



## Did you know?

- ⇒ Spaying one cat results in 370,000 fewer kitten births over 7 years
- ⇒ Spaying one dog results in 67,000 fewer puppy births over 6 years
- ⇒ Spaying and neutering reduces undesirable behaviors such as urine marking and aggression
- ⇒ Spaying and neutering dogs and cats at a young age reduces cancers and territorial fighting

It is the single most important way to end the suffering of cats and dogs



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The newsletter of Wine Country Animal Lovers

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# Help for animals helps people, too

It was a time in Caroline's life that was, in her words, "very dark." Her mother and her husband of 46 years had passed away and the horses she loved had to be put down because of colic.

In that difficult time, the retired nurse found solace in an unexpected place.

"I really found myself in helping cats," she said.

She started by rescuing six kittens scheduled for euthanasia.

"I couldn't stand for anything else to die," said Caroline, now a cheerful 83-year-old who lives in St. Helena. "I said, 'I'll take all of them.' And I did, and I nourished them and kept them, and they saved me."

And then something else unexpected happened.

"Cats seemed to find me," she laughed.

One of them was a "Himalayan-Siamese looking kitty" that Caroline describes as "drop-dead gorgeous and totally Mr. Personality." The cat, which she named Andy, showed up at her doorstep and refused to leave. Although she was reluctant to take in another cat, she couldn't help herself.

"He would try to come inside and I was in love with him and, of course, I adopted him,"



Caroline and Andy, the cat she describes as "a gift from Heaven."

she said.

Andy, who Caroline describes as "a gift from Heaven," had been with her for the better part of a decade when, last fall, he became ill with infected teeth and related blood poisoning. Antibiotics cured the blood poisoning, but her

(Continued on page 4)



# Speaking For Animals



By Alissa McNair

WCAL Board President

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Our small grassroots animal rescue has truly filled a need in our area, helping underserved animals whose families or finders often have nowhere else to turn. Wine Country Animal Lovers' home base in Calistoga places us an hour north of the Napa animal shelter in the rural area where Napa, Sonoma and Lake counties intersect. Knowing that there aren't many others who serve the animals who call this place home increases the pressure for our rescue to be able to say YES when the phone rings.

WCAL is growing and we are trying our best to stay true to our core values and maintain our high standard of care as our good reputation reaches farther than ever. The volume of calls for help has increased significantly over the past eight years. Each year we are able to help more animals in new and exciting ways. While we started as a rescue focused on the animals of Calistoga, our volunteer- and donor-supported group has expanded to serve three counties. We have played an important role in advocating for no-kill sheltering with local governments and in disaster planning that is inclusive of our furry family members. WCAL is so much more than just an adoption agency.

We spent the past year reviewing all we have accomplished and focusing on what it is that we do best to make strategic goals for the future. Our board of directors includes many new faces, most of whom first joined the cause as dedicated WCAL fosters. By restructuring, we are preparing to bring on some support staff for the first time ever to make sure we can continue to help the animals of Napa, Lake and Sonoma counties into the future. It takes an incredible amount of volunteer hours to manage our adoptable animals, run our special projects and be responsive to the community. The addition of a few key staff members will help us do an even better job and ensure that our growth happens sustainably.

With your support, in 2020 we will expand our foster program and continue to support animal owners through our charity medical program, which is the core of what we do at WCAL. At the same time, we have lofty fundraising goals so that we can partner with like-minded rescues and shelters to offer as much free spay/neuter as possible. Special projects like the Clearlake Alter Project allow us to keep our eye on the big picture of animal welfare – reducing pet overpopulation. This is how we plan to have a tangible impact on the lives of cats, dogs and the humans who love them.

*WCAL's Angels Foster families  
making animal rescue possible*



**Brenda Lynch and Harrison, the most recent of her WCAL fosters**

## My wife, foster mom extraordinaire

**By Chris Lynch**  
WCAL Board Member

Back in May 2018, Brenda Lynch received a call from WCAL. A stray dog and her eight puppies had just been rescued in Lake County. Brenda and I, and 11-year-old twins Katie and Porter had been discussing becoming a foster home for some time. Brenda's winery, Mutt Lynch Winery, has long supported animal rescue groups over the years, exposing the family to passionate volunteers and foster home puppies on numerous occasions. It was now the Lynches' time.

Brenda told the family about the litter and said that she had agreed that we would take one of the puppies. She also said we might have two puppies, but only for a few days. We all agreed.

WCAL's animal coordinator called to say that the puppies had completed their intake exam at the Calistoga Pet Clinic, so we went there to await our puppy. In came the first, then a second; but wait, a third and fourth were carried in. I looked at my wife. She just smiled and said, "Our home and heart are big enough for these four adorable puppies."

There's no question that our first foster experience was a baptism by fire. But it was so rewarding. Brenda has guided our family through 10 successful foster dog adoptions over the past 18 months. Our current foster pup, 4-month-old Harrison, was in need of a foster home during our recent evacuation from the Kincade Fire and we've taken him in and are preparing him for his forever home.

# Alter program makes impact in Clearlake

**By Pam Ingalls**  
WCAL Founding Board Member

Almost from our inception in 2012, WCAL has been actively helping animals in Lake County, which is just over the hill from Calistoga and a vastly different demographic than the Napa Valley. Much of our effort is now focused in Clearlake, a city with a population of more than 15,000 and a median annual household income of only \$27,034.

Clearlake is the poorest city in the poorest county in California, and largely because of that, few animals born there are spayed or neutered by their owners.

Knowing it's not possible to address animal overpopulation through rescue alone, WCAL and Dogwood Animal Rescue Project of Santa Rosa have teamed up to provide free spay and neuter for pets in Clearlake.

Experts say that in order to make a long-term impact on a pet population in an economically depressed area, it takes five years of continuous spay and neuter. That is WCAL's and Dogwood's commitment to Clearlake animals.

This is the second year of the Clearlake Alter Project, and added funding this year means almost twice as many pets will be spayed and neutered as last year. In 2018-19, the project provided 209 spays and neuters. The second year started in October with 52 pets altered in the first month alone.

Middletown Animal Hospital is CAP's medical partner and is providing generous discounts.



**The CAP program spayed and neutered more than 200 animals last year.**

If you'd like to join us by making a donation to support the Clearlake Alter Project, please mark "CAP" on your donation. CAP's average cost to alter one animal, with microchipping, is \$136.

This program is one of the most impactful projects WCAL has supported. By altering hundreds of animals each year, we will save the lives of hundreds of thousands of kittens and puppies who won't be born into homelessness and overcrowded shelters.



## In Memorium and Gratitude

The generosity of two Napa County residents who sadly passed away in 2019 is living on through Wine Country Animal Lovers' spay and neuter efforts.

Sandra Maresca, a Calistoga resident who was a part-time bookkeeper at the Calistoga Pet Clinic, died on March 18. John DelBondi, a resident of Rutherford who worked at Berringer Brothers Winery for nearly 60 years, died on Sept. 27.

We are deeply appreciative that Sandra and John left generous bequests to Wine Country Animal Lovers. When WCAL was notified of the sizeable gift from Sandra, we reached out to a close friend of hers to ask if she knew how

Sandra would like the money to be used. The answer was charity medical and spay and neuter.

Mr. Del Bondi was not known personally to any of us at WCAL but he had sent WCAL annual gifts since 2014, and on the memo of each check he wrote, "for spay and neuter."

WCAL has taken on many animal-related roles over the years, and this year our focus has been to reduce animal births through spay and neuter.

We are honored to fulfill the wishes of Sandra and John by using these funds to save animal lives by providing free spay and neuter for many Lake and Napa county animals.



# 'Our prayers were answered through WCAL'

vet advised that the teeth needed to be extracted, a procedure that would cost \$1,500.

"It just came out of nowhere," said Caroline. "Living on Social Security, there was no way I could come up with the money."

That's when her vet told her about WCAL.



**After treatment for parvo, Apollo is now a healthy young dog.**

"I thought nothing will ever come of this, but it can't hurt to try," said Caroline. "WCAL came through in a way that just blew me away."

WCAL not only paid for Andy's teeth, but transported him to and from Calistoga Pet Clinic, where Dr. Steve Franklin did the surgery at a deeply discounted rate.

"They really, really came through for me at a totally dark moment of my life," said Caroline.

Caroline is only one of many people who were helped by WCAL when they were unable to afford one-time emergency medical treatment for their pets. In the last 12 months, WCAL has paid for all or part of medical services for more than 64 animals, at a total cost of \$21,145, averaging \$330 per animal.

"Charity medical is extremely rewarding, knowing that we're not only able to help a family in desperate need, but also keep a loved pet at home and out of the homeless ani-

mal population," said Pam Ingalls, past WCAL president and now a board member in charge of the charity medical program.

Among the other animals helped by WCAL this year was Apollo, a German shepherd-mix puppy who was given by Natalie, a single mother living in Knights Valley, as a birthday present to her son. What Natalie didn't know when she adopted Apollo from a private party was that he had parvovirus, a highly contagious disease that typically attacks a dog's intestinal system.

A vet estimated the cost of treating Apollo at \$1,300, far beyond Natalie's ability to pay. In desperation, she tried to treat the puppy herself.

"The first night he revived and seemed like he was going to pull through, but by the second evening he took a turn for the worse and I was sure I was going to lose him," said Natalie. "He had lost a whole lot of weight and looked like a Third World street dog, completely emaciated, with only bones showing."

That's when she turned to WCAL, who paid for Apollo's treatment, first at an emergency clinic and then at Calistoga Pet Clinic. Now Apollo is a healthy young dog, living in a loving family.

"The kids and I are so grateful he is alive, healthy and ours to love," said Natalie. "I'm so grateful that our prayers were answered through Wine Country Animal Lovers."

Sadly, some of the charity work WCAL does involves the humane euthanasia of animals, rather than their treatment.

Noah, a Clearlake resident, had begun feeding a colony of feral cats and as so often happens, he became close to one of them, "a typical, very tough tomcat" that he named Scar.

Unfortunately, Scar soon started to show signs of illness.

"It was just the way he would kind of plop down in the street," Noah said. "He'd walk up the block a little bit, like he was confused, like he didn't have anywhere to go but didn't feel good."

Noah didn't have money for a vet, so he began calling rescue organizations.

"I reached out to everyone and WCAL was the only one that helped," he said.

A Lake County vet said that Scar's kidneys and liver were failing, and that he had feline leukemia. The vet recommended euthanasia, which WCAL also offered to pay for.

"I was beyond appreciative because he would have died suffering," said Noah. "I was just amazed at WCAL's generosity and kindness."



**WCAL helped ease Scar's pain.**



# For emergencies, plan for pets, too



**By Mark Doherty**  
**WCAL Board Member**

The fires of recent years, really starting in 2015 with the Valley Fire in Lake County, have literally brought home the need to have emergency plans in place for the whole family, including critters.

The plans should include contingencies for various scenarios based on time of day, who is available within the group, ability to gather up pets for an evacuation, the pets' cooperation and comfort level, and effective shelter in place.

Fortunately, with this need has grown an ever-deepening pool of information, as well as opportunities for training to help people better navigate this reality safely, smoothly and with better outcomes.

Establishing checklists of emergency supplies and necessary documents for family and pets, along with identifying a staging area for these items, should be done in advance so that when a red flag warning or other disaster situation occurs you can grab and go as required. Go-bags, meds, foods, litter, crates and carriers should be included in the planning. [www.NapaCART.org/](http://www.NapaCART.org/)

prepare has household and animal checklists and a host of preparedness information.

With dogs and cats, it's important that they become familiar with any crates, carriers and enclosures they may be asked to deal with in these situations. They will already be keyed to your emotional state; remember, calm

**WCAL strongly recommends that all pets be microchipped and ownership registered in advance of any emergency or disaster**

is contagious. Trying to stuff them in a box while you are agitated will not go well!

With our dogs and cats, we leave the carrier or dog crate doors open with a familiar blanket or towel and randomly throw treats in for them to discover. They often climb in on their own when the carriers come out. The idea is to build up positive associations to lessen the likelihood of bolting or hiding when it's time to load and go.

You must plan for the bolting, because at some point it's going to happen. Before loading, check the environment; close all windows and doors, know where the hiding spots are, limit

access if you can. This is where drills really show their worth. Zip tie carriers and crates to bullet-proof them during transport.

With cats more so than dogs, any change in routine is suspect, and coupled with your family's anxiety, they quickly become traumatized. We must think many steps ahead to manage their environment before we can let them out of their carriers, no matter how they protest. Once settled into an evacuation situation, transferring from carrier to crate always happens

last. Cats are in their carriers on the floor, with the crate set up and exits limited. Bathrooms and laundry rooms are good for this. A litter box, water and food are placed in the crate, and doors and windows are closed before opening the carrier into the narrow end door of the crate, leaving only one direction to move. Close the crate door immediately and make your apologies!

We do not recommend letting cats out of their carriers in any vehicle during an evacuation. They are traumatized and in flight mode!

Hope this helps with safer, better outcomes when faced with these challenges.

# New tool a savior for vulnerable young animals

By **Alissa McNair**  
WCAL President

WCAL accepts many neonatal kittens and puppies into our foster program each year. These young orphans need to be bottle fed around the clock and they cannot maintain their own body temperature until they are nearly four weeks old. We were able to purchase an incubator this year and it has already improved the level of care we can provide. Animals this young have a high mortality rate and this device significantly improves their odds of survival, recovery and eventual adoption.

The first litter to spend time in the incubator was Catrick Swayze, Kitty Purry and Kittney Spears. These three kittens struggled at first, but after just four days in the incubator, they were less restless, with bright eyes and good appetites.

Our new incubator provides optimum conditions through steady heat and precise humidity. It can also be used as an oxygen chamber when needed and connects to our nebulizer for medicating fragile neonates. Raising baby animals in



**Catrick Swayze, Kittney Spears and Kitty Purry hang out in WCAL’s new incubator.**

an incubator helps their bodies to more efficiently convert food into weight gain and minimizes loose stools. Rather than struggling to stay warm, all of their energy can be focused on growth and developing a healthy immune system. The proper humidity promotes a healthy respiratory

system and the air they breathe is filtered. We are always learning and trying our best to help all the animals who count on us. Thanks to our generous donors, we are continually improving our ability to give the youngest babies we help their very best chance.

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