

The PAWSitive

* A publication of Riverside County Animal Services * AUTUMN 2020 *

Other Stories

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Overseeing operations at multiple shelters during a pandemic causes many challenges, but the community's support helped Animal Services big time.

Page 3 — COPING WITH THE LOSS OF A PET: One veteran employee shares her story about losing a lifelong family member.

Page 5 — GRANTS AWARDED ANIMAL SERVICES: Some major assistance on the spay & neuter surgery front.

Page 6 & 7 — HELPING HANDS: When the Bobcat Fire exploded above the hills of Monrovia and elsewhere, our friends at Los Angeles County Animal Care & Control had their hands full. Several days later, they called us for help — and we went.

Page 10 — How we're helping pet owners in need.

Page 11 — Volunteers make our pets look good!



RESCUED! Do you see me? Above, Sgt. Kyle Stephens captured the moment the storm-drain kitten looks up at him; kitty's first meal, above; and a fun selfie, right, on rescue day.

*** COVER STORY ***

Officer Adopts Drain-Rescue Kitty

Sgt. Kyle Stephens is generally a quiet person and is definitely not someone who anyone would call a braggart. But we must give him a shout out for his sensitive side. In 2019 he rescued a kitten from a storm drain. It didn't take long for him to bond with the tiny fuzzleball. Read more about Sgt. Stephens and his feline friend: Page 4

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

It

's been more than eight months since COVID-19 changed our world. Seemingly overnight, Animal Services reimagined our programs with an eye toward helping pet owners keep their pets at home during this crisis. While residents of Riverside County lost their jobs, their homes and tried to protect themselves from catching the disease, animals became at risk of being homeless too.

We knew we needed to step up and immediately created new programs to assist. Our virtual adoption programs found new pets loving families. Our enhanced foster program quickly onboarded and placed more than a thousand moms with their babies and orphaned pets into temporary homes. Our animal control officers feverishly worked to return healthy-and-safe lost pets back to their owners in the field — rather than coming into the shelter. And our new Healthy Pet Zone program provided temporary boarding to animals from owners who needed to go to the hospital due to COVID-19.

Our community also helped in a big way. From our partners who transferred our



animals to their programs, to members of the public who found animals and returned them home, we thank you. To all of you who donated or volunteered, your efforts have made a huge difference for homeless animals and pet owners in crisis.

As we enter the autumn season, and see the holidays on the horizon, I wanted to let you know that we are committed to keeping our community safe, providing great care for animals that enter our shelters and strengthening the bond between animals and humans. Inside this newsletter you will learn about some of the programs that are available and ways we have supported the community. You will also read about ways that you can continue to support our goals.

Above, Director Julie Bank cuddles with Milkshake, a friendly pet belonging to staffer Ryan Long.

Financial gifts, in-kind gifts, and volunteerism go a long way in saving animals' lives. On behalf of the animals we serve, I thank you for your assistance.

Wishing you and your two-legged and four-legged family continued safety and support.

Sincerely,

Julie Bank

LOSING LILLY: COPING WITH THE LOSS OF A BELOVED PET

STORY BY EMMA PEREZ-SINGH

On Aug. 31, 2020 at 10:45 am Lilly, my 12-year-old Maltese mix died in my arms.

Lilly was a foster fail. While working as a front counter supervisor at our former shelter in Riverside, Lilly and her brother, Spock, were brought in by a woman that could no longer care for them. They were about 5 weeks old — and just the cutest critters.

Lilly was one of those dogs that was always gentle, affectionate, and oh so loving. In fact, I never knew her to growl or show any sign of aggression the entire 12 years she was in our lives. We fondly referred to her as our garbage disposal because this girl could eat. She did not discriminate. If it was edible, she'd eat it.

She was an integral part of our everyday life. When I think back to all the difficult moments in my life while she was with us, I remember how much love and comfort she gave me. If she saw that I was sad, she would intentionally come over to me and whimper until I picked her up and held her. She sensed that I needed someone and she was there to happily answer the call.

At the beginning of COVID I noticed that she was breathing differently. Her diaphragm was contracting ever so slightly more than usual. Sort of like when one is trying to catch one's breath after running up some stairs. When I had her examined, a heart murmur along with a significant amount of fluid was discovered. We immediately started her on medication which helped her significantly. After a few weeks, Lilly was back to her old self. She stayed that way until about two weeks before she died.

Although I knew that her condition was going to worsen and the end was near, it did not help to ease the pain of losing her. I spent many days thinking about how much better I could have been to her as her owner, and how I took

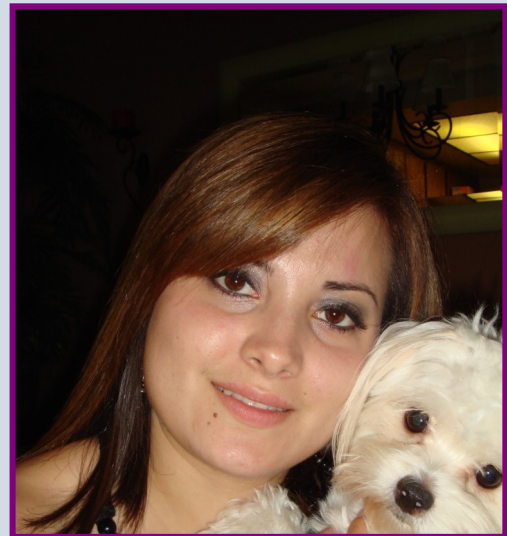
Animal Services encourages pet owners to use their private veterinarians for end-of-life services. However, humane euthanasia is provided to pet owners at the county's shelter in Jurupa Valley. E-mail us: shelterinfo@rivco.org



her love for granted at times. It took the wisdom of my 7-year-old daughter to remind me that I can not change what wasn't, that all I could do was focus on all the good times we shared. And that's what I did.

I began to look at old photos, and I started to share stories that we remembered of Lilly. He reminded me of the time that she and her brother almost died from ingesting poison at the dog sitter's house and how I stayed up with her and her brother for several days giving them meds and hand feeding them while they recovered. Then there was the first time they traveled with us. They vomited all over our car halfway to Fresno. We had to use a small McDonald's cup I found in a parking lot to get water from a gas station bathroom to clean them off. I think I made at least 20 trips back and forth before I could get them cleaned. We drove with the windows down the rest of the trip — the smell was that bad. When we arrived at our destination, we took the car to get detailed to rid it of the vomit aroma. Of course, we never loved our pooches any less for their unfortunate accidents.

We continue to grieve but these stories help us. It has been more than two months now that she has been gone. With every day that passes, the pain of her loss becomes a little less raw. But, as anyone who has had to deal with such loss knows, it still hurts.



Recently, my brother had to say goodbye to his 14-year-old Samoyed, Kory. It was hard watching his family deal with their loss. This brought more loss for me, too, because Kory was part of our family as much as my brother's. Losing Lilly helped me to understand that dealing with the loss of a pet is an extremely personal thing. As a result, I was able to impart some of what I learned to my brother and his family as they go through their own grieving journey. As I shared with them, there is no right or wrong way to process and cope with losing a pet.

Until we meet again, Lilly. Love you always *mamacita*. We miss you every day.

Ms. Perez-Singh is an animal services chief overseeing veterinary services operations.

COVER STORY

Officer Rescues Kitty from Storm Drain



Sgt. Kyle Stephens is known for his interesting service calls. He once saved an owl from a swimming pool in the Temecula area. He rescued a deer stuck in an iron fence. The poor thing seemingly tried to leap through the fence and had severely injured itself. Sgt. Stephens managed to safely extricate the deer and his colleague, Supervising Registered Veterinary Technician Ryan Long, provided medical care. And Sgt. Stephens saved a bighorn sheep stuck in a canal in the Coachella Valley in 2014. (If you'd like to watch the very grainy footage from a witness here: https://youtu.be/e95R_G97Rdc). So when he responded to a kitten trapped in a storm drain in Riverside, this was no big deal. Meow, meow, meow, spoke the kitty. Sgt. Stephens used his skills to safely remove the gray

fuzzball — and quickly fell in love with his new feline friend. He and his fiancé decided to foster the kitty, but they soon realized this would be a “foster failure.” In other words, this kitten had just scored its forever home. We just couldn't part with her,” Sgt. Stephens said. “There was an immediate bond with the little gal and she's gotten along with our other pets and my son very well. She is a great addition to our family.”

Want to become a foster? Sign up here: <https://www.rcdas.org/index.php/foster-care/orientation-application>



TOP LEFT: Scratch, relaxing at Sgt. Kyle Stephens' home, was rescued from a storm drain in Riverside; **MIDDLE & BOTTOM LEFT:** Scratch immediately became comfortable with Stephens' other pets, including Woody, a Labrador mix, and Easy, a French bulldog; **ABOVE:** the officer's son, Jesse, gives Scratch a ride. “She's a very good cat,” Sgt. Stephens said. “She lets my son push him around in his little pedal car. We love him.”

County Receives \$125K in Grants



Truman, a 9-year-old husky, received major love from a foster family. Bolstering foster programs are part of the recent grant funds awarded to Riverside County Animal Services. Photo courtesy of foster parent, Wayne Chung. (Lara Soldmann of Riverside eventually adopted the dog.)

The Walker family of Riverside, including Leia Walker, fostered a kitten and fell in love with the charming feline and decided to adopt. Photo courtesy of Leia's mom, Julie Walker.

light of the department's ongoing operations. The California Animal Welfare Funders Collaborative provided \$23,000, and another \$232,650 from CARES funding gave Animal Services the opportunity to support families impacted by COVID-19, experiencing homelessness, and financial instability in our communities.

These grants are revitalizing the department's Healthy Pet Zone program (its mission statement: Promoting Compassionate Communities), a combination of human and animal social service efforts. The program offers temporary boarding of pets for those in crisis, a pet food bank, and a multitude of supplies and services for those in need to help them keep their pets at home.

Seeking grant funds has always been part of Animal Services' strategic planning. Staffer Kim Youngberg leads the efforts on this front and is reporting a robust year in 2020, despite the coronavirus pandemic.

All told, Animal Services has already received \$125,000 in grant funds this year from foundations supporting animal welfare issues.

"We have been very fortunate in obtaining a variety of grants this year," Youngberg said. "These grants are all going to support important life-saving programs in our communities, including foster care, spay/neuter services for the public and cat lifesaving. They will also help Animal Services improve its technology to enhance customer service during this difficult time working through the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, funding was received to aid our communities in keeping pets, a vital part of family units, in homes."

Some of the highlights include a grant from the Petco Foundation for \$55,000. This was used to buy needed surgical instruments and specialized equipment to treat shelter cats and make their stay more comfortable. The grantor Maddie's Fund awarded \$20,000 to bolster Animal Services' foster care program.

"This year more than 1,000 animals' lives have been saved through the foster program and the year is not over yet!" Youngberg said. "With these funds, the program is also expanding to include a focus on large dog, short-term foster opportunities."

Short-term foster allows the public to take a dog out of the shelter for a weekend at home, or on a foster field trip, such as a walk through the park or hike. These activities have been proven to reduce the stress of shelter dogs increasing their chances for adoption.

"It also gives potential adopters the opportunity to fall in love with the perfect pal," Youngberg said.

Another critical source of funding during the pandemic was provided by the CARES Act.

Animal Services received \$386,650 for support in



You can help, too! Please consider making a donation to Riverside County Animal Services; here's a direct link:

<https://www.rcdas.org/index.php/donate>

Heading West to Help L.A. County: *Bobcat Fire Demanded Extra Resources; RivCo Officers Responded*

Two years ago the Woolsey Fire raced through the Santa Susana Mountains between Los Angeles and Ventura counties. It grew so large and so fast that the Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care & Control reached out to Riverside County Animal Services seeking assistance. Almost a dozen Riverside County officers responded and assisted during the Woolsey Fire, which ultimately burned almost 100,000 acres.

In September, our friends in L.A. County found themselves with another massive fire. This time it was the Bobcat Fire and another mutual aid call came our way. Once again, RivCo officers responded, offering key assistance with animal-welfare calls in evacuation zones. The call for help occurred at the same time the Animal Services responded to — and monitored — two large fires in its backyard: the Apple Fire (more than 33,000 acres burned) near Beaumont and the El Dorado Fire (23,000 acres) near Yucaipa and Oak Glen.

“Many times these fires burn through rural lands where property owners have several acres and own many animals,” Animal Services Commander Chris Mayer said. “A lot of the calls we help with involve livestock or small farm animals. And property owners cannot get to their animals because of hard closures. Law enforcement does not want to put anyone in danger while fires are still active and firefighters are putting out hot spots. That’s where we come in and help.” This time, many of the pets needing water and food involved chickens, geese and lots of goats,” Mayer said. “We meet some interesting friends,” he said. “We know the animals appreciate our visits — as do our counterparts with L.A. County. We’re happy to help and make a difference.”



SCARRED LANDS — RivCo trucks in the Juniper Hills area near Pearlblossom Highway; Officer Denise Westbrook (above) helped goats get hay; officers transported some friendly geese from a dangerous area. (Photos by Riverside County Animal Services Officer Adam Haisten)

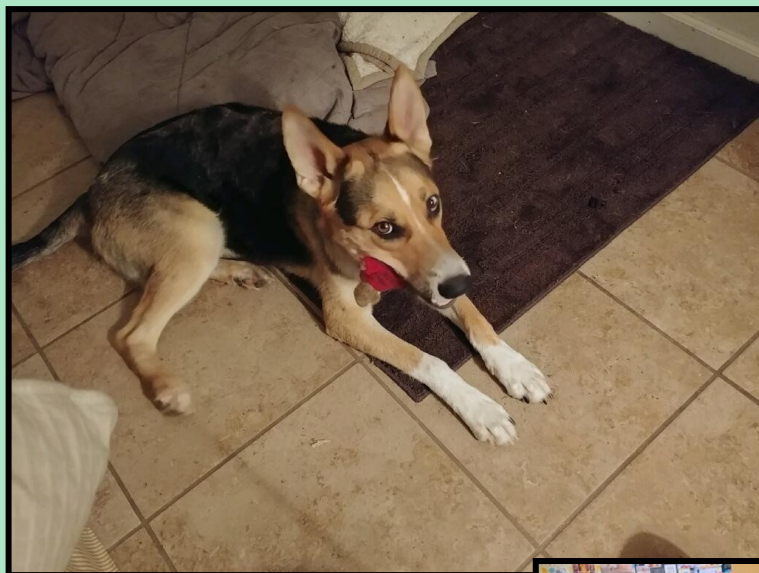
Bobcat Fire Response (cont.)

All told, slightly more than 100 animals were assisted or rescued from properties within the fire zone, said Lt. James Huffman, one of the responding officers during the mutual aid response. Of the more interesting scenarios, officers rescued a cat from a green house, provided food to fish in a koi pond and wrangled a stray chicken. On a serious note, Huffman said the assistance helps build lasting relationships. One day, Riverside County's animal control officers may need to be backed up if — and when — a major wildfire rages in their jurisdiction. "I'm certain they'll be happy to come our way to return the favor," Huffman said.



HEADING WEST, HELPING HANDS — (Upper right) Officer Michael Cox, feeds koi in the Juniper Hills area; (Middle right) RivCo officers transported a disaster relief trailer (donated by the Kennel Club of Palm Springs) to a staging area at the Palmdale Animal Shelter; (Right) Officer Cox also wrangled a stray chicken; (Top, middle) RivCo and L.A. County officers stage outside the Baldwin Park Animal Shelter; (Above) RivCo Officer Mary Salazar protects herself from smoke on the Angeles Crest Highway as she and her colleagues prepare for their instructions for the day. (Photos by officers Adam Haisten, Mary Salazar and Lt. James Huffman)

Vet Techs Help Hurt Pets Recover



National Veterinary Technicians Week is recognized in mid-October each year. We are very fortunate to have so many skilled techs working on behalf of the injured, neglected pets that cross our paths. These employees treat these poor animals as their own pets. They groom the matted, mend the broken-boned and nurse the dehydrated and skinny back to health. These stories are the ones that break the hearts of animal lovers everywhere. These stories are also the ones that make people want to help. We are ALWAYS interested in help!

How can you help us help the animals? There are many ways! Probably the easiest way to donate is by visiting the DONATE button on our website: www.rcdas.org

Prefer to make a call to donate? Please call:
951-358-7387

If you're "old skool," and you'd rather go the snail mail route, please send your donation here:

**Riverside County Department of Animal Services
6851 Van Buren Blvd.
Jurupa Valley, CA 92509**

Every pet featured here came to Riverside County Animal Services neglected or with a serious medical issue, including the tiny feline to the right. That poor kitty needed to have an amputation and — get this — was ultimately adopted by a family whose child is also an amputee.



Our Pets Delight at Eastvale Meetings



Lt. Lorena Barron-Lopez, above, cuddles with a shelter dog prior to a recent Eastvale City Council meeting. Stella, top right, visited City Hall in late September and Dodger, right, enjoyed the spotlight in late October.

They say you can't fight city hall. Our pets are OK with that. They've been showing up recently at Eastvale City Council meetings to woo and awe the elected officials, city staffers and the general public. So far, visits have been going very well. The visits also provide our pets some always-welcomed exposure — and a greater chance at finding their forever home. We're excited to share



that other cities are interested in getting in on the pet spotlight action.

Representatives from the cities of Jurupa Valley and Riverside — both contract partners with Animal Services — expressed interest in starting later this year. We and our four-legged friends are looking forward to those sessions.



(One of our former residents.)

Did you know you can renew your dog license online? It's super easy and saves you time. Here's a direct link:

<https://www.rcdas.org/index.php/services/dog-licensing>



*The PAWSITIVE is produced by the Riverside County Department of Animal Services. Stories and photos by Public Information Officer John Welsh, unless indicated. Copy Editors: Laurie Dozier, Elissa Messenger and Stefanie Rubio. GOT A STORY? Please send your stories, pet photos, and other ideas to shelterinfo@rivco.org (we LOVE hearing from our adopters!). Thanks for reading **The PAWSITIVE!***

Healthy Pet Zone

Pet Food Distribution

NOVEMBER 21, 2020

Drive-Thru Event!
9- 10 am

Western Riverside, San Jacinto and
Coachella Campus Locations

Must be registered to participate:
www.rcdas.org

"HELPING TO KEEP OWNERS AND PETS TOGETHER BY
PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THOSE IN NEED."



Volunteers Make Our Pets Appear Magical

Ever wonder how we get such amazing photographs of our pets? If you follow us on our social platforms, you have likely come across these beautiful photos.

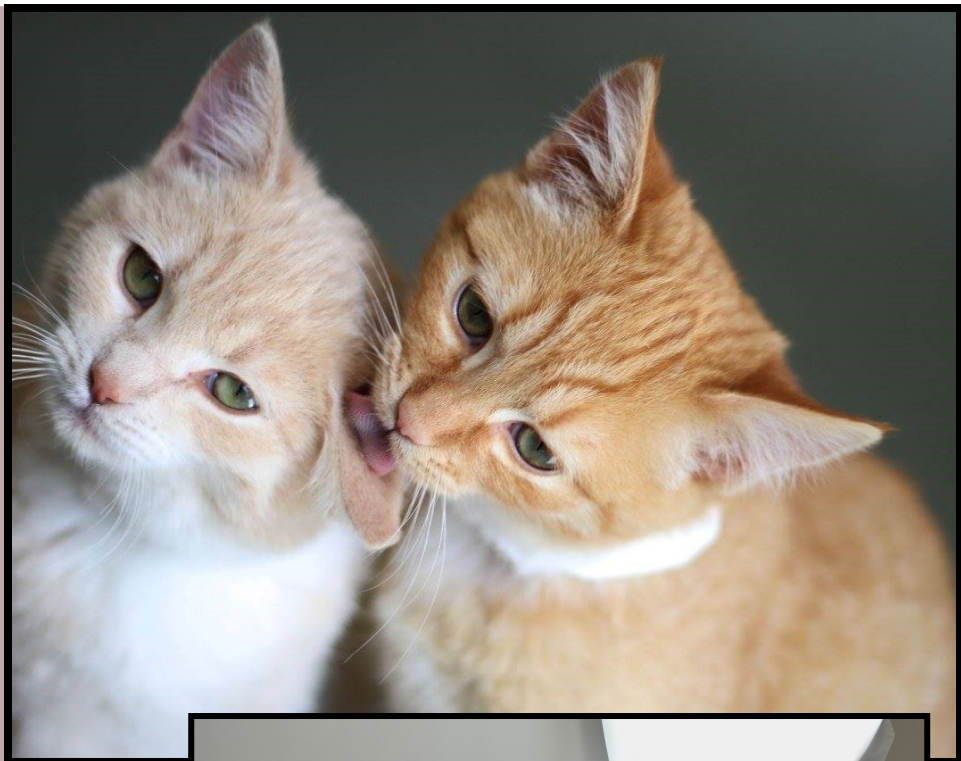
Well, these stunning images are the work of a great corps of volunteers that just make our homeless animals look magical. Kelly Vela, of Corona, was a mentor to the young and talented Ale Robles, a county employee at the Public Safety Enterprise Communications. Ms. Robles volunteers at our Jurupa Valley shelter location on Saturdays. Her photo sessions with our “models” are such a wonderful gift to us — and, of course, our homeless animals that need as much exposure as they can get. She really shows their personalities.

Freddie Bommer, whose talented photo sessions were well documented at our now-closed San Jacinto Valley Animal Campus, now drives all the way from his hometown of Hemet to Jurupa Valley to complement Ms. Robles’ work. When he’s not taking pictures of shelter pets, Mr. B. takes off on international journeys to take stellar nature shots.

And we must give a shout out to Cheryl Honts. She has been taking spectacular pictures of our pets at the Coachella Valley Animal Campus for several years. The retired registered nurse has told us she loves giving the pets a second chance by making sure they look good in her patient photo shoots.

Interested in volunteering? Please visit this link: <https://www.rcdas.org/index.php/volunteer>

(And thank you!)



TOP RIGHT — Two feline friends bond, as caught by the talented camerawork of volunteer Ale Robles. **MIDDLE:** Volunteer photographer Cheryl Honts and handler Dolores Anderson calm a nervous pooch before picture time. **RIGHT:** Freddie Bommer captured a sweet, bonding moment between volunteer Jennfier Todd and a husky mix before the pet’s modeling session. **BOTTOM RIGHT** — Volunteer Ale Robles comforts a Chihuahua moments before photo time.

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STUFF ON YOUTUBE?**

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FACEBOOK.**

**WE HAVE THREE FACEBOOK PAGES:
COACHELLA VALLEY ANIMAL CAMPUS
RIVERSIDE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES
SAN JACINTO VALLEY ANIMAL CAMPUS**



**PLEASE CONSIDER ADOPTING YOUR NEXT PET AT ONE OF
OUR SHELTER LOCATIONS ***

BLYTHE: 295 S. CARLTON AVE., BLYTHE 92225 (760) 921-7857

**COACHELLA VALLEY ANIMAL CAMPUS: 72-050 PET LAND PLACE,
THOUSAND PALMS 92276 (760) 343-3644**

**WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY/CITY ANIMAL SHELTER: 6851 VAN BUREN BLVD.,
JURUPA VALLEY 92509 (951) 358-7387**

*** DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, ADOPTIONS AND OTHER SERVICES
ARE BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. FULL INFORMATION ON OUR WEB SITE:**

WWW.RCDAS.ORG