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When we look back at 2020, I believe we will see it as a year of transitions. Certainly that’s true for the Santa Cruz SPCA, as we move into our long-awaited new facility, just a few doors down the street from the tiny bungalow where we’ve been for more than ten years. It has been a year of huge support for fostering animals, for pet food pantries and other programs that keep pets and people together, and—for rising up to meet unprecendented challenges.

I would like to think of it as the year we rallied to accomplish what we might never have undertaken otherwise: 2020 is the year that we found new physically distanced ways to continue our essential, lifesaving work. It’s the year when we realized you CAN start the adoption experience online by meeting a cat or a dog via Facetime or Zoom!

And most of all, it’s the year we realized the dream of our new facility, where we will be able to help even more animals and their people for many years to come. But there’s more to it than that.

This is the year that our community rallied to help us traverse the final fundraising mile to pay for that building. If you haven’t yet donated, there’s still time, and our campaign could still use your help! If you donate $1,000 or more, your name will be memorialized on our donor wall with other generous benefactors! Please join us as we open our new doors and the next chapter of the Santa Cruz SPCA.

Thank you for your support.

Woofs and meows,

Alison “Ali” Talley
Executive Director

Meet Pluto
Foster cat Pluto regains his health, finds new orbit

On March 12, when Bob & Linda Powers agreed to foster Pluto, he had a wired jaw, a missing eye, and a hide-under-the-covers demeanor.

What a difference a little time, attention, and treats can make. These days, four-year-old Pluto has a lucky life at the Powers’ house with two hours of daily leash walks, endless time on the cat patio (catio), and ready responses to any of his demanding mews.

“He’s gotten tons of attention because we are home all the time, and when we go out, he’s not happy with us,” said Bob. “He’s the best example of a comeback kitty that you’ll ever find. He has the missing eye, which you don’t notice, and the jaw wire came out after a month. He’s super athletic, jumps up on the trees, and runs faster than we ever will.”

Pluto was four years old when he was hit by the car that fractured his jaw and damaged one of his eyes. The Santa Cruz SPCA arranged surgery, and Executive Director Ali Talley took him into her own house post-surgery for a couple of weeks. Then she asked Bob and Linda if they would foster him as he continued his recovery. Bob and Linda are SCSPCA donors who love cats and previously fostered a female cat named Cherie in 2019. They helped place Cherie quickly using a lovingly detailed NextDoor posting.

The Powers love cats and choose to donate, foster, and sometimes volunteer at the Santa Cruz SPCA because their travel schedule prevents them from adopting. When the lockdown happened, they postponed a scheduled trip to France for August and kept Pluto just a little longer. That trip was also postponed, and Pluto’s stay extended again.

“Alli told us that Pluto likes to cuddle, but he is the most energetic, high-maintenance, curious cat we’ve ever had,” Linda said. “We had never had a cat who had the “zoomies” before. He runs up and down the stairs, and we tried baby gates to contain him to certain areas of the house, but finally we just gave up.”

Over the months, Bob and Linda have learned to read Pluto’s signals, and he has learned theirs. With his one eye, he spends hours watching birds, bugs, and lizards in his specially enclosed catio in their yard. On his leash walks, he initially wanted to catch them all.

“We worked with SPCA staff to modify his behavior on walks,” Linda said. “We take him out on the leash and he has a high prey drive and wants to catch lizards, but the behaviorist taught us to bring toys and treats, and he focuses on them instead.”

Pluto has also learned to open doors, and is currently studying how to unlock the door to the catio, but for now, Bob and Linda still hold that power.

The Powers gave generously for the cat adoption wing and an indoor-outdoor catio at the Santa Cruz SPCA’s new facility. If you would like to name a cat condo in honor of a memorable cat, please reach out to foreverhome@spcasc.org or call 831-465-5000 x19.
Disaster Response
Santa Cruz SPCA rallies to help humans and animals during CZU fires

This summer, our community rallied to help the people and the animals affected by the unprecedented CZU Lightning Complex fires that burned forests, houses, and businesses, and forced local families to evacuate their homes. Working to support local efforts, we quickly mobilized to help animals and families affected by fire. In August, we cared for a group of senior cats when their guardians were evacuated.

“All the cats we took in at that time were seniors, not just older than eight years, but in their teens. I think the average age was 15 years old!”
- Shelter Manager Mandi Hart

Many evacuees needed help with feeding, transporting, and sheltering their pets.

"As a single person, my animals are my life and I can't think of anyone who would be willing to go above and beyond in caring for them like the Santa Cruz SPCA did," said Darilyn Druhe of Scotts Valley, who had to board her cats Purrcy and Anni at the Santa Cruz SPCA when she evacuated from her home.

SANTA CRUZ SPCA RESPONDS TO CZU FIRE COMPLEX

Boarding for Evacuated Animals
Shelter staff and volunteers made sure the cats had food, love, medical care, and enrichment during their stays. To lower the risk of transmitting disease, we completely separated shelter cats from owned evacuated cats. To create space for feline evacuees, our team sent adoptable shelter dogs to foster families.

Daily Supply and Food Pantry
During the fires, our weekly Pet Food Pantry became an on-demand daily food pantry and supply depot. We’re grateful to local community members who allowed us to give out nearly 5,000 lbs of pet-related food and supplies for those in need. To expand our reach, we had recently formed partnerships with the Santa Cruz Salvation Army and Community Connection. Please, keep your generous donations coming!

Crate Giveaway
To help evacuated families on the move safely transport and house their animals, we gave out approximately 70 wire crates, plastic travel carriers, and large enclosures for dogs, cats, ducks, chicken, rabbits, and other small pets. We also brought additional animal carriers to the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds for evacuated animals there. A huge round of thanks to all who donated carriers.
COVID-19 Update

Shelter-in-Place order helps Santa Cruz SPCA prepare for move to new building

Something funny happened when COVID-19 forced people to stay home and do their jobs remotely. Families finally had time to adopt new pets, and shelters across the country saw applications to adopt skyrocket. Yet most shelters initially had to reduce the number of available animals on-site and regroup to draft operating procedures that assured the optimal safety for humans and humane care for animals. Meanwhile, trained and new foster volunteers who formerly took in the most vulnerable animals offered homestays for healthy shelter dogs and cats.

At the Santa Cruz SPCA, we rallied to train new foster volunteers to host shelter dogs and cats in their homes. As we implemented Shelter-in-Place protocols, we joined a national discussion among independent shelters about benchmarks and best practices. We made the most of this time, and teams began drafting new standard operating procedures for the new facility.

“Our SPCA staff have always been ingenious when it comes to devising ways to provide top-notch, humane care to the animals at our little bungalow house.” said Executive Director, Ali Talley. “Thanks to some dedicated work during the lockdown and a carefully designed new building, our operations will be so much more efficient going forward. With a streamlined new facility, the sky is the limit on what we can achieve on behalf of the animals.”

A revolution in animal welfare

When the COVID-19-related lockdowns happened across the country, many shelter workers suddenly were working remotely, while a reduced staff stayed on site with remaining animals. Our Santa Cruz SPCA staff capitalized on the renewed interest in adopting, and found families new time at home meant they could adopt dogs and cats whose behavior or medical conditions might have been daunting before. Our staff also seized the opportunity to take a variety of online webinars. All team members who work with animals have now completed the online Fear-Free Shelter Program to improve the pets’ emotional experience and reduce stresses common to shelter environments. Although this period of time was bittersweet, our staff passed the baton to foster volunteers who temporarily assumed some of their most cherished roles.

“We had to let go of our attachment to having personal knowledge of each animal. Because animals weren’t in the shelter, we asked our foster families to help describe the animals to potential adopters,” said Mandi Hart. “We sent them fun questionnaires designed to get their creative juices flowing, and we coached them on taking photos of their animals.”

Community giving brings light, safety, space to shelter animals

Thanks to generous gifts from donors, the new space modernizes animal habitats for comfort and stress reduction, and adds a dedicated grooming spa, separate play yards, and high-volume laundry machines. Isolated air and water flows prevent cross contamination. Animal habitats in our intake and recovery areas isolate disease and muffle sound. Staff are excited to expand on newfound skills, and special teams have been preparing protocols for the new facility for behavior and enrichment, volunteer shifts, foster pickup and returns, cleaning, and care.

As always, we will collaborate with partner shelters, rescues, foster volunteers, and veterinary clinics to provide the very best care. We are reaching out to make new connections to source more animals in need, and many community members have a greater appreciation for animal sheltering on a personal level. With an imminent move into that long-awaited new building, all of those new relationships and lessons are just in time. We’re on the last lap of our fundraising efforts. If you’d like to contribute, please reach out to foreverhome@spcasc.org or call 831-465-5000 x19.