



Press contact:

Julia Black

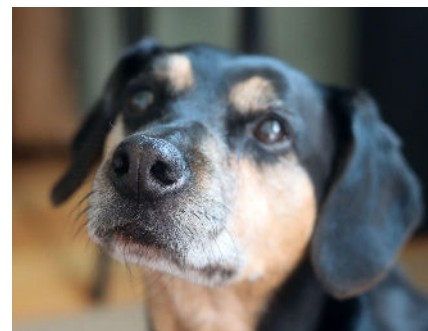
916-743-5872, julia@care4paws.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

As veterinary costs rise, Central Coast nonprofit C.A.R.E.4Paws urges pet families to prioritize preventive care

Catching health concerns early can mean less costly treatment and healthier, happier pets.

Santa Barbara County & San Luis Obispo County, Calif., September 23, 2026 — When sweet senior Athena arrived at C.A.R.E.4Paws' mobile veterinary clinic, her family believed they were coming to say goodbye. Severe skin problems had progressed to the point that Athena's family had scheduled a euthanasia appointment. But after examining Athena, C.A.R.E.4Paws' Lead Clinic Veterinarian, Dr. Meighan Gomes, saw another path forward. Instead of euthanasia, Gomes and the clinic team began treating Athena's condition and working closely with her family. Today, Athena is feeling much better.

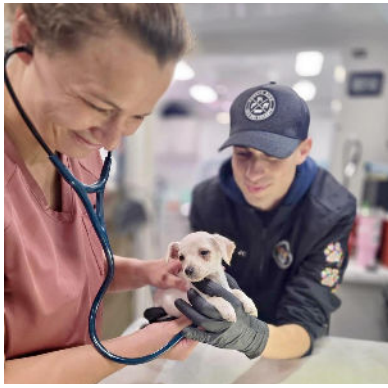


It is impossible to know whether earlier veterinary care would have changed the course of Athena's condition. But her story reflects a challenge C.A.R.E.4Paws sees increasingly across Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties: families who love their pets deeply but may delay seeking veterinary care because they are worried about what it will cost. By the time they seek help, a health concern that may have been easier and less expensive to address earlier can sometimes become a medical crisis.

The problem extends far beyond the Central Coast. [A March 2026 survey from the ASPCA](#) found that six in 10 U.S. pet families lack confidence that they could afford a medical emergency for their pet, potentially putting more than 100 million pets at risk.

Through its mobile veterinary clinics, C.A.R.E.4Paws helps more than 1,300 pet families each month access affordable wellness and medical services, including vaccines, flea and deworming treatments, nail trims, care for ear and skin infections, and dental care. The organization also spays and neuters approximately 2,000 dogs and cats annually—procedures that are an important part of preventive care. Spaying can prevent pyometra, a potentially life-threatening uterine infection, and greatly reduce the risk of mammary tumors, particularly when performed early. Neutering eliminates the risk of testicular cancer and can help prevent other reproductive health problems.

Because C.A.R.E.4Paws is not intended to replace a pet's primary care veterinarian, the organization encourages families to establish a relationship with a veterinarian for regular exams and ongoing care.



“Preventive medicine is essential for the long-term health of our pets,” says Dr. Gomes. “Scheduling regular exams, whether for routine wellness or a specific concern, helps us identify issues that may be hidden beneath the surface. We often see patients for a single obvious complaint, such as a dog licking its feet, but a thorough exam may reveal other issues, including skin or ear infections, underlying allergies or parasites.” She adds, “Early detection and treatment can make recovery easier for the pet, more manageable for the family and far more cost-effective. These appointments also give us an opportunity to discuss long-term care, what to expect, and

how to prepare for a pet’s future health needs.”

C.A.R.E.4Paws recognizes that veterinary costs put care out of reach for many Central Coast families, whether they are seeking preventive care or treatment for a sick or injured pet. In addition to the affordable wellness and medical services offered through its mobile clinics, the nonprofit’s Veterinary Partner Services program, supported by the organization’s Albus Pet Lifeline Fund, helps eligible families access urgent and advanced treatment through partner hospitals.

“When a pet is sick or injured, families are often making difficult decisions while worrying about how they will afford care,” says Libby Cabral, C.A.R.E.4Paws’ Assistant Manager, who oversees Veterinary Partner Services. “Supporting pets starts with supporting people. We help families understand what resources are available and, whenever possible, find a path forward for their pets.”



Donations to C.A.R.E.4Paws support affordable veterinary care throughout Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, including wellness and medical services through its mobile clinics and financial assistance for urgent and advanced care through the Albus Pet Lifeline Fund. To support C.A.R.E.4Paws’ veterinary programs or learn more about services, upcoming mobile clinic dates, financial assistance or the Albus Pet Lifeline Fund, visit care4paws.org.

###

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; assistance with emergency medical care; 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. Follow us on Facebook at [@care4paws](https://www.facebook.com/care4paws), YouTube [@care4paws](https://www.youtube.com/care4paws), Instagram [@care4pawsSB](https://www.instagram.com/care4paws), and LinkedIn [@care4paws-inc](https://www.linkedin.com/company/care4paws-inc).