

Emptying the Ocean with a Bucket

By Lela Gregory and Devonna Ijames

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Many are noticing the beginnings of a change in the temperature and humidity here in western North Carolina. This signifies two exciting hot topics: the beginning of autumn, as well as REASON's annual update citing our progress over the past year. Well, just maybe one of those is more exciting than the other, so let us delve into REASON news.

Those of us in animal welfare know that with our pet population, late summer and early fall is the onset of one of their most prolific breeding seasons. It seems everywhere you turn; someone has a litter of puppies or kittens to give away, or worse, someone is reporting newborn litters abandoned. Unfortunately, for many years in Burke County this continuing cycle has resulted in far more animals born than there were homes available. Animal Control statistics expose the stark and disturbing reality of the numbers. In 2012, a mind-boggling 6,617 dogs and cats were brought into the shelter, of which sadly 5,508 (83 percent) were euthanized.

These startling statistics brought the realization that rescue without spay and neuter was tantamount to attempting to empty the ocean with a bucket. It was like for every animal rescued, five more took its place, most of whom sadly were eventually put down. Compare that to 2019 when 2,031 dogs and cats were brought into Animal Control and 667 (32.8 percent) were euthanized. Still too many, but with the efforts of REASON in partnership with local vets, spay/neuter clinics, Burke County, and our friends in animal

rescue, the future is much brighter for our animal population. Another blessing for the animals came last year with the addition of our new Animal Services staff and their lifesaving efforts and philosophy in August of 2019.

REASON (Reduce Euthanasia and Spay or Neuter) is a nonprofit organization focused on assisting low-income residents of Burke County in spaying/neutering their animals, thereby reducing the numbers of unwanted animals being born. Since its inception in 2012, REASON's efforts have resulted in a total of 3,895 spay or neuter surgeries being performed. In this past year alone, REASON has assisted Burke County residents with 434 spay/neuter surgeries. Using the formula from "Spay USA," that one dog or cat could produce 12-16 offspring in one year, in effect, REASON has feasibly prevented more than 5,000 unwanted kittens or puppies from being born in this past year alone.

Of the 434 animals, 276 were females and had already been responsible for 120 litters prior to their surgeries. One can easily see how quickly the puppies and kittens multiply. In addition to the deeply humanitarian aspect of this, there are other positives. The cost in time, money and human resources involved in finding a home, vaccinating, vetting and providing food, water and shelter for an unwanted animal is far greater than the cost of having one animal spayed or neutered and much more humane. As the saying goes, it is "one and done."

REASON also assists with compliance of the regulatory standard concerning mandatory rabies vaccinations. Eighty-two percent of the total surgeries completed were administered a rabies vaccination.

REASON consists of a small group of volunteers who are closely bonded by their love and compassion for animals, and their desire to know that all of God's creatures get to experience the joy of human love and companionship that they so crave and deserve. Much has been done but there is much left to do and we need your help. As stated, since its inception, REASON has accomplished a great deal with just a small number of volunteers so just imagine what could be done with more volunteers. Could you be that next volunteer? Would you? If you would like to join our team, visit the REASON website at www.reason-nc.org and fill out a volunteer application, visit our Facebook page and message us, or call 828-403-3675, leave a message and a volunteer will contact you.

In addition to volunteers, REASON depends on the partnerships we have developed with our local vet offices and spay/neuter clinics, who provide reduced rate spay/neuter surgeries. We would like to salute the following along with their staff: Animal Hospital of East Burke, Animal House Veterinary Hospital, Brother Wolf Animal Rescue Fido Fixers Mobile Clinic, Burke Animal Clinic, Foothills Spay and Neuter Clinic, Healthy Petz Veterinary Clinic, Morganton Animal Clinic, and Vale Veterinary Clinic. If you have an animal that has not been spayed or neutered, call REASON at 828-403-3675 to see if you may be eligible for low-cost spay/neuter services.

For REASON to be able to provide these services, partial funding is received from the state of North Carolina Spay/Neuter reimbursement program which relies on the sale of specialized "I Care" license plates. In addition, we receive support from Burke County as well as obtaining a small copay from each client we serve. Therefore, REASON must rely heavily on donations from our friends and neighbors in the community. In addition to volunteers, donations are currently needed to continue our ongoing progress.

If you are considering a donation, we want you to know that REASON is financially solvent, and we feel we are diligent in our stewardship of the monies entrusted to us. In this past year, 94% of our total income received went directly to cover the vet costs of spay/neuter surgeries. There are several ways to donate. Please explore our website at www.reason-nc.org and click on the donate button or visit our Facebook page.

Our first annual Facebook fall fundraiser was launched Sept. 1 which was designed to raise awareness of spay and neuter as well as to seek continued support for our program.

REASON continues to work steadfastly toward its goal and will not stop until Burke County reaches its goal of a 90% live release rate. We just need a few more big hearts and we can do this! You can be part of the solution by volunteering or donating to REASON, as well as by making sure your pets are spayed or neutered and encouraging your friends and neighbors to do the same. Burke County is making progress in the right direction, unlike North Carolina as a whole, which ranks 3rd in the highest kill rate of the US.

Let this thought motivate you as it does all of us at REASON: "Most people never step into an animal shelter ... most animals never step out."

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