

Talk to the Paw: From the Editor

How Humane is Tucson?

Last spring, the Humane Society of the United States released the results of a study to determine America's most humane city, entitled the Humane Index. The statics used in the Humane Index offer an objective means to determine the 'humaneness' of a city.

The methodology was based on individual metrics, such as:

- * Percentage of pet stores selling puppies
- * Amount of local engagement with the Humane Society
- * Ratio of wildlife watchers to the number of hunters
- * Number of times animal issues were covered in the major newspapers
- * Number of fur retailers per capita
- * Number of locations (companies, restaurants, stores) that offer cage-free eggs
- * Number of captive marine animals and elephants on public display
- * Number of licensed wildlife rehabilitators
- * Number of vegetarian restaurants
- * Number of shows performed by Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus
- * Number of restaurants participating in the ProtectSeals boycott of Canadian seafood
- * Co-sponsorships on animal protection legislation

You can read more about the study at www.humaneindex.org. Tucson was not one of the top 25 major metropolitan areas studied and so we don't know how we would rank, but certainly puppy mills and blood-sport breeders don't contribute a city's humaneness. However, if public support and generosity could be measured I think the compassionate and altruistic citizens of Tucson would more than make up for a few unscrupulous individuals.

The outpouring of community support during the recent Chihuahua rescue was phenomenal. Dozens of veterinarians donated their services, restaurants provided meals for the HSSA staff, and volunteers and local businesses contributed cash and supplies. The animal-loving citizens of Tucson came out in droves in response to the media coverage of the situation. Hundreds of people waited in line to offer one of the dogs a home. Day and night, generous Tucsonans dropped off donations of food, carriers, blankets and money. One staff member said "a pile of towels the size of A Mountain" had been donated. And speaking of the staff, they, along with the volunteers worked, relentlessly until all of the dogs were safely removed from the property, documented, examined and treated for any health issues.



Photography by Meredith Moore

While the Chihuahua rescue and pit bull bust could be viewed as black marks against Tucson's humaneness, there were a few positive outcomes. The public's awareness of blood sports has increased, and we saw that Tucson law enforcement makes it a priority to investigate and dismantle offenders. We also know that our community is compassionate, caring, generous and will swiftly come forward to help the local shelters in times of crisis -- that may be all the measurement we need.

-Gretel Hakanson



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