



# Our Animals

The Magazine of the San Francisco SPCA

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## Table of Contents

- 3** CEO's Message
- 4** Caring for Animals Since 1868
- 6** Making a Difference: Keeping Animals in Their Homes
- 8** Celebrating the Human-Animal Bond
- 10** Behavior Troubles? We Can Help
- 11** A Remarkable Rescue at the Community Veterinary Clinic

## The San Francisco Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

201 Alabama Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 | (415) 554-3000  
Founded April 18, 1868

## Our Mission

Our mission is to ensure every companion animal has access to quality medical care, compassionate shelter, and a loving home.

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# CEO's Message:



Welcome to the 155th anniversary issue of *Our Animals* magazine. As I look back on our legacy, I'm in awe of how much we've achieved, where we are today, and our exciting work to come.

Thanks to ongoing support from our donors, volunteers, and staff, we've established ourselves as more than just a safe haven for pets and pet guardians in San Francisco. Now, we're reaching beyond to make veterinary care more accessible to cats and dogs throughout California.

In this celebratory issue of *Our Animals*, we'll share our remarkable 155-year evolution, how our internationally recognized veterinary behaviorists elevate life for pets and their people, a dramatic kitten rescue right here within our walls (literally!), and more.

We're proud of our focus on access to care, and we wanted to reflect that commitment in how we talk about ourselves and the world we hope to create. Today, we're delighted to share our new vision and mission statements with you.

**VISION:** We envision a world in which the love people share with animals uplifts humanity to a state of greater compassion.

**MISSION:** Our mission is to ensure every companion animal has access to quality medical care, compassionate shelter, and a loving home.

Our new vision and mission statements set the course for our work ahead, and we hope they resonate with you as much as they do with all of us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JMS'.

Jennifer Scarlett, DVM  
CEO

# Caring for Animals Since 1868

In the spring of 1868, when banker and “49er” James Sloan Hutchinson stepped in to save a hog from c̈Elty he witnessed on the streets of San Francisco, he likely had no idea of the lasting impact of his next decision—to launch the San Francisco SPCA.

Today, in our 155th year, we show our love for animals and our communities by expanding access to veterinary care, creating career inroads for under-resourced and under-represented communities, and bringing aid to our neighbors beyond the borders of our city.

## Our early days of c̈Elty prevention

We began our journey in 1868 to prevent abuse of the city’s work horses, livestock, and companion animals. Our founding marked the outlawing of c̈Elty to animals in California and launched our long tradition of advocating for the welfare of animals.



For the next hundred years, we focused on providing aid to distressed animals throughout the city. We cared for fire horses transitioned out of daily service, developed and promoted adoption programs for companion animals. And in 1924, we opened our first animal hospital to the public.

## Animal-centered sheltering

In 1976, with Rich Avanzino at the helm, we ended our 100-year contract as the city’s animal control service provider and became the country’s first no kill shelter. The



move established a national, animal-centered template prioritizing adoptions, spay and neuter programs, a robust volunteer and foster-home network, high-quality medical care, and a promise to find loving homes for all adoptable cats and dogs.

Since then, we’ve helped shelters across the state to modernize their facilities and adopt practices to elevate the health and wellness of animals in their care.

## Enhancing access to veterinary care

Since establishing our first hospital in 1924, our medical team has grown to 20 veterinarians and 100 veterinary nurses who work with more than 36,000 clients each year. We use that expertise to make veterinary care more accessible to all pets in San Francisco and beyond.

We began with low-cost spay and neuter clinics, free mobile vaccinations, and a walk-in, low-cost clinic piloted at our Mission campus in 2018. That success launched the Community Veterinary Clinic, our first stand-alone, community veterinary clinic now serving clients in San Francisco’s Excelsior district and neighboring communities.

## Creating inroads to the veterinary profession

We’ve long provided opportunities to community members who want to work and volunteer with animals and build skills in animal care. Our new Community Medicine Education Training (CoMET) program introduces veterinary medicine to historically under-represented San Franciscans.



During a four-month mentorship, trainees gain hands-on experience under the supervision of SF SPCA Chief of Medicine, Dr. Jena Valdez. The program helps provide BIPOC individuals with a career pathway in animal welfare, while expanding diversity and the languages spoken in the field.

### Sharing love with our neighbors

The California Humane Animal Transfer Team (CHATT), launched as a pilot in 2018, is a coalition of Bay Area and Central Valley shelters working together to bring lifesaving veterinary, behavioral, and sheltering resources to where they're needed most.

As founding members, we provide direct assistance by transferring animals to our site in San Francisco, where many receive specialized medical and behavioral care. More than 10,000 animals have been transferred to the SF SPCA since the program began. We also help shelters grow their capacity to serve local companion animals, pet guardians, and communities.

### A new direction for our organization

This year, we introduced new vision and mission statements reflecting our commitment to elevate the human-animal bond and to ensure that all animals have access to medical care, safe shelter, and loving homes. With your heartfelt, generous support, we're certain we'll be there for animals for at least another 155 years! 🐾



## San Francisco SPCA Legacy Society

When you join the SF SPCA Legacy Society, you help secure our lifesaving work with cats and dogs for the next 155 years and beyond.

Enroll today for exclusive member benefits, including an invitation to our upcoming Legacy Society Tea event.

[sfspca.org/legacy](https://sfspca.org/legacy)



# Making a Difference: Keeping Animals in Their Homes

Wailani Sung, MS, PHD, DVM, DACVB  
Director of Behavior & Welfare Programs

## How long have you worked at the SF SPCA?

Five years.

## Do you have pets?

Two dogs: a Cocker Spaniel named Poe Dameron, and Ahsoka Tan, a German Shepherd whom I adopted from the SF SPCA. I also have two cats adopted from the SF SPCA: long-haired Nico Furioso who has one eye, and short-haired Mad Eye Moody, who's blind.

## What one word embodies the SF SPCA for you?

Hope.

## Why did you choose to study veterinary medicine?

I always wanted to be a vet. I have a special love for animals, and I thought being a vet would be the best way to help animals.

## Why did you decide to specialize in animal behavior?

Since my first family dog, I've had an interest in animal behavior. My parents were old-school, and we did not know how to raise that dog. We would yell at him when he did something wrong, and we never praised him.

It wasn't working, so I went to the library and checked out a few books about dog training. I applied some of the principles and, voila, they worked! I realized he was trying to

communicate with us because we were not fulfilling his needs. Instead of punishing him, I started rewarding the behaviors I wanted to see. His behavior improved immensely.

## What is the most rewarding part of your job?

The ultimate reward is helping people better understand their pets and manage behavior issues in a way that improves the quality of life for both people and animals. This way, we help pets stay in their homes. Ensuring owners don't relinquish animals to shelters is my main goal. That's how we help save lives.

## You promote positive, rather than punitive, training techniques. Can you explain?

Punitive techniques have been documented to increase fear and anxiety in pets. A successful relationship is built on trust. I want my dog to listen to me because she's excited, versus, "Oh my gosh, I better listen or I'm going to get smacked." I



don't feel like dogs and cats should be in that position.

I want them to feel safe, and I want them to trust me. We have to create a common language and have mutual respect for each other. The way to do that is by teaching them the behaviors we want.

For example, I don't want my dog to jump up on me, but jumping up to greet people is pretty normal in the



dog world. They want to get their faces close to ours. Instead, I ask her to sit and touch my hand to greet me.

### **Do you also work with the animals in the shelter?**

We are lucky at the SF SPCA to have a shelter behavior program that helps identify cats and dogs with behavior issues or who may struggle a little bit. Life in the shelter is super stressful.

Sometimes, animals have trouble adjusting. For a dog from the Central Valley, maybe they've never been exposed to trucks and cars and buses, and now they're inundated with all these noises. Some might be strays and may not have ever had an opportunity to walk on leash.

### **How do you help shelter dogs with behavior issues?**

We evaluate them to figure out their triggers and whether the triggers are manageable. Then we ask what kind of training plan is best and if this dog is a candidate for medication. And if the dog bites, we want to know what caused the dog to bite and if it is something that's avoidable. That's important too, because we want to adopt out dogs that are safe for the public.

We identify special needs dogs and try to get them to the point where we think an average person can take the dog and be successful.

### **Is there anything else you'd like people to know?**

Our job here is to make animals comfortable. We use a combination of behavior modification, medication, fostering, environmental enrichment, walks, and doggy play dates. But no option is as good as being adopted and loved by a family. 🐾





# Celebrating the Human-Animal Bond

**No matter where we come from or who we are, so many of us are bound together by the love of animals. Here, our donors, staff, and volunteers share the pets who live in their hearts and homes.**

## Call for submissions!

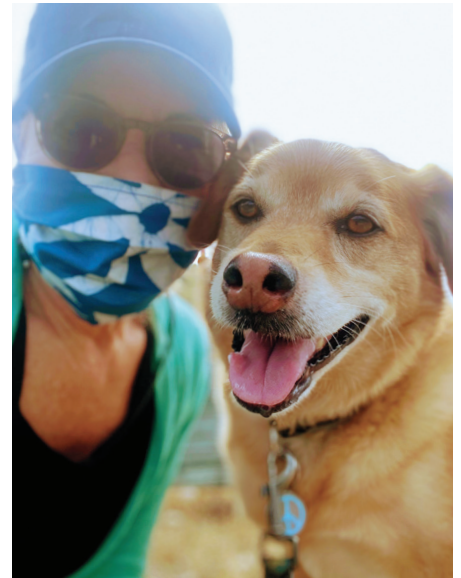
Tell us what your pet teaches you, how you found each other, and, most important, what makes your relationship special.

Send your submission and a high-res photo of you with your pet to [publicrelations@sfsPCA.org](mailto:publicrelations@sfsPCA.org) (subject line: "Our Animals Submission").

## Sue G. and Rusty

I went to the SF SPCA hoping to get a new dog, since I had lost my Beagle-Lab mix a few months prior. I met an amazing staff member, Marti, and she told me she had the perfect match for me. I walked into Rusty's room and he began zooming and kissing my face. He was a Beagle-Shepherd mix, and I fell in love instantly.

Rusty is happy, kind, gentle, and loving. He often puts a smile on strangers' faces as we walk by. I don't know what I would have done without Rusty during the Covid lockdown. He was always by my side through all the ups and downs. Our daily walks and evenings lying on the couch together made me feel less alone. And he still gives lots of kisses!



## Andra Y. and Opal

I was working my volunteer shift at the adoption center, when I visited a kitten who leapt up onto my shoulder. Even though I was not actively looking to adopt another cat, this little girl and I had an undeniable bond. She came home with me a few days later and joined her adopted older brother, Ollie, who is also from the SF SPCA.

In the beginning of the pandemic, when things were so uncertain and stressful, Opal and Ollie reminded me how it is to live in the moment; to appreciate the companionship we have at home together through their comfort, cuddles, and love. They continue to provide a bond, which is invaluable to me.

*—In loving memory of Opal and her brother Ollie—*



## Dawn N. and Star

Star is my special girl. She has the most incredible eye contact I've ever seen in a cat. I feel like we can communicate without saying a word. Her tail goes straight up when I call her by her nickname, "Babes," which makes me smile and helps relieve the stress of the day.

At four years old, she still has a lot of kitten moves in her, especially her acrobatics, that make me laugh out loud. During the Covid shut-down, I started a "book club" with my cats. When I pick up a book, Star still comes Ænning and jumps up next to me. And at the end of the day, she will knead and purr on her favorite blankie next to me. It's a comfort that is hard to put into words.



## Alexandra M. and Kitty

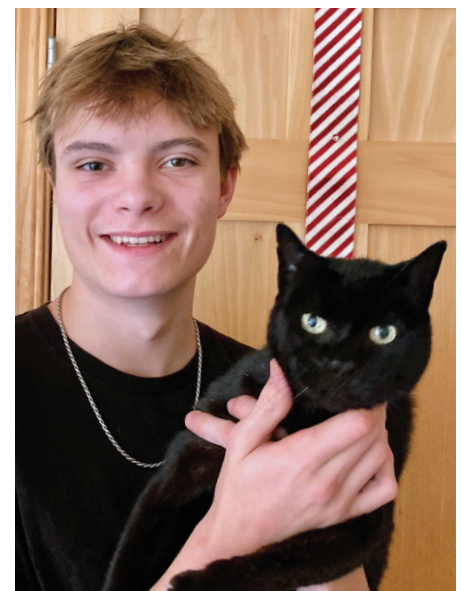
Kitty came into my life during the holiday season of 2020 as a five-month-old foster kitten. She had been found with a paw cêshed beyond repair, which required amputation. When I read her story and saw her sweet face, I knew I had to bring her home. By the end of her foster period, she had completely stolen my heart.

Kitty melts my heart every time I look at her. Simply having her snuggled next to me at night is the greatest comfort. Her resilience and independence always impress me. As an indoor/outdoor cat, her amputated paw has not stopped her in any way—from catching mice to climbing trees.

## Robert M. and Osito

10 years ago when Osito walked up to me in the SF SPCA shelter, I knew he was a forever friend. From jumping at bugs or falling asleep next to me, he is a great cat. I have been involved with the SF SPCA for many years. From adopting two cats to volunteering, I have gotten to know the opportunities and love the service it gives its animals.

I am a whole-hearted supporter of the SF SPCA, and I couldn't have picked a better shelter to adopt from. Osito has given me so much happiness and fun over the years, I couldn't be more grateful to the shelter that brought him to me.



# Behavior Troubles? We Can Help

**SF SPCA Behavior Team delivers 97% improvement rates after just one visit.**

Many behaviors we see in our companion animals are normal reactions to their environment. Patience and understanding can address most issues. However, when behaviors exceed normal expectations, it's a good idea to seek professional help.

SF SPCA's Behavior Team, led by board-certified veterinary behaviorist Dr. Wailani Sung, offers exceptional support for your pet's behavior problems. Serving more than 1,000 clients annually, the team provides expert care and guidance for any behavior query or issue you might face.

## Case Study: Sir Colby Cheddar

### Challenge:

Fearful, anxious, prone to pacing when left in others' care

At four months old, bouncy puppy Sir Colby Cheddar's personality took an odd turn. His guardian, Mira Bieler, noticed he was suddenly fearful, anxious, and visibly stressed around strangers. Our behavior team explained the shift was probably due to trauma experienced by his



mother, a stray, who transferred her stress to her unborn pups. Under-socialization due to Covid lockdowns compounded the problem, a common issue for puppies raised during that time.

### Treatment:

Training and management tools, enrichment games, and medication

First, we taught Mira strategies to help Sir Colby Cheddar manage his stress. Taking challenging situations one step at a time, Mira engaged her pup with tasty-smelling treats before he went “over threshold,” to gradually desensitize him to his triggers. We introduced enrichment games to help expend energy in a positive way and prescribed a low dose of medication to take the edge off his anxiety.

### Results:

The pied piper of puppy fun

Mira shares, “Now he's our dream dog. We began on leash with short, controlled walks. Now, he walks off leash the entire time. He meets and interacts beautifully with both dogs and new people—he's become the pied piper of puppy fun! People we walk with can't believe he ever had issues. He will always have a little special need, and we will always be advocating for him, but the progress he's made has been beautiful to see.” 🐾

## Why Choose SF SPCA's Behavior Team?

- Bay Area's largest, most qualified behavior-resource center
- Two months of behavioral support included with each treatment plan
- Humane, evidence-based training techniques
- Space to practice working with difficult behaviors
- With vet referral, pet insurance might cover consultations

**Learn more at [sfspca.org/behavior](https://sfspca.org/behavior).**



# A Remarkable Rescue at the Community Veterinary Clinic

One fall morning, staff members opening the SF SPCA Community Veterinary Clinic heard a faint meow from behind the back wall of the supplies room. The cry grew louder as they entered, so a few employees stepped outside and circled behind the building to take a look.

They determined a cat was stuck somewhere in the building, but its exact location was a mystery. Vet tech Kristy Castro called San Francisco Animal Care and Control for help. Officer Burke arrived shortly after and gained access into the neighbor's backyard to investigate. She confirmed it was most likely a feral cat trapped behind a panel directly behind our back wall.

As the meows grew more desperate, firefighters from Station 15 were summoned, and a large team of experts pondered the rescue. Facilities lead, Scott Davis, pointed out a crawl space that might lead to the terrified creature. Firefighter

Larry plunged into the darkness and emerged moments later with a tiny and very relieved brown tabby kitten.

Waiting with open arms, our techs and doctors quickly examined the kitten, who was cold, and famished. They gave him plenty of food and water, having no idea how long he'd gone without. He also had very goopy eyes, which prompted a proper dose of antibiotics.



After a good lunch, the kitten began purring and fell asleep in his cozy makeshift bed. He remained at the clinic all day, where team members took turns during their busy shifts to check on him and share cuddles. Vet tech Andi Ramirez took the kitten home to foster him and named him Wall-E, after the Pixar movie character from similar cramped circumstances.

SF SPCA veterinarian Dr. Lindsey Meyer eventually adopted Wall-E. She shares, "He's doing great in his new home. We call him our crazy cute monster—he has so much energy and is so food motivated and so sweet!"

Wall-E couldn't have found a better place for his story to begin. On the hectic and stressful morning of his rescue, the heartwarming outcome that brought everyone together made all the effort so very rewarding. 🐾





201 Alabama Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
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SAN FRANCISCO SPCA  
**155<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

# LATE NIGHT WOOFTOP PARTY

**APRIL 18, 2023**

8:00-11:00PM

DANDELION CHOCOLATE FACTORY

FOR TICKET INFORMATION  
VISIT [SFSPCA.ORG/TAILOFTHEHEART](https://sfspca.org/tailsoftheheart)