

FREE Micro-chipping Offered for all Highlands Cats

Dear Highlands Cat Owners and Lovers:

We are pleased to invite you to a **FREE microchip clinic** for your cat (or cats) that is being held by the Monmouth County SPCA on **August 10 and August 24 from 7PM-9PM** at the **Municipal Building at 171 Bay Avenue**. This program is open to Highlands residents only, and proof of residency will be required (a utility bill or driver's license will suffice). Microchipping enables animal rescue organizations, animal control officers and veterinarians to scan lost pets so they can get back home quickly. The microchip itself contains the owner's name and contact information (this information cannot be read without a special scanner), and is smaller than a grain of rice. It is inserted quickly and painlessly in between the cat's shoulder blades. Please take advantage of this exciting, cost-saving opportunity to protect your pets.

The microchip clinic is part of a larger, partially grant-funded program through the MCSPCA to initiate a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program for stray and feral cats in Highlands. TNR programs are a humane method of controlling free-roaming cat populations. Currently, if a free-roaming cat is picked up by animal control, it is brought to the MCSPCA and held for seven days as required by law. If the cat is unsocialized, it is unadoptable and the MCSPCA is forced to euthanize that cat, even though the cat is perfectly healthy and happy if allowed to live outside if he has a caretaker.

A well-run, efficient TNR program rapidly controls the population of outside cats. We humanely trap feral cats, spay/neuter them, vaccinate them for rabies, ear tip them (so we know they were TNR'd), microchipped with colony number and then returned to their colony to be cared for by a certified caregiver for the rest of their lives. Spaying or neutering cats significantly reduces nuisance behaviors like fighting, spraying and howling. Since cats no longer need to find a mate, they typically stay close to their feeding stations and out of trouble. Once all the cats in a colony are TNR'd, they stay close to their feeding stations and the population stays stable since no kittens are born and new cats typically are not "allowed" in an established colony by the other cats.

In order to keep proper track of colony cats and to have controlled feeding stations that do not attract rodents and wildlife, Colony caregivers will be registered with the MCSPCA and provided ID badges by the Highlands Police Department. Only those identified are permitted to feed and care for the colonies. If you would like more information about becoming a caregiver for Highlands's stray and feral cats, please contact Francesca Alexander of the MCSPCA at (732) 540-0040.

After the microchip clinics, MCSPCA personnel, colony caregivers and volunteers will begin the TNR program for the cats who roam our community. If your cat is not

microchipped or does not wear a collar, you are encouraged to keep your cats inside during this time. All residents should be aware that under the new TNR ordinance adopted this year, ***Highlands law does not allow owned un-spayed/neutered cats to roam outdoors at any time.***

Over 60% of unwanted cats come from people's pets who were not spayed or neutered before the first litter. Cats can have kittens at only 4 months of age. It is vitally important to spay/neuter your cats at 4 months, not later, to avoid the "oops" litter. Over 28,000 cats were euthanized in shelters across NJ in 2009. You can make a difference and save lives- spay/neuter your own cats. The MCSPCA offers low-cost spay/neuter at our clinic, please call 732-542-3125 and be sure to leave a message. We are very busy but we will call you back!

Also, please support TNR in Highlands. The purpose of a well-run TNR program is to control the population, reduce nuisance behaviors and reduce disease by vaccinating all the cats who are homeless. Just like dogs, the MCSPCA does not believe cats should live outside unsupervised. Like dogs, cats need an indoor home where they are safe. Our plan is to increase education and increase access to spay/neuter services to control the overpopulation of cats, with the goal that every cat has a loving home. Thank you for your support!