

Help Pets, Help People

Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ keeps pets healthy, so those experiencing homelessness in San Diego can keep their lifeline





PHOTOS COURTESY OF FEEDING PETS OF THE HOMELESS™

Unconditional Love and Compassionate Care

Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ needs support to help the most vulnerable

by Anne Stokes

In 2019, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) counted 567,715 people experiencing homelessness in the United States. More than half of people living unsheltered on the streets — 53% — were living in California; that's a 21% increase from the year before. While HUD doesn't do an official pet count, it's estimated between 5 and 20% of homeless people have animal companions.

Since 2006, Genevieve Frederick, founder and president of Feeding Pets of the Homeless™, has been doing something to help.

"I saw a need that no one actually realized there was," she says. "I got this 'a-ha' moment: How are these people feeding these pets? I thought about it for a while and I thought, 'I can do this. I could help feed these pets.'"

Frederick first started coordinating food donations between her local food bank and her veterinarian, Dr. Gary Ailes, who agreed to host the first donation site. After Frederick's effort was featured on the front page of the local newspaper, pet food donations poured in.

"That's when I knew this was going to work, this was going to be something," she says. "From that moment, I thought this could be a national organization and we could have donation sites across the country."

By 2008, her effort officially became a nonprofit organization and started to include veterinary care after a volunteer in California started asking for help with pets with severe medical needs.

"They were injured, they were in pain, they were suffering and what could I do?" Frederick says. "We've had emergency situations in over 500 cities across 50 states, so we are national. The word is getting out there through social workers, police officers, from first responders that know about us."

Since its beginning, Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ has:

- Collected and helped distribute 1,400,885 pounds of pet food.
- Provided emergency veterinary care for 5,063 pets.
- Provided preventative veterinary care for 16,733 pets.
- Partnered with 46 veterinary offices to host 95 Wellness Clinics across the country.

(These figures are updated monthly.)

And there is still a great need. According to Frederick, San Diego has the highest rate of emergency cases.

"We would like San Diego to get more involved," she says. "We would like more veterinarians, more donation sites, more volunteers and more donations coming out of San Diego ... so we can continue to help these people."

For more information on how to get help, volunteer or donate, visit www.petsofthehomeless.org or call 775-841-7463.

"I thought, 'I can do this. I could help feed these pets.'"

Genevieve Frederick
Feeding Pets of the Homeless™
founder and president



During crisis, pets comfort people

On April 1, in a move to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, the City and County of San Diego joined with the San Diego Regional Task Force on the Homeless, the San Diego Housing Commission, regional cities and local homeless services providers to kick off Operation Shelter to Home. As of April 30, more than **1,100 homeless people** — some of them with pets — were moved from shelters and off the streets via outreach programs and housed in the San Diego Convention Center. Along with support services, free and voluntary testing for the virus is offered.

"We repurposed the center to address (the pandemic) and reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness going forward," San Diego Mayor Kevin L. Faulconer says. "The goal is to get people indoors and then into permanent housing."

"Case managers and housing navigators are focused on identifying the most appropriate exit strategy for shelter clients and working to end their cycle of homelessness," says Tara Grimes, City of San Diego public information officer.

"The responsibility of taking care of the animals is on their owners," Grimes says. They must keep their dogs leashed and under control "at all times," and walk them in designated areas. The Convention Center sits on San Diego Bay, "which gives guests and their pets plenty of open space to walk around and allows for proper social distancing."

A few of Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ Donation Sites have delivered pet food to the Center, according to Founder and President Genevieve Frederick.

Grimes says the service providers at the Convention Center are well aware of the emotionally comforting impact that pets have on their homeless owners, especially in such stressful circumstances.

"The presence of pets at the Convention Center helps create a sense of community among all those who are sheltered here," Grimes says. "Even non-pet owners are very helpful to those with dogs and cats."





A Survivor's Advice: 'Don't give up'

Her harrowing journey has led to safety, shelter and the beginning of a fresh start

by Allen Pierleoni

“Our goal has always been to end homelessness, and we're here for everybody,” says Jesse Casement. In San Diego, she's the division director of client services at Father Joe's Villages, a homeless services provider since 1950.

“We do everything from outreach and interventions to job training, education and health care,” Casement says. “Each night, we have 850 people in shelters, and hundreds more in supported housing.”

Father Joe's is a partner of Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ (FPOTH), which provides Father Joe's with crates used by homeless pet owners to temporarily house their dogs and cats “while they're doing the things they need to do to get out of homelessness, such as job-hunt,” she says.

Casement and her team have seen the impact of animals living with their owners in the shelters. “Pets give people a reason to interact with each other,” she says.

Casement calls her clientele “resilient survivors. We see them leave our shelters better than when they came in,” she says.

Dorothea Sontat, 64, embodies that profile, and then some. The Air Force veteran and licensed vocational nurse had a harrowing journey before finding shelter at Father Joe's with her companions, Contessa the Chihuahua and Captain Flint the tabby cat.

“I had them with me the whole time I was homeless and they still sleep with me. I call them my daughter and son,” she says. “They know when I need to pet them and they come to me when I'm down in the dumps.”

Dorothea and her husband, Carl, met during their

deployment, married and then retired from the military. Later, Carl became chronically ill and then Dorothea lost part of her left leg to complications from diabetes. She is mobile because of a prosthetic, a wheelchair and a cane.

Twice the couple moved into apartments, and twice they lost them. In between times, they lived in their van.

“We worked our way off the streets and got into another apartment,” she says. Carl passed away in 2015, resulting in Dorothea moving back into their van with her pets.

After finding an apartment on her own, she contracted Hepatitis A and was hospitalized. Her landlord evicted her during her recovery.

Afterwards, Dorothea turned to Father Joe's for shelter and meals. “I felt safe there,” she says.

Dorothea enrolled in Father Joe's Skills Training Enhancement Program, graduating from culinary and gardening classes. She was able to move out of the shelter and into supported housing, with plans to job-hunt and use her new skills. But the coronavirus pandemic turned her world upside-down.

Her new goal is to “survive the virus and find a job,” she says. “I can do a lot of different things, I just need someone to give me a chance.”

While she waits, Dorothea is making face masks to give away to church organizations for those in need.

What message would she give to others experiencing some of what she has been through?

“Don't give up,” she says. “You can do anything you want if you put your mind to it. I plan to accomplish more as time goes on.”

“Pets give people a reason to interact with each other.”

Jesse Casement
Division director of client services, Father Joe's Villages

Pets help guide their homeless owners

According to several studies, as many as **3.5 million people nationwide** experience homelessness in any given year – some temporarily, others chronically. A large percentage of them care for companion animals, according to Feeding Pets of the Homeless™, whose mission is “**to feed and provide basic emergency veterinary care to their pets.**”

Much more than travel companions, pets are a form of healing therapy for their homeless owners. Psychologically and emotionally, the person-pet relationship centers on issues of trust and comfort from a consistent “friend” who is nonjudgmental and offers unconditional love.

A pet helps its owner fulfill the basic human need for **companionship**, given that many homeless people lead socially isolated lives. Caring for a pet fosters responsibility, commitment, structure, security, self-worth, a sense of connectedness, and feelings of loyalty and normalcy, psychologists agree.

“Homeless clients who have come out of difficult circumstances tell us they overcame them because of the bond they have with their pets,” says Geraldine D'Silva, director of PAWS San Diego. “Some have even told us that their pets are their only reason to live.”

A 'Pet Connect' For the Homeless

PAWS San Diego strives to preserve the pet-human bond with a menu of services and care

by Allen Pierleoni

Help feed the hungry pets

Feeding Pets of the Homeless™

The national organization offers free pet food and supplies "to all who need them" at participating food banks, pantries, soup kitchens and shelters that allow pets.

"The number one city we get calls from is San Diego," says Founder and President Genevieve Frederick. "It is my hope that the San Diego community will continue to help so that our mission to provide pet food and veterinary care continues."



For the locations of its 468 pet food providers, wellness clinics and 200 donation sites around the country, visit www.petsofthehomeless.org or call 775-841-7463.

PAWS

PAWS San Diego has similar programs. In one week in Spring 2020, it distributed more pet food than it usually does in a year, says Director Geraldine D'Silva.

Due to the increasing number of people becoming homeless because of the pandemic, PAWS is in need of:

- pet food
- leashes
- collars
- treats
- monetary donations

The San Diego community "has been fabulous," D'Silva says. "When we put out our first request for help, truckloads of donations arrived over the first three days."



To donate time, money, veterinary services and/or pet food, and to find locations of pet food distribution sites, go to www.sdhumane.org, or call 619-299-7012, Ext. 2100.

"The goal of PAWS San Diego is to help people keep their pets, and we provide support and resources for them to do that," says Director

Geraldine D'Silva.

PAWS stands for Pets Are Wonderful Support. A program of the San Diego Humane Society, it offers a long list of services to assist a spectrum of clients, including those experiencing homelessness who have pets. For instance, PAWS is a source of pet food and supplies, affordable spay and neuter services and veterinary care.

PAWS serves more than 6,000 people annually with a small staff and crew of part-time volunteers. For the broadest presence, it partners with a network of organizations that specialize in animal welfare and human services, including Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ and Father Joe's Villages. It also distributes pet food and gear at many churches, soup kitchens and day centers.

"We help people who are experiencing homelessness with pets in many different ways," D'Silva says. "One way to reach out and make contact with them is by piggybacking on the events sponsored by our human services partners."

Two of those partners are Project Homeless Connect and Stand Down San Diego. Both are resources fairs, staffed by dozens of organizations providing legal and spiritual counseling, housing guidance, meals, haircuts, clothing, pet care and other services. Both fairs have been postponed because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stand Down San Diego is usually an annual event that houses the homeless in tents during its three-day run, a welcome respite from the daily grind of the streets.

"Pets aren't allowed inside the services facility, so we take care of them while their owners access their free resources," D'Silva says. "We provide dog walking areas and cat care, veterinary services and pet food. After the pet owners receive their services inside the facility, they can pick up their pets."

The main concern for the pet owners is "doing everything in their capacity to make sure their pets are OK. We haven't come across a single pet that looks malnourished or unhealthy," D'Silva says.

The on-site PAWS team prefers that pet owners take breaks from the fair and walk their dogs themselves, and with good reason.

"Those who are experiencing homelessness are never separated from their pets, so they have a unique bond," D'Silva says. "The dogs don't want to be walked by us; they want to be with their humans."

PAWS makes it a firm policy to not judge its clientele. "A lot of them have come out of very difficult circumstances — addiction, depression, the loss of their families," D'Silva says. "Whatever their stories are, they've been able to overcome many hardships because of the unconditional love they get from their pets and the bond they share."

"They've been able to overcome many hardships because of the unconditional love they get from their pets and the bond they share."

Geraldine D'Silva
Director, PAWS San Diego



PAWS San Diego partners with Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ and other organizations to provide pet food and supplies to those in need.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PAWS SAN DIEGO

'Street Vet' Took His Practice to Those in Need

Known for his animal actor work, veterinarian cares for pets living on the streets

by Allen Pierleoni



"Street Vet" Dr. Kwane Stewart takes veterinary care directly to the animals that need it.

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. KWANE STEWART

As an animal welfare expert, Dr. Kwane Stewart looks out for the health and safety of animal actors on movie and TV sets. But on the streets of San Diego, he helps the pets of the homeless.

"I got this crazy idea to go out by myself and take the care straight to people with pets who were living on the streets," recalls Stewart, who started his street practice in Modesto. "I've always had a soft spot for people going through hard times for whatever reason. I don't judge; it's the pets I worry about."

On his first outing, Stewart set up a table near a food bank and approached people standing in line who had pets. "I said, 'I'm a veterinarian and I'm here to give care to your pet at no cost to you.'"

"I thought it was going to be a one-off, but that day turned into a calling," he says. "I decided to start walking the streets in my spare time to find homeless pet owners and treat their animals, all out of pocket. I'm still doing it."

Stewart moved to Hollywood to become the chief veterinary officer for the American Humane Association, making

sure "No Animals Were Harmed" (as the end credits say) during film and TV productions. Last year, Netflix asked him to start its own animal protection program.

One day, Stewart was discussing his sideline with a TV producer, who suggested making a reality series chronicling his work on the streets. The notion turned into "Street Vet," airing in 30 countries.

"I didn't make any money off it; I actually went into my own pockets to complete the series," he says. "It was a passion project that has brought some awareness to the situation."

Stewart estimates he's treated about 400 animals over his nine years working the streets.

"That street corner under that traffic light becomes my clinic," he says. "A lot of pets need vaccines, many have basic problems like fleas, overgrown toenails, skin and ear infections, arthritis and allergies. I can treat

85% of cases out of a small bag of tricks I carry with me. The remainder need in-hospital care, and that's when I ask my colleagues to host certain procedures for me or take on pro bono cases."

Dr. Stewart refers the homeless to Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ when he cannot treat a pet on the streets. For example, one recent case involved a dog with a perineal hernia, which he could not treat.

Over time, Stewart has learned that homeless pet owners are especially dependent on their companions for emotional and psychological support. "Their pets give them purpose. They're together 24/7, so the bond between them is incredible. Not only have these people taught me; they've touched me. When we say goodbye, I feel like I'm saying goodbye to a friend."

"Not only have these people taught me; they've touched me."

Dr. Kwane Stewart
Veterinarian and animal welfare expert

Find help for your pet wherever you are

"Many homeless people do not have the resources to help their beloved companions with veterinary care," says Genevieve Frederick, founder and president of Feeding Pets of the Homeless™. "Some find us almost too late for us to help, when the pet is in danger of losing its life."

The message: Get help sooner rather than later.

Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ has a nationwide network of veterinary services, including preventive and emergency pet care.

"Everyone can help by spreading the word so that the pets of the homeless do not have to suffer unnecessarily," she says.

Here's how to get medical help for your pet, no matter where you are:

- 1 Start by reaching out to a case manager at 775-841-7463** during office hours (9 a.m.—3 p.m. PST, Monday-Friday). Outside of office hours, leave a message and your call will be returned the next business day.
- 2 A case manager will determine your eligibility,** ask about your pet's condition, locate the nearest participating veterinarian willing to treat your pet and pre-approve an examination.
- 3 You will be given the vet's name, address and phone number.** Your appointment must be made during Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ business hours (9 a.m.—3 p.m. PST, Monday-Friday).
- 4 Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ pays veterinarians directly** for services, with a minimum of paperwork.

Keeping Companions Happy and Healthy

Wellness Clinics provide services to animal friends in need

by Anne Stokes

For many people who are experiencing with homelessness, finding reliable health care is a challenge. It's even more difficult to find affordable veterinary care for their pets. Animals who live unhoused with their owners face myriad diseases, infections and injuries usually without the benefit of routine medical care.

Partnering with local veterinary offices, Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ offers owners the opportunity to keep their companions happy and healthy free of charge through sponsored wellness clinics.

"The goal is to keep these communities safe from parvo and rabies and, in the cat world, leukemia. ... All those diseases are transmittable," says Genevieve Frederick, Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ founder and president. "It prevents diseases from getting out into the community, so it's beneficial to the whole community."

For veterinarians and tech assistants willing to volunteer their time and expertise, Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ will pay hard costs like vaccines and other medical

supplies through approved applications made by veterinarians. Providers supply an estimate. Any leftover funds can be rolled over and used for future Wellness Clinics. Veterinarians who are interested in hosting a Wellness Clinic may obtain a Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ application by emailing info@petsofthehomeless.org.

"We give them instructions: Here's what you're going to need, here's what you need to think about, because we've done it so many times ourselves. We give them guidelines and a template for registration," Frederick says. "We encourage doctors to go to where the homeless are congregating. If they know of a homeless camp, we ask them to go out there."

Frederick says it's up to veterinarians to determine the easiest way to run the event, but typically Wellness Clinics include a basic examination, vaccines, minor first aid, grooming such as nail trims and ear cleaning, deworming, and flea and tick treatments. Any condition that requires further treatment can be handled as an emergency case, also through Feeding Pets of the Homeless™.

"It prevents diseases from getting out into the community, so it's beneficial to the whole community."

**Genevieve Frederick
Feeding Pets of the Homeless™
founder and president**



Wellness Clinics offer free veterinary care to low-income families as well as those experiencing homelessness.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FEEDING PETS OF THE HOMELESS™

"Some of these pets, especially in the homeless world, have never been to a doctor, never seen a vet and this is (the person's) opportunity to get the medications their animal needs and get them vaccinated," she says. "They're on the streets and we don't want them casting off diseases or biting someone (without) a rabies shot. That is a nightmare."

To find an upcoming Wellness Clinic near you or partner with Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ to host one in your community, visit www.petsofthehomeless.org or call 775-841-7463.

Why pets?

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, pet ownership not only provides direct health benefits such as lowering blood pressure — animal companions can help owners struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and other emotional and mental conditions common among homeless populations.

Pets have been shown to:

- ✔ Serve as non-judgmental sources of companionship and support.
- ✔ Support emotional stability, stress management and the ability to cope with difficult life events.
- ✔ Disrupt attention from hearing voices, panic attacks and suicidal thoughts.

For many homeless owners, pets are also a vital source of protection while living unhoused. According to Genevieve Frederick, Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ founder and president, approximately 61% of people seeking their services are women and 6% are veterans.

"For pets, their home is that person. That's the person that feeds them, that takes care of them, that loves them unconditionally," Frederick says. "That goes both ways."

Supporting the Homeless and their Companions

Q&A with Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ Executive
Director Renee Lowry

by Anne Stokes

Living on the streets is a hard, dangerous life. For many people struggling with homelessness, pets are often a source of companionship, security and love. Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ is committed to helping owners provide lifesaving health care and food for their beloved companions.

Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ Executive Director Renee Lowry shares why this organization's work is so beneficial to both people and pets.

What is the Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ mission?

Our mission is to help homeless people who have sick, injured or hungry pets. (We) help those pets with emergency vet care and with pet food and wellness clinics around the country.

Why are pets so important for people struggling with homelessness?

It's very dangerous out there, as you can imagine. Living on the streets is not a safe place. A lot of women have pets for protection; when they're in their cars at night in an empty parking lot, their dog is the first to alert them that someone is walking up to their car.

Every situation is different. People might already have pets and then all of a sudden become homeless. Or in some situations, homeless people rescue abandoned pets off the streets.

What kind of need are you seeing in the San Diego area?

In the San Diego area, we have a lot of emergency cases. ... We provided assistance to a lot of animals who have been hit by cars, animals who have been in fights, and with ear infections and eye infections.

How can people help?

What we need right now is people to donate directly to us via our website, and that way we can have the funds to help these pets at veterinary hospitals during an emergency.

We also need veterinary doctors who are willing to donate their time and their staff's time to run a Wellness Clinic. We need hospitals to step up and let us know if they are willing to become part of our network that we can call with a case. We pay at time of service.

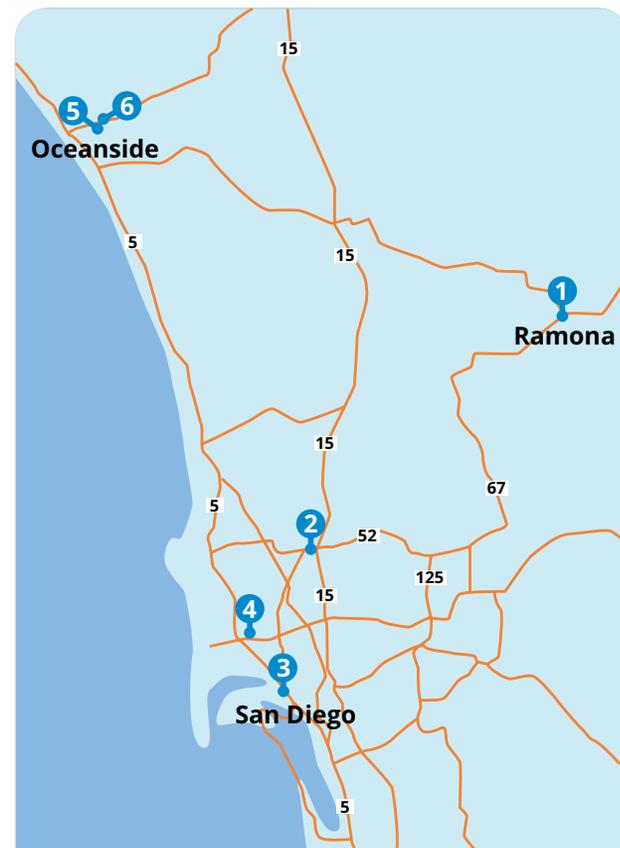
Obviously, people need pet food for their pets. You can find a Donation Site location to drop off any kind of pet food on our website. The Donation Sites will take the pet food to a Pet Food Provider where they can repackage the pet food and hand it out directly to those in need.

We need volunteers. During the COVID pandemic, we have volunteers at a standstill because we don't want people out in public, but when things get back to normal, we definitely need volunteers to help with pet food transportation and to recruit more Donation Sites in their community.

For information on where to find help, donate or volunteer, visit www.petsofthehomeless.org. We look forward to the opportunity to get your help.

“Our mission is to help homeless people who have sick, injured or hungry pets.”

Renee Lowry
Executive Director, Feeding Pets of the Homeless™



Where to find help

Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ works with several organizations throughout the San Diego area. Owners can find food and supplies at:

- 1 Ramona Food and Clothes Closet**
773 Main St., Ramona, CA 92065
760-789-4458
- 2 So Others May Eat, Inc.**
9222 Chesapeake Dr., San Diego, CA 95123
858-900-1275
- 3 Salvation Army - San Diego**
825 7th Ave., San Diego, CA 92101
619-699-2116
- 4 PAWS San Diego County**
5433 Gaines St. #B, San Diego, CA 92110
619-297-7297
- 5 North County Humane Society**
2905 San Luis Rey Road, Oceanside, CA 92058
760-757-4357
- 6 Brother Benno Foundation**
3260 Production Ave., Oceanside, CA 92054
760-439-1244

For more information, including shelters and other resources, visit www.petsofthehomeless.org or call 775-841-7463.



You Can Help Pets, Too

Make sure every pet has food and health care services — no matter where they live

Lend a hand as a...

Veterinarian

Participate in a Wellness Clinic or be added to the Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ emergency services database.

Homeless Shelter

Receive pet crates free of charge to use at your location, keeping pets and owners together.

Provider

Distribute donated and correctly portioned pet food to the homeless from your community food bank or other organization.

Volunteer

Work at Wellness Clinics, connect homeless individuals with Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ services, run pet food drives, recruit businesses to host pet food donation sites and recruit local veterinarians to join Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ programs. Let us know of

food banks, pet food pantries or homeless shelters that we have not listed on our website that distribute pet food. Start a GoFundMe campaign with your friends and family. Email us for the link.

Donor

Donate tax-deductible monetary contributions, name Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ as your beneficiary, enroll this nonprofit in your company's donation matching program or give CharityChoice gift certificates. Make a gift from your Donor-Advised Fund. Use AmazonSmile to name Feeding Pets of the Homeless™ as the nonprofit of your choice.

Get in touch

775-841-7463

info@petsofthehomeless.org

www.petsofthehomeless.org

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OfficialPetsoftheHomeless](https://facebook.com/OfficialPetsoftheHomeless)

twitter.com/petsofthehomeless

youtube.com/user/PetsHomeless

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