



# THE TAOS NEWS

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## My Turn

## In support of Stray Hearts

Winn Kalmon

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I am writing in support of Harvey Yocum and Stray Hearts Animal Shelter.

Under contract, renegotiated every year but without substantial increase for many years, the town of Taos and Taos County together pay for about one-third of the operating costs of the shelter. Yet most of the animals that come to the shelter for sheltering care, medical and emergency care, and adoption/ transfer/return-to-owner outcome are from the two governing authorities in our area. The town and county are not paying their legitimate share for services provided.

### **This is a real problem.**

The insufficient contracted funding from the town and county oblige the shelter to rely too heavily on volunteer support and donor dollars.

You cannot solve the problem you have created by simply directing your animal control officers not to take animals to the shelter, in some misguided notion that reducing the population of animals there will thereby reduce your obligation.

The abandoned, abused, homeless, injured, starving, dangerous, and unwanted animals will not just disappear; our streets will be littered once again, as they were a few years ago, with dead dogs and cats, abandoned litters of puppies and kittens.

You have a responsibility to the citizens you represent to see to it that domestic animals have the best chance possible to live and thrive in good homes. You cannot ignore your responsibility to the people and animals in the community you serve to ensure that pets have adequate shelter and healthcare, that there is provision for and education about pet population control, that schoolchildren learn about good pet care, that safe and humane treatment of domestic animals is guaranteed by ordinance, and that there are measures to prevent the spread of disease by lack of care.

### **The shelter is in crisis now.**

Intakes are up 150 percent over last year, and the kennels and cattery are too crowded.

Euthanasia for space is not an option, nor will it be, at Stray Hearts. But funding shortfalls have demanded extreme measures such as reduction of staff, reduction of veterinarian hours, suspension of training and remediation for frightened and feral animals, and additional cost-cutting. These crisis measures have inevitable and predictable bad results, and you have played a key role in creating this crisis.

I understand that you have met with Harvey Yocum about funding. Those meetings will hopefully continue, with greater success, in this time of crisis. I know also that you want to do what is right. It is in your power to do the right thing for the domestic animals in our area. I wish you good luck with your deliberations as you make critical decisions that have great impact on the quality of life for our citizens and the animals we love.

*Winn Kalmon is a resident of El Prado.*