



SFSPCA

**Our Unique
Approach to
Care**

PAGE 4

**Milo's
Lifesaving
Surgery**

PAGE 16



Our Animals

The Magazine of the San Francisco SPCA

Spring 2026

Vol. 118, No. 1

sfspca.org



Table of Contents

- 3** CEO's Message
- 4** Our Relationship-Centered Approach to Care
- 14** Making a Difference: Care that Comes from the Heart
- 16** Happy Tails: Milo's Lifesaving Surgery
- 18** Celebrating the Human-Animal Bond

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.

Board Officers

Curt Kirschner

Board Chair

Leslie Baker

Vice Chair

Rebecca Doherty

Treasurer

Jennifer Scarlett, DVM

CEO

Board of Directors

Curt Kirschner

Leslie Baker

Rebecca Doherty

Andy Chen

Kathy Coffey

Sarah Dodge

Nancy Egan

Ashley Goldsmith

Gilda Gonzales

Yunha Kim

Amy Ko

Damon Lewis

Lulu Roberts

Jay Sullivan

Allison Van Houten

Bharat Vasani

Barbara Wolfe

Hutchinson

Emeriti Directors

J. Peter Read

Eric B. Roberts

Emeriti Directors

Catherine B. Brown

Jennifer Chung

Derek L. Dean

Belinda Getler

Austin Hills

Daniel Levitt, MD, PhD

David Tateosian

Keith Wetmore

CEO's Message



As a veterinarian, I've spent my career listening carefully to two things at once: what an animal's body is telling me and what a family is experiencing at that moment. In recent years, those conversations have become more complicated. Across the country, veterinary care is in crisis. Rising costs and limited access have left many pet parents facing barriers to care. These realities are reshaping our profession, and they demand thoughtful, compassionate responses.

At the San Francisco SPCA, we respond the way veterinarians always have: as a team. Excellent care has never been the work of a single pair of hands. From the team members who welcome families at the front desk to those providing expert medical care, every role matters. Our doctors rely on their colleagues to watch closely, communicate clearly, and care deeply. Above all, it requires a love of animals and the people who cherish them.

In this issue of *Our Animals*, you'll see how that commitment takes shape every day at our hospital. You'll learn more about the philosophy that guides our care—one shaped by medical needs, family circumstances, and shared goals. By putting relationships first, treatment plans grow from conversation and trust. You'll also meet Dr. Lindsay Wilson, one of our dedicated veterinarians whose expertise and passion reflect the heart of this work.

You'll read the story of Milo, a cat who faced a life-threatening urinary blockage, and how partnership and financial assistance enabled his care. You will also hear from members of our community whose stories celebrate the human-animal bond, reminding us that love brings pets into our lives and veterinary care helps keep them there.

Looking ahead, our focus remains clear. The SF SPCA Hospital exists to serve our community with compassion, flexibility, and medical excellence, recognizing that caring for animals also means caring for the people who love them. With the support of our donors and community, we are advancing a model of veterinary care rooted in partnership, prevention, and accessibility; one that responds to today's challenges while helping shape a more sustainable future for animals, families, and the veterinary profession itself.

Thank you for helping us shape a healthier future for our animals.

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

Jennifer Scarlett, DVM
CEO



Inside the San Francisco SPCA Hospital's Relationship-Centered Approach to Care



Over the course of her career, our CEO, Dr. Jennifer Scarlett, has seen veterinary medicine change lives in countless ways. One case from her early years at the SF SPCA has stayed with her because of what compassionate financial support made possible.

A single mother and her young daughter arrived at the SF SPCA Veterinary Hospital with their newly adopted kitten. The daughter had been the kitten's biggest champion, and the decision to adopt had been a meaningful step for their family during a period of transition.

Then the kitten swallowed an earplug.

The object caused a blockage in the kitten's abdomen, a condition that can quickly become life-threatening. Medically, the path forward was clear. With prompt surgery, the kitten had an excellent prognosis. Without it, the options were devastating. For this family, the question was not whether or not the kitten needed care, but whether or not they could afford it.

Rather than presenting the situation as a simple yes-or-no decision, the hospital team began with a conversation. Through our Financial Assistance Program, staff worked with the mother to understand what she could realistically contribute. Together, they arrived at a number that felt possible for her, and the hospital covered the remaining cost through donor-funded grants.

The impact went far beyond the operating room. The mother, already navigating the emotional strain of a recent separation, shared how much it meant to be able to say yes to her daughter in that moment. Saving her daughter's kitten allowed her to show up as a source of stability during a fragile time. Through medical care and compassion, the hospital preserved not only a kitten's life but also the family's sense of dignity and connection.

Since opening our first animal hospital in 1924, the SF SPCA Veterinary Hospital has always been shaped by the needs of our community. From its early days of caring for working animals in a growing city to its present-day focus on cats and dogs, the hospital has adapted as veterinary medicine, community needs, and the human-animal bond have changed. Facilities have expanded, technology has advanced, and treatment options have grown more sophisticated. What has remained constant is a commitment to compassionate care—and the understanding that supporting animal health also means supporting the people who love them.

From the smallest patients to the biggest personalities, the SF SPCA Veterinary Hospital provides compassionate care for cats and dogs at every stage of life.

Veterinary care rooted in partnership

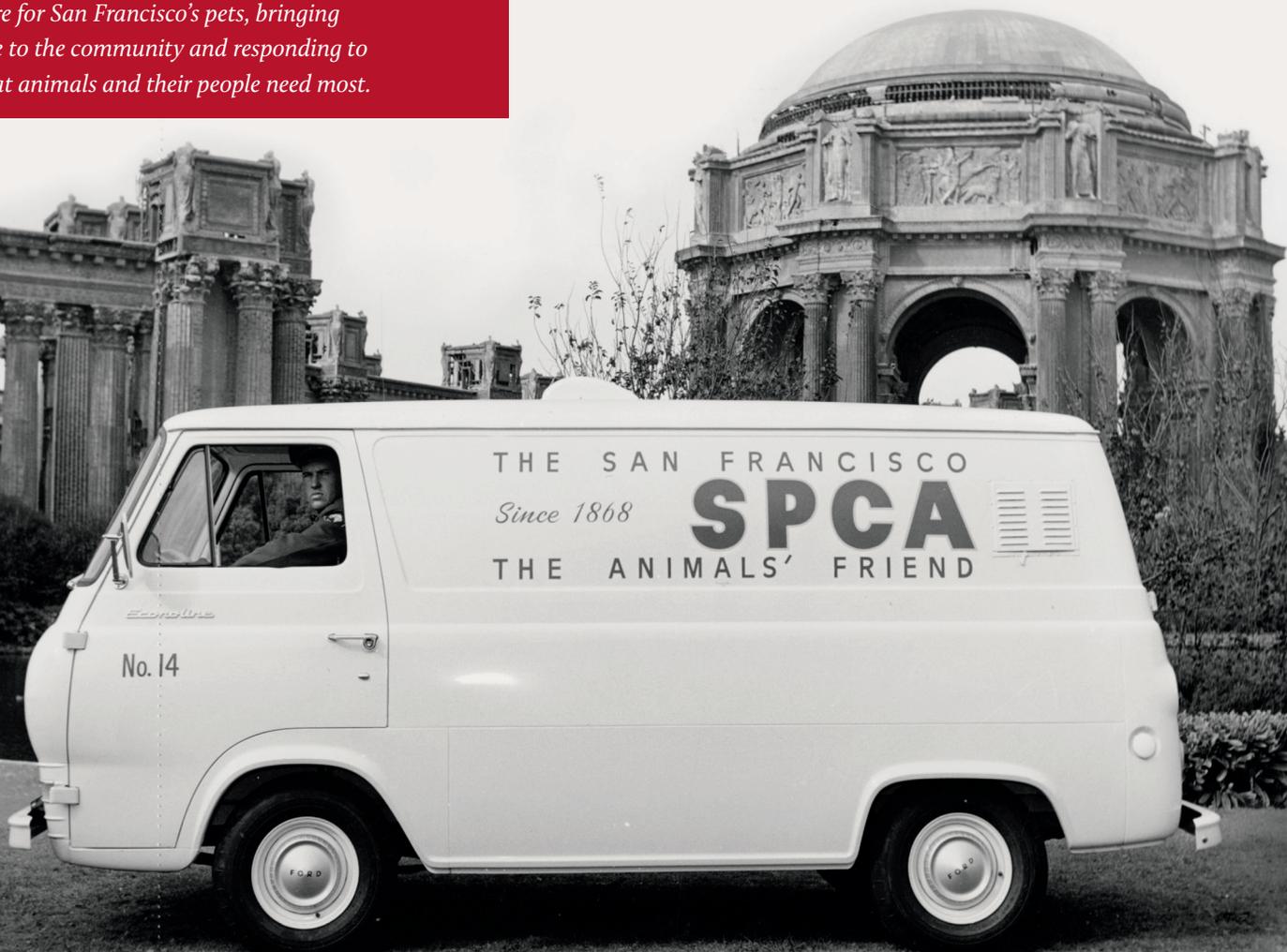
Across the country, the cost of veterinary care has risen faster than many families' ability to keep pace. According to the 2025 PetSmart Charities-Gallup State of Pet Care Study: Pet Parents' Assessment of American Veterinary Care, just over half (52%) of pet parents say they have delayed or declined veterinary care within the past year, even when they believed their pet needed it. This is not a reflection of how much people love their pets. It is a snapshot of the reality many families face, caught between medical recommendations and financial constraints.

At the SF SPCA Hospital, that reality shapes everything we do. Over the past year, our team performed 25,903 exams, each one representing not just an animal patient, but a person navigating decisions about a beloved companion. The hospital exists to help close the widening gap between what veterinary medicine can do and what families can realistically afford.

At the heart of the SF SPCA Hospital's approach is a simple, but powerful, idea: there is no single right way to care for a pet. Instead, treatment recommendations exist along a spectrum, shaped by each animal's medical needs and each family's unique situation. This contextualized approach centers on relationships first, allowing treatment plans to grow from conversations, trust, and shared goals.

Rather than insisting on a single "gold-standard" path, it recognizes multiple valid ways forward. "Our primary goal, no matter what, is to build a relationship with the client," says Dr. Jena Valdez, Chief Medical Officer at the SF SPCA. "That means meeting people where they are financially, emotionally, and culturally, and really listening to what matters most to them. From there, the plan for that animal and client unfolds through partnership between the veterinarian and the client and what the client needs and wants for that visit."

For generations, the SF SPCA has been there for San Francisco's pets, bringing care to the community and responding to what animals and their people need most.





Expert Care, Right From the Start.

From nose to tail, our veterinary team is here for every checkup, question, and cuddle.

Mention this ad in *Our Animals* to receive

\$25 OFF
YOUR APPOINTMENT.

Limit one per client, offer valid through May 31.

CALL (415) 554-3030 TO BOOK TODAY.



Coordinated care that puts patients first

Partnership with our clients takes shape through hundreds of everyday interactions at the SF SPCA Hospital, especially in moments of uncertainty or crisis. The following stories offer a glimpse into how this approach works in real time, guided by teamwork, flexibility, and care that extends beyond the medical chart.

A bulldog named Alofa arrived at the SF SPCA Hospital after her guardian noticed a recent loss of appetite. During the initial exam, our doctors discovered a large umbilical hernia measuring roughly seven centimeters in size. It was a serious condition that required prompt surgical attention.

Rather than delaying care or transferring Alofa offsite, her medical team looked for the safest, most efficient way to treat her quickly. After consulting with Dr. Grace Park of our Community Medicine team, the doctors determined that Alofa would benefit from surgery at our on-site Spay/Neuter Clinic. While it's best known for sterilization procedures, the clinic's highly specialized surgical team routinely performs complex abdominal surgeries and cares for higher-risk patients, including brachycephalic breeds like Alofa.

By tapping into that expertise, the team coordinated Alofa's care so our doctors could perform her hernia repair

and spay surgery during the same procedure. Moving her just next door allowed the team to address both needs in a single surgery, minimizing her time under anesthesia and avoiding an additional procedure and recovery period. This kind of collaboration allows patients to receive the right care without unnecessary delays, referrals, or stress on them or their families.

Throughout the process, Alofa's guardian was informed at every step. The care team explained the diagnosis, the surgical plan, and what to expect during recovery, ensuring that decisions were made clearly and collaboratively. Behind the scenes, veterinarians, Registered Veterinary Technicians (RVTs), and support staff moved in sync to treat Alofa. Thanks to that teamwork, she underwent surgery and returned home to her guardian later that day.

Training the next generation while delivering exceptional care

When a five-month-old puppy named Samael returned home after running away, he was unable to bear weight on his left hind leg. X-rays revealed a severely fractured femur. In growing puppies, injuries like this are particularly painful and destabilizing, with the potential to interfere with normal development.



expands its ability to care for complex cases while ensuring patients receive thoughtful, attentive treatment. For Samael and his family, this meant access to high-quality care and a path forward to an active, pain-free life.

Prevention, education, and long-term health

Contextualized care isn't just about responding to crises. It's about building relationships early, especially with families who might be seeking veterinary care for the first time, and using that trust to prevent small concerns from becoming bigger, more costly problems later. When clients feel seen and supported, they are more likely to ask questions, return for follow-up care, and address issues before they escalate.

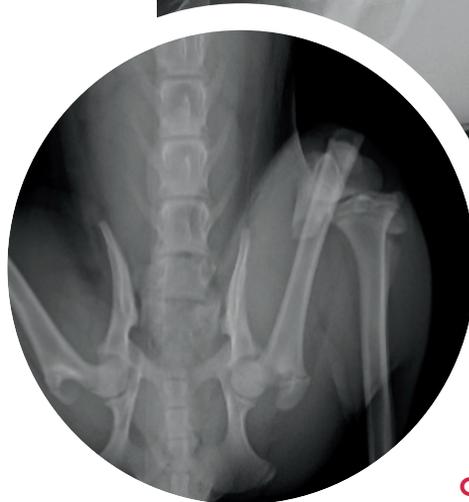
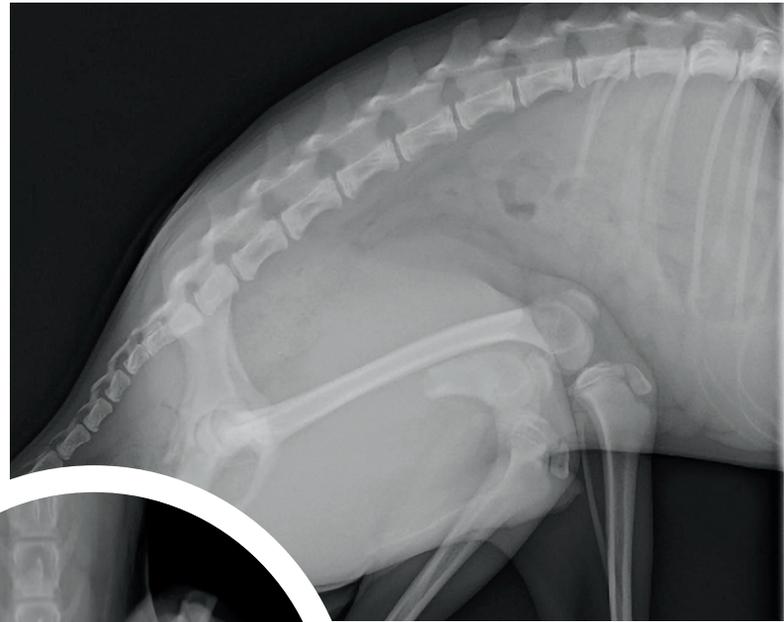
Each recommendation is grounded in an understanding of the animal's health and the guardian's circumstances, equipping families with tools that support long-term well-being. For some families, it could mean learning how to brush their dog's teeth to prevent advanced dental disease. For others, it might involve spaying or neutering to reduce the risk of preventable emergencies, such as pyometra or pregnancy-related complications.

Every exam begins with a conversation. Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jena Valdez meets with a client, reflecting the hospital's relationship-centered approach to care.

In Samael's case, the location and severity of the fracture made repair to restore comfortable use of the limb unlikely. Amputation was recommended as the most humane option to relieve pain and allow him to move forward. While amputation might sound daunting, young dogs often adapt remarkably well to life on three legs, regaining mobility as they heal.

Samael's surgery also became an opportunity for mentorship. The procedure was scheduled with Dr. Divya Ravichandran, a veterinarian at our hospital who had not previously performed this specific type of amputation. She was eager to help Samael while continuing to grow her surgical skills. With Dr. Valdez as her training doctor, she performed the surgery with close guidance and shared decision-making.

This kind of collaborative learning helps our veterinarians grow their skills and care for more animals. By supporting clinicians at different stages of their careers, the hospital



Samael's X-rays revealed a severely fractured femur that needed surgical intervention at the SF SPCA Hospital.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

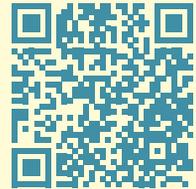


California Adopt-a-Pet Day

One Day. Thousands of New Beginnings.

Celebrate the joy of adoption on June 6.

Join the statewide celebration of second chances during California Adopt-a-Pet Day, a free adoption event helping animals find families. Last year, 4,979 pets found loving homes across California. Will you adopt this year?



**Scan the QR Code to
find a participating shelter.**

Unleash Your Wild

Join our Bay to Breakers charity team on May 17, and turn your race into lifesaving impact for dogs and cats across San Francisco. Pledge to fundraise \$600 for the SF SPCA, and unlock your free race registration.

SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW TO SIGN UP TODAY.



SF  SPCA



Join the Legacy Society

The Legacy Society recognizes those who make a lasting commitment to animals through planned giving.

NOT YET A MEMBER?

Join today for special recognition, exclusive benefits, and an invitation to our annual Legacy Society Tea on May 15.

PLEASE RESPOND BY MAY 1.

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



Maximize Your Impact

Inspire your team around a common mission. Join the Bay Area companies and employees that are participating in payroll giving to ensure every companion animal has access to quality medical care, compassionate shelter, and a loving home.

SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW TO LEARN MORE.





Dr. Divya Ravichandran performs a surgery at the SF SPCA Hospital, where collaborative learning and patient care go hand-in-hand.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Education is not delivered as instruction, but as collaboration. RVTs, who are similar to nurses in human healthcare, play a central role in this work by building relationships with clients and helping them feel confident caring for their pets at home. Whether they're demonstrating how to give medication, answering follow-up questions, or offering reassurance, our nursing team helps translate medical guidance into everyday practice.

Behind the scenes, collaboration continues across the hospital. Veterinarians consult with one another, drawing on a range of experience and perspectives to explore creative treatment options and continuously refine their approach. This culture of teamwork and learning supports better

outcomes and reinforces the idea that no one is navigating care decisions alone.

Ultimately, contextualized care allows the SF SPCA Hospital to align high-quality medicine with access and compassion, rather than forcing families to choose between them. It frames veterinary care as a shared journey built on transparency and respect for each client's realities. For pets and their guardians, that partnership can make all the difference.

The community that makes it possible

None of this happens without the community of supporters who believe in this work. Donor support underwrites the hospital's ability to deliver contextualized care, including

meaningful financial assistance for families facing difficult decisions. Expanded through significant gifts from supporters like Curt Kirschner and Nick Augustinos, these programs help cover essential services, including urgent surgeries, pain management, and compassionate end-of-life care. This support helps sustain a care model that prioritizes individualized solutions over one-size-fits-all approaches.

Beyond individual cases, donor funding helps create an environment where veterinary professionals can practice medicine with intention. It helps create a healthier, more sustainable workplace where veterinarians and medical staff have the time, resources, and peer support needed to develop their skills and have fulfilling careers in veterinary medicine. This commitment to professional development strengthens care today while preparing the hospital for tomorrow's needs.

Just as important are the clients who choose the SF SPCA Hospital as their trusted veterinary home. Every wellness exam, surgery, and follow-up visit helps sustain the hospital's broader mission. By bringing their pets here for care, our clients support a practice that combines advanced medicine with a commitment to accessibility. Their trust allows the hospital to support every patient who walks through our doors.

Our donors and clients empower the SF SPCA Hospital to be many things at once: a trusted medical center for pets, a safety net for families navigating financial strain, and a place that fosters innovation in veterinary medicine. The impact extends far beyond the hospital walls, strengthening the bonds between pets and people, and helping ensure that compassionate care remains within reach for the San Francisco community.

Strengthening San Francisco's system of care

Our hospital is a neighborhood practice for San Franciscans, a place where love for animals is the common denominator. As veterinary medicine continues to evolve, so does the role the SF SPCA Hospital plays within San Francisco's broader system of care. One of the most significant drivers of this evolution is the hospital's commitment to continuous improvement. Rather than relying on static systems, the team regularly examines how everyday processes work, starting with smaller, more manageable steps. By testing and refining workflows, the hospital is building consistency and efficiency into its operations. These improvements ripple outward, strengthening quality, safety, and overall client experience.



This focus on refining how care is delivered opens new possibilities for the future. As systems become more efficient, the hospital can explore ways to apply those lessons across services, making high-quality care more attainable for more families. Over time, documenting what works and contributing to evidence-based practices can help shape veterinary medicine beyond the hospital's walls, offering models that balance excellent outcomes with accessibility.



Donor support helps create a hospital environment where staff can practice medicine with care and intention.

Together with free vaccine clinics, affordable spay/neuter services, and preventative care at the Community Veterinary Clinic, our full-service hospital serves as the anchor of an interconnected system of veterinary care in San Francisco. Each part works as part of the system to expand access, reduce barriers, and help pets stay healthy and with the families who love them.

In many ways, this moment echoes a sentiment shared in an issue of *Our Animals* more than half a century ago:

“Whatever the SF SPCA faces in the future, it is resolved to be strong enough, wise enough, and flexible enough to meet the challenge.” That resolve continues to guide the hospital today. By combining compassion with medical curiosity and tradition with thoughtful change, the SF SPCA Hospital is a steady presence in a shifting landscape, strengthening San Francisco’s system of care for pets and the people who love them, now and for generations to come. 🐾



MAKING A DIFFERENCE:
Care that Comes from the Heart

DR. LINDSAY WILSON

Veterinarian

How long have you worked at the SF SPCA?

I joined in May 2024.

Do you have any pets?

I have one cat and five urban honeybee hives (that's about 50,000 bees!).

What one word embodies the SF SPCA for you?

Community.

What led you to a career in animal welfare at the SF SPCA?

After working in San Francisco veterinary practices for 15 years, I came to understand the importance of providing care to all pets and families in our community. With the rising cost of veterinary care and nationwide veterinarian shortages, I wanted to join an organization that supports all pets and the families who love them. I have a special affection for felines and am thankful for the SF SPCA programs that support spay/neuter and Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) for community cats.

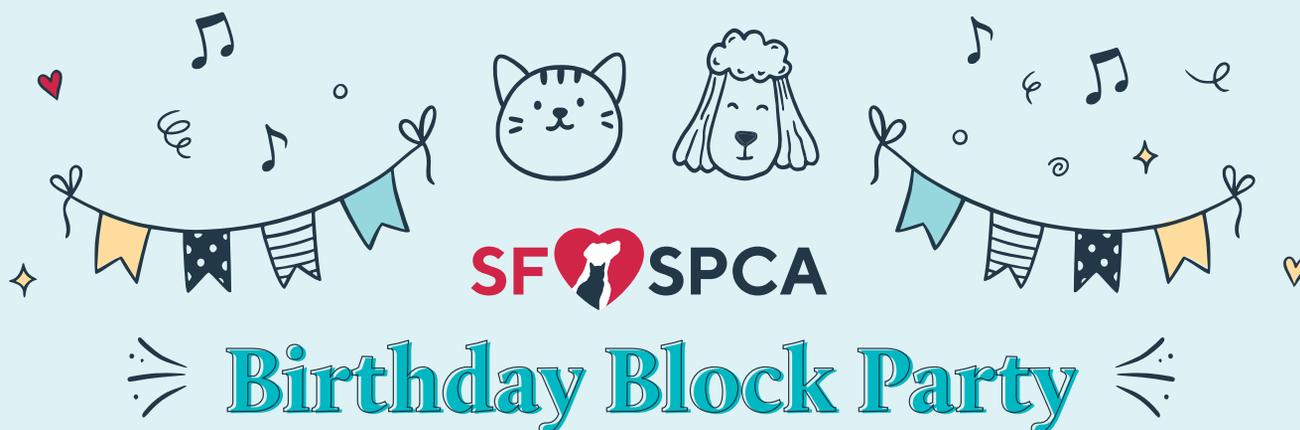
What's a typical day for you at the SF SPCA?

I work in the hospital, seeing patients for general practice, wellness, newly adopted pet appointments, urgent care, and routine or emergency surgery. Every day is different in the hospital, and what I'm doing can change quickly if a pet needs emergency care.

How does our focus on access to care impact your work?

Loving animals is a universal human experience. By providing community-based programs and financial assistance, the SF SPCA allows me to focus on what's best for each pet. 🐾

RSVP FOR OUR BIRTHDAY BLOCK PARTY to receive a commemorative pin designed by 3 Fish Studios. Learn more about the artists and their inspiration for this artwork on page 19.



BRING YOUR DOG. BRING YOUR FAVORITE HUMANS.

Everyone is welcome at our Birthday Block Party on **Saturday, April 18!** Join us for a fun-filled afternoon packed with tail wags and community right outside our campus at 201 Alabama Street.

SCAN THE QR CODE TO RSVP AND GET YOUR FREE PIN.



Milo's Lifesaving Surgery

When Milo, pictured right, arrived at the San Francisco SPCA Veterinary Hospital, the urgency of his case was immediate, and our veterinary team called a STAT. Milo was suffering from a urinary blockage, a life-threatening condition that male cats are especially prone to. Without swift intervention, toxins can build rapidly, putting a cat's life at risk.

Within moments, Milo received emergency care. Our veterinarians relieved the blockage and worked closely with his family to send him home with a prescription diet designed to support urinary health, which is often an effective solution after a first episode.

A setback requiring advanced intervention

However, one week later, Milo was back at our hospital. The blockage had returned. After a thorough evaluation, Milo's care team determined that he needed a perineal urethrostomy (PU) surgery, a complex procedure that reroutes the urethra to prevent future blockages. It's a highly effective surgery with an excellent prognosis, but it's also costly and typically performed at specialty hospitals.

Milo's family was faced with an impossible choice. They wanted to give him the care he needed, but they didn't have the financial means to pursue the surgery elsewhere.

Although PU surgery is often performed at specialty hospitals, our team has the surgical expertise to handle complex cases like Milo's. That capability, combined with a deep commitment to access to care, meant his family didn't have to choose between financial hardship and their cat's life.

Our veterinary teams partner closely with clients to understand their goals, values, and financial realities. Through this contextualized approach, treatment plans are tailored to each pet and family, ensuring that medical decisions are both compassionate and realistic. When cost becomes a barrier to lifesaving care, our donor-supported financial-assistance program helps make treatment possible.

Thanks to this service model and the generosity of supporters who make financial assistance possible, we were able to make Milo's surgery happen. Two of our dedicated doctors, Dr. Grace Park and Dr. Kat Geating, cleared their schedules and performed the delicate procedure, collaborating closely with Milo's family every step of the way.

A full recovery and a bright future

Today, Milo is thriving and enjoying life back home with the people who love him. His story reflects the heart of the SF SPCA Hospital: exceptional medical expertise, close partnership

with pet guardians, and a commitment to keeping pet care accessible. Primarily funded through philanthropy, the SF SPCA Hospital's services and programs help ensure that lifesaving care is available to pets and families when they need it most, strengthening San Francisco's network of veterinary care.

Schedule an appointment at the SF SPCA Hospital and partner with a veterinary team that's committed to your pet's lifelong health. 🐾

When cost becomes a barrier to lifesaving care, our donor-supported financial-assistance program helps make treatment possible.



Facebook:
@sanfranciscospca

WANT MORE HAPPY TAILS?

Follow us on social media to read more of our amazing adoption stories, and DM us to share yours!



Instagram:
@sanfranciscospca



Celebrating the Human-Animal Bond

Love brings pets into our lives, and veterinary care helps keep them by our sides. In the stories that follow, our community celebrates the animals who fill their days with joy and the care that helps them thrive.

Irene and Fiona

Adopter, Donor, and Hospital Client

Fiona joined our family when she was two-and-a-half years old. We adopted her from the SF SPCA, and we worked quickly to help her settle into our home. Over time, she truly flourished. She is about 10 now, and she still has so much energy that many neighbors think she is a puppy. Fiona delights us daily, insisting on an early breakfast, escorting me home from BART, and greeting her best friend—our treat-carrying UPS driver. Shortly after her adoption, she needed some medical attention. The SF SPCA Hospital helped us so much by resolving her issues and ensuring she was ready for action. Since then, the staff and I have worked together to keep Fiona healthy and thriving. I'm so grateful for their ongoing care and support.



Janet, Chris, Genevieve, Robert, and Kibo

Adopters and Donors

My family had been searching for a small, old dog. Instead, a three-month-old Shepherd-Rottweiler mix came into our lives and changed everything. I named him after the volcanic cone atop Mount Kilimanjaro, which I climbed for my 50th birthday. It was a fitting name as we ascended new heights of love, patience, compassion, and joy with him. A working breed, he always seemed to know what each member of his pack needed. Our walks through Golden Gate Park built us an incredible community of dog lovers. In 2024, he had surgery to remove a tumor, and we received the gift of nine more months of his wonderful companionship. He spent his final week with his puppyhood “bros”—my son’s friends—eating steak, chicken, and other tasty treats while getting lots of love. Kibo went to his next life, napping in the sun in his beloved backyard at 11 years old. He was truly the best of dogs.

Randy, Jelly Bean, and Boba

Employee and Hospital Client

Jelly Bean and Boba enhance my life by making my day brighter every time I see them. They teach me to enjoy the simple things in life. Whether it be a meal, time in the sun, or a good nap, they always remind me that we don't need much in life to be happy. Even when times get tough, they remind me of what's important—their meal schedule. Access to veterinary care at the SF SPCA has made a huge difference in our lives. With the excellent care the hospital team provides, Jelly Bean and Boba live very healthy lives. They are 12 years old now and show no signs of slowing down. They still play all the time, and I have so much gratitude to the hospital for giving these two even more days to enjoy life.



Andra, Kaleb, and Luna

Volunteer, Adopter, and Hospital Client

I'm proud to say that I've been a volunteer at the SF SPCA for more than 10 years. I work primarily in the ringworm department and with underage kittens on the medical side. I also train and mentor other volunteers. Kaleb, my lynx point, and Luna, my ghost smoke tabby, both came into my life when I fostered them. I adopted them separately, but now they're completely bonded. After tragically losing two of my beloved cats, Ollie and Opal, in a house fire, returning to my rebuilt home with Kaleb and Luna has made life feel whole again. I take great joy in being part of the SF SPCA, and I consider the staff and volunteers I work with to be my extended family.

Annie, Eric, and Woody

Supporters and Founders of 3 Fish Studios

Woody came into our lives as Annie and I were reshaping how we wanted to live. We'd recently moved from San Francisco to the Sierra Nevada foothills, trading stress for space, and, at 55, we found ourselves considering getting a dog for the first time. Soon after, we adopted Woody from the Amador County Animal Shelter. From the beginning, he slipped into the center of our days. Morning walks down the dirt road. Coffee on the deck while he patrols the property. Long naps in the sun patches that migrate across the forest floor. He slows us down without asking, staying close when one of us is anxious or lost in thought. He enhances our lives in a thousand small ways and brings a steady, uncomplicated love into our home. These days, he's also the muse behind the artwork we created for the SF SPCA Birthday Block Party on April 18.





201 Alabama Street
San Francisco, CA 94103
Change service requested.



Care When It Matters Most

Thanks to Nick Augustinos and Curt Kirschner, families confronting some of life's hardest decisions don't have to face them alone. Their generosity helps strengthen the SF SPCA Hospital's Financial Assistance Program, ensuring pets can receive urgent surgeries; pain management; and thoughtful, medically guided care when it's needed most.

**SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT OUR VETERINARY SERVICES.**

