



SPRING 2024 NEWSLETTER

“Working together to improve the welfare of reservation dogs and cats”

“Diné Bikéyah bikáá’góó, ahił-neilnishgo lééchaa’i dóó mósí baa’ ádahwiilyáago”

Email: blackhathumane@gmail.com

www.BlackhatHumaneSociety.org

Facebook: Blackhat Humane Society



Meeting her community

where it is

A lot of our volunteers come to the Navajo Nation from other areas of the country, and are motivated to help the stray dogs largely out of shock at the severity of the problem.

Not so Susan Mayne, who grew up in Cuba, N.M., a few miles from the eastern border of the rez.

“I’m a native New Mexican,” she said, “so I know what people are up against.”

As pet owners, what they’re up against is mostly poverty and a lack of vet services, both of which Susan has been addressing for the past several years. But her care for animals goes way back.

“My mother was a bit of a hoarder,” she admitted. “We had dogs, cats, rabbits ... even a donkey for a while.”

After settling in Ramah with her husband, Pete, Susan found herself collecting unwanted animals

Continued on Page 3



Susan and Pete Mayne (by Icia Belchak)

THE NOTORIOUS MAMA G

It was May of 2020, and COVID-19 was ravaging the Navajo Nation. By order of the tribal president, a curfew was on for anyone who wasn’t deemed “essential.” The reservation, which isn’t exactly bustling in the best of times, was desolate.

Animal rescue was not considered an essential service, but we snuck around and did what we could, mostly only responding to emergencies.

On a dusty afternoon I got a call from Roland Tso, the grazing official in Many Farms Chapter. An elderly couple in Many Farms had both died of COVID, leaving behind a pack



Continued on Page 2

The Numbers

In 2023, Blackhat Humane found homes for **198** dogs and cats. We started 2024 with **46** dogs and cats in foster homes. We currently have **48**.

The Money

Throughout 2023 Blackhat spent **\$52,581** on veterinary expenses,

\$38,980 on foster support and supplies, and

\$4,186 on community pet support

Ahehee’ Thank you!

Airport Animal Hospital, Cedar Animal Medical, Continental Animal Wellness, Kaibab Veterinary Clinic, Montezuma Veterinary Clinic, Nav Nation Veterinary Services, Prescott Animal Hospital, Rez Solutions, Dr. Sand, San Juan Veterinary Hospital, Black Dog Foundation, Bobbie Carll Realty, J&C Enns, T. Frost, L. Gilbert, R. Grossman, E & A Hardin-Burrola, J. Hoit, J. Jim, J & G Kimbrough, F. McKelvey, W & J McKnelly, A. O’Leary, D. Paxton, L. Reed, R. Sherwin, T. Sharp, N. Shinn, L. Smith, C. Starr, N & C Weirsmas, and all who fostered, adopted, donated, prayed, transported or contributed in any way.

The notorious Mama G (continued from Page 1)

of feral dogs they had been feeding. The dogs — Roland had counted seven, but there could be more — were living under the house. They were getting hungry and Roland feared they would start going after livestock.

I enlisted the help of two Blackhat volunteers who lived in the area and went to assess the situation. The gate to the property was locked but we could see through the fence a couple of adult dogs, two juveniles and some six-week-old pups.

There was no doubt about who was in charge. As soon as the pack saw us, they fell in line behind a brown and black German shepherd mix. She eyed us haughtily, puffed up to her full height, and faced us squarely from a little hill.

Once the deceased couple's son came up from Phoenix and opened the gate for us, the work of trapping and finding foster homes began. The dogs were starving and, for the most part, easy to trap ... except for the ringleader and, we suspected, mother of the half-grown and tiny litters on the premises. She would carefully walk around the trap, paw at it a bit from the outside, steal a glance across the street where we were hiding and disdainfully trot off — until one of her puppies wandered into the trap and she followed, grabbing it just as the door slid closed behind her.

Although Mama G, as we started calling her, was very feral and a tough nut to crack, her foster mom Marguerite

eventually won her trust and she was ready for adoption. A woman in Williams seemed to be the perfect fit. She was homebound for the pandemic and had plenty of time to devote to the crafty old matriarch.

Unfortunately, she turned out to be exactly the wrong adopter for a pack leader like Mama G. The adopter doted on her and rarely enforced any kind of discipline. It didn't take long for Mama G. to realize that, — once again, she was in charge, — and this soft human needed protection.

After a few months we got a tearful call from the adopter asking to return Mama G. She had become a nightmare, growling savagely and lunging at any human or dog that got within 20 feet of her or her adopter, and attacking small dogs at the dog park.

We needed professional help, and thankfully Paw Creek Training stepped up, offering to board and train Mama G while we looked for an adopter who was willing to continue her training under their supervision. After a few months Paw Creek advised us that, while she

was learning her commands at record speed, they had made little progress socializing Mama G with other dogs. Mama G would need to be an only dog and kept on a leash at all times. This



cut down on the number of potential adopters considerably, and though we advertised her on Petfinder, Rescue Me and Adopt-a-Pet, no one came forward to meet her.

After more than a year, Paw Creek announced they had done all they could for her and we would have to take her back. But all our foster providers have other pets, and no one wanted to take on such an intractable foster. Calls to at least 20 sanctuaries across the country were equally fruitless; they were either full or only accepted dogs that could be in yards with other dogs.

Sadly, I prepared to travel down to Phoenix to pick up Mama G. With no apparent alternative, I had decided to take her to a county shelter in the area, although I feared she would lose any progress she had made in training and revert to her feral state, which certainly wouldn't help her get adopted.

I was about to pack my bags when I heard from Linda Robinson, our Blackhat vice president. Linda said she had given it some thought and was ready to foster the notorious Mama G. Her rez dog, Dezhi, had recently passed away, so she wouldn't have to worry about Mama attacking her dogs.

"I read her bio and her issues didn't seem that different from what I'd been dealing with with all my rez dogs," Linda recalled. "Besides, fostering a

Continued on P. 3

Resources for 'problem' dogs

Like all of us, Linda is constantly learning from and about her dog. She has found the following two training sites to be helpful with Ajiis:

Handover Rover (handoverrover.com) is a no-kill rescue in Phoenix that focuses its efforts on "providing MASSIVE amounts of free content for dog owners."

The Vermont Dog Trainer (vermontdogtrainer.com) provides programs, online training and podcasts at a reasonable cost "to synchronize your dog's body and mind to facilitate better communication and establish a harmonious relationship that we all desire."

Meeting her community where it is (continued from Page 1)

herself — stray, starving, injured, pregnant; confined to crates or chains; sometimes abused by their owners, who occasionally threatened to shoot them if she declined to take them in.



Slowly, her yard became a maze of makeshift kennels. When they filled up, she and Pete would build another one.

Animals came in but few went out, until in the mid-2000s when her daughter Jasmine somehow discovered Blackhat and became a foster provider.

“Suddenly, we had help with the vet bills and help placing animals,” Susan recalled. “It was a game-changer.”

Volunteering at spay-neuter clinics in Pine Hill, Susan began to realize the importance of cutting the pet overpopulation problem off at the source. She and Dr. Carla Sand, a medical doctor and veterinarian in Thoreau, hatched a plan to offer monthly low-cost spay-neuter clinics at Susan’s remote home in Ramah.

At the first clinic in 2018, Dr. Sand fixed 12 dogs and cats. She can now do quite a few more than that on average. She also finds herself performing euthanasias, vaccinations, examinations — “whatever people need, except testing,” Susan explained. “We don’t have a lab.”

Through the clinics, Susan has come to know the local families who are in greatest need of help — the people who take in the dogs dumped on their property even though they can barely afford to feed their children.

That brought Susan to another mission: a pet food bank for needy families. Every month, Blackhat provides her several bags of pet food. Susan prioritizes the remote families who get stranded by muddy dirt roads that are impassable when it rains or snows.

When she brings the food to her neighbors, she also educates. “You can make medicines out of common household items,” she notes, “and dogs can eat almost anything if you don’t have dog food. The commodity garbanzo beans no one in the family likes, rice, old tortillas . . . you don’t have to have packaged dog food.”

She’ll often bring along a cooler full of puppy vaccines as well.

“Parvo used to really sweep through this area,” she said. “Since we’ve been pushing the vaccines, it’s gotten a lot better.”

Susan is the first to admit she probably has too many dogs, but people have started to learn that, in addition to taking in dogs in need, she also has some great dogs up for adoption. By focusing on adoptions and helping people take care of their dogs so they don’t have to relinquish them, she’s hoping to get down to a reasonable number so she can focus on other things, like finding a job in her field of history and museum studies.

For now, helping her community is her full-time unpaid vocation.

Memoriams

N & V Hicks: In loving memory of Chelly

S & S Hutchinson: In memory of Bella

R Meyer: in memory of Tsar, the loving and "not-naughty" companion of B.Terry and R. Chance

The notorious Mama G (continued from Page 2)

difficult dog, I figured I wouldn’t be tempted to adopt her. Dezhi had only been gone three months, and I wasn’t ready to adopt.”

Just before Halloween 2022, Linda drove down to Phoenix with her tent and mountain bike. She stayed four days, learning the techniques Paw Creek had been using with Mama G, whose name they had affectionately shortened to “Ajiis.” The long drive back to Dolores, Colorado, was a nightmare. Ajiis was carsick the whole time, and escaped out the window when Linda got into a fender bender at a gas station near Tuba City.

“I thought, ‘There’s nothing out here, I’ll never get her back,’” Linda recalled. But, using the command she was taught at Paw Creek, she yelled authoritatively, “Ajiis, come!” . . . and Ajiis came.

Over the next few months, “I just started liking her,” Linda recalled. “She has these big brown oxytocin eyes with expressive eyebrows. She has kind of an old soul.”

Besides, Linda could relate to her. “I was raised on the rez too,” she said, “and I was nervous and scared a lot of the time.”

By May of 2023, almost exactly three years after she was captured, Ajiis was a foster failure. While she has made a lot of progress with training and anxiety medication, and even allowed Linda to foster another dog, Linda can never quite let her guard down.

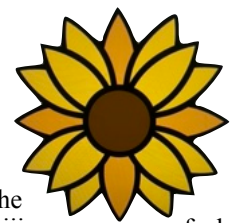
“She’s still a pack leader,” she observed. “If she gets upset with another dog, she’s not going to take prisoners. She’s just going to deal with it.”

But Linda has learned that the more she controls the situation, the less Ajiis she has to.

“She takes her cues from me,” she said. “If I can demonstrate to her that everything’s fine, she’s a lot less likely to react.”

The reward is a loyal, highly intelligent friend who rarely leaves Linda’s side and greets the day by nuzzling her awake. Linda wouldn’t trade her for a “normal” dog.

“People think there’s some standard perfect dog that they have to have,” she said. “Dogs have their own personalities, and every time you get a dog and a person together, there’s going to be a learning curve for both of them.”



feels

P.O. Box 3123
Durango, CO
81302
www.blackhathumanesociety.org



B L A C K H A T H U M A N E S O C I E T Y

Flaco's story

By Gregor Ames



I pulled my old truck alongside the Klagetoh Express. An hour before, Cindy had texted, asking if I could come here to feed and/or rescue a starving and possibly ill dog that had been seen in the area. When I spotted a small dog crouching right off the side of the road, I parked twenty feet away, grabbed a bag of food and crept toward him, talking in a soft voice. He was shaking. From a couple yards away, I tossed a handful of kibble toward him, but before it could hit the ground he was gobbling away. Cuts, bruises and scars covered his body. His entire skeleton was visible through his filthy fur. I tossed out more food, then set a medium-sized wire kennel near the truck and poured in some kibble. He bounded the distance in single second and began vacuuming.

I closed the kennel door and slid it into the back of the truck as he was squirming around chasing after the kibble rolling about. When the food was gone, he sat down and stared at me with the most unexpected expression — not fear, but rather curiosity. I dropped a few handfuls of food through the kennel's wire ceiling, told him we had to drive for 45 minutes,

but when we got home, he would never have to be hungry again.

When I lifted the camper-shell door, I saw the poor guy had thrown up inside the crate. I carried him, crate and all, into the back yard, getting doggy vomit all over me in the process. When I opened the door, he sat there in his own vomit looking at me with the same curious expression. He began singing, until I went in the house and returned with more food.

We only had Flaco for a few days, before handing him off to Marguerite in Flagstaff. Shortly after arriving to his new foster mama, he became quite ill. The vet diagnosed him with Parvo. However, he has since fully recovered. Marguerite began directing his substantial energy into learning tricks. It is truly astonishing how quickly he has learned many commands.

He is an extra-ordinarily intelligent and loving dog who will make a perfect pet for the right person. In return, he will unleash his most prominent super-power: unbounded love. Flaco is ready.