

Citizen Stewardship Collaboration

By Toni Prothero, Education Director, Second Chance Center for Animals, Flagstaff, AZ

This summer, the Kids Care! Summer Camps at Second Chance Center for Animals provided an opportunity for collaboration between Second Chance and the Grand Canyon Trust. Funding from the Arizona Community Foundation of the Citizen Stewardship Coalition is enabling partner organizations to identify shared goals and to leverage each other's programs. At first glance, it may seem that these two organizations have little in common, one being concerned for the welfare of domestic animals and the other for the habitats of native species. The Kids Care! Summer Camp, however, provided an ideal venue for the education programs of both.

During each weeklong summer camp, children ages eight to thirteen help socialize and care for the dogs and cats awaiting adoption at Second Chance. In addition, they learn about the responsibilities of pet ownership, the issue of pet overpopulation, problems of exotic pet ownership, and the impact of domestic animals and exotics on the environment and wildlife. Volunteers from Habitat Harmony participated in each camp and provided many hands-on opportunities for the kids to learn about the destruction of habitat of local prairie dog colonies. The children who attend camp are vitally interested in animals of all kinds, and many hope to pursue careers with animals. They are the future leaders of the citizen stewardship way of living in ways to sustain and nurture our natural heritage.

For this reason, Kari Malen, the Volunteer Coordinator for the Grand Canyon Trust, brought her program to one of our summer camp sessions. Through discussion, brainstorming and games, the children learned about some of the habitat issues of northern Arizona and about the conservation efforts of the Grand Canyon Trust. The kids made their own contribution to these efforts by producing colorful posters advocating the mission of the Grand Canyon Trust. This was an important part of the program as it provided the children with an authentic opportunity to contribute to these conservation efforts. Many of today's children are acutely aware of the problems faced by wildlife because of habitat degradation and destruction. We need to provide them with opportunities as children to help in our efforts so that they may develop the values of citizen stewardship, which must include the value of direct action for the environment and for the welfare of animals, both domestic and wild.

For more information about our education programs at Second Chance Center for Animals, please contact Toni Prothero at toni@secondchancecenter.org.