



Santa Maria Valley

Humane Society

Critter Chatter

2019 SPRING



From the Top Dog

By SEAN HAWKINS, CAWA

Executive Director, Santa Maria Valley Humane Society

We celebrated a really amazing life-saving month in December, accepting 144 dogs and cats in need of homes, with 102 of those pets being from open admission shelters where the animals were at risk of euthanasia. Moreover, an unbelievable 157 dogs and cats were adopted into to new homes! I am super, super proud of every member of our staff, all of our awesome volunteers, and the generosity of the community who made our "Homes for the Holidays" adoption program such a huge success! We are ending the year celebrating the adoption of 1,214 dogs and cats into new homes! (By comparison, we ended 2016 with 487 pets adopted into new homes.) We also spayed or neutered 2,349 dogs and cats in 2018 (a 9% increase over 2017) for a grand total of 36,712 pets sterilized since 1998. Our wellness clinic helped and healed 6,143 patients last year, keeping those pets healthy, safe and in their homes.

"WE'RE BETTER TOGETHER"



Humane Society



It's always interesting to look back at the previous year to recognize accomplishments that we have made. When I arrived at SMVHS, over 13% of the adult animals adopted from the organization were returned. That number decreased to 9% in 2017 with the implementation of our Open Paw manners and skills training for shelter pets. In 2018, our returns decreased again to 7% — and that's with almost tripling the number of adoptions in the same time period! That statistic alone just proves that hard work and consistency pays off. We are investing in making sure every dog and cat in our care is prepared to adapt to a new home when they go out our door. We average taking 40 dogs on three potty walks per day. That's walking our dogs 5,840 miles per year. Our Dog Program Manager, Stephen Szostek, alone, averages walking our dogs 8 miles per day!

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Edwin & Jeanne Woods Family
Animal Care Complex
1687 West Stowell Road
Santa Maria, CA 93458

805-349-3435
www.smvhs.org

Adoption Center

Wed to Sun, 11 am to 6 pm

Animal Intake

Wed, Fri & Sat, 1 pm to 6 pm

Spay & Neuter Clinic

Wed, Fri & Sat, 7:30 am to 6 pm

Wellness Clinic

Wed & Sat, 2 pm to 5 pm

MISSION

The Santa Maria Valley Humane Society exists to rescue, shelter, heal, place, and train dogs and cats while engaging our Central California Coastal community through education and advocacy to end animal homelessness.

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CAT PROGRAM MANAGER & TRANSFER COORDINATOR

DENISE CLIF

TRAINING & BEHAVIOR MANAGER

AILIGH VANDERBUSH, MS, IAABC, CABT, ABCDT

FROM THE TOP DOG... continued from page 1

Ahead in the New Year, six animal welfare organizations in Santa Barbara County formed an exploratory group to discuss potential collaboration opportunities with the goals of services throughout the region and saving the lives of more homeless animals. The exploratory group is comprised of representatives from the Santa Barbara Humane Society, Santa Maria Valley Humane Society, Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society, Animal Shelter Assistance Program (ASAP), Community Awareness, Responsibility & Education (CARE4Paws), and Dog Adoption & Welfare Group (DAWG). A series of facilitated meetings has taken place over the last few months to discuss the organization's current programs and services and how more animals would be helped if the organizations merged together and acted as one.

The working group is undertaking these discussions with help from experienced non-profit partnership consultant Vance Yoshida. Ultimately, the Boards of Directors of each organization will determine what partnerships are appropriate for their groups. Each of the participating organizations has committed to a process of transparency and communication with all stakeholders in the community as this opportunity to help more animals and the people who love them unfolds. We are indeed excited about entering a new era of caring, compassion and hope for all animals across the county.



QUESTIONS ABOUT CATS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD? WE CAN HELP!

By **SEAN HAWKINS, CAWA**
Executive Director, Santa Maria Valley Humane Society

Community cats are animals who make their home outdoors, and are provided happy, healthy lives by volunteers in the neighborhood where they live. We want to provide you with important information about a program called Trap-Neuter-Return to limit cat populations and adopt out socialized kittens. We have resources to help but we need you to be part of the solution.

1. ARE YOU CURRENTLY PROVIDING CARE FOR COMMUNITY CATS?

We need your help to inventory the cats in the neighborhood. We need to know a description of each cat and their location(s). We would like to work with you to coordinate a feeding schedule prior to our trapping efforts — this maximizes our chances of trapping all of the cats.

2. ARE YOU INTERESTED IN VOLUNTEERING TO HELP THE CATS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

Volunteers will help complete a thorough inventory of the cats, distribute future communications to residents, notify us of new cats that move into the area, confirm that feeding stations are located in appropriate areas, and additional duties as they become needed.

3. ARE THE CATS SPAYED OR NEUTERED?

It is important that all cats in the community be spayed or neutered, not just the neighborhood cats. This especially includes pet cats who are allowed outdoors. We can provide you with some low-cost options for your pet cats, free options for the neighborhood cats, and even help provide transportation.

Trap-Neuter-Return involves humanely trapping outdoor cats, having them spayed or neutered and vaccinated, and then returning them to their outdoor homes where they will be cared for by volunteers. These tried and proven methods are scientifically validated to ultimately reduce cat populations without euthanasia. Our programs are modeled after national successful models created by Alley Cat Allies. Funding for the North County Community Cat program is made possible by Animal Shelter Assistance Program. For more information about helping Community Cats, call (805) 349-3435, Ext. 1.



It is important that all cats in the community be spayed or neutered, not just the neighborhood cats.



IS YOUR DOG REACTIVE? WE'VE GOT A NEW CLASS FOR THAT!

By AILIGH VANDERBUSH, MS, IAABC, CABT, ABCDT
Behavior & Training Manager at the Santa Maria Valley Humane Society

Do you hate walking your dog? Get nervous when you see another dog approaching? Feel embarrassed every time you get ready to take your dog in public? Walk your dog in the middle of the night to avoid other people? You are not alone. In the last 15+ years, the need for dog training classes geared toward dogs that are reactive on leash has taken new heights.

I've been in your shoes and I can tell you that as my dog went over his threshold, so would I. I was embarrassed, frustrated and in the beginning, angry. I often had to take a deep breath and remind myself that my dog was acting out of fear and was trying to tell me he needed to move away from the oncoming canine.

Reactive dogs overreact to something that may seem perfectly normal to us or to another dog. This is often due to a lack of socialization, over socialization, fear, or even genetics. This overreaction is heightened with the dog on a leash as they could feel trapped and unable to get away from the fearful trigger. A leash reactive dog may bark, lunge, or show teeth, as a way of communicating their fear and a desire to avoid an actual fight. Some leash reactive dogs have never been taught how to appropriately approach or interact with another dog and their similar behavior to

the fearful dog maybe over excitement while trying to get to the new dog to play.

Luckily, Reactive Dog Classes are available and many dog trainers or behavior specialists work with reactive dogs. There are article, books, and videos to offer help. But, I can tell you from my own experience, taking a class with people in a similar situation is immensely helpful. As I participated and eventually ran reactive dog classes, each class became like a therapy session — like a reactive dog anonymous. As a trainer, I help you lay a good foundation of skills that can be utilized quickly and easily as soon as you notice the fear signs in the dog and as human, I can give you skills to help change or manage your own behavior in a way that helps the dog.

Reactive dogs teach us a lot about dog communication and behavior, and really, a lot about our own behavior. There is hope! You and your dog will be able to walk in your own neighborhood, in the daylight and without embarrassment. You can find out about all of the dog training classes at Santa Maria Valley Humane Society and sign-up for the Reactive Rover class by visiting www.smvhs.org/animal-services/bark-university.



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