



# Cheap Fix Cat Clinic

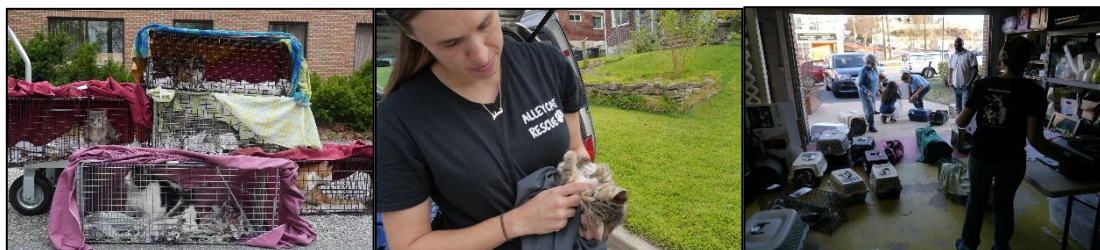
Project #  
17-213

County: Prince Georges County

Number of Cats Spayed:	274	Number of Dogs Spayed:	0
Number of Cats Neutered:	213	Number of Dogs Neutered:	0
Amount Received: \$22,636.00		Amount Remaining (to be returned to MDA):	0

### Project Synopsis:

This project sterilized cats identified in 77 colonies in the target zipcodes of 20712, 20722, 20783, 20784, 20787, and 20788. We had at least 480 cats that required TNR in order to stabilize the outdoor cat population.



### Project Description:

Alley Cat Rescue received funding to support free, targeted community cat spay/neuter for the critically underserved cities of Brentwood, Mount Rainier, and Hyattsville (hereby referred to as the "target region.") According to the Petsmart Census formula, there are roughly 59,338 community cats in Prince George's County. Although the target region makes up just 3.31% of the county's human population, it accounts for more than 12% of cat intake at the shelter -- indicating an astonishing lack of services for individuals in this region. Last year, this area of intake accounted for the impoundment of 582 cats. With detailed records on the existing colonies in the target region over the past 2 years, we have identified 77 active colonies in Mount Rainier, Brentwood, and Hyattsville -- with a total of 812 cats currently in the database. Alley Cat Rescue has spayed/neutered 332 cats (59.11% of known colony cats in region), but there remain 480 unsterilized cats whose numbers undoubtedly grow daily. With the permission of caregivers, a rigorous trap-loaning and training system, and a wonderful partnership with Spay Spa and Neuter Nook, we provided the first free program in the region to sterilize the remaining cats.

Last year, Prince George's County Animal Shelter euthanized roughly 2,067 cats. Total feline intake for the year was 4,742, with 582 (12.2%) of these cats coming in from the targeted region. Eartipped cats (community cats who have undergone sterilization) are protected by law in Prince George's County, which affords protection from both impoundment and euthanasia -- but without access to a community cat spay/neuter program, these cats cannot get an eartip and are at risk of impoundment. The shelter's official policy is not to impound eartipped cats, and in the rare instance that an eartipped cat is brought to the shelter, Alley Cat Rescue partners with the shelter to rescue and return them, further reducing euthanasia for community cats. Cats who have not yet been eartipped, contribute to both intake and euthanasia at a high level, particularly from low-income areas of intake such as the target region of Brentwood, Mount Rainier, and Hyattsville. Alley Cat Rescue predicted that a targeted, free program for community cats in this region will reduce shelter intake by between 3% and 10%, as cats in the target region will not only cease to reproduce, but will also themselves



be protected from intake and euthanasia via the eartip. Targeting this region also complements the efforts made in the surrounding area, strengthening the impact of the county-wide efforts.

Alley Cat Rescue conducted this effort as a special part of its "Cheap Fix Cat Clinic" which occurred on the first Tuesday of each month, in partnership with Spay Spa and Neuter Nook. Alley Cat Rescue dedicated two days each month to sterilizing 20 cats each clinic, for a total of 40 cats each month, or 480 cats in 12 months. Participants and volunteers dropped off and picked up cats at the conveniently located Brentwood office, where the cats were transported by Alley Cat Rescue staff to the Spay Spa clinic in Davidsonville, Maryland. Participants received Alley Cat Rescue's expansive training in best practices for trapping, including overviews of how to safely, legally, and humanely conduct a TNR operation. Alley Cat Rescue tracked the progress of each colony in its database, ensuring continued targeting and a 100% spay rate for each individual colony.

### **Summary of Approach:**

**Outreach activities and schedule:** Upon receipt of funding in October 2016 Alley Cat Rescue launched a weekly outreach initiative to alert the community of the resources. Nikolette Cochran coordinated the volunteer teams to reach out to caregivers and schedule appointments for the clinic. Alley Cat Rescue provided traps and training to participants, who picked up traps and received training Monday-Friday at the Brentwood office. Participants were logged in a "Traps and Training" log which includes signed waivers. In February of 2017 volunteers hung door flyers in our target neighborhoods. In May of 2017 a large sign was placed outside of the office to advertise the no cost clinic.

**Clinic activities and schedule:** Clinics occurred twice every month, following the model of the Cheap Fix Cat Clinic -- with a drop off time of 7:00am. Two staff were on site at 6:30am to prepare for the clinic, and received the cats, collected paperwork and liability release forms, got the cats humanely and safely loaded into the two donated vehicles Alley Cat Rescue owns, and drove them to the clinic in Davidsonville, MD. The cats were spayed between 8:30am and 3:30pm, after which they were picked up by Alley Cat Rescue in the two donated vehicles and transported back to the office. At the office, the cats were either held for recovery overnight, or picked up by the caregiver between 5:00 and 6:00, and held for recovery at their home. Caregivers were given discharge paperwork including post-operative instructions and recommendations for safely and humanely returning the cats to the colony and providing ongoing care.

**Strategic population management:** All records were entered into a database maintained by Alley Cat Rescue to monitor and manage the complete sterilization of each colony. Incomplete colonies were followed up with by an Alley Cat Rescue staff each month and ongoing support was provided to caregivers including access to food, training, and sterilization services for any future cats that arrived.

### **Accomplishments:**

Alley Cat Rescue was able to build 8 new relationships with community colony caregivers by recognizing cultural and language barriers. Collaborating with volunteers assisted ACR in identifying 23 additional colonies that need to be treated. Alley Cat Rescue achieved 90% sterilization of the original 77 identified colonies. We also were able to remove 55 kittens from these colonies. We recognized a need for an alternative plan for the kittens other than returning them to the colony, so ACR established a protocol for handling kittens and adopting them into forever homes. This allowed us not only to further reduce the amount of cats living outdoors in the target region, but to grow the capacity of our organization by establishing procedures to use moving forward. Alley Cat Rescue efforts reduced cat intake to the county shelter by 22%, effectively reducing euthanasia rates. This number is dramatically higher than the 3% to 10% we predicted.

### **Lessons Learned:**

As we implemented the CheapFix program we found four areas for improvement: advertising, language barriers, cultural barriers, kitten and injured cat resources. As issues arose, our team began problem solving and implementing solutions, which allowed our organization to grow and effectively address the needs of the



public. We increased our positive effect on the target area allowing us to reach 90% sterilization in our 77 identified colonies.

Our initial advertising strategy was door hangers that volunteers distributed door to door by canvassing local neighborhoods. This proved to be inefficient. We then placed a large sign outside our building on Rhode Island Ave, an extremely busy road. Phone calls and emails increased by 40%, which is reflected in the total number of cats being spayed and neutered increasing.

This advertising in turn spurred recognition to our second issue - the language barrier. The phone calls and emails illustrated that we were having a problem communicating with the Hispanic population in the target area. This led to the creation of a flyer in Spanish and English, and the recruitment of a bilingual colony caregiver. She was an exceptional resource for identifying additional colonies and communicating with colony caregivers.

As our outreach to the Hispanic population increased, we began to encounter cultural differences. The local Hispanic population has a fierce love of the outdoor cats, but also loves to have kittens. We had to nurture the trust of the Hispanic community cat caregivers, so they would participate in the program. The volunteer helped to explain the importance of spaying and neutering the outdoor cats. We are continuing to work on educational materials that address community cats in Spanish. We look forward to growing our success and reaching out within the Hispanic community.

Finally, we realized the need for a plan when managing kittens and any injured or sick community cats that are trapped. We quickly developed an intake process for kittens that included health checks, vaccinations and foster care until they were old enough to be sterilized and adopted into forever homes. This included developing and holding regular adoption events. The sick or injured community cats also needed to be held either at our location or in foster care until they were healthy enough to be released.

These situations, allowed us to grow as an organization in knowledge and as a resource for the community.

**Attachments:**

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter Grant Participants, 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Grant Participants, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Grant Participants, 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Grant Participants, Grant Extension Participants

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**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
SPAY AND NEUTER GRANTS PROGRAM**

