



Tough Economy Threatens Valley's Free Spay/Neuter Program

PHOENIX (April 8, 2009) – Maricopa County Animal Care & Control's (MCACC) Big Fix program, one of the country's largest and most innovative spay/neuter initiatives, is the latest victim of a sagging economy; and is in danger of becoming a victim of its own success. Open to all residents of Maricopa County, the Big Fix has been providing NO COST spay/neuter services to Valley companion animals since its inception in April of 2006. A sudden increase in those applying for Big Fix surgeries has forced MCACC to reevaluate the program and begin the implementation of program restrictions.

In 2007, the Big Fix provided 5,915 no-cost spay and neuter surgeries. Last year, the Big Fix provided 14,600 free surgeries! The Big Fix is funded by MCACC's independent non-profit partner, FACCs – Friends of Animal Care & Control – an organization with a mission to end euthanasia of healthy adoptable dogs and cats. Last fiscal year (7/1/07 – 6/30/08), FACCs funded approximately 11,300 spay/neuter surgeries, at an average cost of \$60 per surgery. The group had planned to fund 12,600 Big Fix surgeries from July 1, 2008 through June, 30, 2009, but they have already exceeded that number.

FACCs' Big Fix vouchers are redeemed for free surgeries. Applications were intended to be distributed only through MCACC's website, shelter locations and mobile adoption or spay/neuter events in lower-income areas, as well as mailed to those without internet access. However, well-meaning animal lovers reproduced the applications and began distributing them at dog parks and passing them on to family or friends. As a result, MCACC has been flooded with applicants and the program has seen an unexpected redemption rate of approximately 75%.

Beginning April 15, 2009, MCACC will distribute Big Fix applications affixed with a unique and numbered seal. Applications will be available on a limited basis at various events throughout the Valley. For more information, visit MCACC's website at www.pets.maricopa.gov. Big Fix applications without the special seal will be honored through May 1, 2009.

FACCs has been fortunate enough to receive \$225,000 from PetSmart Charities (the company's largest local gift ever) and most recently, \$75,000 from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust. Even with these generous grants to provide Big Fix surgeries in targeted low-income Valley zip codes, demand continues to rise. To be able to offer surgeries in other areas, MCACC and FACCs are asking for the public's support.

"In these hard economic times, we need to come together to support this life-saving program for our innocent pet community," said MCACC Director and Assistant County Manager, Dr. Rodrigo Silva.

A gift of \$60 will prevent one more litter of animals – but any donation amount is appreciated! Those wishing to offer their financial support to the Big Fix program may visit www.firstgiving.com/bigfix. Gifts may be mailed to FACCs at P.O. Box 80739, Phoenix, AZ 85060. FACCs is a 501(c)(3) organization; donations are tax deductible.

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