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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

As Vet Care Costs Soar, C.A.R.E.4Paws Stays Committed to Ensuring Central Coast Families in Need Have Access to Affordable Pet Wellness Services

Since 2009, the organization has provided access to care that allows pets to stay healthy, out of shelters and with the people who love them.

Santa Barbara, Calif., November 15, 2024 – Pets are a vital part of human societies. Seven out of 10 U.S. households have at least one pet and 95% of people living with pets consider them family members, recent polls report. Sadly, millions of these bonded families struggle to access veterinary care because of the cost, which can lead to animal suffering and pets being relinquished to shelters. This is where C.A.R.E.4Paws comes to the rescue. The nonprofit's mobile veterinary units bring affordable wellness services directly to marginalized Central Coast communities to keep cats and dogs healthy, out of shelters and with their families for life.



Since 2012, C.A.R.E.4Paws' Mobile Community Medicine & Spay/Neuter Outreach program has provided low-cost and free vaccines, spay/neuter surgeries and other types of medical services to thousands of pets annually. In 2024 alone, the clinic program will help 20,000 animals in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo (SLO) counties, outpacing the 17,000 pets it assisted in 2023 and the 13,000 the year prior.



"The costs of veterinary services are beyond what most low-income families can pay, and it's only getting more expensive," says Dr. Alex Gomes, a C.A.R.E.4Paws clinic veterinarian and board member and a full-time doctor at Main Street Small Animal Hospital in Templeton. "Here on the Central Coast, C.A.R.E.4Paws is the only group that works directly in the community to care for animals who would otherwise never see a vet, whether they're six months or 12 years old."

Beyond financial difficulties to pay for pet services, lack of transportation, distance to care and language barriers are among other challenges families face when it comes to seeking out and receiving veterinary treatment. This is especially true for families experiencing homelessness.

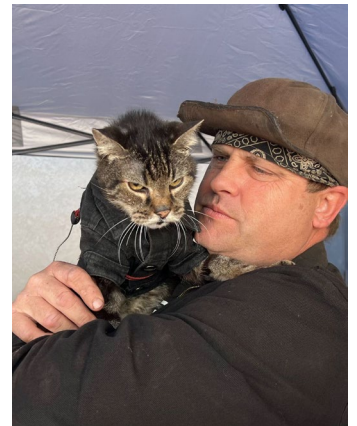
Without access to care, many pets don't get vaccinated or altered, explains Gomes, who heads up the Central Coast chapter of Street Dog Coalition, a C.A.R.E.4Paws partner that provides free veterinary

services to unsheltered community members. As a result, Gomes says, shelters remain overcrowded, disease runs rampant through pet populations and you see more zoonotic diseases, which are caused by germs spread between animals and people. “With its mobile clinics, affordable services and bilingual, compassionate clinic team, C.A.R.E.4Paws works at the root of the problem, removing barriers and saving lives every single day!”

C.A.R.E.4Paws’ clinic program provides not just vaccines and spay/neuter surgeries at low cost, but medical exams, treatment of skin and ear infections, basic bloodwork as well as dental care and mass removals. In fact, the clinic team will perform at least 3,300 surgeries this year, compared to about 3,000 in 2023. If a family cannot afford to pay for surgery or other treatment, the nonprofit does everything it can to provide the service for free or for a small donation.

The organization also offers critical resources through other programs, such as distribution of pet food and supplies, dog training, grooming for dogs of the unhoused and support for pet families exposed to domestic violence. It co-operates several Pet Resource Centers alongside animal- and human-welfare partners, where people in need can access dog and cat food and supplies and sign up for wellness services for their companion animals as well as for themselves.

Overall, C.A.R.E.4Paws’ partnerships with dozens of animal nonprofits and shelters, vet clinics, pet service providers, businesses, social-welfare groups, community groups and youth organizations help ensure that pets don’t go without care due to financial constraints or accessibility challenges.



Taken together, C.A.R.E.4Paws’ partnerships and programs provide a lifeline for many pet families, like Lucia and her beloved service dog, Luckie, a 14-year-old labrador. “C.A.R.E.4Paws is a very strong support system for us,” says Lucia, who struggles with progressing disabilities. Over the last few years, Luckie has received help with pet food, vaccines, exams and dental surgery as well as temporary foster care while Lucia underwent surgery in the spring of 2024. “Luckie is my trusted companion and, for us, C.A.R.E.4Paws is family.”

As the need for access to pet care and other resources keeps growing on the Central Coast, C.A.R.E.4Paws is committed to continuing its work and providing services to those who need it the most, says Isabelle Gullö, the organization’s Cofounder and Executive Director. “For so many people, a pet represents the brightest part of their world—a source of true love and companionship.” She adds, “We see firsthand what happens when someone can’t afford care, and we need to work together as a community to support pet families, increase pet retention and protect the human-animal bond.”

To contribute to C.A.R.E.4Paws’ Mobile Community Medicine & Spay/Neuter Outreach and other programs that keep pets healthy and with the people who love them, please visit care4paws.org. For assistance with pet care, go to care4paws.org/programs or contact C.A.R.E.4Paws at 805-968-2273 or info@care4paws.org.

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About C.A.R.E.4Paws

C.A.R.E.4Paws—short for Community Awareness, Resources & Education—works to reduce pet overpopulation and improve pet family welfare. Its critical services include free and low-cost spays/neuters, veterinary care and vaccine events in C.A.R.E.4Paws' mobile veterinary clinics; distribution of pet food and supplies; support for pet families exposed to domestic violence through Safe Haven; and Paws Up For Pets humane education. C.A.R.E.4Paws has worked in Santa Barbara County since 2009, and in 2022, the nonprofit expanded its mobile clinic services to San Luis Obispo County. To learn more or to make a contribution, visit care4paws.org.

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