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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

At the San Francisco SPCA, advocacy has always been more than a program—it's our compass. Since our founding in 1868, we've worked to dismantle barriers to care and create a world where every animal is treated with dignity and compassion.

In this issue of *Our Animals*, you'll see how that commitment continues today. Discover our history of advocacy, including the legal battle over one dog that made national headlines, and the policy work that drives lasting change for countless animals across California. You'll also meet Bruce Wagman, who serves as special counsel for the SF SPCA and leads our Shelter Policy and Legal Services Program (Shelter PALS), a program that is creating stronger protections for animals today and for generations to come.

Longtime Legacy Society member Judy Dauphinais shares her own advocacy journey, her love for Boxers, and how her estate plans reflect her lifelong commitment to animals. You'll also read the Happy Tail of Freddie and Franny, two beloved cats who found a safe future through our Sido Pet Protection Program after their lives were unexpectedly turned upside down.

In 157 years, the SF SPCA has come a long way for animals. Every milestone in our advocacy work has been fueled by people who believe animals deserve better. With your support, we'll continue breaking down barriers and building a more humane California, one victory at a time.

Thank you for being there with us, for our animals.

Jennifer Scarlett, DVM

CEO

Clearing the Path: Transforming Animal Welfare in California



Representatives from organizations across California gathered at the State Capitol in Sacramento for Animal Advocacy Day on April 29, 2025. Photo by San Diego Humane Society.

Animal advocacy has been at the heart of the San Francisco SPCA since our founding.

In 1868, local banker James Sloan Hutchinson was walking through downtown San Francisco when he came upon a scene that stopped him in his tracks: two men on horseback were chasing a loose pig through the streets. They roped the animal's legs and dragged it across the cobblestones as it squealed in distress.

For many, this was simply the way things were. The treatment of working animals, livestock, and street dogs was all part of daily life, and their suffering often went unnoticed. But Hutchinson couldn't look away. He stepped in, determined to help the pig and to create a future where all animals had protection under the law.

Within weeks, Hutchinson began the process of making cruelty to animals a crime in California. Soon after, he gathered a small group of like-minded citizens, and on April 18, 1868, the San Francisco SPCA was officially chartered, becoming one of the first animal welfare organizations in the nation.

With persistence, the SF SPCA began to shift public attitudes—outlawing blood sports, fighting to protect working horses, and laying the groundwork for innovations like San Francisco's first horse ambulance.

What began with one man's refusal to ignore suffering has grown into more than 150 years of progress. Advocacy remains our compass, guiding us toward a world where every animal is treated with dignity and compassion.

The 'grande dame' of the SF SPCA

Among the many advocacy milestones in our history, few are more memorable than the case of one dog whose story touched people across the country. While the circumstances were very different from Hutchinson's day, the principle remained the same: standing up for an animal whose life hung in the balance.

Many of today's SF SPCA supporters know this dog's name: Sido. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, she became the face of a new era of animal advocacy, one that expanded the conversation from preventing cruelty to recognizing animals as family members whose lives have intrinsic value.

When Sido's original guardian passed away in 1979, her will requested that Sido be euthanized. Her intent wasn't cruel; it was out of concern that no one would care for her beloved dog. When the SF SPCA learned of Sido's situation—that she was a perfectly healthy and adoptable dog—there was still no legal path to save her. By law, she had to be euthanized. That's when the SF SPCA's then-President Richard Avanzino stepped in to save Sido and change the decision that stood between her and a long and happy life.

Avanzino and the SF SPCA fought a legal battle that made national headlines. On June 16, 1980, Governor Edmund G. Brown, Jr. signed SB 2059, known as "Sido's Law," into law. The next day, Superior Court Judge Jay Pfotenhauer ruled that the provision ordering Sido's euthanasia was "invalid."

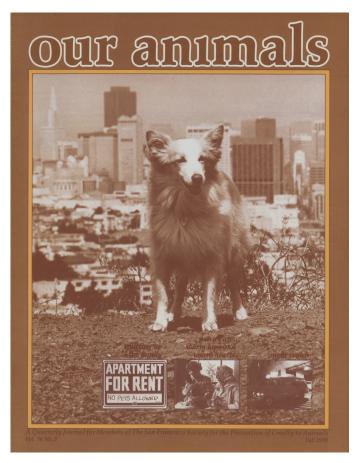
Sido was saved. And in the end, Avanzino adopted Sido.

The spring 1982 issue of *Our Animals* magazine describes Sido as the "grande dame" of the SF SPCA. During her days at the SF SPCA office, she enjoyed greeting visitors, attending meetings, and getting attention from staff and volunteers. In other words, a life that would never have existed if Avanzino and the SF SPCA hadn't advocated for her.

Sido didn't receive much media attention after her day in court, but she didn't seem to mind. Fame may be fleeting, but her legacy lives on.

Soon after Sido's legal victory, the SF SPCA created the Sido Pet Protection Program. This program continues Sido's legacy by protecting pets if they outlive their guardians. Enrolled cats and dogs receive lifelong veterinary support, behavioral care, and help finding a new family.

In reflecting on Sido's story, Avanzino says that "[Sido] was a great companion and a wonderful emissary of our cause...and even today we are hearing about cases that are relying on her [case] to basically say that animals are special. They're family members. They're in our hearts. We have a right and a responsibility to care for them and care for them well."



The fall 1980 issue of Our Animals featured Sido, the dog whose story inspired landmark animal welfare legislation in California.

We have a lot to thank Sido for, and her legacy continues to inspire people, and protect pets everywhere. Sido's case proved that advocacy could save lives and change systems. The SF SPCA has carried that lesson forward, working to ensure that more animals can access medical care, resources, and pathways to the loving homes they deserve.

Stockton: a turning point in advocacy

In the early 2010s, the SF SPCA was receiving animals from the Stockton Shelter, one of our Central Valley transfer partners, that were gravely ill with preventable diseases like parvo and distemper. Each outbreak forced our shelter into quarantine, halting adoptions and slowing lifesaving work. It became clear that if we wanted to protect animals in San Francisco, we had to help address the root causes upstream, where less than a third of animals in the Stockton Shelter were making it out alive.

We began sending veterinary teams to Stockton, where space was so limited that they worked out of a supply closet in the shelter, performing spay/neuters, treating illnesses, and providing urgent care. The results were promising, but it was only the beginning. We placed a dedicated and

registered veterinary technicians on-site, expanding treatment to include trauma cases, such as animals injured by cars or involved in dog fights. We also placed a rescue coordinator at the shelter to streamline transfers to San Francisco. With better medical care and a clearer pathway to adoption, lives were being saved.

Still, we hit a wall. Local ordinances prevented shelters from lowering or waiving adoption and redemption fees. Families who were ready to adopt or wanted to bring home their lost animal often couldn't afford it.

That's when the missing link became clear: advocacy.

Working alongside Stockton city officials, community members, and shelter staff, we pushed for changes to local ordinances that would give shelters the flexibility to adjust or waive fees. The results were immediate: adoption numbers increased and live outcomes (like adoptions, animals returned to their owners, and transfers out of the shelter) rose almost overnight, soaring from 28% to 84%.

"The SF SPCA's partnership gave us hope when things felt impossible," says longtime supporter Alexis Spanos Ruhl. "They didn't just send resources. They worked with our community to remove barriers and create real,

Shelters



A map of the California shelters and rescues that received legal guidance, education, and support from Shelter PALS in 2024–2025.

lasting change. The difference has been transformative for Stockton's animals and the people who love them."

The Stockton Project taught us an important lesson: operational improvements are essential, but lasting change depends on removing barriers at the policy level. It was an innovative effort that saved lives and created a model that could be replicated in other communities facing similar challenges.

From Stockton to statewide: the birth of Shelter PALS

The lessons learned in Stockton reshaped our organization's approach to advocacy. If outdated laws could halt lifesaving efforts, then meaningful change required going beyond shelter walls.

This blueprint—combining hands-on support with advocacy—evolved into what is now our advocacy program, Shelter Policy and Legal Services (Shelter PALS). Founded in 2020, this program brings legal and legislative expertise directly to the frontlines of animal welfare.

Today, Shelter PALS is led by Bruce Wagman of Riley Safer Holmes & Cancila LLP—and yes, with a name like *Wag*man, it almost feels like fate. In addition to his private practice, he serves as Keith C. Wetmore Shelter PALS Special Counsel at the SF SPCA. Widely recognized as one of the leading animal lawyers in the country, Wagman has dedicated his career to the development of animal law, with an exclusive animal law practice for more than 20 years. His practice includes working on behalf of companion animals, farm animals, wildlife, and animals used in research and entertainment. Along the way, he's also adopted more than 30 shelter animals, turning his personal life into a reflection of his professional mission.

"We realized that helping animals one shelter at a time wasn't enough. We had to tackle the legal barriers systematically," says Wagman. "Shelter PALS allows us to support individual shelters while also writing new laws that impact animals across California. And once we got going, we expanded our policy work to improve the legal landscape for all sorts of companion animals, including cats, dogs, horses, guinea pigs, and roosters. It is revolutionary work that truly changes the future for all California's companion animals."

Today, Shelter PALS serves shelters throughout California, from Redding to San Diego and from Tulare to Santa Barbara and Los Angeles, dismantling legal roadblocks to

animal welfare, including cases involving hoarding, abuse, and neglect. Most shelters lack access to legal guidance, yet are forced to navigate complex questions about sheltering, liability, custody, and public health. Shelter PALS steps into that space to analyze legal challenges, create practical solutions, and turn them into tools shelters can actually use.

"Shelter leaders often face stress and confusion over state laws, struggling with interpretations and challenges that hinder their work," says Jill Tucker, CEO of CalAnimals. "Shelter PALS has done a phenomenal job educating and supporting our members, and, over time, policies have shifted to better support their lifesaving efforts. I'm profoundly grateful to the San Francisco SPCA for sponsoring this work and elevating our profession statewide."

The result: stronger protections for shelter animals and all pets in California, clearer pathways for veterinary professionals, and better outcomes for the animals in their care.

Improving the system of care in San Francisco and California

While Shelter PALS tackles policy barriers statewide, many of our victories have a direct impact here in San Francisco because they help remove obstacles that stand between pets and the care they need.

At the height of the COVID-19 lockdown, one of the most urgent challenges was simply keeping doors open. Shelter PALS successfully pushed for veterinary professionals and shelter staff to be recognized as essential workers exempt from the lockdown, ensuring animal services could continue operating. This clarity allowed guardians to access lifesaving care for their pets during a time of crisis.

More recently, Shelter PALS, alongside the California Veterinary Medical Association and the San Diego Humane Society, co-sponsored AB 516 and SB 602, legislation that expands the role of Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs). These new laws will help address California's veterinary care shortage by expanding the scope of work that RVTs and veterinary assistants can perform and authorizing RVTs to lead vaccine clinics without a veterinarian being present on-site. We advocated for these bills and more during our annual Animal Advocacy Day in April 2025, and Governor Gavin Newsom signed AB 516 and SB 602 into law in the second half of this year.

The impact is immediate and far-reaching. By empowering RVTs and veterinary assistants, California can run more



Cats awaiting transport at the SF SPCA, where collaboration with local partners expands access to spay/neuter and lifesaving care.

mobile and community-based clinics, particularly in underresourced neighborhoods where affordable veterinary services are often out of reach. For San Francisco, this means more pets will receive timely vaccines and basic care. For the state as a whole, it's a legal victory that strengthens the entire veterinary workforce and ensures healthier lives for local animals.

When free-roaming cats enter the courtroom

Another issue that has recently come to the public's attention is how to best care for "community cats"—unowned cats that live primarily outdoors. These cats may be feral or friendly, but their level of socialization has long been a point of debate. Some groups argue that if a cat is friendly, it should be brought into a shelter and adopted, while ignoring the fact that there are too many cats and not enough adopters, resulting in a negative outcome for the cats. However, 20 years of research by experts in the veterinary community studying these issues have consistently found that a cat's socialization status has no bearing on whether or not it will thrive outdoors.

Research on the best approach to managing the 30 to 90 million outdoor cats in America has consistently found that the most effective and humane way to manage community cat populations is to spay or neuter those cats, then return them to their outdoor homes (Hurley

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Making a Difference: Championing Change for Animals

BRUCE WAGMAN

Keith C. Wetmore Shelter PALS Special Counsel

How long have you been involved with the SF SPCA?

I've served as special counsel for the SF SPCA for about six years, but my relationship with shelters goes way back. Over the last four decades, I've adopted more than 30 animals from shelters, and every single one of them has a special place in my heart.

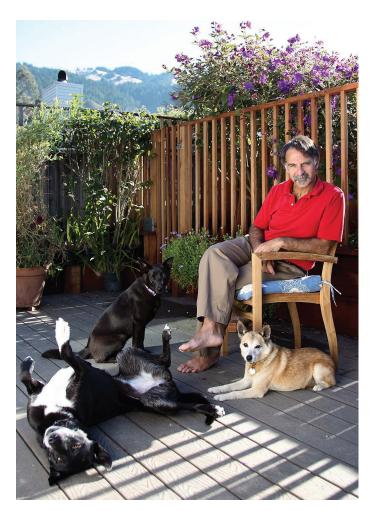
Can you tell us about your experience in animal law?

I've been practicing animal law since 1992—before it was even really considered a field of law. I've had the privilege of representing just about every species you can imagine, from cats and dogs to chimpanzees, whales, and even alpacas. What keeps me going is the same thing that got me started: using the law in creative ways to build a world where animals are safe, valued, and free from suffering.

Do you have pets?

I currently have two dogs and six cats. They prove that cats and dogs are not, in fact, mortal enemies.

What one word embodies the SF SPCA for you? Groundbreaking.



Bruce Wagman at home with three of his dogs—all rescued from shelters.

How do you see advocacy playing a role in the SF SPCA's mission?

Advocacy is one of the cornerstones of the work that the SF SPCA does—and it's what makes this organization so groundbreaking. It's not just about caring for the animals who walk through our doors today; it's about changing the system so all companion animals have a chance at a healthy, loved life. We're tackling the big stuff: expanding access to veterinary care, making spay/neuter more available, and backing it all up with the legal muscle to protect these changes long-term. That's what makes us a force for lasting change.

What's a typical day like for you at the SF SPCA?

There's really no such thing as a "typical" day—thank goodness! One morning, I might be deep in the weeds with a shelter about intake rules and holding periods, and by the afternoon, I'm leading a webinar that helps veterinary professionals navigate the legal maze. The next day, I may be convincing lawmakers that animals deserve a louder voice in our laws.



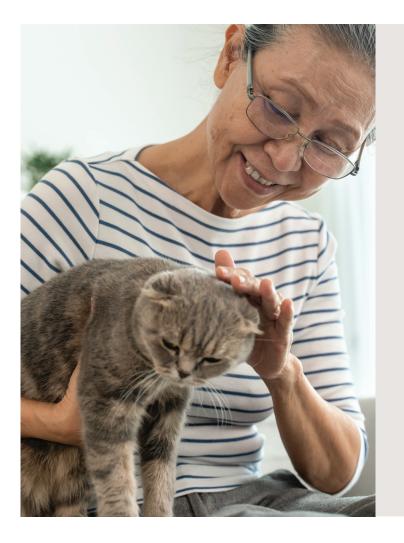
Bruce Wagman spends a day at the beach with two of his rescued companions, neither of whom seems to mind a little sand between their toes.

Is there an advocacy effort that you're especially proud to see the SF SPCA involved in?

I am extremely proud to be serving what is the best and most impactful animal protection organization in the sheltering space. The Shelter Policy and Legal Services (Shelter PALS) Program is a unique effort that serves California shelters with legal assistance that changes the lives of shelter animals every day and is an important player in forming state laws that help animals.

What else do you want people to know about the SF SPCA?

The SF SPCA has remarkable reach and uses its resources to help some of the most underserved communities and animals in California. From funding critical programs to providing hands-on support, the SF SPCA is committed to making a real difference statewide. That commitment starts at the top. Our CEO, Dr. Jennifer Scarlett, is not only our leader but also a veterinarian who still occasionally steps in and helps vaccinate animals. It's inspiring to see that dedication in action, and it reflects our deep commitment to walking the walk when it comes to animal welfare.



Save Lives with Your IRA

If you're 70½ or older, a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) directly from your IRA to the San Francisco SPCA can help animals in need. If you are required to take a minimum distribution (RMD) your gift will fulfill that requirement and lower your taxable income.

Act soon! To ensure your gift counts for 2025, we must receive it by December 22.

scan to Learn More or contact June Hom at jhom@sfspca.org or (415) 430-3251.





Legacy of Impact

A CONVERSATION WITH JUDY DAUPHINAIS, SF SPCA LEGACY SOCIETY MEMBER

How did you get involved with the SF SPCA?

I started volunteering in the early 1990s as a dog walker. While I don't remember my very first visit, I vividly recall the 1998 opening of Maddie's Adoption Center, the first cageless shelter in the country. The event was unforgettable. Former San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown and former SF SPCA President Richard Avanzino were both there. Dave and Cheryl Duffield also attended, as their foundation, Maddie's Fund, made the center possible. Their story and dedication to animal welfare have always inspired me.

What role do animals play in your life today?

I cannot imagine not having a dog in my life. My current dog, Ghost, is my seventh Boxer. All were rescues, one came from the SF SPCA, and the others from Boxer rescue organizations. Ghost is all Boxer—petite and white with brown spots on her head. She has that legendary Boxer energy.

You participated in our first Animal Advocacy Day. What was that experience like?

It was eye-opening. Nearly 100 advocates, including representatives from the SF SPCA, CalAnimals, ASPCA, the Marin Humane Society, and the San Diego Humane Society, spent a full day at the Capitol meeting with legislators to build support for animal welfare bills. It was inspiring to see so many organizations come together, and I felt we were truly making a difference.

Why do you think advocacy is such an important part of animal welfare?

The most effective way to improve the lives of companion animals is through legislative change. There are draconian, decades-old laws governing state and local animal welfare that prevent shelters from providing the compassionate care animals deserve.



Paws abroad! Judy Dauphinais and her dog, Ghost, in France.

What inspired you to name the SF SPCA as a beneficiary in your estate plans?

I believe how we treat animals reflects on us as a society. All animals need to be treated kindly and humanely, and the SF SPCA is a leader in fulfilling that dream. Naming the organization in my estate plans felt like a natural extension of my lifelong commitment to animals.

What impact do you hope to achieve as a member of the SF SPCA Legacy Society?

My main hope is that the SF SPCA continues on its lifesaving community medicine path. Richard Avanzino has always been a leader in animal welfare, and seeing Dr. Jennifer Scarlett's leadership today, I want that work to continue.

JOIN THE SF SPCA LEGACY SOCIETY

The Legacy Society was created to honor its members for their commitment to saving and improving the lives of animals. If you would like to learn more, or if you have already included the SF SPCA as a beneficiary in your estate plans, please contact June Hom at (415) 430-3251 or jhom@sfspca.org.



Judy Dauphinais enjoying time at home with her dog, Ghost.



Your love for animals can outlast a lifetime.

By joining the SF SPCA Legacy Society, you ensure that the SF SPCA will continue its lifesaving work expanding access to care, advocating for animals, and creating a more humane future for companion animals.

Make your legacy one of compassion.

SCAN TO LEARN MORE



Freddie and Franny's Second Chance

TWO SIBLINGS, ONE LIFELONG PROMISE OF CARE

reddie and Franny were adopted from the SF SPCA in 2015 as a pair of kittens. When their beloved guardian passed away in early 2025, their world was turned upside down. Suddenly, the two cats were without the person they had known and loved their whole lives.

The road to recovery

But before they went up for adoption, Freddie and Franny both had unique medical needs that our team needed to address. Freddie required a dental procedure, which resulted in seven extractions. Franny, meanwhile, was losing weight despite a clean bill of health.

To better understand what was happening, the pair was briefly separated into different foster homes so our team could keep a close eye on Franny's symptoms. It turned out she wasn't sick, she was simply stressed from all the changes in her life. Away from the shelter and with space to herself, her weight held steady, and she began to regain her strength.

Every step of their journey, from Freddie's dental surgery to their foster care, was fully covered by the Sido Pet Protection Program. Enrolled pets receive complementary care at the SF SPCA Hospital, ensuring they are supported while in transition and long after they're placed in a new home.

Homeward bound

Thanks to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, and fosters, Freddie and Franny regained their health and confidence. The pair were reunited, and before long, the perfect adopter came along, someone searching for two devoted companions ready to bring joy into their next chapter.

Freddie and Franny's story is an example of the Sido Program's promise: no matter what, pets entrusted to our care will receive compassion, medical support, and the chance to live out their lives in a safe, loving home. For more information on the Sido Program, please contact us at (415) 554-3029 or sido@sfspca.org.



Freddie and Franny relaxing together in the comfort of their new home.

SIGN YOUR PET UP FOR THE SIDO PET PROTECTION PROGRAM

Visit sfspca.org/sido to register today.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

& Levy, 2022). Other solutions, such as mass euthanasia or attempting to place these cats when there are not enough homes to take them, are problematic in multiple ways and are not effective in reducing populations over time.

In a related lawsuit, the San Diego Humane Society (SDHS) was sued by opponents of its veterinarian-supported, modern community cat program. The opponents claimed that SDHS was required to take in all friendly outdoor cats, and the judge affirmatively denied that claim.

Throughout the four years the lawsuit was pending, Shelter PALS collaborated with an excellent legal team at O'Melveny to provide SDHS with pro bono legal services. Ultimately, the San Diego Superior Court ruled that the 2025 version of SDHS's Community Cat Program was legal. Thanks to the ruling, SDHS continues its lifesaving work in this area.

"We are so grateful to Shelter PALS and the San Francisco SPCA for their extraordinary support during our recent court battle," says Gary Weitzman, President of the SDHS. "Their expertise and commitment made even the toughest challenges possible and created a lasting impact on our staff, our work, and the animals we serve."

Honoring the past, driving the future

In 157 years, the SF SPCA has come a long way for animals. Every milestone in our advocacy work—from outlawing cruelty to expanding access to care—has been fueled by people who believe animals deserve better.

Through Shelter PALS, we provide shelters with free legal support thanks to the generosity of our donors and the dedication of our pro bono partners. With this community of animal advocates behind us, we'll continue to break down barriers and create a more humane California, one victory at a time.

We are especially grateful for Barbara Wolfe's commitment to animal welfare through the Barbara Wolfe Advocacy Fund, which makes our advocacy work possible.



Peace of Mind for You. A Loving Future for Them.

The Sido Pet Protection Program continues Sido's legacy by ensuring that pets will always be cherished, cared for, and placed in loving homes—no matter what.



PROTECT YOUR PET'S FUTURE BY ENROLLING TODAY



Celebrating the Human-Animal Bond

Our advocacy efforts have always been fueled by love—the love people feel for animals and the love animals give in return. In this section, our community celebrates the companions who make every effort worthwhile.

John and Alex Adopter and Donor

Alex came home with me from the SF SPCA in 2011, when he was about six months old. Back then, his name was Sulfur, but I renamed him Alex (Alexander) because he reminded me a little of a Russian Blue. The staff said he was shy, and they were right, but he's become the perfect personal cat. He's deeply empathetic and always seems to know when I'm frustrated by something. In recent years, I've had the opportunity to become more involved in supporting the SF SPCA, which offers tremendous service to animals seeking homes and the people lucky enough to adopt them.





Amy, Dave, and Peyton

SF SPCA Board Member and Adopter

When Dave and I first met Peyton, we were casually visiting the SF SPCA. He was one of a litter of terrier puppies transferred from Stockton, and from that day on, he's been a cherished part of our family. With his expressive eyes and chill demeanor, Peyton has shown us the true meaning of empathy and unconditional love. Our bond with him also opened our eyes to the greater impact of the SF SPCA's work, like the Stockton partnership that brought us Peyton and his littermates, as well as the importance of animal advocacy. When Peyton suddenly went blind at age 10, he adapted with such courage, reminding us how to face life's setbacks with resilience. Every day with him is a gift, and I'm endlessly grateful for the bond we share.

The Gutierrez Family and Duke

Supporters and Corporate Leadership Council

Duke has such an amazing big soul in such a little body. He greets everyone like an old friend, which is why we call him "the mayor." He even has a gift for winning over people who are afraid of dogs. I never pictured myself as a dog mom, but Duke has changed that completely. He's my heart, my joy, and my constant reminder to slow down and savor life. There is a quote I once read that said, "learning to love an animal opens another window into your soul." Who knew a four-legged little fluff ball could do that so easily and so simply?





Annaliese and Posie

Volunteer

I knew Posie was meant to be mine the moment I saw her photo online. I'd been searching for the right dog for a while, but when I sent her picture to my mom, she immediately said, "That's the one." We drove from San Francisco to Los Angeles to bring her home, and the rest is history. Since then, Posie has been my anchor through life's ups and downs. I've struggled with depression and anxiety, especially after becoming more recognizable from my time on reality TV. Posie has given me purpose, companionship, and unconditional love. She makes me laugh every day and reminds me to slow down and appreciate life's simple joys. She even inspired me to start painting pet portraits. She's my little muse!

Alison and Lucky

Supporter

When I adopted Lucky when I was 11 years old, I had no idea of the wonderful journey ahead. I was immediately drawn to the adventurous orange kitten with big green eyes—despite being told she'd been returned to the shelter due to stomach issues. With a vet-recommended diet and some TLC, she quickly recovered and became my best friend, teaching me responsibility and unconditional love. Twenty years later, Lucky has been with me through every chapter—college, moving states, adopting a dog, and even getting married. She's slowed down and now prefers her heated bed or curling up beside me instead of exploring outside, but I love her all the same. I named her Lucky for her second chance, but after two decades together, I know I'm the lucky one.





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Change service requested.



Change for Animals Starts Here.

The Barbara Wolfe Advocacy Fund helps power our work, fueling initiatives like Shelter PALS, which provides free legal support to shelters and helps shape more humane laws across California.

Help us build a better future for animals by visiting sfspca.org/advocacy.



