



Press Release

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Elkins Resident Theresa 'Sis' Bruner to Receive a 2026 Governor's Service Award After Saving Thousands of Animals Through Statewide Spay/Neuter Advocacy

ELKINS, W.VA. – Theresa 'Sis' Bruner of Elkins has been named a recipient of the 2026 Governor's Service Awards for her extraordinary commitment to animal welfare across West Virginia. Over nearly three decades, Bruner's dedicated efforts have shifted the state's approach to pet overpopulation from euthanasia to humane, sustainable spay/neuter solutions, saving thousands of lives and taxpayer dollars.

On Thursday, August 6th, Theresa 'Sis' Bruner will be honored for her dedication to volunteer service at the annual Governor's Service Awards dinner at the Culture Center at the State Capitol in Charleston. Presented since 1995, the Governor's Service Awards honor individuals and groups that exemplify outstanding dedication to volunteerism and community service in West Virginia. Theresa 'Sis' Bruner will receive her award in the Lifetime Achievement category.

Sis has always shared her time, energy, and talents helping animals. Her volunteer journey began as a co-founder of the Taylor County Humane Society in 2000. Realizing that the only permanent, humane solution to pet overpopulation was prevention, she expanded her efforts statewide with the Federation of Humane Organizations of West Virginia (FOHO WV), serving 15 years as vice president and four

years as president. She also oversees the production of the West Virginia Animal Law Book, a vital resource used by local law enforcement and animal shelters statewide.

Most notably, Bruner spent years helping to build the West Virginia Spay Neuter Program (WVSNP) which is administered through the West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA). Starting in 2013, she played a key role in a long-term effort to establish the program, map out its rules in 2015, and secure its funding in 2017. Following its launch, the WVDA appointed Bruner to the program's Advisory Committee, where she helped guide its policies and procedures across the state. Through leadership, Bruner successfully secured and administered more than \$4.8 million in grants to fully fund the West Virginia Spay Neuter Program (WVSNP) and high-volume spay/neuter clinics across West Virginia, ultimately helping to alter over 126,000 animals since 2018.

Building on this work, Bruner organized a major community outreach campaign during the 2025 Legislative Session to keep the West Virginia Spay Neuter Program alive. Facing a clause that would have completely ended the program's funding by 2027, she connected networks of supporters across the state and brought more than 100 volunteers to the State Capitol for an awareness day. Her persistence paid off on April 28, 2025, when legislation was signed into law to officially remove the expiration date—guaranteeing permanent, non-taxpayer funding for spay/neuter assistance across all 55 West Virginia counties.

The Governor's Service Awards are hosted by Volunteer West Virginia, the State's Commission for National and Community Service. The event will take place at 6:00pm at the Culture Center in Charleston. A volunteer review committee selects the recipients based on achievement, community needs, continuing involvement, creativity, and impact of service.

Other recipients of the 2026 Governor's Service Awards include, by category:

- **Youth:** Pavan Subramani, Morgantown
- **Young Adult:** Moon King, Parkersburg
- **Adult:** Rhonda Lee, Cottageville
- **Lifetime Achievement:** Clint Hogbin, Hedgesville
- **Group:** The Quarter Store of Webster Springs, Cowen

The ceremony will also feature the presentation of the **Governor's Mountaineer Spirit Award** to Lauren Winans and Kristie Tenney, known as the "Mountaineer Mile Girls."

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About Volunteer West Virginia

Volunteer West Virginia, The State's Commission for National and Community Service, is the lead agency for volunteerism and AmeriCorps in West Virginia. In 1994, Volunteer West Virginia was established to administer National Service programs, such as AmeriCorps, throughout the state. Each year, Volunteer West Virginia administers \$3 million in federal and state funding for AmeriCorps and volunteer programs across the state. Volunteer West Virginia is an agency of the West Virginia Department of Tourism. Learn more at www.volunteer.wv.gov.