all.”

You will become a community leader who has been practicing a science all along.  
And now that you know this, you are **EMPOWERED**.

## ONE LAST STEP

Many readers may have been involved in animal rescue and similar activities that may have slanted their view of “those people out there” and so they just “don’t like them”.



Such readers should examine their own attitudes. To practice the above, to change the behavior and attitude of “those people out there”, one must like those with whom they are working for change. It is an attitude of WITH them, NOT TO them that produces the impact of a Task Force event.

## I. ALWAYS REMEMBER - THE BIG PICTURE

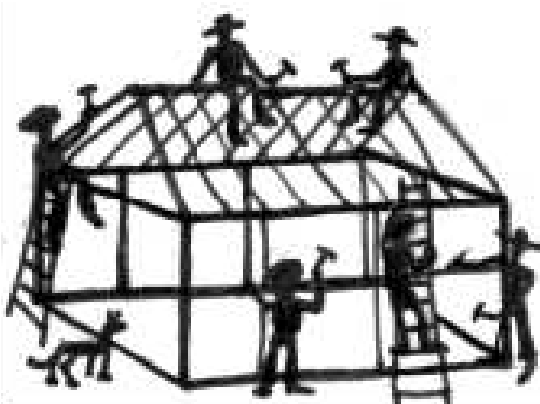
Pet overpopulation and the problems it causes have been a never-ending "drag" in our communities. Its results are ever-present, often occurring in the shadows. Officials have *"too many other things to do and not enough money."* Accepted solutions include numerous methods of killing unwanted animals. Unacceptable but ever-present results include abandonment, neglect, abuse and cruelty.

*Too many pets.*

Pets casually acquired run the risk of being casually treated, leading to an atmosphere of violence in a community, leading, also, to a population of dangerous, unsocialized, aggressive dogs and sick dogs and cats.

A Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force "EVENT" brings all these problems and a solution out into the open, into the light of day.

A Task Force "EVENT" inspires citizens to step up, shine a light and create a solution through hands-on, grass roots action.



*A community solution, event, and celebration*

A Task Force event is like a barn raising. In earlier days, American communities came together voluntarily to help one neighbor do what one could never do alone - raise a barn.

The sides and roof could be assembled on the ground, but many hands were needed to raise the wooden structure walls and connect them. Many hands gave (equaled) hard work, team work, mutual support, families working together, food and drink, and celebration at the finish - and all in the light of day.

Indeed, a Task Force approach could highlight any number of needs in a community - and their solutions.

As with an old fashioned barn-raising, a Task Force "EVENT" can seem a little chaotic compared to the modern science of building structures.

*A Task Force "EVENT" acknowledges that the pet overpopulation crisis is cause for war. The Task Force "EVENT" takes a wartime footing, the M.A.S.H. approach that the military takes to treat the wounded in the field as quickly and fully as possible, many, many patients arriving at once.*

At times, a Task Force "EVENT", which addresses the social problems involved in pet overpopulation, might seem to collide with the practice of science - in the same way that a military field hospital under wartime conditions challenges the ideal practice of science

***Never forget the Big Picture***

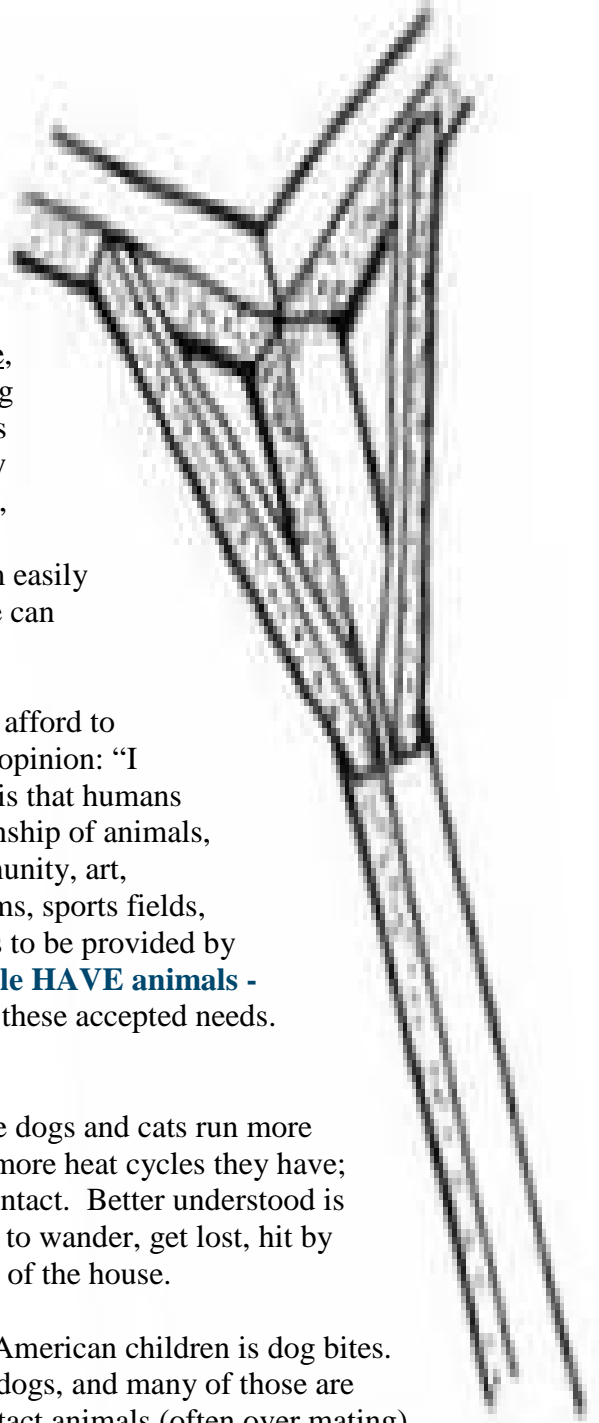
Those who observe the effects of a Task Force "EVENT", no matter how focused they may be on caring for animals or as a community member on the negative impact of too many animals, must never forget the Big Picture.

Remember, everyone comes to the problem from a different perspective: as a pet owner and lover, as a public health official, as a school principal worried about strays in the school yard, as a bird and wild life lover, as a City Council member who can count animal complaints as one of the top three complaints made to City Hall. A Task Force "EVENT" addresses all these perspectives- keeping in mind the Big Picture.



## THE FOUR CORNER POSTS OF A TASK FORCE "EVENT"

1. **Health of the community** - besides the financial costs of managing "all those dogs" and the many dog bites that drain a community, killing, shooting, ignoring, maiming animals is a "drag" on a community. Killing as the answer to pet overpopulation festers and affects the communal psyche, promotes acceptance of violence, especially if the killing is approved by elected "leaders", our role models, and is funded by taxpayers. The "Cycle of Violence", recently identified by researchers as a pattern in all communities, reveals the tie: animal abuse/child abuse/domestic violence/violence. Again, too many animals make them easily acquired and readily discarded, abused, neglected. "We can always get another puppy."
2. **Needs of people** - standard opinion: "those who cannot afford to spay and neuter their pets should not have pets." More opinion: "I don't want to subsidize my neighbor's dog." Evidence is that humans seem to have an almost biologic need for the companionship of animals, just as they have recognized needs for recreation, community, art, beauty, open space. Communities agree: Parks, museums, sports fields, arenas, community halls, fairgrounds are accepted goals to be provided by taxpayer money and community support. **Helping people HAVE animals - responsibly** is not so distant a community service from these accepted needs. One way to help is by providing low-cost spay/neuter.
3. **Health of animals** - not so common knowledge: female dogs and cats run more risk of uterine and mammary cancer and infections the more heat cycles they have; that male dogs risk prostate cancer the longer they live intact. Better understood is that dogs and cats unaltered are many times more likely to wander, get lost, hit by cars, in territorial fights. They mark territory in and out of the house.
4. **Health of citizens** - The number one cause of injury to American children is dog bites. Almost 80% of those bites are delivered by intact male dogs, and many of those are tethered and unsocialized. Dog and cat fights among intact animals (often over mating) threaten community members. The problems associated with pet overpopulation and the costs to a community are social, financial and psychological burdens.





## THE CROSSBEAMS THAT TIE ALL TOGETHER

1. **Make a "wasteland" of breeding dogs and cats in a community** by demonstrating how to create a community "pet care "EVENT" the centerpiece of which is a no-cost, large volume demonstration spay/neuter assistance clinic.
2. Where there are no veterinarians and when it is obvious that cats and dogs, kittens and puppies will not be sterilized, the following is the rule: all breeding-age dogs and cats, in heat, nursing, pregnant, young and old are spayed and neutered. Remember, this is a war and a M.A.S.H. solution.
  - Very young pre-puberty kittens and puppies are spayed and neutered when it is obvious that their future is: hunger, abandonment, neglect and homelessness.
  - Use the 70% solution. A Fourteenth Century formula is followed even today by epidemiologists; if 70% of the population is vaccinated against a disease, it will be eradicated.
  - Spay/neuter as many as possible AT ONE time, not over several months.
3. Go public. The "EVENT" IS the education. Task Force" EVENT" involves the whole community in a demonstration, commitment and celebration: old, young, business, civic and elected leaders

### **Task Force Model**

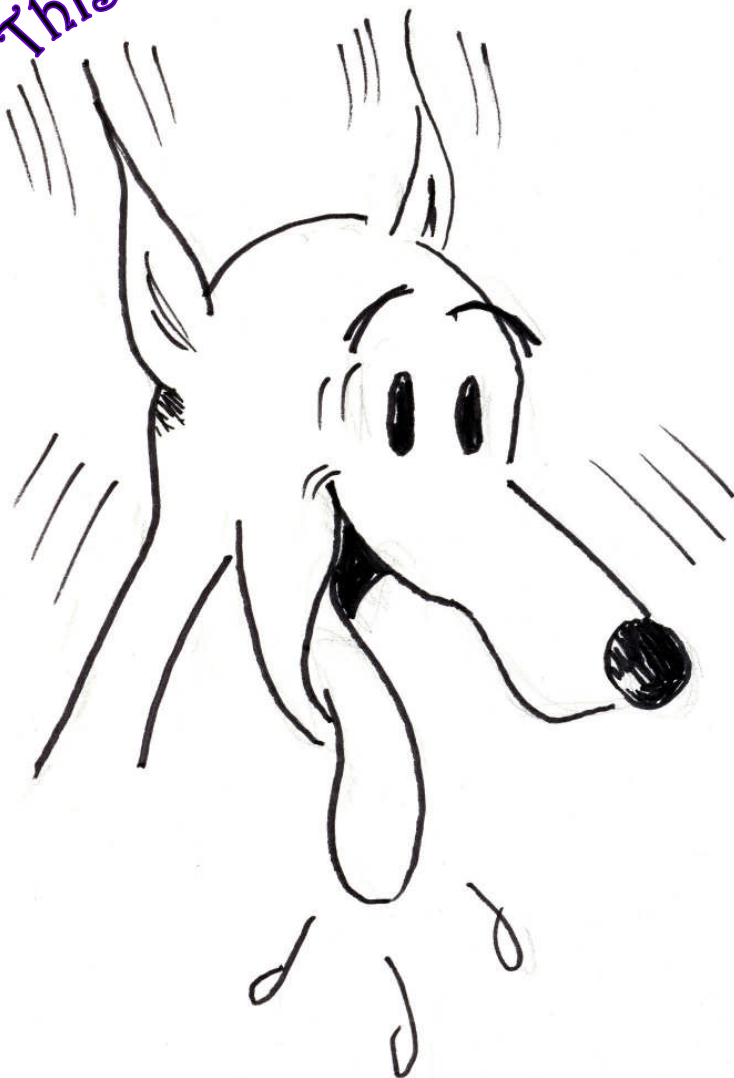
4. Involve the public in the process by setting up the "EVENT" in an existing building, deeply imbedding the action in the community.
5. Approach the community through its culture - rural, urban, ranching, farming, Native American, Latino, for example.

## WHERE IS YOUR STAIRSTEP?

As you read the following pages on how to create a Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force model "EVENT", please remember the history of the Task Force project Stop Pet Overpopulation Today (S.P.O.T.). Where and how it began and where the Task Force has traveled to arrive where it is today will help you understand that it was a long, long stairway. Not everyone or group is going to be able to start at the top of that staircase.

*Somewhere in the Task Force story is the stair step you will recognize as your starting point.*

*This is the Beginning of Something GREAT*



## Our First Step



**And so on:** The next site: Heart Butte, a remote small town in Blackfeet Country, an old one engine fire hall, engine removed in the day, scrunched back in at night. Power, but no water. Two veterinarians, some local volunteers, three Task Force volunteers, one anesthesia machine acquired through a small grant from a national organization.

**Our next step:** The first Montana "EVENT" was created in November 1996 at the invitation of the Blackfeet Tribal Council. The Nation lies just east of Glacier Park and on the Canadian border. A used 1985 Chevrolet van (\$5,000), still painted in its original utility grey, carried supplies and equipment up and over Marias Pass into the capitol of the Nation, Browning. Equipment: a used autoclave, donated, used Pakistani surgical instruments, no anesthesia machine (injectable anesthesia was used). Surgery site: six days in an enclosed one car garage, heated for the purpose. Staff: one heroic veterinarian, one experienced volunteer vet tech, a number of Blackfeet volunteers of all ages, one Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force volunteer.

**Our second step:** In time, with support from a few important people, the group formed a charitable corporation, a local attorney assisting. Encouraged by a large city animal control program director in Montana, The Task Force applied for and received a \$10,000 grant from a small Montana Foundation, of which there are few in the state.

**Our first step:** The Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force Project S.P.O.T. was just a spark in a few heads in a small Montana town of less than 4,000 in 1992 when the first members, a total of four, met after hours in the pet grooming shop of one of the founders. Lots of dog and cat hair.



## WHERE WE ARE NOW

*The Task Force has now helped create Events in all seven Native American Nations in Montana, all major Montana cities, and most small towns and counties. Now the Task Force returns under a program - Phase II (See Section VII – What Next?) - where local communities/elected officials cover all or part of the surgery cost. Inquiries on how to create a Task Force model Spay/Neuter Program come from around the world every month. That is the reason for this detailed how-to guide.*





## THE HARDEST PART - FINDING THE SPARK

The hardest part?  
Finding deep in each community the

### **ONE SPARK**

That will lead to the creation of a Task Force “EVENT”. From that spark, all grows. How to find it? How long does it take? What patience and focus is required?



## PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

**The First Purpose** of this Guide is to **empower**, to empower those in small communities far from the beaten path, those in neighborhoods bypassed, lost in the bustle and growth of sprawling cities, to empower all those who, however, have one great power - grassroots knowledge of their neighborhoods.

When the Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force was preparing for its first event in Blackfeet Country, as described earlier, one Task Force volunteer received a package delivered by the post to her front door. Opening the package, she could see a mass of metal objects. Surgical instruments all in a heap. An early friend of the

Task Force, a veterinarian, had donated to the Task Force the first surgical instruments he could afford to buy when opening his first veterinary clinic. They were economy Pakistani instruments.

She closed the box. They each were a total mystery to her. Those instruments were not only a mystery. They were intimidating. Today, she knows exactly the name of each instrument and exactly its use. She had to learn these instruments. There was no one behind her to whom she could pass off the task and the responsibility.

*Every reader of this Guide will soon know what she learned, and become empowered.*

**The Second Purpose** of this Guide is to encourage and promote faith that solving the community problem of pet overpopulation and all its attendant community problems is possible and in the very foreseeable future. Solving this problem will affect the entire community, those who love animals, those who dislike them and everyone in between these two stances, thus creating a more civil society.

*It's "boots on the ground", it's the infantry that slogs on, takes ground and secures it.*

**The Third Purpose** of this Guide is to make certain that readers understand - the answer is in their hands. No one else out there is going to "do the job." By remembering always the "Big Picture" from our introduction, while starting small and meeting each new day with purpose and determination and the tasks of that day, any group, even the very small (which may be most of you readers), can provide change.

While the following instructions include directions for larger "EVENTs" where as many as six surgery tables are in use, always remember - The Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force Project S.P.O.T. began with an unpainted nine-year-old Chevy six van, no anesthesia machine, one veterinarian and no trained veterinary technician in a heated garage in the Blackfeet Nation.



## II OVERVIEW/SUMMARY OF MONTANA SPAY/NEUTER

### S.P.O.T. EVENTS

This Guide has been prepared, with the support of a PetSmart Charities grant, for the host communities that have invited the Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force Project S.P.O.T. to help them create a local Pet Care Event, the centerpiece of which is a no or low/cost demonstration

large volume spay/neuter assistance clinic. Additionally, this guide is for those around the United States and overseas who inquire about how to carry out a Task Force model program.



This first section is a general overview of "How to Do It" from start to finish. Following are detailed check lists, instructions, even illustrations covering every aspect of the event from public relations, to actual surgery needs and everything in between.

### GETTING STARTED

1. First, read the guide thoroughly. View the accompanying DVD carefully.
2. Assess your resources:
  - Who can help you form a small, official committee?
    - ❖ You may have to start with only one or two who will meet to explore the following (Many times the core community group has no affiliation with existing animal welfare organizations.)
  - Who can volunteer some time to help create an actual "EVENT?"
  - Who will be your veterinarian(s)? (For those wishing to create a Task Force Model.)
    - ❖ This is a matter of asking, educating a veterinarian about the Task Force model, explaining its effect on pet overpopulation and how participating veterinarians have found that their practices grow through their work with the program. (Task Force veterinarians are available to talk with any interested veterinarians.)
  - Try to find an attorney willing to donate services to form a charitable corporation (for those wishing to create a Task Force Model.). Or, find a charitable organization that will allow your group to work under its status with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).
    - ❖ Some organizations exist to provide small groups such a service. In the west the local Rural Conservation and Development (RC&D), affiliated with the County Extension Office, provides this service to small community groups. You will need IRS status as a charitable organization to raise tax deductible donations. The IRS grants, upon application and for a one time fee, the status of 501 C 3 to a Charitable Corporation and an identification number. This 501 C 3 status allows donors to deduct donations of funds or goods in their tax return



## PUTTING TOGETHER THE TEAM/EARLIEST PLAYERS

### ATTORNEY:

1. **Your group will need to register** as a non-profit organization in your state in order to qualify for IRS designation as exempt from taxes in your activities and for those of your donors. Grant foundations require such a tax status
2. **Finding an attorney to help:** someone you know who is an attorney who will help or someone you know has a friend/business acquaintance who knows an attorney who will help your group: a-1) file as a non-profit corporation, which usually includes a small annual fee to the state, a-2) the office in charge of that procedure is your state's Secretary of State, and, b) that attorney would then help your group apply for federal IRS tax status as a non-profit so your group may solicit donations that are tax-deductible for the donors. The federal charge is a one time fee of at least \$500.
3. A local non-profit, an animal welfare group, local or national, perhaps, may know of an attorney who would donate services.

### VETERINARIAN(S):

**Warning:** *hang on, very important, requires your time and patience; this section is going to be LONG*

*Patience  
is a virtue*



1. **The veterinary community usually has several concerns regarding the Task Force model.**
  - ❖ Understandably, there is the worry that such a program will negatively affect their businesses;
  - ❖ They have great concern for the safety of the cats and dogs;
  - ❖ They are concerned that they are "putting their license on the line" when they participate in a Task Force type event.
2. **When approaching veterinarians it is important to keep in mind their perspectives.**
3. **Veterinarians will be members of your team.**
  - ❖ All states in the United States of America (USA) require that a veterinarian have a license issued him/her by that state to practice veterinary medicine in that state. (More and more, states are involved in reciprocal agreement with other states.)
  - ❖ Also, many states are providing a simpler process for veterinarians from out of state to apply for a temporary or permanent veterinary license to practice.
4. **Retired veterinarians make up a very possible pool who might participate** in Task Force model events

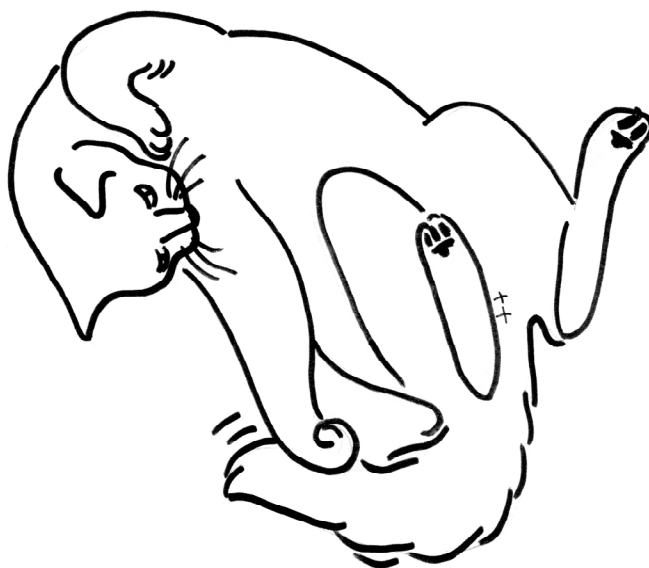


5. **Native American communities/nations are sovereign in regard to state and federal law,** in most cases.

- ❖ Therefore, veterinarians may practice in these communities with a license, but it does not have to be a license issued by the state within which that Native American nation/reservation is located.

The Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force's earliest events were held in such communities.

- ❖ Veterinarians from many states volunteered to provide their services in the beginning to demonstrate, especially in Native American nations, the effectiveness of spay/neuter to the communities, and especially the large volume, no-cost demonstration spay/neuter assistance Task Force model.



6. **It is most important that you visit veterinarians in person, one at a time, when you recruit these professionals.**

- ❖ The veterinarian must have the opportunity to meet you, assess your group, trust you and that you know what you are doing, that your first priority is to provide all you are able to help veterinarians perform safely, humanely and confidently, that you are there backing them up in every way.

- ❖ Task Force has told veterinarians we realize that as they walk into the door of a Task Force event for the first time, they look like they are walking into Auschwitz. They fear finding bad, unsafe, unsanitary practices, and they fear for their veterinary licenses.

- ❖ Recruiting veterinarians for such an effort is not like putting out an advertisement with a job description. They must be partners, not hired help.

- ❖ The negotiations must be very subtle, starting first with your presenting the proof of need for such a program as the Task Force model and proof of the death rate of companion animals because of pet overpopulation, not to mention the cruelty and abuse that results.

- ❖ Task Force participating veterinarians, many of whom are compassionate and thought they knew reality, have reported they never realized how "bad it is out there," how many animals and owners are in need out there, until they participated in a Task Force event where they could meet the owners and talk with them. They are in shock at first.

***The FIRST APPEAL to them must be the NEED you want to address WITH them as partners in the solution.***

- ❖ Low-cost program in a building, dedicated for that purpose, is expensive, unless someone donates use of the building, and narrows the reach of the program to those most in need. Please see *Exhibits*:

- "Who is Poor in America,"
- "The 70 percent solution"; and,
- "Why Build a Shelter."



- ❖ Recruiting veterinarians for a Task Force model program requires much delicate education of the veterinarian, discussion, recognition that any veterinarian who walks into such a situation is putting his/her veterinary license on the line.

7. **The Task Force, in its early years, offered an honorarium, which some kept and some returned.**

- ❖ The honorarium was based on the fee veterinary clinics pay a relief veterinarian per day. As the demand from Montana communities for Task Force events grew and requests for the services of participating veterinarians grew, the Task Force increased the fee and called it a fee, not an honorarium.
- ❖ Task Force Events lodge and provide meals for veterinarians and technicians. Usually, host communities find donations of motel rooms, lodging at churches or private homes, etc., food. Volunteers also can provide pot luck type meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner for out-of-towners and volunteers who work long hours at the event as well as the veterinarians and technicians (See **Checklists – Food Arrangements**).

- a) Regarding veterinarian concerns above: Large spay/neuter Task Force model events will affect their business. Task Force veterinarians find their work with the Task Force exposes them in their communities. From contact at the Task Force events pet owners become new clients for other care. Usually, in a small community, a small drop in business is noticed after a Task Force event, followed by increases as Task Force clients learn the value of spay/neuter and reset their priorities.

- ❖ Veterinarian concern for safety of the cats and dogs and for risking their licenses: If you follow this guide, you should find that veterinarians will be



pleased with the standards of the Task Force model. The Task Force model event results indicate a less than two percent aftercare complication rate for the surgery patients, a rate comparable to national average reported by the American Medical Veterinary Association.

8. **Remember, as in war** – and the war against the tragedy of pet overpopulation is real – M.A.S.H. units are created in an emergency. However, careful antiseptic procedures, small incisions, and short surgery time lead to less invasive practices, for example. The risks taken inside a Task Force surgery clinic setting are not as great as those the Task Force target dogs and cats take and will take in their short lives:

- ❖ hunger,
- ❖ abuse,
- ❖ abandonment,
- ❖ auto accidents,

- ❖ death at shelters or in other and worse ways, as excess, unwanted, homeless, but adoptable pets.
- ❖ injury and death as breeders running in packs or impregnated by packs of male dogs

9. **A major advantage for veterinarians who might choose to participate in a Task Force model program** is the opportunity to increase rapidly their skills, confidence and speed in surgery.

- ❖ Few veterinarians in private practice have the opportunity to do so many surgeries, increase speed and skill, confront textbook medical problems that are rarely seen. Such veterinary surgeons have the chance to practice and become master surgeons. Such veterinary surgeons can develop a specialty that is sought around the country today, should they seek such employment. At first, most veterinarians who participate with the Task Force are not very fast surgeons because in private practice they do not have to be. Many have later said, "I used to think that ten spay/neuter surgeries a day was a cause for celebration." Others have said, "I would not be the surgeon I am today had I not had the opportunity to do so many surgeries so often." As all our Task Force veterinarians say, "To become a skilled spay/neuter surgeon, a

veterinarian must have the chance to practice, practice, practice." Given such opportunity, participating veterinarians have been "grabbed" by other groups in other states, because they have become a "national treasure" and much in demand.





10. **Protocol:** in the Task Force model, the Task Force is in charge and responsible for all decisions in the clinic except those assigned by state law to the veterinarian. However, as much as possible, having agreed on the goal, Task Force, veterinarians, veterinary technicians and volunteers work as partners. Many innovations to clinic process over the years were suggested by volunteers who had the hands-on experience to see needs for improvement and think of better ways and more needs to fill.



11. **Lastly, a need that many do not consider at first.** When the Task Force leaves a community, there must be a "back-up" veterinarian(s) in that community willing to care for any aftercare problems patients may experience following spay/neuter surgery. This is an important need, which must be considered early in the planning of a Task Force model event in a community. (See **Checklists - Aftercare Backup Veterinarian Instructions**)
12. **Most important** is to show prospective participating veterinarians the extreme need and appeal to their compassion and/or to them as business people who want to create business for their clinics. So you need to give them the statistics that prove the success of meeting, the need, and statistics that prove that a Task Force model produces a greater success, shelter stats, impact stats, and clinic stats. (See the Task Force website [www.mtspayneutertaskforce.org](http://www.mtspayneutertaskforce.org) - from the home page click on "our history" and "statistically speaking".)
13. Some of our Task Force veterinarians would be willing to talk with any prospective veterinarians you are attempting to recruit.
14. Not all veterinarians do much surgery, and many who do have not fine-tuned spay/neuter skills because they do not do enough surgery to hone these skills.





## GETTING YOUR COMMUNITY'S ELECTED OFFICIALS ON BOARD

1. In the early 1990s, when a founder of the Task Force was investigating nationwide approaches to and programs addressing the pet overpopulation crisis, one very candid director of a humane society in the southwestern United States made the following observation. He said, **"The pet overpopulation crisis today is not a pet owner problem. It is not a veterinarian problem. It's a community problem."**
2. **Involving the whole community is a cornerstone of the Task Force** philosophy, approach and mission, as explained earlier, including reasons why the Task Force helps bring together the whole community. One of the first steps in creating a Task Force model "Community Pet Care Event" should be meeting with members of your city or tribal council or county commission. Start with one you know or a friend who knows one.
3. **Ask the members to write a letter of invitation** (See *Exhibits – Examples of Letters*) to the group (such as the Task Force here in Montana) that demonstrates the elected body's support for the "Pet

Care Event." Be sure to present facts and figures that support your point: you are addressing a community problem. If your community has a shelter and/or animal control program, show them dog and cat intake and destroy records from these organizations, if you have such organizations. Try to get an estimate of the cost to taxpayers and to the community in other ways: 1) dog bites, 2) dogs chasing live stock or wildlife. According to the International Association of Cities and Counties, animal nuisance is one of the top three complaints received by elected officials and administrators. **Be sure to make clear that your first event will be of no cost to the municipality.** Show them Task Force statistics that demonstrate the impact, the drop in the number of cats and dogs after a Task Force event. (See Task Force website: [www.mtspayneutertaskforce.org](http://www.mtspayneutertaskforce.org); from home page, go to "Statistically Speaking.")

4. **Elected officials are busy people;** write a sample letter for them to refer to in composing theirs, filling in all the reasons



they would support your program. Maybe even get them to sign a proclamation for the event, too. (See *Exhibits* for samples of such letters)

5. **Reasons for soliciting this support.**

- ❖ **One day**, as does the Task Force, **you may be going back to these officials** for financial support to solve a community problem once you can demonstrate how your program has helped save money, reduced nuisance problems, bites, and animal cruelty (arguments laid out earlier.)  
**IMPORTANT:** in our work with host community volunteers, we have observed that some local volunteers may not realize the following. Any time one of you communicates and works with a staff member, especially a department director of a city or tribal council government or county commission, you are in reality dealing with those elected officials for whom he/she speaks. A County Sanitarian, for example, speaks for his/her County Commissioners. If the Sanitarian or other department director supports you, that means the County Commission is supporting you. This means, give credit to those commissioners for their support in all your publicity and public relations.
- ❖ **Elected officials can help provide a site for your event:** especially fairgrounds, municipal shops, and such sites.
- ❖ **Having the "blessing" of your city or tribal council and/or county commission** will open many doors for you. Having these officials "on your team" can nullify any resistance to your program from among the many interests and factions in your community.



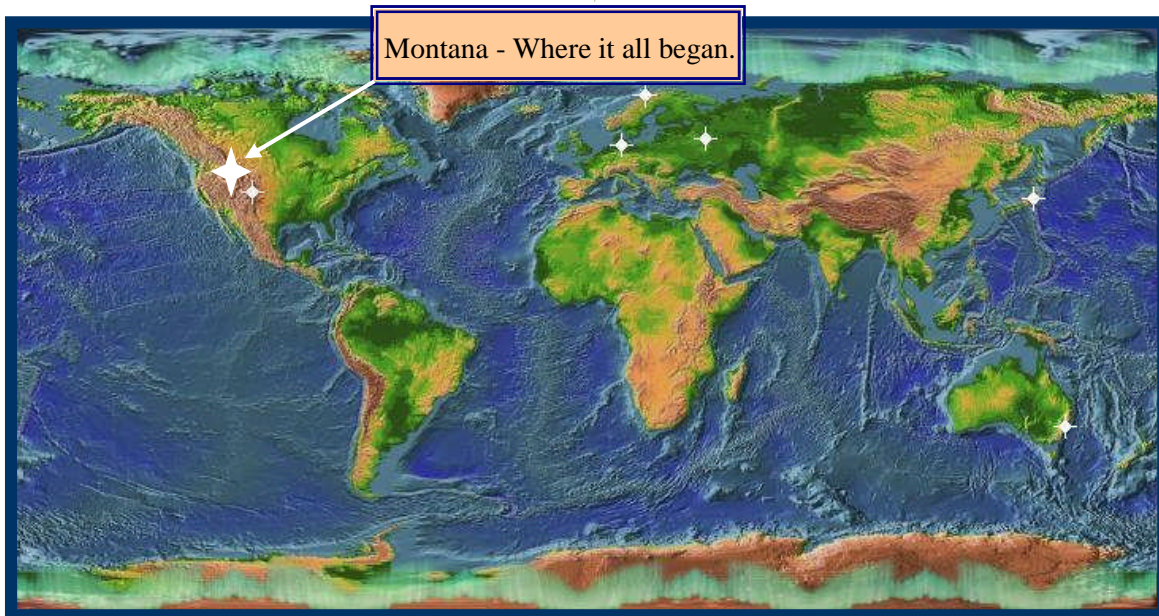


## FINDING/SECURING A SITE FOR YOUR "COMMUNITY PET CARE EVENT"

**SOME COMMUNITIES WILL HAVE A NUMBER OF OPTIONS; SOME WILL HAVE FEW, IF ANY.** What is needed for a large event and on a smaller scale for a small event?

1. **The Task Force has used many varieties of sites, depending on size of and resources in a community. First,** try to locate in your community those **who are "friends" of your mission.** They will be found often in unexpected places: a school secretary, a staff member in city, county or tribal offices, a sympathetic business or store owner OR relatives of such people. Drive around your community, everywhere; use your imagination and keep your options open.

- ❖ Fire Halls, municipal or volunteer. Talk to the fire chief.
- ❖ School buildings, usually the superintendent, principal and/or the custodian. They all have an interest here.
- ❖ Municipal or ambulance garages. Talk to community administrator.
- ❖ Community centers. Talk to the director.
- ❖ Privately owned empty stores, in malls and in the community. Find the manager of the mall or store owner.
- ❖ The Task Force has even used as an event site the offices of a construction company. Cotton or plastic sheets can be used as protective cover for equipment, desks, and other items at a site.



## AND NOW WE COME TO . . . NAMING YOUR PET CARE EVENT AND DESIGNING YOUR FLYERS, HANDBILLS AND POSTERS!!!

Let's review. You now have a site reserved, even though the plans are not yet definite. You also have veterinarian(s) committed to participating. In the beginning they would participate as volunteers with a specific honorarium offered, until such time as they feel comfortable with the project and want to commit to more events. And, finally, you have the support of city council (Mayor), County Commission, or Tribal Council giving you their blessing, if not any material support as yet, and, as role models, honoring the concept of the humane treatment of animals.

*Many host community coordinators have reported that their first real "sense-of-ownership" moment came when they sat down to give their "Community Pet Care Event" a name.*

### WHY DO YOU WANT ALL OF THE ABOVE FOR JUST ONE "LITTLE, OLD EVENT?"

Because, the end goal of all your efforts, hidden in the bushes still, is a plan – to create an ongoing no or low-cost spay/neuter program funded by your local municipal leaders (listed above). The net is being spread to "rope them in" because an empowered, educated citizenry, (which your event is creating) will demand a program to prevent pet overpopulation in their community for many reasons – cost, health, humanity – resulting in a more "civil" society. By that time, your programs will have made a big dent in reducing the numbers of homeless, unwanted dogs and cats that result from uncontrolled breeding. Remind your leaders and

community that no other domesticated animal is allowed to breed without supervision – farm animals, cattle, sheep, or poultry.





### *Now to the naming of your first community pet care event (perhaps, first ANNUAL community pet care event?)*

- When considering a name, think about the message you want to send to your community, especially to the target families (Please see below "Should you charge a fee for spay/neuter?" for definition of "target family") that you most want to reach. The naming of your community pet care event, as well as the event itself, is an opportunity to provide an educational experience for the whole community, even your municipal officials, police, sheriff's deputies, firemen, sanitarians, and animal control officers.
- Many groups, especially those with experience in animal welfare work, rescuing homeless animals, and sheltering them, think of names, often acronyms that resonate with them, that please them because they are cute or carry messages that have meaning for them. Examples are: SNIP; SNAP, Fixer Upper, Nip and Tuck, and other variations. Many of the acronyms spelled out have meaningful messages, but those above acronyms rarely are. **To the reader,** SNIP, SNAP, even spelled out concepts – Nip and Tuck -, though unintended, imply cruelty. SNIP suggests scissors, needles, and knives. The very people who are the most compassionate about animals are using words that imply cruelty and disrespect.
- Examples of names for Community Pet Care events, (which have been used by Montana communities and convey the purpose of the event: proper care and respect for animals) include the following: Stillwater County/Columbus "Proper Pet Care Expo"; "Bonnie Maiers 'Love Your Pet' Days" (in Memoriam for someone in the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes community who had helped animals); "Valley of the Chiefs Pet Care Days" for the Town of Lodge Grass, Crow Nation, which expresses pride in the culture and the community, as well as an official demonstration of the need to care about animals; "Sicunga Pet Care Week" in a Lakota community; Musselshell County Pet Awareness Weekend; Montana State Prison "Feral Cat Awareness Day" So think about your target when you name your event – perfect chance to educate.





## DESIGNING FLYERS, POSTERS AND HANDBILLS FOR YOUR PET CARE EVENT

*The Task Force approach: keep it simple, keep it humble, keep it frugal, and keep it imbedded in the community (remember the barn raising analogy.)*

Task Force surveys of those bringing animals to community spay/neuter assistance events show: the most effective means of reaching the target families is through posters, handbills, and flyers (See *Exhibits – Flyers*), and by word of mouth.



This event belongs to YOUR people in YOUR community and not to some experts from out-of-town. You are not DOING TO a community; you are partners WITH the community.

With the above as your role, remember that your flyers need not look expensive and slick. Many of the target pet owners are simple, shy, and poor people. They need to feel they are also a part of this community that is coming together to solve a community problem. So the flyers should reflect your community and its resources. Not many of our communities can afford expensive printing jobs, with several ink colors and on shiny paper. However, experts who know graphics, who work in advertising and publishing, give good advice.

1. **Black ink on colored paper** is effective and inexpensive. The color catches attention. The most attention-getting colors for paper are **bright yellow** and **shocking pink**. Some groups have chosen colors **they like**, but without much thought as to how the color will attract the target audience. Black print on **on dark blues, greens, reds** is very difficult to read. Some lucky communities have graphic artists who can design in color and run colored messages on light paper. The expense is in the printing when using color graphics and print.
2. In the *Exhibit* section are examples of handbills used by Montana communities. Handbills are effective, less expensive, and easier to distribute. They can be printed four to a page, can use any artwork from the flyer design, can be placed on counters at quick stops, grocery stores, gas stations, barber shops, beauty shops, trailer park offices, bars, child welfare and other entitlement programs. Because the handbills are small, businesses do not mind forfeiting the counter space required for display. Handbills can be left for target families to take home and spread throughout their immediate communities and you can target just the communities where the target families live. One way to distribute such handbills: cover small cans or similar containers with decorating material and use them to hold the handbills.

***TIP:** some communities have held competitions in the schools, asking students to make up their own posters for your event (with a little guidance to include "key" words from your flyer).*

3. Posters: are larger versions of the flyers for posting in the target neighborhoods.
4. What to include in your flyer/poster/handbill:



- Be sure to feature in **LARGE** letters the name of your Community Pet Care event.
- **MOST IMPORTANT:** try to avoid featuring "free spay /neuter clinic." This blatant statement invites everyone one to "pile in" with his/her dogs and cats, AND also is very annoying to local veterinarians. This event is assistance for those in "great need" of your service. So, after the big letters naming the event, you might follow in smaller letters with "the centerpiece of which is a no charge, demonstration spay/neuter clinic." In the **Checklists**, you will find more discussion of flyers, creation of appointment committees and phone numbers to provide the target families. Your posters, etc. will include contact information for making appointments for the surgeries, for volunteering, the site for the event, times, and dates, etc. More information on these details follows.

## SHOULD YOU CHARGE A FEE FOR SPAY/NEUTER?

**Whether to charge a fee** to the target families you hope to entice to your spay/neuter event is a very delicate subject for which there is no absolute answer.

**The subject logically fits here**, because the answer you choose will be on your flyers and posters.

**Over the past ten and more years**, the Task Force has addressed many times with many people and in many places the subject of charging pet owners. Task Force has queried other spay/neuter programs around the country about their charges and their success in **achieving the goal**.

1. There are a number of "goals" out there, but the highest common denominator is – reduce **the killing** of unwanted, healthy, adoptable cats and dogs, followed by **reducing the stray and shelter** cat and dog population.



*Looking for a home.*

2. Other **secondary goals** include:
  - **Helping educate pet owners** about the many benefits of spay/neuter for the family and their neighbors and their pets.
  - Helping a community understand the "Cycle of Violence: the tie between animal abuse/child abuse/domestic violence/violence and how solving pet overpopulation by killing unwanted, but healthy, adoptable cats and dogs feeds into a "culture of violence", especially when elected officials (role models for a community) approve the killing and use taxpayer funds to pay for the killing.
  - **Reducing incidence of dog bites, danger** to livestock and wildlife from stray and owned dogs and cats by reducing the numbers of unwanted, and unsupervised dogs and cats.
  - **Convincing elected officials that** spay/neuter is a community issue, that people should be helped by the community to own pets – responsibly.

3. **BUT**, for most of those reading this Guide, the number one goal here is to **stop the suffering and killing of healthy cats and dogs** any way we can. So with this first goal in mind, we review the subject: Should you charge for spay/neuter.

**ONE POINT OF VIEW:** Some believe that pet owners must pay “something” so that they will value their pets. Betsy Boxer, Executive Director of Animal Allies, Inc. in South Carolina answered the Task Force query: this organization offers a low-cost spay neuter clinic: “my philosophy has been ‘no free surgeries’ , but we are starting to see the ‘hardcore’ now. . . the pit bull owners who breed, the people who have no value for the dog or cat. . . I am still resistant to ‘free surgeries.’” I am working with local and state government to try to help me with these types of people. Puppy Lemon Law, anti-tethering, etc.”



*Homeless and Hungry*

**ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW:** some, especially veterinarians, believe that “free” spay/neuter devalues veterinarians. Many people, including many veterinarians, believe that “free” spay/neuter devalues the animal for the owners. Some people, maybe it is our culture, just have trouble with the idea of “free.”

**FROM ANOTHER VIEWPOINT:** SpayJax, Jacksonville, Florida, a publicly-funded program providing, initially, no-cost spay/neuter to “qualifying” families at privately owned veterinary clinics. The program received an impressive response resulting in a drop in intake at local shelters of 9.27 percent (at shelters where increases averaging 15 to 20 percent per year was the norm.) Savings, at \$120 per animal to impound, house, care for and destroy, was \$379,920 for one year. Cost of the program for the first two years was \$488,510 to taxpayers. (Task Force model – large volume, in a target neighborhood, with Task Force experienced surgeons – would probably have cost less to taxpayers.) Owners had to fill out papers demonstrating that they qualified (were poor enough) and sometimes had to go to a separate office to do so. SpayJax also reports that through their interview process, they find a large segment of “working poor” that may not seek government assistance for human services, but who qualify for SpayJax

**BUT**, and this fact is important to the discussion of what, if anything, to charge for spay/neuter . . . near the end of the third quarter of the second year, the number of requests for spay/neuter dropped dramatically. This drop seems tied to new requirements: 1) pay \$16 for rabies shot and tag per animal, and 2) families were now limited to three pets (cats/dogs) per family.



In New Hampshire, Peter Marsh pioneered a state-wide publicly-funded spay/neuter program which required qualifying similar to human entitlement programs and used local veterinary clinics. For a long period co-pay to pet owners was \$30 to \$60 including vaccines and licenses. Then co-pay was dropped to \$10 for cats and \$20 for dogs. The numbers of animals at New Hampshire shelters began to drop when the program first started, but then the numbers dropped precipitously when the co-pay was lowered. Marsh, who appears at Spay/Neuter conferences around the country, reports that animal welfare groups in the South believe the lowered New Hampshire co-payments are still prohibitive in reaching the target families in their southern regions.

Maddie's Fund, which has broad experience with large-scale, low-income programs reaching up to one-eighth of the national population, seems to have settled on a \$10 fee for cats, \$20 for dogs.

- Our effort has been to try to develop some scientific data to help determine the absolute barrier (fee for spay/neuter) beyond which the target family cannot or will not go to have pet(s) spayed/neutered. The Task Force goal is to **reduce the strays and animals in the shelters** and the killing as quickly and effectively as possible. A community that is no longer habitually seeing the killing, the strays, and full shelters gets used to this wonderful world. Example: the Blackfeet Nation is located in northwest Montana on the Canadian border on land that was reserved for them when they were displaced from their home lands. It is a windy, barren, cold and forbidding environment. For its first outing, November 1996, the



*Looking for my next meal.*



*I had a home but they moved and left me behind.*

Task Force was invited by the Blackfeet Tribal Business Council to help create the first Annual Blackfeet Pet Care Days. The Council had funded yet again an animal control program, appointing an Environmental Office staff member to develop and find more funds to launch the plan. In a few efforts in the recent past, animal control programs were launched – and defeated by the citizens. The tires of the animal control truck were slashed which demonstrates the heat of their resistance. When the Task Force arrived, these Blackfeet residents were not even one hundred years away from their unique nomadic life on the western plains. The situation, as described in grant proposals by the staff member was dire. The future was bleak, with packs of dogs running loose, eating the carcasses of dead livestock, raiding the town

dumps, trash cans, begging at school yards, grocery store entrances, in parking lots. The numbers were overwhelming, and most were starving, sick, full of mange. Yet, tradition included the belief that dogs should “run free”, that they were somewhat magical in their powers and should not be “messed with.” Still, during the Task Force visit, described briefly

in this Guide’s Introduction, many older tribal members brought their animals. Elderly ladies had to drag dogs on ropes from pickups – dogs that had never been in a vehicle or on a leash – step by step into the Task Force surgery clinic – a heated garage. The dogs were thin, scarred from running in or from packs, skittish. They had been “taken in” as survivors from litters that had been dropped and left to die. Yet these ladies made extreme efforts to get them to the Task Force event. Strong men came with hunting dogs and Rottweilers. Five months later, during a return visit, the Task Force could hardly find a dog on the streets, and those sighted were healthy and tagged with the new license tags. School principals reported no packs of dogs at school bus stops and in school yards. The Task Force event, coupled with the new animal control program that cleared the sickest, most hopeless cases, had created this remarkable change. Two years later, when the Tribal Council failed to fund animal control for the next year, many residents demanded to have it back. Now, now that these people had learned there were answers to the conditions they had all grown up around, these rugged people no longer accepted the usual situation. They no longer had to.

- The Blackfeet Nation experience illustrates why the Task Force “brings in a small van the equipment and supplies to set up in an existing building a large volume, no-cost **DEMONSTRATION** spay/neuter assistance clinic.” While **DEMONSTRATION** refers immediately to demonstrating how to plan and run such an event, demonstrate” also means – showing through action what it is like to have a pleasant pet, pleasant surroundings, a civil society with no killing, not to mention a happy set of elected officials watching money being saved while not fearing that the next phone call will be another dog complaint.
- A nationwide study by **ANIMAL PEOPLE** (news publication) found that as few as three percent of pet owners were causing as much as eighty percent of the pet overpopulation problem, and those owners were low-income households.
- In *Exhibits* you will find a study “Who is Poor in America” which brings another perspective to understanding that target pet owner we all aim to reach and help.



*I think my family got lost.*



## SHOULD YOU CHARGE A FEE: THE TASK FORCE CONCLUSION



The Task Force decided from the beginning that asking for qualifying information as to how poor was the applying owner was demeaning. Poor people suffer enough humiliation. We wanted them and the children to feel at "home" and "among friends" during Task Force Pet Care events. We wanted them to experience "caring" so they could take that home with them and distribute it among themselves and onto their pets. Since a Task Force

event is a total community experience and everyone involved is in close contact with others, including veterinarians, technicians, and maybe the county commissioner might drop by, the chance to demonstrate and share "caring," not just for the animals but for their families and the community members present, can result in an atmosphere of compassion that is always palpable.

The Task Force chose to "like" pet owners, not just the pets, and risk giving owners the benefit of the doubt. It's better to risk bargain hunters, who can afford to have their pets spayed or neutered, slipping in rather than to lose target owners who would stay away because of humiliating questions that might be asked.



Standard "tests" for human entitlement programs used to screen for qualifying pet owners would miss the "working poor" mentioned above by SpayJax. These "entitlement tests" could definitely miss those owners or caregivers of multiple dogs and cats who are the breeding animals most targeted on the Task Force radar.

The Task Force goal is to help create a lifetime relationship for every Montana dog and cat with a Montana veterinarian.

The Task Force screens calls from pet owners with the following words in their flyers and media coverage: "This Community Pet Care event is an assistance program. Please do not, if you can afford it, stand in line and displace those who are in desperate need." **This phrase is important for your event** – for appointment takers, flyers, news articles, radio, and television. Often, the caller will agree that someone else might have more need of this service.

*The Task Force always leaves a number of "donation" jars.  
Many pet owners express appreciation for the chance to make a donation.*

## *TASK FORCE CONCLUSIONS TO THE QUESTION "SHOULD YOU CHARGE A FEE FOR SPAY/NEUTER?": MEASURING OF TASK FORCE IMPACT ON A COMMUNITY SUPPORTS TASK FORCE CONCLUSIONS.*

Look at the following numbers. As you will see on the sample Clinic Surgery Form in the **Recipes**, the Task Force asks a number of questions that illuminate the background of the pet and its owner. In Billings, Montana, 52 percent of the animals brought to the event had owners who had never before had an animal "fixed;" in Anaconda, Montana, the figure was 68 percent; in Butte, 50 percent. For most communities, the range is from one fifth to one third of the animals.

**Source of animals:** from one fifth to one fourth or more of the animals were originally stray/abandoned/surrendered.

The average age of cats and dogs presented to private veterinary clinics for spay or neuter is from five to seven months. The Task Force sees from very young puppies and kittens to ages as high as fifteen or more. In Billings, one family brought two female cats, age fifteen and seventeen. The smallest category seen is the age group from five to seven months.



Many female dogs and cats are brought in with a history of multiple litters, and may also be in heat, pregnant, or nursing.

Especially in rural areas and Native American Nations, the Task Force volunteers, veterinarians, and technicians notice that each year, upon a Task Force return, the conditions of the dogs are better: they are healthier, with better weight, healthier coats, less dusty and straggly, and better mannered – less shy or less obstreperous. While these statements would be labeled "hearsay" in court, the observations are solid and consistent throughout the Task Force schedule of visits. Does this fact support the idea that "free spay/neuter" devalues the pets in the eyes of the owners?

In the little town of Lodge Grass, in the Crow Nation, where there is no animal control or shelter (a situation in much of rural Montana) local officials reported, after one of the first Task Force visits to their community, that, unlike the past, one could hardly find a dog on the streets in town, that now that the dogs are gone, they are seeing cats that once had not dared to come out from hiding because of the large numbers of dogs. The townspeople and their children were still talking about the big Pet Care Event – "Valley of the Chiefs Love Your Pet Days" – and how much they learned. Written by a young Northern Cheyenne on an exit questionnaire "How was this event of benefit to you," in a childish scrawl, with cross outs. "It helped me" – then cross out – then written above the cross out "have", followed by "more care for animals."

## Impact on Dog Bites:

Convincing elected officials using evidence gathered following Task Force community events. Examples of results follow when the Task Force model is used: 1) as much as possible make a wasteland of breeding dogs and cats in a community. 2) provide as many

spay/neuter surgeries as possible, as efficiently as possible, and safely. 3) schedule from young to old all ages and categories, pregnant, nursing, and in heat. 4) include the pets possessive family in the action. 5) involve the full community in helping. 6) use lots of publicity.



**D**og Bites: sample statistics following Task Force model events: There was a definite trend in that dog bites decreased after spay/neuter events held in the Blackfeet Nation in conjunction with the Montana Spay/Neuter Task Force. In the year immediately after the first spay/neuter event, (comparing year before and year after), there was a drop in dog bite incidents of 22%. However, if we compare the average of the three years before with the year after, the decrease in dog bites was 14%.

After 6 Task Force community pet care events from 1996 through 1998, the dog bites dropped 18% in 1999 and 28% in 2000 compared to the yearly average of those three years, 1996-1998.

- ♥ The data for the Blackfeet Nation indicate a definite drop in dog bites after the Task Force visits. Comparing the yearly average of the 3 years before any Task Force events to the yearly average of the 3 years following all of the Task Force events, the results indicate a drop of 13½ % in the number of dog bites.

**D**oes a "free" spay/neuter devalue veterinarians. Task Force surgeons welcome observation by pet owners and community members who are taught to respect the "sterile field" at the surgery table and are encouraged to ask questions. Many thank the veterinarians warmly for their work and skills used on their pets. Others come to thank them when they leave with their pets. Owners have sent thank you cards for the veterinarians and brought back cookies and treats.



**D**oes a “free” spay/neuter devalue the pet in the eyes of the owner? Here are some Task Force experiences with pet owners:

*...Little eight-year-old Kristi Doney of the Gros Ventre Indian Tribe, with the help of a doting and patient father, brought three female cats to the Fort Belknap Indian Community Pet Care Week clinic, July 2000. The cats were boxed in pet carriers donated by HSUS so that the volunteer who invited Kristi to stay and help could not see them. Kristi was just too shy to stay, but she was willing to walk back to the cat waiting, surgery, and recovery areas to deliver her cats. “Oh,” said the father,” seeing all the kittens. “I didn’t know you do kittens.” He looked at Kristi. “We have ten kittens at home,” she admitted. She was encouraged to go home and get them. Taking carrying boxes and surgical forms to sign in, she left with Father. This was serious business. Back they came with all ten kittens, but still Kristi could not bring herself to stay with strangers and help with the cats. But one more adult female at home still was not caught. Home they went to try once more. Not long after, the volunteer felt a tug on her shirt tail. Kristi, beaming, had the last cat. This time, she stayed for the rest of the day helping to recover cats.*

*...A woman brought forty-eight cats to the Salish and Kootenai Love Your Pets Week clinic in the Flathead Nation. All the cats and kittens were socialized, clean, carefully boxed, and identified. They lived in an old house she gave them on her ranch. Many of the kittens and young adults were adopted by volunteers and pet owners with local references.*

*...Montana State Prison Feral Cat Day and Montana State (Mental) Hospital Feral Day: there was great resistance among administrators against a trap/neuter/release approach to the ferals on their grounds. With the publicity, education, doing all the cats at once, community and staff support, “those” cats became “our” cats, and support for TNR is now strong in both institutions.*

*...After the Montana State Prison event in Deer Lodge, a volunteer returned to her distant home to find on her answering machine this message: “Hello, I’m looking for” (her name he must have read in pre-event news articles and located in the telephone book) “and I just want you to know . . . . I just want . . . just take care of those cats! I used to be in Deer Lodge (the prison) and those cats are cool!” A lesson that is directed toward the very roots of violence.*

*...A helping Salish and Kootenai Housing Authority worker and Kootenai tribal member observed after the first Task Force event in 1998 in which he helped: “I used to hate my dog. She was always having puppies. My cat, too. Now my dog’s by my feet watching television and my cat is in my lap.”*

*...Custodian for the Kootenai Activity Center, standing alone after a long day and many families with many pets, leaned on his broom. He reported that his dog had been neutered that day. He paused, looked up and said, “You know, I had better watch over him more – now that this has happened.”*

*...Animal Control officer for Salish and Kootenai learned from a local hardware store owner before the First Task Force event the following: “I never sold so many dog houses. Everyone wants one, saying, “Now that I’m going to have my dogs fixed.”*

*...Overheard in a local used goods store, before the Task Force first visit, by Salish and Kootenai animal control officer. Someone was asking the shop owner if there were any used dog crates. When it was reported that there were none in the shop, the owner suggested to his client that maybe the man could borrow one. “No,” answered the customer. “Now that my dog is getting fixed, he should have his own crate.”*



*Now let us return to our original question: Should you charge a fee for spay/neuter?*

Task Force impact statistics, developed following Task Force Community Pet Care events in communities where statistics on cats, dogs, and/or dog bites are kept, indicate the following: large, community-based clinics (like the Task Force model) seem to be much more effective in reducing more quickly the numbers of animals admitted to animal control and local shelters and in the reduction of animals destroyed than the distribution of low-cost spay/neuter certificates or a small-volume low-cost surgery program. "Free" (no-cost) programs seem to be more successful than clinics charging even nominal fees. In the two communities in which spay/neuter certificates were dispensed over a six year period, there was a slight positive, but non-significant correlation with a reduction in admitted and destroyed. In Billings, Montana, when a small fee was charged for an event similar to the earlier and larger Task Force visit, the decrease in numbers of animals taken in slowed. Previously, after the Task Force visit, the number of animals being destroyed had decreased; but, after the later event there were more animals destroyed than before that event.



**\$ Task Force conclusion:** most of the evidence suggests that any barrier to the target families runs the risk of the program's not reaching them. The Task Force goal was and is the following: 1) to create clients in the future for local veterinary clinics, 2) do large numbers of surgeries to impact the community significantly and immediately, and 3) to provide a service so easily and inexpensively that the most resistant, because of cost or habit, would take advantage and have their pets altered. The initial and only Task Force



*I was scared, alone, and homeless.*

visit to the Billings/Yellowstone County community was only two days for the largest urban population area in Montana. Yet, the impact to the Billings Animal Control Shelter was an average reduction of twenty percent. If you set your goal as stopping sheltering and killing of unwanted dogs and cats, then focus totally on reducing the numbers of homeless animals. If you tie licensing, vaccines and the idea of charging higher fees to encourage the owners to value their pets, you will not reach the goal of no homeless pets and not reduce the cost to the community as efficiently or rapidly as will occur without these



"distractions" from the goal. In worrying about whether pet owners "deserve" help, about devaluing the pets, and requiring vaccines and licenses, you will miss the poorest of people who cannot afford prices higher than a few dollars. If the goal is to save taxpayer money and inconvenience by seriously reducing sheltering and destroying, then focus for a few years on making readily and easily available very low-cost, high volume, spay/neuter assistance for all cats and dogs.

Finally, for those whose goal is to stop the killing and the suffering of animals, no-cost early in your program may find some unworthy bargain hunters slipping through, but, to use a timely cliché, consider the cup half full and think about all the animals, their families, their neighbors, their municipalities happy with their great good fortune. For **some**, it is hard to give something free, but who among us, no matter point of view on "free", cannot rejoice that cats and dogs are not suffering, nor being killed for our community's convenience because of your efforts and a Task Force model program.

**!! Rejoice !!**



# FINALLY . . . .BEFORE RAISING THE CURTAIN ON YOUR FIRST COMMUNITY PET CARE EVENT THE "STARS OF THE SHOW MUST BE SCHEDULED"

## "MAKING THEIR APPOINTMENTS"



From Task Force experience, some thoughts before proceeding. (See **Checklists- Event Coordinator**)

The kinds of local pet owners, who contact you via the contact information on your flyers, handbills, and in other publicity, may surprise you. This section is based on the experiences of many host community "heroes" who volunteered to "man" the phones, take the inquiries from pet owners, and then schedule their pets.

- Many owners will have multiple pets needing different kinds of care and attention: pregnant, litters, old, very young, females with a history of many litters.
- **VERY IMPORTANT:** try to schedule ALL of the multiple pet owners' animals. Task Force has experienced host-community volunteers turning down people with eight dogs, five to thirty cats, thinking that these callers were "taking advantage" of their community pet care event. As pointed out earlier, THESE are the VERY owners you most want to assist. The goal is to make a wasteland of breeding animals in your community WHEREVER they are.

**Food for thought:** one very supportive Task Force participating veterinarian, very concerned about pet overpopulation, used to say he would only provide spay surgery for females. His reason: because pet overpopulation was so overwhelming, he believed in a triage approach; do the females first. If there is a barn full of twenty five cats, and there are resources to provide spay/neuter surgery for only some of them, do the females first. Reasoning: if all the cats in that barn are sterilized except one female and a tom cat wanders in from somewhere, you can imagine the result. Same thinking should be applied to the owners of multiple pets.



- Some pet owners may never have had experience with a

veterinarian. As reported earlier, in some Montana cities and rural areas, as many as 68% of the animals brought to the clinic had owners who had never before had a cat or dog spayed or neutered. Task Force has even had a few pet owners arrive and go into near shock because they did not realize just what spay/neuter entailed, especially that surgery was involved.

- So these callers may tend to be shy, hesitant, confused and perhaps even embarrassed. (However, Task Force has had senior citizens cry when they learned they could have their pets "fixed.")
- Occasionally, when schedulers make return calls, they have reached an aggressive, gruff, unfriendly voice. Be prepared. The problem may be that someone else in that household loves a pet, wants it fixed, and made the original call. So diplomacy, in the cause of the pet, will be the best action.
- Owners, the target owners, may have multiple jobs and odd working hours.
- Owners may have no telephone.
- They may have limited or no transportation.
- They have a difficult time carrying out what comes naturally for us: picking up the phone at any time they choose to answer or make calls; making calls from wherever they are able at a

*Senior  
Citizens  
have cried upon  
learning they  
could have their  
pets fixed.*



time of day that is convenient to most people; getting a ride, a pet crate, a leash, a collar. In one host community, for example, pet owners seeking appointments called the local animal shelter because the phone number to call for appointments was busy. The shelter workers responded, "Just keep calling. You'll reach them." Some pet owners have very limited opportunities to reach a telephone. Knowing about the kinds of people making these inquiries, more effective results could have been achieved had the shelter simply taken the callers' numbers, told the callers they would be contacted, and then passed on the information to the

Pet Care Event phone schedulers. Serving these pet owners, and especially their pets, requires considering the situations, including the simple logistics of living, these pet owners undergo.

- The scheduling process can be complicated for a number of reasons. (See **Checklists – Client Appointment Coordinator**)
- Veterinarians request that the more difficult surgery clients be scheduled early in the day as they will require more careful post-surgery monitoring and more time to recover.



## Estimating SURGERY TIMES

Scheduling rules of thumb (depending on speed of the surgeon(s); times below are based on surgery times of Task Force participating surgeons from the newest member to the more experienced who are able to do more than 50 cat surgeries or up to 50 dog surgeries a day (mixed male and female). Most veterinary students perform few spay/ neuter surgeries in school. Most veterinarians in private practice do not perform high volumes of surgery per week. Task Force participating veterinarians say they once thought ten surgeries a day was a "big day," until they participated with the Task Force. To become an expert surgeon, they say . . . keep doing surgeries. Many Task Force participating veterinarians appreciate the chance to do the many surgeries that a Task Force community event provides to hone their skills. Because they see so many patients, the percentage is higher that they will also have the opportunity to experience medical conditions that few veterinarians meet outside of textbooks.

### TASK FORCE SURGERY TIMES

1. Male cat neuter      1 to 6 minutes
2. Female cat spay      10 to 20 minutes
3. Male Dog Neuter      10 to 20 minutes
4. Female Dog spay      15 to 30 minute

These times are based on healthy, fairly young animals. Complications can slow down surgery. Some can be predicted such as female dogs and cats that have had one or more litters, pregnant, nursing. Some can be unpredictable such as a male cryptorchid: with one or two undescended testicles.

For families with multiple pets, given the situations described above, it will be a

challenge to get them scheduled at the same time if some are old, some are pregnant, etc.

(See **Checklists - Client Appointment Coordinator**) for examples of scheduling forms for your use. They may be printed out as hard copies for use by the appointment takers, schedulers and at pet check-in when the event begins. Or they may be downloaded into your computer files and filled in as calls are received and appointments are scheduled. These forms were created and amended over the years to fit Task Force experiences. The titles above the columns are all there for a reason: 1. to be sure to get proper information on ALL types of callers; 2) to make the work of the scheduler AND the check-in volunteers easier. So, name of owner is first, because, if that person has a number of animals, the blank spaces below that name in the first column warns the check-in volunteers that a large number of cats/dogs are due. If that owner is late, or does not arrive as scheduled, the check-in volunteers are duly warned that the owner should be called and tracked to be sure he is





coming. If not, people on the waiting list can be called to fill that space. The rest of the appointment form is designed for similar reasons. Clinic coordinators will be able, for example, to estimate at a glance by looking down the appropriate column how many more dogs, or cats, male or female, are still due in for that day. They and the veterinary teams can gauge their progress, through the list of appointments, what to expect, and when surgery might end for the day.



**IMPORTANT:** do not schedule all female dogs for a veterinarian or all female cats for a veterinarian. Vary between male and female, as female spays are much more demanding. Usually, in large events, veterinarians are assigned to cat surgery or to dog surgery for most of the day, though they may change to the other species if the need arises. Some prefer to make a choice, cats or dogs for the day.





"OH BOY!

*We're Getting Tutored Today!!!*