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Air Conditioner Thieves Strike Animal Samaritans

Thousand Palms, CA – October 5, 2009: On Sunday morning, kennel attendants at the Animal Samaritans' shelter and vet clinic on Ramon Road in Thousand Palms discovered their primary air conditioning unit for the building had been stolen. Tire tracks from a hand dolly and paint scrapings on the property suggest thieves rolled and lifted the heavy unit over a three foot high brick wall to a getaway vehicle parked on the street.

"This was an expensive unit," explains Animal Samaritans' Director of Clinic and Shelter Operations. "And heavy. Stealing our air conditioner was a team effort for sure."

The stolen air conditioner cooled the organization's surgery suites and recovery rooms, for both public animals and county animals. "The thieves not only stole a \$4,000 dollar unit," explains Animal Samaritans Executive Director, Fred Saunders, "They've deprived us of our ability to do business. We're a non-profit, and we depend upon the income generated from our veterinarian services to keep shelter animals feed and employees paid. This really hurts."

Animal Samaritans has purchased a replacement air conditioner, and is leaning on ORR Builders to assist with the immediate installment of a cage-top fence to surround it. Saunders estimates the combined expenditure is about \$5,000 dollars. "We could use some help recovering our costs with this. You just can't run a vet clinic in the Desert without air conditioning."

So far, Animal Samaritans has had to reschedule more than 60 spay/neuter appointments. The organization plans to resume surgeries by Wednesday, provided the new air conditioner and security fencing is in place by then. The front lobby and animal shelter is cooled by separate units, and Animal Samaritans remains open for pet vaccinations, basic pet dental care, pet wellness exams, and pet adoptions.

According to County law enforcement, air conditioner thieves usually target foreclosed and abandoned houses. The crime against Animal Samaritans is one of the few they've seen in Thousand Palms that's targeted a business. It is perhaps the only one to strike a non-profit.

Animal Samaritans SPCA, a 501 (c) non-profit organization founded in 1978, is committed to improving the lives of animals and people. As the Coachella Valley's most comprehensive animal welfare organization, they strive to one day eliminate the needless suffering and abuse of homeless and unwanted animals. Programs and services in place to save the lives of healthy and treatable animals include prevention through humane education, low-cost and no-cost spay and neuter, low-cost vaccinations, animal sheltering and pet adoptions. In addition, more than one hundred volunteers from their Animal Assisted Therapy programs visit disabled children in special needs classrooms, nursing homes, and hospitals, while their Animal Assisted Activities teams see residents at Juvenile Hall. More information is available by calling 760-343-4908 and by visiting www.animalsamaritans.org

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