

Part III. Federal Return 2009. Statement of Program Service Accomplishments United Paws of Tillamook

Mission: The mission of United Paws of Tillamook (UP) is to 1) financially assist low-income residents of Tillamook County to spay and neuter their companion animals; if a person is extremely poor, UP also pays for veterinarian-mandated inoculations; 2) assist caregivers of feral-cat colonies to sterilize all cats in their care; UP pays for inoculations and donates pet food, if necessary; 3) pay for the sterilization and some medical expenses of abandoned cats and dogs rescued into the UP foster program; 4) educate our community through local media and talks to social clubs regarding a) the benefits of sterilizing all companion animals; b) how sterilizing free-roaming cats is the only way to humanely manage their population; and c) that adopting rather than buying a cat or dog is the compassionate choice to make. We also have an emergency fund, "Annie's Fund," named after the mother of a donor to the fund. This is for the immediate veterinary care of companion animals, either a stray or a pet belonging to a poor person who cannot afford a veterinarian. The purpose of Annie's Fund is to avoid the destruction of animals who, with appropriate medical care, can continue to enjoy a quality of life.

United Paws makeup and structure: UP is an all-volunteer group consisting of approximately one dozen volunteers; no one on the board or any volunteer receives compensation. Volunteers pay for most expenses themselves. UP does not maintain an office; rather, volunteers network through their personal computers and home phones. UP has a hotline that takes on average 6 calls a day from the poor needing our services, residents needing help with strays, someone giving up an animal for adoption, or to report an animal in need, etc. Volunteers staff the phone each day and refer calls to the appropriate volunteer. UP also has an on-line email for the public, also staffed by volunteers.

Our website contains a wealth of information, and we refer to it in all advertisements and announcements to encourage residents to utilize the educational resources and referral sources listed there, and to view our animals in foster care needing "forever" homes. We cross-reference our foster animals to the nationwide database "Petfinder" to ensure they receive maximum exposure.

The county's Animal Control is mandated to respond only to calls about dogs; as a result, the largest proportion of UP's work is with cats. There is no humane society in Tillamook County. There is the equivalent of a dog pound. The county gives us no funds; we rely on donations from individual supporters, grants from local and out-of-county foundations, fundraisers, and adoption fees. We do not euthanize any animal--no matter how abused, injured, or diseased--unless a veterinarian advises us that the animal cannot recover with any quality of life.

Spay/Neuter: Research shows that the poorest 3% of the population can be responsible for 80% of a community's unwanted cats and dogs. Therefore, UP has chosen to target the poor as the most effective way to reduce and prevent animal suffering through homelessness. American animal shelters destroy an estimated 5 million healthy and adoptable cats and dogs, kittens and puppies every year.

To date we have sterilized 3,700 cats and dogs--pets; free-roaming cats; and strays who have entered our foster program. One volunteer handles all spay/neuter work--she authorizes sterilization surgery with the client by phone; faxes an authorization to the vet and mails a copy to the client; then, tallies the two to pay the bills. UP works with all 3 local vet clinics and 2 out-of-county to obtain good discounts.

UP is proud to have introduced TNR to Tillamook County. TNR stands for Trap, Neuter, Return, which is the only humane and legal way to manage free-roaming cat colonies. We have 20 humane traps, which we lend to anyone in the county willing to practice TNR, provided they also then feed the animals we've helped them sterilize. We instruct such compassionate residents how to trap, often helping them initially, as well as pay for the spay/neuter of all cats, regardless of resident's income. In this way, we ensure free-roaming cats are valued in our community and cared for. Approximately 70% of all cats entering animal shelters are killed; this figure rises to 100% when the cats are free-roaming and, therefore, unadoptable. We have over 200 caregivers of free-roaming cat colonies so far. A free-roaming female cat can be responsible for 420,000 kittens in her breeding lifetime (she has kittens who remain unsterilized; they have kittens who aren't sterilized; and so on, which adds up to this staggering number). However, 2 out of 3 kittens die before they reach their first birthday, due to malnutrition, exposure, falling prey to predators, or disease. UP believes this is a cruel waste of life that is easily preventable; hence our emphasis on TNR at every opportunity.

In 2009 we sponsored a mobile cat sterilization team called the Neuter Scooter to come to our county. In just 3 separate visits, lasting one day each, the Neuter Scooter spayed and neutered 332 cats and kittens. The Neuter Scooter is an excellent way for UP in one time to reach a larger number of residents with cats and those caring for free-roaming cats, thereby making better use of our donated dollars.

Foster program: At present UP has only 8 volunteers who foster animals. However, because we have so many animals in need of a "second chance," UP runs what we call our "self-foster" program. A UP volunteer takes in an animal in need of a permanent home; as soon as this animal finds a home, the UP volunteer takes in another. A self-fosterer, on the other hand, cares for only one dog, a mother cat and kittens, motherless kittens, for example, until these animals are placed. Then the self-fosterer takes in no more. UP pays for the spay/neuter of foster animals and medical expenses, as funds allow, as well as helps place the animals through advertising and monthly adoption events. To find caring, "forever" homes for animals in foster care, UP runs advertisements in the local press and on local radio stations and Cable TV. In addition, every month we hold an Adoptorama/Adoptathon event in the county fairgrounds, at which we adopt out an average 6 cats or kittens and a dog or two. In 2009, 145 cats and 10 dogs found homes thanks to UP's efforts, bringing our overall total to 1,000.

Education: UP maintains an excellent relationship with all local media. Newspapers, radio stations, local cable TV, and Internet networks broadcast our informational articles and Adoptathon dates. UP has noticed more letters-to-the-editor condemning cruelty to animals as a result. In addition we give talks whenever invited to social clubs, such as Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.