San Francisco SPCA Turns 140
Bunting and birthday cake

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A cat’s amazing tale

Summer Camp’s Life Lessons
From SF/SPCA student to teacher

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Dog Day on the Bay
After long and careful consideration, The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SF/SPCA) Board of Directors made the difficult decision to discontinue the Hearing Dog Program. We are all extremely proud of the program and its very professional staff and committed volunteers, so we reached this conclusion only with great sadness and reluctance. Nevertheless, it was the right thing to do, as we’ll explain.

For almost 30 years The SF/SPCA Hearing Dog Program provided invaluable assistance to people who are deaf or have hearing loss. The first such program in the nation sponsored by a humane society, it offered life-altering services to both dogs and their human companions. Its very existence provided encouragement for similar organizations.

Fortunately, a gratifying change has occurred during those 30 years. Other assistance-dog agencies, whose only mission is to train and place such animals, have expanded, making a major impact on the field. The organizations move more dogs through training, keep the animals in appropriate long-term housing and provide extensive follow-up care for the dogs, thus impacting the lives of many more individuals (both canine and human) than The SF/SPCA program could.

Meanwhile, the need remains urgent for the lifesaving services that The SF/SPCA has traditionally supplied to homeless companion animals: expanded spay/neuter to prevent overpopulation, affordable and compassionate veterinary care, and increased adoption services. These constitute The SF/SPCA’s core mission, and by focusing the Society’s finite resources on these goals, we believe we can save the lives of many more companion animals.

Not only will we continue to give homeless cats and dogs the medical and behavioral rehabilitation – and time – they need to get adopted, we will also transfer animals from other, underserved shelters and endow them with the same extraordinary treatment. Our efforts are already underway in a big way. In the last year alone, The SF/SPCA provided these comprehensive lifesaving services to 1,154 companion animals from outside San Francisco. This is an astonishing number, representing an exciting development that once again puts The SF/SPCA at the vanguard of animal welfare. Clearly, we can do far more good for many more animals by investing our resources at the very heart of our mission.

Moreover, within a year The SF/SPCA’s new Leanne B. Roberts Animal Care Center will open, significantly expanding our capacity to provide virtually all aspects of medical care and to meet the continuing need for spay/neuter surgeries. Remember, too, that another pillar...
of strength The SF/SPCA provides for our community is the raft of charitable veterinary programs that help literally thousands of pets of people with limited financial means. Our vital programs, currently funded at more than a million dollars each year, allow these guardians to keep their companion animals rather than give them up on account of unaffordable medical expenses. The new Center will allow The SF/SPCA to broaden those services as well.

Change is difficult, but we have ensured that the community’s needs are met. Our Behavior and Training Department will offer assistance to all existing SF/SPCA Hearing Dog teams. In addition, a free-lance Hearing Dog trainer has been retained by the Society to provide in-house, off-site services for current Hearing Dog recipients.

Also, The SF/SPCA formed a partnership with Canine Companions for Independence, a non-profit, Santa Rosa-based, service-dog training agency, to provide support for applicants currently on The SF/SPCA Hearing Dog wait list. This partnership will help fill the need for those waiting for a Hearing Dog. Founded in 1975, Canine Companions has been enhancing the lives of people who are deaf or have hearing loss by providing highly trained assistance dogs and ongoing support to ensure quality partnerships. By letting this specialized agency concentrate on what they do best, we can focus on what we do best: maximizing our life-saving potential.

Every SF/SPCA supporter can be extremely proud of what our Hearing Dog Program accomplished for the 800 dogs and people whose lives it directly touched, and for the inspiration it provided to the general public about what “shelter dogs” can do and how intrinsically valuable all dogs are. As with many other programs, The San Francisco SPCA showed the way. Others can now take over. Meantime, we persevere with our vision of a future where all animals in our society will receive the care and treatment they deserve. Step by step, we are succeeding.

Jan McHugh-Smith, President
Catherine B. Brown, Chair of the Board

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On the cover: San Francisco resident Julie was searching for a new puppy when she found gold at San Francisco Animal Care and Control, adopting two-year-old Nikah instead. Julie and Nikah then took multiple courses at The San Francisco SPCA; Nikah even graduated with honors from the small-dog class. Photograph ©2008 Mark Rogers Photography.
Animals Make the Rounds

Now in its 27th year, The San Francisco SPCA’s Animal Assisted Therapy Program touches people throughout our city.

Compiled by Jennifer Emmert, Ph.D., Manager, SF/SPCA AAT Program

The San Francisco SPCA’s Animal Assisted Therapy Program brings the healing presence of animals to people in healthcare facilities citywide. Society volunteers take their own pets on the visits; most of the animals are dogs, but guinea pigs, rabbits and even cats participate.

The SF/SPCA was the first animal welfare organization to provide this invaluable service. Today, the Society's program is considered a model in the field. Each year, AAT staff and volunteers visit tens of thousands of people in nearly 100 local healthcare facilities. AAT visits do far more than provide a temporary lifting of spirits to clients in hospitals, nursing homes, psychiatric clinics and special schools. Again and again, residents show increased communication, lowered anxiety, and even decreased heart rates. Where humans sometimes fail, animals are often successful in cutting through the barriers that isolate people with physical and emotional difficulties. “We gather around the AAT animal and volunteer like people warming their hands at a campfire,” says one therapist.

Lately our AAT program has been expanding its services to other non-traditional settings, including transitional housing, emergency housing, and youth shelters. In addition, the Puppy Dog Tales Reading Program recently celebrated its one-year anniversary. The first of its kind in San Francisco, this program gives children who are just learning to read a special opportunity to practice their skills. When a child reads aloud to a dog, the animal listens patiently, issues no corrections, and provides loving licks just for trying.

More than 100 pet/person teams volunteer for The San Francisco SPCA’s Animal Assisted Therapy Program, and there's plenty of room (and demand) for more. Join us! Call (415) 554-3060. As these field reports show, AAT visits are rewarding for clients, volunteers and facility staff members.

Each time an SF/SPCA volunteer team comes to our center, it is a good day, and the day of Michele and Sam’s visit was no different. [Michele Chaboudy and 10-year-old Old English Sheepdog Sam have been AAT volunteers for seven years.] Staff who spend a lot of time working in the back area of the center came out to greet the visitors, and, best of all, the seniors that we serve were engaged, excited and happy. Sam is a much bigger dog than the majority who have come to our center. However, Sam’s gentleness and likeability won over the hearts.
of our seniors. Even one particular woman who has a long history of being frightened of dogs, particularly large dogs, could not help but reach out to Sam, laugh, and caress him. His shaggy face and calm demeanor won us all over. Thank you to Sam, Michele and The SF/SPCA!"

— Martine Bernstein,
On Lok Lifeways Mission Center

One man at the Veteran’s Administration hospital said that Coby made his day. Then he changed his mind and told me Coby had made his week.

— SF/SPCA volunteer
Sarah Pinto

The visits are very much appreciated and loved by The Avenue residents. Each time an adorable dog visits us, I see many faces light up instantly, as everyone wants to touch or play with the lovable creature. All my pain and worries are erased whenever I see the darling animals. My heart just fills up with warmth for these beautiful pets.

— H.C., resident,
The Avenue

Our most special client is a 90-year-old woman who gives new meaning to the word curmudgeon. No matter what the staff does to try to please her, she remains steadfast in her grumpiness. Except when Charlie, my 90-pound Bernese mountain dog, comes. For him she gets out of bed, dresses and gets into her wheelchair. And with him she comes alive, telling us stories of her past dogs and horses, laughing when Charlie licks her hands, and giving him “a treat” she has saved for him alone. At her request the Activity Director took a photo of her with Charlie and a large copy now adorns her wall so that she can be with him between visits.

— SF/SPCA volunteer
Linda Blackstone

Zoe, a golden retriever who’s been doing AAT for more than five of her six years, accompanies SF/SPCA volunteer Kathryn Coffey to Hamilton Family Center on Friday nights. Hamilton offers food, shelter and guidance to more than 300 people each day, 60% of whom are children. Kathryn and Zoe have made a long-term commitment to Hamilton Family Center.

“We sit in a circle in the playroom, taking turns and learning about what Zoe likes to do (fetch and swim) and looking at her paws and ears and teeth (she is very tolerant). Some children like to hold her leash and walk around the playroom. Others remember from previous visits that she gets hot and thirsty with all the petting and playing and will very proudly provide her with a bowl of fresh water and delight in her drinking the water and subsequently irrigating the playroom with her wet snout.

I bring a Polaroid camera with me. It takes a bit of coordination to have the children sit or stand (and hold still) next to Zoe while I take the photo. The magic comes as the picture develops and the children see their images emerge and sharpen from a square of shiny white paper. The children love this little treasure and treat it accordingly. Many of them walk it over to Mom or Dad to share.”

To volunteer for The San Francisco SPCAs Animal Assisted Therapy Program, call (415) 554-3060.
That's right, manicures for Mittens. The San Francisco SPCA holds a Cat Claw Clipping Clinic twice monthly: 10-11 a.m. the first Sunday of every month, and 6-7 p.m. the third Thursday of every month. The cost is $10 for the front paws and $15 for all claws. (Polydactyl? No extra charge.). Come to The SF/SPCA Hospital’s Cat entrance at 2500 16th St. Your cat must be in a carrier. No appointment needed. To confirm, call (415) 522-3525.

**CATCLAWCLIPPING CLINIC**

Bustopher

The San Francisco SPCA Feral Cat Assistance Program wants YOU.

We're looking for people to join our neighborhood Cat Assistance Team. We'll train you in the rescue, fostering and humane trapping of feral (wild) cats so the animals can be spayed or neutered and then either released or adopted.

Also, city construction projects displace feral cats, so we are always on the lookout for potential relocation sites like back yards, barns and warehouse areas.

Be part of the humane solution -- and work from home! Call Mary Ann Buxton, SF/SPCA Feral Cat Coordinator, at (415) 522-3539.

**CATCH FOSTER FEVER!**

KITTEN SEASON’S HERE. Bring adorable kittens into your home for a few weeks and be part of The SF/SPCA’s lifesaving phenomenon.

Potential foster parents need not attend a general SF/SPCA volunteer orientation; just come to a one-session foster class. To sign up, call SF/SPCA Foster Care Facilitator Alison Lane at 415-522-3542 or e-mail her at alane@sfspca.org.

Our two-hour foster class will be held on these Saturday afternoons: June 21, July 19.

**Readers write**

**Q:** The “Miracle on O’Farrell Street” article in your spring issue describes Desmond and Penny as “flame-point” kittens. What does that term mean?

**A:** “Flame-point” refers to a cat coat color scheme of cream-colored body with reddish ears, face, legs and tail. Typically, these “points” are subtle during kittenhood and turn a bit darker as the cat ages. Frosty (see pg. 19) has some of this coloration.

**Q:** A while back, an article in *Our Animals* suggested stuffing your dog’s hollow toys with food and treats, including raisins. Aren’t raisins poisonous to dogs?

**A:** The article was published several years ago. Since then, alerted by a rash of cases, scientists have concluded that raisins are toxic to dogs, though no one knows why. To be safe, keep raisins (and grapes) out of Rover’s reach; for the latest information, ask your veterinarian.
The clip-clop of horses’ hooves and the rustle of long, silk skirts echoed once again at The San Francisco SPCA on Friday, April 18, 2008, as the venerable organization celebrated the 140th anniversary of its founding.

SF/SPCA President Jan McHugh-Smith and Board Chair Catherine Brown welcomed the guests; officials from the State of California and City of San Francisco mingled with other dignitaries, staff (some in period costume), volunteers and well-behaved dogs, while horses from the San Francisco Police Department Mounted Unit formed an honor guard for the occasion.

Dan Bernal, a representative from Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s office, read a congratulatory letter – and sent best wishes from all the office dogs at Ms. Pelosi’s San Francisco headquarters. California State Assemblyman Mark Leno spoke warmly about the Society’s lifesaving work, and Leah Rowell, representing State Senator Leland Yee, delivered a congratulatory statement. Finally, Alfredo Pedroza read a proclamation from San
Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom which lauded the organization and named April 18 San Francisco SPCA Day in the City.

Welcoming San Francisco Fire Chief Joanne Hayes-White and Police Chief Heather Fong, Ms. McHugh-Smith noted the Society’s long history of caring for the horses of both City Departments, a situation that continues to this day with The SF/SPCA’s Police Horse Retirement Program. Guests toasted the Society and wished it another 140 years (or 980 years, calculated in dog and cat time) of continuing success.

On Saturday and Sunday, April 19 and 20, The SF/SPCA held an Open House to celebrate 140 years of service to the animals and the community, and to mark the 10th anniversary of the initiation of the landmark Maddie’s Adoption Center; since Maddie’s opened, over 36,000 dogs and cats have been adopted from the facility. As a special birthday gift, adoption prices on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. were lowered to 1998 levels – $28! Other weekend events featured canine agility demonstrations and participation, Humane Education activities for youngsters, and an art auction to benefit the Animal Assisted Therapy Program.

Many happy returns to the Society and to the tens of thousands of animals – feline, canine and equine – whose lives have been saved by The San Francisco SPCA.
YAPPY HOUR

DOG-TIRED FRIDAY EVENING? Wag and drag your favorite canine or canine-loving human to San Francisco’s DragonBar on Friday, June 20th, from 6 to 9 p.m.

For just ten barks – uh, ten bucks – admission (which benefits The San Francisco SPCA), canines munch and drink free (kibble and H2O) and humans get a specialty cocktail. Enjoy a convivial conclave of doggie devotees plus the hands-on company of their canines – TGIF! There are also fantastic raffles, door prizes and more.

Dog- and crowd-friendly pooches only, please. All dogs must be on-leash at all times. DragonBar is in North Beach, 473 Broadway at Kearny.

If you miss this Yappy Hour, fear not; others are planned. Check www.dragonbarsf.com or www.sfspca.org. And if you know of a neighborhood tavern that wants to establish its own Yappy Hour, call Laura at The SF/SPCA, (415) 522-3564.

A Paperless Society

The San Francisco SPCA has stopped using newspaper in animals’ quarters because recent scientific findings indicate that newspaper can harbor germs – not a good thing! So, after decades of asking people to bring newspapers here, The SF/SPCA is switching from paper to cloth. 🐾 Please give us your tired, torn, and tattered towels and blankets that you’re yearning to replace. Unlike newspapers, these items can be used over and over again thanks to The SF/SPCA’s in-house laundry capability. Bring your cloth contributions to Maddie’s Adoption Center or the Spay/Neuter lobby (16th St. entrance). There’s free parking in our Maddie’s Center lot on Florida St., just off 16th St. 🐾 Thank you for adding a soft touch to some needy animals’ surroundings.

Switch Search Engines

Each time you use Goodsearch.com for an online search, SF/SPCA animals get a penny. We don’t have to tell you, that will add up quickly! Enter “San Francisco SPCA” at Goodsearch.com.

Gifts of Love

All gifts to the Society in honor or in memory of a person or pet are gratefully accepted, and we will gladly notify others of your thoughtfulness.

In memory of:
Babette, from Roni Howard
Chauncy, from Ling and Cleo
Koko-Girl, from Renae & David MacLachlan
Martini, from Izabela Akerman
Pepper, from Roni Howard
Preston and Ernie, from Ling and Cleo
Raven, from Roni Howard

To give a Gift of Love, send your contribution of $50 or more to The SF/SPCA, 2500 16th St., San Francisco, CA 94103. At your request, your memorial or honorific gift will be printed here. Contact Cynthia Howland, Development Coordinator, at (415) 554-3029 or chowland@sfspca.org for details.
I will never forget my first dog. Her name was Katie. She was a brindle-colored Australian cattle-dog mix who could be overly submissive but was always sweet as pie. Unfortunately, Katie was only mine for a week, but it was one of the best weeks of my life because I knew I helped train Katie to become the best dog she could be.

This memorable experience could only happen in one place: The San Francisco SPCA summer camp classroom.

In 1994, at the age of eight, I attended my first week of Dog and Cat Camp at The SF/SPCA. Now, fifteen years later, as I wrap up my first year working as a full-fledged humane educator, I realize and appreciate how much summer camp at The SF/SPCA changed my life.

Summer camp was not just a week of playing in kitty condos and walking dogs. My first time at summer camp was an unforgettable week of character building, problem solving, and inspirational teachers that opened my eyes to the world of animal welfare and sheltering (in addition to lots and lots of puppy kisses).

I started my career as a camper (twice) and grew from there to being a junior counselor and then completed the circle to become a paid head counselor for two summers. Regardless of what changed in the camp curriculum each year, one quality remained true. Every single time I walked into the classroom, I was truly inspired. For me, this was not the typical classroom where you learned about making a difference, it was an amazing place where you made that difference.

Let me tell you a story from just last summer about a camper named Tommy. Each summer, The SF/SPCA offers at least one session of camp to children in need. The second I met this rambunctious camper, I knew he was going to be a firecracker. He was quick to make smart remarks about our activities and anxious to be the center of attention. Tommy had been moving from foster home to foster home, making it difficult for him to gracefully receive any type of direction from any face of authority.

But when the animals were around, he behaved like a completely different kid. Even though Tommy wasn’t the most attentive or obedient child, this boy was by far one of the most thoughtful campers. From day one, he immediately put each visiting animal’s needs before his own; so much so that if Tommy caught another camper not respecting an animal he would politely correct them. Some of the most moving moments of camp for me were observing Tommy silently identifying with the small kittens he was petting or the dogs he was socializing. Signs of growth
were heartening to see as Tommy insisted on walking the biggest and most challenging dogs in the shelter because he believed he could help those dogs the most. Tommy’s confidence was developing, too, as he found something he could finally trust and identify with. Not only that, everyone could see Tommy was starting to believe in himself.

My impression was confirmed not long afterwards when his foster parents contacted me privately to ask if I would baby-sit Tommy, per his request. Of course I was flattered to be asked because it meant Tommy felt comfortable with me. But I think it was not about me so much as about what summer camp allowed and encouraged this boy to do: make a connection with the animals and experience and accept their unconditional love.

Tommy is just one of countless children that I witnessed to be genuinely moved by the animals, transformed during their week at summer camp. As I said, the humane education taught at summer camp is not just about playing with the animals; it is about establishing and trusting new connections and learning how to take action and speak up for those who cannot.

As a camper, my personal week-long transformation took place in a slightly different fashion. I always had an infatuation for animals, but it was at SF/SPCA summer camp that my passion was unleashed. Not having any pets of my own at the time, it was a dream come true to be surrounded for an entire week by animals and people who love animals. Attending camp not only validated my love for animals, it opened my eyes to a world of animal welfare, training, behavior, and conservation. The exposure and experience gave me an entire new world to explore.

The satisfaction of socializing feral kittens and scared puppies moved me to become a foster parent for The SF/SPCA. Watching a hearing dog demo inspired me to learn American Sign Language as well as to volunteer for a service dog facility. Watching my favorite counselor, Craig O’Brien, talk with such passion about animal welfare gave me strength to stand up to anyone who questioned my passion for animals (and to this day watching him as an animal control officer guest)

LEFT: Campers learn that swaddling a skittish kitten – making a “kitty burrito” – helps socialize the animal.

Below: The Case of the Multiplying Cats
I exposed myself to as many aspects of animal welfare as I could throughout high school and college. Like most animal-loving children, I thought the best way to help animals was to be a veterinarian. So one summer in high school, I attended “Vet Camp” at a university. However, after a few weeks of shadowing vet techs, vets, and emergency doctors, I realized that as much as I enjoyed the learning experience, this line of work was not for me.

Still determined to explore direct animal-care opportunities, I interned for two summers at an animal sanctuary. While nothing could compare to the gratification of working with animals in need (whose trust you saw through the spark of recognition in their eyes), I found the lack of human interaction taxing. Once again, not quite the right occupation for me.

Then, after watching my first episode of “Animal Cops” on TV, I considered becoming an animal control officer. But as I watched more episodes, it became clear that as rewarding as the work may be, the thought of witnessing case after case of animal neglect and abuse would break my heart. I wanted a profession where I could make a difference and remain inspired.

Despite not knowing exactly what career path I should pursue – what college student really does? – I continued to volunteer for local animal welfare organizations. I assisted with fundraising, dog training, cat socialization, and anything else you can name. (Having moved across the country away from my own pets to attend college, it was also the only way to get the personal time I needed with animals.)

With graduation pending, I felt the pressure to join the “real world.” I admit, the idea was daunting. Yet while college was ending, summer camp was starting. I called Laurie (the Humane Education director at The SF/SPCA) to say I wanted to return to the classroom where I felt most at ease. She said yes, and as soon as I came back, I found myself asking, “Why did I ever leave this place?”

I fell in love again with The SF/SPCA classroom and what it meant to me. And I realized I’d found the answer to my animal-care dilemma. The profession of humane educator gave me the ideal balance of hands-on animal care, proactive prevention of animal neglect and abuse, constant exposure to animals everywhere, and my most essential perquisite, a consistently positive work environment.

My post-graduate stint as camp counselor allowed me to contribute significant to the curriculum. We introduced a new theme for the campers: to become Animal Ambassadors, which meant they were taught and encouraged to speak for and act on behalf of the animals. We asked campers to challenge themselves and...
place the animals’ needs before their own, even in small ways. For instance, all of us like to hug and kiss tiny kittens or squirmy puppies, but is that the best thing for the animal? We wanted the children to really think about that. To help convey this new concept, we invited nine guest speakers, all adult animal ambassadors of some kind, from bee-keepers to foster parents to vet techs to animal cops.

As much fun as it was to be a camper, being a counselor meant creating new and fun ways to teach others about what I was passionate about. One lesson I created was the “Case of Multiplying Cats.” What if each of the ten campers adopted an unfixed feline and then allowed “just one litter?” It seemed inconsequential until, as a class, we added up all the cats we would have after one year. The kids were always shocked by the number (normally somewhere in the 300s) and could finally internalize the importance of spaying and neutering their pets.

Another lesson I helped write was a scavenger hunt around Maddie’s Adoption Center. It included questions such as “How many black cats are here?” or “Why does it cost more to adopt a puppy than a grown dog?” Tracking down the answers led to important discussions about the big issues at an animal shelter – and how those issues affect individual animals such as the very cats and dogs the kids cared for during their week at The SF/SPCA.

No week ever went perfectly at camp, yet I always felt confident that each student ended their experience proud to be an animal ambassador. Whether by telling a friend about neutering their cat or adopting their next dog from a shelter, these children were going to help create a better world for animals.

The most important perspective I have learned from all my work at The SF/SPCA (and that I take with me everywhere) is that everyone is an educator and can choose to be an animal ambassador. We each play a distinctive role in teaching each other and it is important to always remember that principle.

Beyond compare, the most rewarding part of camp was seeing the change in the children as they left to go home every day, growing more aware that they can make a difference. I’ve seen children as young as six ready to change the world one animal at a time. But you want to know a little secret? Any of us can do that at any age.
Good Will Toward Animals – and Be Specific.

Making San Francisco SPCA animals a beneficiary of your will, trust, life insurance, or IRA is a powerful way to protect innocent lives far into the future. Be sure to use the SF/SPCA’s full corporate name: “The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.” This prevents confusion with other animal organizations that contribute little or nothing to our efforts. Suggested wording: I give to The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals the sum of ______ dollars or _____ percent of my estate (or, if insurance policies, land or other property, please describe).

Remember, the San Francisco SPCA, founded in 1868 as a private and independent nonprofit, is a stand-alone organization that has made our city the national leader in saving the lives of dogs and cats. You are all our animals have. Please contact Katy Volz at the SF/SPCA, (415) 554-3027 or kvolz@sfspca, with any questions.

Tails of Devotion

A Look at the Bond Between People and Their Pets

Emily Scott Pottruck • Foreword by Amy Tan

Perfect gift for animal lovers

Starring Jessica Aguirre, Isabel Allende, Peter Coyote, Mickey Hart, Jessica McClintock, Amy Tan, Michael Tilson Thomas, Robin Williams and many more

■ Beautiful hard-cover book features SF luminaries’ pets
■ 2006 Independent Publishers Book Award
■ ENTIRE sales price of $29.95 donated to animals
■ Available at Maddie’s Center or www.sfspca.org

Pet Press

■ Comcast on Demand
Pet Care Tips

■ FETCH The Paper
Pets of the Month & Event Listings

■ KSFO 560 AM
Weekday mornings around 8:40 am

■ KGO Channel 7
Morning News
Third Friday of the month around 11:25 am

■ San Francisco Advertiser
10 Pets of the Week

■ San Francisco Bay Guardian
Featured Pet of the Week

■ Marina Times
Pets of the Month & “Kibble & Bits” column

■ BAY WOOF
Event Listings

■ KOIT 96.5 FM Website
Pet of the Week

■ The City Star
Pet Corner

AnimalUpdate

■ KCBS All News 740 AM
Sunday: 1:35 pm, 3:36 pm, 9:22 pm.
Monday: 1:53 am
Salty Dogs Set Sail

BY PAUL GLASSNER, SF/SPCA

PHOTOGRAPHS © 2008 MARK ROGERS PHOTOGRAPHY
MARK DONATED HIS TIME AND TALENT TO THE SF/SPCA.

Every spring, Hornblower Cruises & Events invites all San Francisco SPCA salty dogs (and the sweet ones, too) for a first-class cruise aboard their flagship vessel, the San Francisco Belle, an outing known as Dog Day on the Bay. Created originally by a Hornblower staffer and held last May for the fourth consecutive year, this nautical event is unique to The SF/SPCA — and it’s not merely exclusive, it’s extraordinary.

Canines are catered to with a Bow Wow Doggy Buffet that includes a variety of cheese cubes, delectable meat-flavored snacks and all kinds of treats, even Happy Tail Ale, a beef-flavored, non-alcoholic beer for dogs. The ship comes with non-slip floors anyway, but special protective netting is added to railings at dog height throughout. The crew comes complete with a fleet of SF/SPCA dog monitors plus onboard veterinarian and nurse just in case. Oh, and several artists are available to render sketches of adored dogs (with fees donated to The SF/SPCA).

Then there’s the poop deck, a large area on the boat’s top level carpeted with real grass, surely the world’s most picturesque place to, uh, go. As they have each year, Sloat Garden Center generously donates and delivers hundreds of pounds of sod for the occasion, and the dogs know just what to, uh, do.

Meantime, the humans (they are the ones paying for passage, after all) get treated to their own all-you-can-eat gourmet buffet plus all-you-dare-drink champagne. Not to mention the fabulous views. And the company of hundreds of well-behaved dogs and their friendly, doting guardians. For people who couldn’t stand to just sit, eat, drink and talk, an onboard treasure hunt rounded out the leisurely midday voyage.

One more thing: this brunch on a boat benefits homeless animals at The SF/SPCA, so we hope to “sea” you next year! 🐶
Which way to the buffet?
Modern cruise ships come with everything, but in the whole world only this one has a real poop deck.
On a chilly evening last April, a volunteer with The San Francisco SPCA Feral Cat Assistance Program received an urgent telephone call from her mother and hurried over to her house. Peering into one of the feral cat humane traps she had set up on the porch the previous day, she saw that a cat had ventured into one of the cages seeking food and had been trapped. An unkempt, pale orange and white kitty covered in the trap, gazing up at her with scared blue eyes.

The tale had begun the previous December when the volunteer’s mother, who lives in the Richmond district of San Francisco, began noticing two cats hanging around her house. They were obviously homeless and hungry, so she put some food out for them. Soon the cats were regular visitors, and over the next few months she fed them daily. Eventually, she mentioned the cats to her daughter. The daughter’s immediate reaction was to bring a couple of humane cat traps over to her mother’s house and set them up on the front porch.

The volunteer saw that the animal’s left ear wasn’t tipped, which meant the cat hadn’t been through The SF/SPCA Feral Fix program. So she covered the cage with an old blanket (which helps calm a cat under these conditions), loaded it into her vehicle and headed to the home of the Coordinator of the Feral Cat Assistance Program, Mary Ann Buxton.

Buxton noted that the cat was covered with mats, but he (she determined that he was a male) was a good weight and, although he was frightened, he was calm. Still, he didn’t exhibit tame cat behavior either, and some feral cats, when captured, appear frozen. The next day, after keeping him overnight in his cage in her kitchen, Buxton brought the bedraggled feline into The SF/SPCA and registered him as a feral cat who needed to be altered.

The SF/SPCA’s Feral Cat Assistance Program uses Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR), widely recognized as both the most humane and most effective strategy for controlling feral cat populations. Feral cats are trapped by volunteers and then transported to The SF/SPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic for surgery; while under anesthesia, the animals also get vaccinated and have their left ear tipped for identification. The volunteers pick up the altered cats that same afternoon, allow the animals to recover from the surgery and then return them to their colonies. The SF/SPCA’s medical services are free.

As a veterinary technician prepped the orange cat for surgery, she noticed that he had no claws on his front paws. This meant he had once been somebody’s companion animal and was either lost or had been abandoned. Stray cats often turn up in feral colonies, and if they are trapped before they become too undomesticated, The SF/SPCA can try to find their guardians or, failing that, re-socialize them and place them for adoption.

Prep work on the cat was halted. One of the staff then passed a microchip scanner over him and got a reading! The identification number was soon matched with the name, address and phone number of a woman in Walnut Creek, and a Clinic staffer placed the call. The number had been disconnected, and there was no forwarding information.

Rewind to January, 2003, when Kimberly Halley, living in Minnesota at the time,
adopted a tiny, cream-colored Himalayan kitten. Her children named him Frosty because, as Kimberly remembers, it was wintertime then and a “frosty” two-hour drive was required to go get him!

Later that year, Kimberly and her family relocated to California and settled in Walnut Creek. In addition to Frosty, they brought with them another beautiful cat named Mickey. “At the time I told myself I should get these guys microchipped,” Kimberly says. “Unfortunately, I didn’t do it and my beloved Mickey was stolen. There are no words to describe the loss I and my family still feel over Mickey…. I immediately took Frosty in to have him microchipped.”

In the summer of 2007, the family moved again – to an apartment in San Francisco. “Frosty had always seemed sensitive to noise, and I really think the move completely freaked him out,” Kimberly explains. “At some point at the end of August my daughter was home with the back door [accidentally] open; I believe at this time Frosty made a run for it.”

Kimberly was frantic with worry because Frosty was strictly an indoor cat who had been declawed. For weeks she and her family papered the neighborhood with flyers hoping someone had seen him, but as the days, weeks, and then months passed and there was no sign of him, Kimberly began losing hope of ever seeing Frosty again.

No longer a candidate for Feral Fix, the pale orange cat was moved from the Spay/Neuter Clinic to the Adoption Department, where SF/SPCA staff began the assessment process. A medical examination showed that he was in good shape and had, in fact, already been neutered.

He was then partially shaved to remove the mass of mats. As for his behavior, well, he was scared yet sociable, so he had a good chance of being re-homed.

Adoption Director Holly Fink spent a lot of time with him, but he huddled silently in a corner of a kitty condo and looked so forlorn that she decided she just had to try again to reunite him with his missing human companion. She decided to try the San Francisco phone book and found a person listed with the same name as the one in the cat’s microchip data, and who lived in the same general area where he had been caught. Fingers crossed, she called the number and left a voicemail.

Kimberly Halley remembers the day she received the message. “When I got the voicemail that The SF/SPCA thought they had (Frosty), I completely freaked out…. I didn’t know if he was alive or dead or what condition he was in, or if in fact it really was him.” She recalled the microchip company’s Web site saying that 94% of pets with microchips are reunited with their owners. But seven months had passed since Frosty had disappeared.

Eerily (as it turned out), the night before the message came from The SF/SPCA, Kimberly’s fiancé asked her if she wanted to go and adopt a new kitten. Having lost two beloved cats in two years, she said no; she was done. “But in the back of my mind,” Kimberly remembers, “I was also thinking, what if I got another cat and then Frosty is found? I guess I was still hoping he’d be returned.”

Kimberly rushed down to The SF/SPCA and Fink took her to meet the pale orange and white kitty. When Kimberly entered the room and called to him, he meowed a greeting to her. “He immediately let me pick him up and buried his head in the crook of my arm, purring like he always used to do,” Kimberly remembers with emotion.

Frosty was found! Several weeks into his return, Frosty remains skittish, though he now spends more time on top of the bed than under it. There’s no mistaking how Kimberly feels, however. “I can never thank The SF/SPCA enough for giving him back to me,” she says.

About the size of a grain of rice, a microchip is quick and painless to insert, costs little, is permanent, and may well save your companion animal’s life.

The SF/SPCA considers the declawing of cats inhumane and unnecessary, and the surgery is not performed here.
The beginnings for the divine Miss B, as she would come to be known, were, at the very least humble, if not steeped in trouble. She was found in 2002 by San Francisco Animal Care & Control, wandering the streets.

Though a fluffy and adorable puppy, this tiny ball of tawny fur was actually awful: aggressive, possessive, ferocious, a veritable spitfire unsuitable for adoption and, at a tender young age of three months at most, headed down the wrong path. By the time she reached her first birthday, she would be 50 pounds of unpredictable terror. The combustible little Chow was transferred to The San Francisco SPCA for behavioral rehab and, it could only be hoped, eventual adoption.

A knowledgeable SF/SPCA foster parent agreed to temporarily take care of the tempestuous toddler, work on her “behavior issues,” and prepare her (fingers crossed) for adoption.

Fast forward five years to the elegant Oak Room of the Westin-St. Francis Hotel, where Miss B (Buffy is her real name) was the guest of honor at The SF/SPCA Legacy Society Tea. Sitting serenely with her mane of flaming hair (all natural), her incendiary personality all in the past, Buffy was the subject of a talk by her very proud mom, the woman who generously fostered her and patiently made her over, none other than Jean Donaldson, internationally renowned dog behavior expert, award-winning author, and Director of The SF/SPCA Academy for Dog Trainers.

Jean told the audience, “Had you asked me, prior to getting Buffy, my Chow, if I would ever, in a million years, under any circumstances, have a Chow, the answer would have...”
been no."

Each year, a member of The SF/SPCA staff is asked to be the featured speaker at this small-scale event, giving members the opportunity to learn firsthand how profoundly their generosity affects the work and mission of the organization. It’s also a chance for presenters like Jean to offer a glimpse into their own work and their personal motivation behind it.

The Legacy Society Tea is held once a year to honor the many generous individuals who have pledged bequests to The SF/SPCA in their estate plans. The Society, now numbering over 200 members, was founded in 2003 as a means of rectifying a missed opportunity. Earlier that year, the SF/SPCA was notified that Anita West, a teacher, artist, and dog lover, had left a substantial bequest to the organization for the care of homeless dogs and cats. Sadly, this notification came many months after she had passed away, too late for The SF/SPCA to express gratitude to Ms. West for her gift, which came as a bittersweet surprise. The organization vowed to never again miss an opportunity to personally thank anyone who had been so kind as to include The SF/SPCA’s homeless companion animals in their estate plans. The annual Legacy Society Tea is the result of this pledge.

“When colleagues chided me about fostering a puppy and getting all bonded and keeping her,” Jean explained, “I laughed and laughed at their naïveté. I’d fostered and had in my home for training scores of dogs, and only a small handful were ever difficult to give back.” Jean had taken on this tough case as a test of her skills as a trainer. Love had nothing to do with it, and she never dreamed her heart would become involved, much less of adopting her difficult client. “Never say never,” Jean concluded, smiling down at her fluffy Buffy.

To learn more about The SF/SPCA Legacy Society, contact Katy Volz at The San Francisco SPCA, (415) 554-3027, or kvolz@sfspca.org.
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Jean’s books and DVD (great gifts!) are available everywhere – but if you buy at Maddie’s Adoption Center or through www.sfspca.org, SF/SPCA homeless animals benefit.