

City's homeless outreach team is critical to those in need

Last week during a routine morning patrol, Costa Mesa Senior Code Enforcement Officer Mike Brumbaugh came across an older woman and her two dogs sitting in her car near a motel.

She had been staying at the motel. Unfortunately, she ran out of money and her husband left her. She had no other options and began living out of her vehicle. She was frightened and staying in an area known for some questionable activity.

Brumbaugh did not want to leave the woman in this situation, so he reached out to Muriel Ullman, an outreach coordinator for the city's Network for Homeless Solutions. Ullman assessed the woman, who disclosed that one of her dogs had cancer and she did not have the money to put the animal to sleep.

Brumbaugh reached out to the city's Animal Control staff who came out to assist.

"I see many negative things during my day, but this was heartbreaking," said Brumbaugh. "Watching this lady say her last goodbyes to her life-long pet and put it in the truck and be taken to be put down was tough."

With the help of NHS and community partners, the woman and her remaining dog were placed in a shelter.

Outreach staff are working with her to get the registration of her vehicle renewed and locate a more permanent place to stay.

"This was one of three similar situations I came across in the same week," said Brumbaugh. "If I didn't have NHS and this group available to help me, it would be difficult to assist those in need."