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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Domestic Violence Victims and Their Pets Need a Safe Haven Right Now

Santa Barbara County, Calif., April 15, 2020 – With the lockdown orders and heightened emotional and financial stresses caused by COVID-19, domestic violence is more prevalent than ever. Family violence affects not just adults and children, but pets, too. So many of our community members and their animals are being harmed in a place where they should feel safest: their own home. C.A.R.E.4Paws and local agency partners are here to provide a refuge.

C.A.R.E.4Paws' Safe Haven program (care4paws.org/safehaven) ensures domestic violence victims can find safety for their pets when they leave an abusive situation. Pet owners exposed to domestic violence can seek emergency shelter with their companion animals through Domestic Violence Solutions (DVS) and C.A.R.E.4Paws will arrange for immediate, anonymous foster care or boarding for the pets. Victims or law enforcement can also contact C.A.R.E.4Paws directly for support.

Even before the social isolation enforced by COVID-19, family violence statistics were already staggering, making a program like Safe Haven desperately needed. Isolation and lack of social support contribute to the increased risk of domestic violence. Pets are often used to control the family and may prevent members from leaving out of fear something will happen to the animal. In surveys of women entering domestic violence shelters, as many as 85 percent reported that their pets had been threatened, tortured or killed by their partners.

“Now more than ever, we need to provide a safety net for those in need,” says C.A.R.E.4Paws' Executive Director and Cofounder Isabelle Gullo. “Safe Haven will protect and care for pets until they can be reunited with their loving owners. We hope this encourages community members to reach out for help and seek safety with their companion animals.”

Pets enrolled in Safe Haven are sheltered with love and also have access to veterinary care in C.A.R.E.4Paws' mobile veterinary clinic as well as behavioral training, if needed.

“The partnership between Domestic Violence Solutions and C.A.R.E.4Paws has become an essential part of the services we offer to shelter clients who have pets,” says Jan Campbell, Executive Director of Domestic Violence Solutions. “Knowing that their beloved pets are safely and confidentially housed helps to mitigate trauma suffered by domestic violence survivors and their families.”

Other critical Safe Haven collaborators include C.A.R.E.4Paws' partners in the Animal Welfare Alliance of Santa Barbara County—Animal Shelter Assistance Program (ASAP), Dog Adoption Welfare Group (DAWG) and Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society—as well as Santa Barbara County District

Attorney's Office Victim-Witness Assistance Program, whose advocates are specially trained to help victims of abuse.

“Our goal is to support crime victims and witnesses as they move from victim to survivor to empowered,” says Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley. “We know a significant step toward that is to help them and their loved ones (including their pets) feel safe. Toward that end we proudly partner with C.A.R.E.4Paws and Domestic Violence Solutions.”

For more information about C.A.R.E.4Paws’ Safe Haven program, visit care4paws.org/safehaven or contact C.A.R.E.4Paws at safehaven@care4paws.org or (805) 335-7524. For a quick guide to services provided to pet owners in need during COVID-19, as well as ways in which community members can help others during this crisis, go to care4paws.org/petstrong.

About C.A.R.E.4Paws

C.A.R.E.4Paws—short for Community Awareness, Responsibility & Education—works to reduce pet overpopulation, keep animals out of shelters and improve quality of life for pets and pet owners in need. The organization was founded in 2009 with the goal to promote animal welfare and alleviate the burden of Santa Barbara County shelters by intervening before animals become homeless. Its critical services include free spays/neuters and assistance with veterinary care in C.A.R.E.4Paws’ own mobile veterinary clinic; distribution of pet food and supplies; support for victims of domestic violence and their pets; Paws Up For Pets youth education; bilingual community outreach that inspire compassion and accountability for animals; and Pet Emergency Training (P.E.T.) for First Responders. Learn more at care4paws.org.

About Domestic Violence Solutions

Domestic Violence Solutions for Santa Barbara County provides the county’s only 24-hour shelter services for victims and their children, as well as transitional housing programs for domestic violence survivors. DVS also operates four 24-hour hotlines; accompanies law enforcement on domestic violence calls; works to prevent domestic violence through teen outreach and education programs; and provides comprehensive counseling services to men, women, and children affected by domestic violence. For more information, please call (805) 963-4458 or visit the DVS website at dvsolutions.org.

About Santa Barbara County District Attorney’s Office

A violent crime will impact many aspects of a person’s life. Not only does crime affect the victim but also their loved ones and at times, an entire community. A crime can also have long lasting physical, emotional and financial effects. Often the needs of crime victims can appear to be overshadowed by the focus on the investigation and prosecution of the defendant. The Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office Victim-Witness Assistance Program seeks to make the criminal justice system more understandable, accessible and responsive to the concerns of victims and witnesses. Victim Advocates are available to ensure that crime victims and their loved ones are kept informed and supported throughout the criminal justice process. Specially trained advocates are also there to assist victims of elder/dependent adult abuse, child abuse, and animal abuse. They are available 24/7 by calling 805-568-2400. Further information is also available on the DA website: countyofsb.org/da/victim_witness.html