



WINE COUNTRY ANIMAL LOVERS NEWSLETTER



IT'S BEEN A VERY SPECIAL YEAR

GIVING THE MOST VULNERABLE PETS THEIR VERY BEST CHANCE

WCAL takes in many animals that likely wouldn't have a chance without us. Some are neonates too tiny to survive on their own, others may have an injury requiring an expensive surgery or they are often so ill that they require around-the-clock care. We know that every animal, no matter how small or how broken, deserves a chance at the best life and it's our privilege to be able to offer them the help they need. Over the years, we've noticed that these special needs animals often end up being the most grateful and loving pets of all. This past year, we helped an extraordinarily high number of special needs cases, making it a very special year for our team.

Thanks to our generous donors and veterinary partners, we are able to say YES when urgent calls for help come in. In 2021, our fosters shared their homes with a playful deaf dog in need of intestinal surgery, a jet-black cat with a badly broken leg that required amputation, a "wobbly" cat with Cerebellar Hypoplasia disease, a kitten who needed her infected kidney removed, a scruffy puppy with an injured eye, many kittens that had to undergo eye removal surgery to save their lives, and one tiny snowshoe Siamese kitten who sadly lost both of his badly infected eyes at less than a week old. Another kitten saved by WCAL had his skull fractured in three places by a raccoon! Now that he is healed, Rocket has the cutest smushed face and he's one of the most loving cats currently available for adoption from WCAL. Although we would certainly never have wished these hardships on them, the

truth is that the extra attention they received during their recovery allowed each and every one of them to become even more loving and trusting than a "normal" dog or cat. The families who adopt them are lucky indeed.

Take it from Heather who adopted the big white deaf love bug of a dog named Mo. "It's definitely a new experience and there are some challenges," Heather says. With a little ingenuity, she's figured out some helpful techniques to make life easier for Mo. "At night we use a flashlight or flash the patio light to get his attention, which surprisingly works very well. Mirrors have helped too. We keep them next to his little area so that he's able to see his surroundings and this has made him less jumpy since he can't hear us approaching. Little things like this make both our lives easier and it's super cute to watch Mo admire himself in the mirror, lol." Heather also shared one huge benefit of having a deaf dog. "I think one of the funnier reasons I love having a special needs pup is that 4th of July is a breeze now. Mo doesn't mind the fireworks since he's deaf. The lights in the sky startled him at first but as he became more comfortable, Mo would run around the backyard looking for them."

Through countless rescues and adoptions, we've learned that special needs animals often go on to be the most loving and beloved pets. Whether you adopt one or support us through your donations, your generosity helps us give them a chance.



PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Every rescue scenario invariably begins with a sad story, but my secret is to focus on the happily ever after. It would be naive to pretend that the bad isn't there, but it's the positive outcomes that keep our team of volunteers going day after day and year after year. The cumulative wins fuel us and help us keep at it when the sad stories alone might otherwise become too much.

Most people get involved in animal rescue for a similar reason; we can't stand the idea that any living animal is suffering while humans stand by and allow it to happen — or worse, that humans may be the cause of their suffering. There are times when it can feel especially hard to get past that initial hardship, abandonment, medical crisis or disappointment, but then we meet the animals and look into their eyes or feel their purr and the urge to relieve the discomfort, teach them to trust and ensure they land in the most wonderful homes takes over. Helping to right these wrongs and turn things around for forgotten, unwanted or broken cats and dogs is our greatest reward.

Receiving adoption photos and stories or thank you notes from grateful families is so meaningful because it reminds us of the impact that our small animal rescue can have. When we were able to resume public adoption events this past year, an unexpected treat was having WCAL adopters come visit in person to tell us stories about their pets and show photos on their phones of the cushy lives they lead now. We have done our best to keep in touch with our extended WCAL family through our computer monitors with Zoom, Facebook, Instagram and WCAL's e-newsletters, but it sure feels good to be able to reconnect again more fully.

The support of our community of animal lovers, WCAL adopters, and all your heart-warming stories help us focus on what we CAN do in the coming year and all the good that will come from our efforts. It's this positive outlook that helps our daily rescue work become a celebration of the lives saved.

Alissa McNair

Alissa McNair
WCAL Board President



STEPPING UP FOR ANIMALS IN NEED

Wine Country Animal Lovers is a small but mighty group of talented, animal-loving volunteers and we routinely step up in many unexpected ways for cats and dogs, near and far. Taking in homeless animals and preparing them for adoption by placing them in loving foster homes and working with our veterinary partners to make sure they are healthy and neutered before going home is only one of the many things we do. We are equal parts a rescue group and an educational & advocacy organization. WCAL works hard to connect people with resources and the “how-to-do” info so they can also participate in helping cats and dogs.

There are only so many hours in the day and our volunteers have full-time jobs, families and pets of their own so we can't possibly take on all that is asked of us or take in all the animals that we are asked to help so we get creative to stretch our resources as far as possible. Our team answers hundreds of phone calls, emails and private messages in a month and our goal is to be a source of support and education for those who are trying to help animals in need. On any given day, we might direct those who find lost dogs to the nearest microchip scanner, advise someone how to go about finding their missing indoor-only cat, or connect distraught families with resources to help pay for unexpected medical bills. Many people who find a litter of young kittens need help determining if

a mama cat is nearby and likely to return or are seeking timely advice about age-appropriate food for an abandoned litter. WCAL loans humane traps for the safe Trap-Neuter-Return of feral cat colonies and our volunteers also teach the art of trapping. Our adoption counselors problem solve with potential adopters and offer cat and dog training and behavioral tips to help animals thrive in their homes. In addition to helping with pet food or special supplies for the cats and dogs belonging to struggling families, we offer courtesy posts to assist people who need to rehome a cherished pet to help animals avoid a trip to the shelter. Whenever possible, WCAL offers to pay for spay/neuter to help reduce the severe pet overpopulation crisis. We root for people we have never met and get involved in their stories and experiences because we all have the same goal.

There are many kind hearted people who are willing to be a part of the solution once they know that they have our support and guidance. Often they tell us how relieved they are to speak with people who understand. We know first-hand that animal rescue can be hard if you feel like you have to go it alone and don't know where to get answers. It's our privilege to be a helping hand for fellow animal lovers who are willing to roll up their sleeves.





WAYS TO GIVE

Your support of Wine Country Animal Lovers is what allows our foster volunteers and veterinary partners to provide loving homes, good nutrition and quality medical assistance to the animals in our care. While it may sound like a cliché, it's true – we really couldn't do what we do without you.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO HELP:

- Visit www.winecountryanimallovers.org/donate and use your credit card to make a one-time donation or set up a recurring monthly gift
- Use the enclosed envelope to send us a check
- Donate something from our Amazon wish list: <https://a.co/hWJjmlH>
- Set up a qualified charitable distribution from your IRA; you may give up to \$100,000 per year tax-free or use your gift to satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution after you turn 72*
- Donate appreciated stock that you've held for at least one year; WCAL receives the full value and you may be eligible for income tax savings*
- Consider a bequest or endowment to Wine Country Animal Lovers as part of your estate planning

**This information is not intended as legal or tax advice; please consult an attorney or tax advisor before making decisions that involve your investments.*

DONOR PROFILE:

SUSAN GLEASON

There is no doubt that Susan Gleason is an animal lover. She has volunteered for Sunrise Horse Rescue and Goatlandia for years, and through these connections, she found Wine Country Animal Lovers when she needed a live trap to safely capture a fearful stray cat who had appeared at the horse barn. WCAL came to the rescue.

Susan was able to easily trap the wayward kitty, a beautiful and tame Chocolate Snowshoe. A WCAL volunteer visited the barn to scan the friendly cat for a microchip. We helped get the kitty a wellness check and updated vaccines at the local vet. When no one came forward to claim the cat, Susan promptly adopted him, now her beloved Arnold.

After losing her home in the Tubbs Fire, Susan found her car filled with fleece fabric that she'd purchased and thought that making fleece blankets for rescue animals would be a good use of her time and resources. This is how Susan came to be known as WCAL's "Fleece Fairy."

Susan's hand-crafted fleece blankets help our fosters welcome their fur babies with the softest, most welcoming blankets to keep them warm and secure. If you follow our daily updates on social media or have visited us at an adoption event, then you may have seen her colorful blankets in action. Susan has also become a regular donor and in addition to making hundreds of blankets, she sends financial gifts as often as she is able.

Susan now lives in Petaluma with Arnold and seven goats, left homeless after the Tubbs fire, plus three chickens to round out the farm. We are thankful to Susan for not only being our Fleece Fairy but also for the donations she makes to WCAL that help us provide much-needed services to families and animals throughout Lake, Sonoma, and Napa Counties.

THANK YOU, Susan, for all of your efforts and your compassion for rescuing animals and making them happy in their foster and forever homes!



A NEW LIFE FOR COTTON

When we met sweet Cotton she was seven years old and tired. She'd spent her short life raising litter after litter of puppies because her family could not afford to have her spayed. Cotton had given birth to five litters of puppies, and now, relinquished to the Clearlake Animal Shelter with three pups in tow, needed some help.

One look and we knew she deserved a second chance. Despite her sad circumstances, we soon learned that Cotton was delightfully mellow, friendly with other dogs and kids, and under her tangled and dirty mop, was a beautiful girl. Visits to the Calistoga Pet Clinic provided a full exam, vaccinations, flea and worm treatments, and a spay day to ensure that her breeding days were over. During a month with a loving foster family, she came to love the routine of indoor living, the joys of chasing a ball and an appreciation of all the good smells a leash walk through town could provide; she was ready for her forever family.

The list of applicants was long, and when the big day came, she drove off with three wonderful ladies and a nine-year-old poodle pal named Diesel. To add to the happy ending, Cotton's puppies, Memphis, Nash, and Knox, also cared for by a nurturing WCAL foster family, all found great homes of their own! Teamwork makes the dream work and Cotton's story is just one example of what the dedication and support of our donors, rescue partners and foster families can do.



Cotton, adopted from WCAL in May, 2021

FOSTERING CAN BE LIFE-CHANGING

BOARD MEMBER PROFILE: CAMILLE LINA

After fostering multiple puppies with WCAL, Camille joined the WCAL Board of Directors in 2018 and was elected Vice President a year later. During her time with WCAL, she became very interested in the science behind animal behavior.

Wanting to bring more pain-free, punishment-free, positive reinforcement training to the Napa Valley, Camille left her job in the wine industry to complete the Karen Pryor Academy for Animal Training & Behavior Dog Professional certification program.

Camille is now a Certified Training Partner of KPA and has her own training business. which is terrific news for the dogs (and cats) of Napa Valley and their humans! We are so proud of Camille on behalf of our four-legged friends.



“There are a lot of outdated methods that are still in use out there. With dog training being an unregulated industry, it's challenging for people to figure out what exactly to look for when searching for a trainer.”

- Camille

A LESSON IN UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

BEETHOVEN AND MAYNARD JAMES KITTEN

I didn't know it was my destiny to be the provider and companion for special needs cats. Cats who need extra love and attention. Cats who need to be kept safely indoors. Cats who might otherwise have been overlooked or misunderstood. But I'm glad I know now. My heart has changed for the better and my life has a new sense of purpose. These cats have been saved, and they have saved me.



I live with four special needs cats; two sibling pairs. Bunny and Squirrel are tri-pod twins adopted from the Humane Society. I adopted Beethoven and Maynard James Kitten from WCAL. After being injured by a dog, Beethoven is half-blind/half-deaf and Maynard's front left leg is twisted 90 degrees. Each day brings challenges and rewards in new and surprising ways.

I raised two daughters and thought I'd learned all I needed to know about myself, but this foursome taught me something new: how to give and receive unconditional love in the face of adversity. My life has been immensely enhanced by the exceptional relationships I have with my special needs cats and I couldn't be more grateful that they came into my life.

— Justine, WCAL Adopter

Beethoven and Maynard James Kitten (originally named Sid and Axl) came from WCAL and were hand-raised bottle babies.

WOBBLY WONDER

Written by Neena Heitz

Baby Ruth and Candy Corn's life journey began with WCAL at just over a week old. Their mom, Pumpkin, and siblings Butterfinger, Peppermint Pattie and Junior Mint, all came to WCAL in crisis when mama kitty was unable to nurse her newborns and needed emergency medical care.

Baby Ruth was the smallest of the litter and a teeny tiny bottle baby with an early special needs diagnosis - Cerebellar Hypoplasia (CH) - more commonly known as "wobbly cat syndrome". CH is a developmental condition in which the cerebellum of the brain fails to develop properly. The cerebellum controls movement, coordination and balance. For Ruth, CH mostly meant erratic head movements and a general instability on her feet. Her plucky attitude and indomitable spirit quickly endeared her to both Alissa, and her 2nd foster parents, Neena and Harry.

With slight modifications to her environment, like silicone bowls (to avoid chipped teeth) and an incline scratcher (a ramp to her favorite chair), Ruth proved remarkably adept at overcoming adversity. Baby Ruth and her bonded sister Candy Corn were in foster care for almost an entire year before finding their perfect family.

Just as we hoped, they were adopted TOGETHER. Their adopter had done her homework and knew exactly what Baby Ruth (now named Ruth Bader Ginsburg) and her sister Candy Corn (now named Alice Paul) needed to be comfortable. We are overjoyed that patience and love prevailed for these amazing sisters.



"Well we foster because we just love cats. It's honestly as simple as that."

FOSTER PROFILE:

NICOLE AND FAMILY

Some fosters are like GOLD. In addition to her good outlook and sense of humor, Nicole is one of those fosters who rolls up her sleeves to help ANY cat in need. Even when there is no room, her family will convert the bathroom in their apartment to create a foster quarantine space if that's what it takes to save a life. They have taken in nursing mama cats and their babies, kittens with the contagious ringworm fungus, cats with calicivirus, feral cats and countless bottle babies who need to be fed all through the night. Nicole and her family have also fostered special needs cats like siblings Sunny and Kai who both developed neurological issues. Her family cared for them as hospice animals until we had to say goodbye to both of them. They love each foster as one of their own.

Does anyone remember the creative and entertaining rap Nicole wrote and recorded to get her long-term foster kitty named Eggy adopted? It worked! What is particularly unique is that Nicole's entire family shares all aspects of fostering and it's something they do as a family. Her husband Shawn and son Xander are both skilled bottle feeders and cat lovers too and this means that they can take turns waking up in the night or coming home on their lunch hour to care for a large litter of needy little bottle babies.

As a teacher, Nicole often brings lessons learned in animal rescue into her classroom and her students enjoy hearing about the animals she is caring for and following along on their journeys to adoption. We always enjoy having her attend adoption events because she is so comfortable engaging the people who come to speak with us and helping to answer all of their questions from her own experience. Nicole is a true feline advocate and we are grateful to have her family on our team of extraordinary volunteers.



"My husband really likes taking care of sick kittens; he says it makes him feel needed and like he's making a difference."



"(My son) often takes the late night feedings (teenage body clock) so that I can get some rest."



**WINE COUNTRY
ANIMAL LOVERS**

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CRISIS CARE

Wine Country Animal Lovers' Crisis Care program was designed primarily to help family pets stay with their humans when the cost of a one-time unforeseen medical crisis might otherwise separate them. Sometimes, however, it's utilized when an animal in need requires extensive and expensive medical care and there's no one else to turn to.

Such was the case for a tiny kitten that was attacked by a raccoon, an encounter that could easily have ended his life. Fortunately for him, a good Samaritan who was feeding a feral cat colony nearby was able to chase the marauder off and give the little guy a chance.

Rocket, as we came to call him, had multiple bite wounds on his face and had nearly lost an eye. At the clinic, his x-rays revealed multiple skull fractures. Amazingly, his spirits were good, but as he weighed less than a pound and was only a few weeks old, there was clearly a long road ahead if he was going to make it. A foster family with extensive medical experience took him home and syringe-fed him multiple times during the day and night and gave him lots of tender loving care. Frequent vet visits confirmed that he was on the right track. Once he'd gained some strength and was finally

able to eat on his own, it was time to find him a friend. We went back to the feral colony he came from and retrieved a little girl kitten we believe to be his sister. Lylla instantly became his best buddy and gave him someone his own size to play and snuggle with. In exchange, Rocket has been able to help wild child Lylla learn to adapt to an indoor life.

Today, thanks to the kindness and dedication of many, Rocket is five months old and healthy with just a runny eye as a souvenir from the raccoon. He's also an absolute joy, with an incredible purr and the best lap manners ever. He and his sister Lylla are also ready for adoption, so if you have room in your heart for this perfect indoor-only pair, they'd love to meet you!

Visit www.winecountryanimallovers.com to learn more about them and submit an application.

