

## **Why this grant is important to the Knox County Humane Society and this community:**

The Knox County Humane Society (KCHS) provides day-to-day shelter and placement services for unwanted and abandoned cats and kittens. In addition to providing health assessments and pre-adoption medical care for kittens and cats surrendered to KCHS, we also provide very low-cost spay and neuter surgeries for companion animals (both cats and dogs) owned by residents who cannot afford expensive private veterinary services and for surrendered kittens and adult cats prior to adoption. In Knox County, a female cat spay can cost up to \$100 and a female dog spay operation can be in excess of \$250 at a private veterinary clinic. Since those costs are out of the price range for so many families, since 2013, we have provided literally hundreds of cat and dog spay and neuter operations for contributions of only \$10 each from the owners to the extent we could afford this service. KCHS paid for the remainder of costs associated with veterinarian services, medicine and care by using our estate gifts and one small grant. We also passed on the major savings to people who adopted kittens or cats from our shelter. This extremely low-cost spay and neuter program resulted in huge increases in the numbers of animals that were sterilized and thus huge reductions in the numbers of unwanted litters of cats and puppies. We believe this has led to a reduction of citizen complaints of feral animal problems in the city limits as well as fewer abandonments and animal cruelty incidents involving stray cats and dogs.

The Knox County Humane Society is not a governmental agency and we receive no funding from any governmental sources except for a \$3,900 annual grant from the City of Mount Vernon. Further, we receive no funding from the National Humane Society. To support our work, we collect extremely low-cost fees for spay/neuter operations, micro-chipping, intake, care and housing of surrendered pets and adoptions which in turn are subsidized by donations, bingo proceeds, limited investments and fund-raising. In 2012 and early 2013, the KCHS was fortunate to receive three substantial gifts from estates and those proceeds were used to defray almost all of the costs incurred with our spay and neuter services to the community, however, we have not had similar gifts since early 2013. Since that time, we have not been able to successfully compete with larger organizations for most grants since we no longer have sufficient revenues to underwrite major projects or produce the same level of dramatic results as in 2012-2013. We strongly believed in the good that our extremely low-cost spay and neuter program was doing and so decided to continue it as long as possible. However, without additional estate gifts in the second half of 2013 and all of 2014, contributions and grant revenues at the end of 2014 were 57% less than the levels recorded at the end of 2013. Because we continued to provide a much needed service that aided both the animals and the community, our expenses for the same time decreased less than 9%. KCHS used long term financial reserves to cover revenue shortfalls of more than \$78,000 for 2014 alone. Since most of our resources have been depleted, KCHS has been forced to make some difficult financial operations changes: currently, KCHS has suspended the \$10 spay-neuter program unless all residual costs can be fully paid by remaining grant monies. It should be noted that the undiscounted KCHS prices for quality spay-neuter operations are still less than 50% of the costs charged by most local private vet clinics. Similarly, we have increased our fees for vaccines and micro-chipping, but our prices remain far less expensive than private vet services. A paid public relations position and an office manager position were eliminated and as positions are vacated by staff, the positions have not been backfilled. A number of volunteers have stepped forward to help expand our bingo sales and increase other fund-raising efforts. We continue to seek support from charitable foundations and local businesses to support our work.

Your grant would help us to continue the progress we made since 2012 to provide public low-cost spay and neuter surgeries. We have enjoyed a number of success stories through investing substantial resources to provide low-cost spay and neuter operations for animals who have homes but whose owners cannot afford expensive private veterinary sterilization surgeries. We have addressed our 2015 accomplishments in our application, but it should be noted that in 2012, we performed 1310 feline sterilizations; in 2013, we increased that work substantially to 1821 feline spay/neuter surgeries; in 2014, we performed 1854 feline spay and neuter surgeries (1935 total operations including canine public spay/neuter surgeries). We are making a real difference in reducing unwanted litters and the suffering associated with those sad events: in 2013, we processed adoptions for 295 kittens but in 2014, just one year after the institution of our low-cost feline spay and neuter program, we were called upon to place only 154 – almost half the number of kittens requiring care and placement services! Additionally, fewer adult cats were surrendered thus requiring adoption support – from 203 cats adopted out in 2013 to only 161 adoptees in 2014! It is clear that our efforts to reduce unwanted litters are indisputably successful and that spayed and neutered cats are not surrendered by owners at such a high rate as those that produce unwanted litters of kittens. Strong demand for these low-cost sterilization surgeries continue since there is a large population of felines that are in need of this help. Similarly, we have had great success in helping dog owners with low-cost spay and neuter efforts. In 2013 we performed spay or neuter operations for 376 dogs or puppies and in 2014 we performed spay or neuter operations for 343 dogs or puppies brought to us for help by their owners who are residents of Knox County.