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New SPCA spay-neuter clinic targets pit bulls, feral cats

Metro Digest

February 15, 2008

The Maryland SPCA announced the opening of its new, low-cost spay-neuter clinic yesterday and said the program will initially be directed at pit bulls and feral cats.

The new clinic "targets the two most vulnerable pets that end up in shelters - pit bulls and cats - by providing services to reduce their numbers," said Mary-Ann Pinkard, president of the Maryland SPCA board of directors.

The theme of yesterday's opening - keyed to Valentine's Day - was "Show your Pit the Love. Neuter Him."

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The clinic, in a refurbished pump house on the grounds of the Falls Road shelter, replaces the SPCA's Neuter Scooter, a brightly painted bus that traveled the city for four years providing the surgery at no cost to dog and cat owners.

The Neuter Scooter stopped making its rounds in 2005 - after providing more than 10,000 operations - when the cost of operating it became prohibitive.

Even though grant money, donations and vaccination fees helped defray the cost, the organization lost about \$600,000 during the program's four-year run.

Since then, the SPCA has had a spay-neuter program on its grounds, but the new surgical center expands the nonprofit organization's capabilities. The Maryland SPCA altered 6,000 pets last year.

Under the new program, low-income families - defined as families of four making less than \$35,000 a year - can have their cats or pit bulls spayed or neutered for between \$30 and \$40. The program will also work with programs that trap, neuter and return feral cats, ensuring that such populations don't multiply.

This month, the SPCA's clinic will charge \$20 to spay or neuter pit bulls.

Private veterinarians' fees for spay-neuter operations often are \$100 or more, said Lillian Alfaro, the SPCA's staff veterinarian.

Aileen Gabbey, executive director of the SPCA, said the program will lead to fewer abandoned pets, fewer pets in shelters, less aggressive pets and a healthier community.

To schedule appointments, call 410-235-8826, ext. 140, or e-mail fixem@mdspca.org.
[John Woestendiek]

Baltimore

MTA is installing rider-alert system

The Maryland Transit Administration has begun rolling out a new technology that alerts rider of its Metro subway when a train is about to pull into a station.

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The system was installed on a pilot basis this week at the Charles Center station. If money is available, the MTA hopes to deploy the system - which sounds an alert and flashes blue lights when a train is about 800 feet away from the station - throughout the Metro system by the fall, said spokeswoman Cheron Wicker.

Wicker said that in addition to alerting riders, the system will improve safety for track maintenance workers.

The system alerts riders to approaching trains but does not tell passengers how long it will be before the next train arrives. Such technology has been in operation on Washington's Metro system since 2000.

Baltimore's subway, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, runs from Owings Mills through downtown to Johns Hopkins Hospital.

[Michael Dresser
Baltimore County
Forum tomorrow on Hickey School

A public forum on the states plans for the Charles H. Hickey Jr. School will be held at 10 a.m. tomorrow at Cub Hill Bible Presbyterian Church, 2927 Cub Hill Road.

Maryland Juvenile Services Secretary Donald W. DeVore will attend and respond to questions. Last month, Gov. Martin O'Malley announced plans to build a new youth jail on the grounds of the school. If approved by the legislature, the \$37 million detention facility would be part of a \$200 million overhaul of the state's juvenile justice operation.

The forum is sponsored by Sen. Katherine A. Klausmeier and the 8th District House delegation. Information: 410-841-3620.

Maryland Study notes ways to save on bills
Marylanders could reduce their electricity bills and avoid the threat of rolling blackouts by investing in energy-efficient appliances and light bulbs, better insulation and other power-saving measures, a study by a Washington advocacy group says.

The report, released yesterday by the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy, says the state's energy use could be reduced 15 percent by 2015, which is the target of energy legislation being pushed by Gov. Martin O'Malley.

"Our study confirms that the governor's goal is actually attainable," said William Prindle, deputy director of the council. It was underwritten by three foundations concerned with the environment.

Power-saving light bulbs and appliances cost more to buy, but the report projects that those who do will save \$4 in lower electricity bills for every dollar they spend. By 2015, households that have taken steps to use energy more efficiently should save \$8 a month, the study concluded.

State efforts to promote energy efficiency also should generate more than 8,000 trade and professional jobs in the state by 2015, the report says.

The governor has proposed energy bills aimed at encouraging more efficient energy use and reductions in consumption, while promoting cleaner generation from wind and solar power. The General Assembly held hearings on most of the bills this week.

[Timothy B. Wheeler
Agency head's firing upheld by judge
A Baltimore County judge ruled this week that General Services Secretary Alvin C. Collins was within his rights to fire the longtime head of the agency's real estate division.

The former employee, Nelson Reichart, had claimed that he was fired because of a quote he gave to The Sun regarding a land deal approved by Gov. Martin O'Malley's administration.

Circuit Judge Timothy J. Martin ruled that such a contention is impossible because the evidence showed Collins decided to fire Reichart and interviewed and offered a job to his replacement before the newspaper printed the comment.

Reichart also alleged in his suit that he was fired because he is a white, male Republican. Because Reichart did not raise that issue when he was fired, he had no legal basis to do so in court, Martin ruled.

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