

AMIGOS DE LOS ANIMALES de Guanajuato, A.C.

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82 Dogs and Cats Neutered during Our Spring Campaign

On Sunday, April 22, we conducted an intensive canine and feline spay/neuter campaign in the village of San José de la Luz with the support of a team of veterinarians, volunteers from the Guanajuato community, and volunteers from the village. The campaign offered the service to dog and cat owners unable to afford the customary charge for the procedure.

This campaign—Amigos’s fifteenth since our founding in 2002 and our first one of this year—took place in the primary school “Emiliano Zapata,” where two classrooms were converted into a surgical unit and a recovery unit. The medical team neutered 82 animals—58 female dogs, 9 male dogs, 12 female cats, a 3 male cats. This was a one-day record for us.

The Healthy Communities Initiative

San José de la Luz is participating in a program organized by Guanajuato’s Urban Health Center to become certified as “A Healthy Community.” The Healthy Communities Initiative focuses on improving the health status of the participant villages. San José de la Luz invited us to hold our spay/neuter campaign as part of their year-long certification program and participated with Amigos volunteers by offering us the use of the school, delivering water to the school, and cleaning the classrooms before and after the campaign.



Three Amigos volunteers visited the school several days before the campaign to talk with students and give them handouts announcing the campaign to take home. On Saturday afternoon a group of volunteers arrived at the school to set up the equipment and prepare the classrooms for the campaign. At 9 o'clock on Sunday morning the campaign began. Pet owners registered their animals, each of which was then anesthetized, prepped for surgery, and operated on by one of the eight surgeons participating in the campaign. Afterward the animals were carried into the recovery unit and attended by a vet technician and other volunteers until they were ready to go home. Amigos volunteers transported some larger dogs to their homes and removed the medical equipment at the end of the day.

During the afternoon village residents served a delicious hot lunch to the volunteers. While the animals' owners waited for their pets to wake up, our volunteers talked with them about treating their dogs and cats humanely, entertained the children who were present, and organized a rummage sale. The animals' owners also had the opportunity to watch a documentary film entitled "Companions to None," about the problem of homeless dogs and cats in Mexico. The documentary includes interviews of members of Amigos and scenes from a spay/neuter campaign that Amigos held in Santa Rosa de Lima.

The team of volunteers included Guanajuato veterinarians María-Eugenia Herrera, Miguel Ochoa, Felipe Manríquez, Gerardo Martín Muñoz de Coto, and Moisés Rivera; physicians Zazil Botello Hernández, Gloria Jardón, and José Luis Reyes Gómez; veterinary technicians Kelly Karger and Angel Dettenreider from San Miguel de Allende; veterinary technicians Ricardo Mejía, Ana Laura Septién, Verónica Septién, Julia Salido, and Lori Wilson from Guanajuato; and various assistants in the surgery and recovery units, including the nurse María Patrocinio Tovar Vizguero.

Members of Amigos are grateful to them and also to Dr. Daniel Vazquez Velázquez, director of the Urban Health Center, for his support; to Sra. Eva Jiménez Morales, director of the primary school "Emiliano Zapata," for her cooperation; to Sras. Guillermina Tovar and Chela Cortes for their help; and to Sr. Jesús Solís Díaz for filling the school's cistern from his water truck.

Other spay/neuter campaigns planned for this year

Our campaign is scheduled for August 26 and will take place in a village near Guanajuato that is participating in the Healthy Communities Initiative. On November 10 and 11 we will hold a two-day campaign in the city itself. Veterinarians and vet technicians who would like to participate in either of these campaigns are encouraged to contact us at amigosanimalgto@yahoo.com.

Our Goals for the Year

Plans for the current year include continuing and expanding our clinic-based spay/neuter program, which involves city veterinarians who offer their services at reduced fees to owners of dogs and cats unable to afford the procedure. The pets' owners are asked to pay part of the fee, and Amigos pays the balance. We are also organizing three intensive spay/neuter campaigns with the help of veterinarians and other dedicated residents and visitors, all of whom volunteer their services. (The first campaign took place on April 22 and is described in the first article of this newsletter.) These campaigns, which help reduce

the number of strays, are intended for the benefit people without the means to pay the customary charges for the surgeries.

In the area of rescue, Amigos plans to contact more of the families who adopt a dog or cat to be sure the animal is adjusting well to its new home. To expand its rescue work, Amigos is seeking volunteers to provide temporary foster care to dogs and cats convalescing from injuries or illness. We also occasionally need volunteers who are traveling to the U.S. or Canada and are willing to let a rescued dog accompany them. Amigos volunteers will arrange the paperwork required by airlines and provide assistance in taking the dog to the León airport and checking it onto a flight. The adopting family will pay the animal's airfare and meet the flight. If you may be able to help us transport animals to the U.S. or Canada, see the article on page 6 ("Tips for Dog and Cat Lovers Planning to Travel to Guanajuato").

Our plans include expanding our educational activities in schools and through local media in an effort to raise awareness of the suffering of street animals and to encourage compliance with a state law for the protection of domestic animals, as well as to encourage pet owners to neuter their dogs and cats. We are now regularly placing educational articles in two local newspapers. High school and university students wishing to perform social service and others interested in furthering this effort are invited to volunteer their help. In August Amigos will commemorate International Day of Homeless Animals with a consciousness-raising activity in the *centro*.

Amigos will attempt to become registered with the National Institute for Social Development known as INDESOL and to establish relations with the Secretariat of Social and Human Development of the State of Guanajuato.

To continue and expand our activities, the board hopes to increase the number of association members and supporters from 150, many of whom live outside Mexico or are volunteers rather than dues-paying members. We have already held one major fundraising event, in February, and plan to hold another in the fall. At the spay/neuter campaigns volunteers will sell donated clothing and other articles to help pay for medical supplies used in the campaigns. Anyone wishing to support Amigos can make a donation using PayPal through the Amigos website, www.amigosanimalesgto.org. Donations to Amigos are deductible from federal taxes in the United States.

The Amigos Board of Directors

Amigos members present at the annual meeting filled several vacancies on our seven-member board of directors and elected officers for the year. Our board currently consists of the following officers: Sandra Ward, president; Marlene Davis, vice president and founder of Mex-Can Pet Partners in Victoria, British Columbia; Laurine Maxwell, secretary; and Martha Roberts, treasurer. James Pyle, Julia Salido, and Lori Wilson, board members at large, are involved in organizing various Amigos activities. Serving as advisors to the board are Maribel Felix, a licensed translator; Julián Gaxiola, attorney and former board member; Dr. María Eugenia Herrera, veterinarian and former board member; and Sherry Wolff, a retired professor of law who has taught courses in animal-rights law.

Unchained!

By Rusty as told to Marlene Davis

The following story was inspired by an actual event that recently took place near the city of Guanajuato. Marlene Davis, founder of Mex-Can Pet Partners, was one of the people involved in the dog's rescue. The story appeared in Guanajuato's weekly newspaper Chopper on June 9.

I was born a year ago in the fall. The air was fresh and chilly, but my mother and the presence of my brothers and sisters gave me warmth and comfort. We did not live with a wealthy family, but they had enough food to feed us all.

One day, after a few weeks of life, I was taken away from my family. A woman came to our home and picked me out from my brothers and sisters. She didn't seem to care too much about which one of us she chose. I was scared to leave my family. I was alone except for this woman who carried me away. I hoped she would take good care of me and that she would take me to a good place where I would have the company of others to keep me warm and play with.

When we arrived at her house she wouldn't let me inside the house. Instead, she dropped me on the ground in a corner of her property and put a chain around my neck. Then, she got another heavy chain and attached it to a big tree about one meter away.

I was hungry, scared, cold and alone. I was confused and missed my mother, brothers and sisters. I didn't see the woman again until the next morning, when she came to throw a few tortillas at me. I could barely reach them with my paw, draw them closer to me and eat them after dragging them through the dirt. There was no water close to me, but I could see a hose a few feet away. The woman walked away, and I didn't see her again until the next morning. It is dark at night, but that night was especially dark, and it was cold. I could hear the woman talking with others inside the house, and I could smell food cooking. My stomach and my heart ached.



Once in a while the woman would put some water into a bucket and bring it near me. I became so excited that I would jump around and accidentally knock it over. She would get mad and hit me with a stick. She usually left again without refilling the water bucket.

I wished every day that I could rid myself of that chain and get further away from that tree so I could find some food. If only the woman would let me into her house I would show her how friendly and loving I could be.

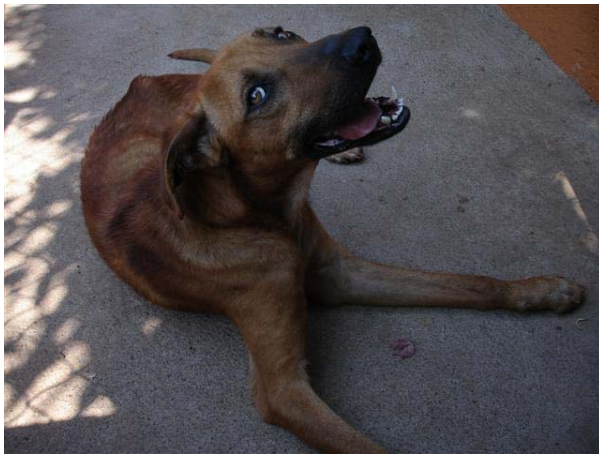
But each time she came outside she got mad at me when I jumped at her and knocked things over. Often the food would fall on the ground and I had to scrape it towards me. The more excited I got, the angrier she became. I started to wonder if this person was my friend or my enemy. I began barking at her when she approached, and then she would hit me. Now she scared me and so I growled at her. She hit me more and came to feed me less often.

I grew thin. I cried for food and comfort. I endured the rains, the thunder and lightning, the harsh sun and, worst of all, the loneliness and boredom. I was a prisoner, but I did not know what I had done to deserve this punishment.

My life continued like this for months on end. I had no outlet for my puppy energy and I had no company. I had no way to satisfy my hunger and thirst, and no clean place to urinate or defecate. Wherever I walked I would step in my own dirt, which was covered with flies. I had fleas, which caused me to scratch most of the time, and the parasites in my stomach prevented any food that I received from nourishing me. Rats came at night to scavenge. My entire world was confined to the length of my one-meter chain, and I seemed destined to spend my life in endless torture.

Then recently something different happened. Some other people came into the yard and greeted me. I was afraid they would come near me and hit me. I barked and growled at them and showed them my teeth. They took a stick and dangled a bucket of food from it, pushing it toward me. I was afraid. As they placed the food near me I attacked the stick, but they did not hit me or yell at me. They only spoke softly as I devoured the food. They returned every day for a while. I started to wag my tail when I heard them coming.

One day they came and I ate my food as usual. After a while I felt very sleepy. The next thing I remember is that I was in a very nice, clean, warm place. People came to visit me and stroke me. There was food and water in a bowl next to me. There was a blanket for me to lie on. There were no flies, no rats, no urine or stools under my feet. There was no chain around my neck. I was free!



Rusty, a mixed-breed neutered male about one and a half years old, needs a home without young children or other pets where he will receive kind and patient attention. Because he was abused, he still mistrusts strangers and needs a secure place where he can hide when visitors arrive. He also needs to be able to exercise in an enclosed yard or go on frequent walks on a leash.



He seems to feel safer with women, although his current caregiver is a male veterinarian to whom he is very devoted. We believe that with gentle treatment, Rusty will overcome his fear of strangers and become a great pet.

Tips for Dog and Cat Lovers Who Plan to Visit Guanajuato

Many people who visit Guanajuato end up adopting a dog or cat they have rescued from the street and ask for our help in arranging to take it home with them. We are happy to provide guidance. Here are some things to bear in mind if you are considering an adoption here.

If you plan to drive across the border to the U.S. with your new pet, you need only a certificate from a local veterinarian stating that the animal has been vaccinated and is in good health. The certificate must not be more than 30 days old. We have a list of veterinarians in the city who can give your animal a checkup, shots, and certificate. Their charge for this service is modest.

If you are flying from Mexico to the United States or Canada, you must also acquire an airline-approved kennel large enough for your pet to stand and turn around in. We have some used kennels that we can lend or sell you for this purpose. If you travel with a cat, puppy, or small dog, you may be able to keep it with you in the main cabin, provided its soft kennel will fit under the seat in front of you.

Not all airlines will accept a pet, however. Continental, for example, does not accept pets as checked baggage and does not allow small animals to ride in the main cabin on flights into and out of León. Frontier Airlines does not allow pets. Some airlines impose a moratorium on accepting kenneled pets when there is to be a transfer in the U.S. and the temperature in the transfer city at the time of transfer is extremely hot or cold. If you think you may want to return home with a dog or cat, we recommend that you check with your prospective airline to find out what its policy is *before* you book your flight to Mexico. You may need to choose a different airline from your customary one.

We have received excellent cooperation from the personnel of several airlines at the León/Bajío Airport. They are aware of our rescue activities and have been very willing assist our efforts. Visitors have also received the cooperation of the bus lines they have used.

Our Website Has a New Look!

Take a look at our website, www.amigosanimalesgto.org, and let us know what you think. Among its new features is an “Adopt Us” section featuring rescued dogs and cats awaiting adoption. We never have trouble placing puppies and kittens, but adult and handicapped animals are another story. Mature pets are generally easier to care for than youngsters, better behaved, and very grateful to be adopted. We screen prospective pets and owners to get a good match.

Other News and Updates

- In May, in recognition of our work on behalf of the community, Amigos president Sandra Ward was appointed to a newly formed **Commission on Municipal Health and Social Work**, which advises the mayor and City Council of Guanajuato.
- The city government has asked us to help draft **regulations for enforcing a state law** passed four years ago to protect domestic animals from abuse and neglect. We are working with another local organization on this project.

- Also in May a group of preparatory students organized a race to raise money for Amigos. Billed as “Corre con Tu Mejor Amigo” (**Run with Your Best Friend**), the race began at the Presa de la Olla and ended at the Jardín de la Unión in the center of the city. Ten runners received prizes that included hefty bags of dog food donated by the Diamond Pet Food Company, Amigos tee-shirts, and dog bowls donated by the student organizers. The event raised 503 pesos. With students’ help we plan to hold another race next spring.
- In June Board member Julia Salido spoke to **three groups of young children** attending a summer program, telling them how to properly care for a pet. About 30 children were in each group. During her talks Julia distributed copies of our coloring book entitled “Lend Them a Hand.”
- The documentary film “**Companions to None**,” described in our March Newsletter, was accepted at the Breckenridge (Colorado) Film Festival and the 20th Annual Dallas Video Festival. It includes clips from interviews with Amigos volunteers and scenes from one of our spay/neuter campaigns. Recently the film was picked up for worldwide distribution. We have presented the English version to the public at a local café, shared a copy with the mayor, and offered to show it to other members of the city government. When the new school year begins, we plan to show the Spanish-language version to high school and university students.
- We now have two **contribution boxes at the León/Bajío International Airport**. Travelers departing from Mexico who have pesos they no longer need can donate them to Amigos in the departure area. Look for the green boxes with our sign on them. Our thanks to airport director José Manuel López Moctezuma for allowing us to install the boxes and to Dan Sholl for making them.
- Remember **Mama Dog?** (See our March newsletter.) Shortly after Mama Dog was spayed and returned to the car-wash lot where she had been subsisting on scraps of food, Canadian visitor Sylvia Munn decided to care for her until she could find her a permanent home. Sylvia returned with Mama Dog to Victoria, B.C., but quickly fell in love with her and decided to adopt her herself. The two are now inseparable companions.



Recent Donations, Memberships and Volunteer Support

We depend upon the donations we receive from our supporters to provide services to the community. Our sincere thanks go to the following donors and volunteers for their recent support.

Best Friends: Carolyn Crowder, Marlene Davis

Benefactors: Sel and Chris Burrows, Nancy Hager, Bill and Carol McLachlan, Martha Roberts, Simone Rodriguez, Jocelyne Roy, Ruth Steinberg, Stephen B. Watt and Nancy Williams Watt, Sandra Ward

Individual memberships: Diane Carter, Joan Eby, Julie Frost, Laurine Maxwell

Family memberships: Luis and Victoria Cano, Areceli Espino, Mary Lewis, Tom Reavley and Guille Amézquita, Aline Roddam, Natalie Roseth, Holly and Kim Silver, Leigh and Marilyn Stowell, Jeff Tashman and Nina Johnson, Diane and Jim Treat

Donors of medical supplies, carriers, and leashes: Forever Friends Pet Hospital, Forever Friends Pet Care Center, Stacey Tompkins

Other donors: Marsha Coarsey Sharon Schaap, Judy Schilling

Volunteers: Maria Chan, Maribel Félix, Nancy Hager, Ed Schiff, Dan Sholl, Janice Shewey

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