

## Placer SPCA Press Release

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### **Heroes Among Us: Placer SPCA Awards Animals & People who Help Each Other**

**Roseville, Calif.** – Every year the Placer SPCA honors heroes, human and animal alike, who impact the community and make a difference in all of our lives. This year’s awards were presented at Placer SPCA’s 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Funny Bones Comedy Show & Awards Night—the first in-person gathering Placer SPCA has held in over two years.

The mission of the Placer SPCA is to enhance the lives of companion animals and support the human-animal bond. The 2022 Placer SPCA Hero Award recipients truly embody every ounce of that mission. They show how animals and people work together, for the benefit of us all:

- **Jim Gray** (*presented posthumously to Jim’s daughter Kristin Taggart*) - One person can make a difference. That’s exactly what Jim Gray did. He began his long tenure on the Placer SPCA Board of Directors after serving as City of Roseville Mayor and Councilmember. Jim helped to shape an innovative partnership between Placer SPCA and the City of Roseville, as well as a large fundraising campaign, that brought a 14 million dollar best-in-animal-welfare-practices facility to the community – completely debt free. Jim also made a personal gift commitment to the facility, and he didn’t hesitate to invite his friends and colleagues to make a donation as well. Jim helped create something out of virtually nothing. He made things possible for people and animals. He created opportunities. Jim helped people follow their dreams. He was a role model. He made people feel valued and cared for. Jim gave his best – in his work, his relationships and in the causes he was involved in. This is the legacy Jim started during his lifetime and it will remain in perpetuity. Sadly, Jim passed away in 2019, but is survived by his two dogs Bella and Gracie, adopted from the Placer SPCA, wife Judi and daughter Kristin.
- **Jackie Bryla & Mango** – Mango is a registered therapy dog who, alongside his owner Jackie Bryla, has provided his much needed services over the course of some very difficult years and in very difficult situations. He loves and prefers people above all else. He intuitively knows how to approach a person that may be hesitant of dogs—he’ll often lie down and let that person approach him. He can be there for a person who is sad or stressed, and his presence can change their demeanor, if only for a moment. Mango’s instinctive way of adapting to each individual situation and each individual’s needs is uncanny. He can figure out if they need him to wag his tail, look lovingly into their eyes, greet them with a smile or just lie down beside them. He has provided comfort to first responders, healthcare workers, children, and so many countless others within the community.
- **Roseville Animal Control Officers** (*Animal Control Supervisor John Bennett, Animal Control Officer Sarah Severns, and Animal Control Officer Gabe Sorenson*) - These three Roseville Animal Control Officers love their careers, as well as the people and animals they serve, both in the City

of Roseville and beyond. They not only investigate animal cruelty and neglect, they assist with sick, injured, and orphaned domestic animals and wildlife. Most recently they provided mutual aid during the devastating fire season, in both Placer County and in El Dorado County. Occasionally, you will also find them in a children's classroom, Placer SPCA Kid's Camp, or neighborhood meeting to help promote public safety and responsible pet care. Roseville Animal Control and Placer SPCA have a unique relationship that collectively provides an important safety net for people and animals in the community.

- **Sophie.** Amanda Barnes, Sophie's owner, has been on quite a journey. She was a victim of a hit and run while walking in a crosswalk in 2011 at the age of 22. The driver was never found and she became a complete paraplegic. When Amanda met Sophie, this dog had also been on a journey of her own. In September of 2019, the Placer SPCA had visited a horribly under resourced shelter and transported her along with several other at risk animals to their shelter. Sophie fell ill and while the cause was unknown the diagnostics tests revealed that her prognosis was guarded. Sophie would undergo two months of intensive medical treatment under the supervision of the Placer SPCA medical team. Sophie was medically cleared for adoption and went home with Amanda a few days later. Together, Amanda and Sophie have become quite the duo. Sophie helps Amanda with tasks as well as emotional comfort. "I am so incredibly grateful to have Sophie in my life and by my side as my companion and partner," Barnes said. "She has given me so much confidence and strength." Sophie has come a long way from being homeless and abandoned to a hero among us.
- **The Webber family.** Lucy and Ethel are a very special pair of dogs. Due to medical issues Lucy is blind, and Ethel is deaf in one ear. Lucy acts as Ethel's ears, and Ethel acts as Lucy's eyes. They were transferred to Placer SPCA together from another local shelter which had been unable to meet their medical needs. Thanks to the Placer SPCA's Guardian Angel Program, they were able to get the care they needed. In 2021, after nine months in Placer SPCA's care, Lucy and Ethel found their forever home together. Eve and CyAnn Webber adopted Lucy and Ethel, becoming the heroes these girls needed.



*Left to right: Dawn Clayton (PSPCA Board President), Leilani Fratis (PSPCA CEO), and Kristin Taggart (daughter of Jim Gray).*



*Dawn Clayton, Jackie Bryla, Mango, and Leilani Fratis.*



*Dawn Clayton, Roseville Animal Control Officers Gabe Sorenson and Sarah Severns, and Leilani Fratis.*



*Leilani Fratis, Dawn Clayton, Sophie and Amanda Barns.*



*Eve Webber, CyAnn Webber, and Leilani Fratis.*

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### **About Placer SPCA**

Founded in 1973, the Placer SPCA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the lives of companion animals and supporting the human-animal bond. Today, we are the largest and most comprehensive nonprofit animal welfare provider in Placer County. In 2018 the Placer SPCA opened a best in animal welfare practices Adoption & Education Center and can house up to 4,000 animals annually. The Placer SPCA continues to grow and provide many innovative programs to enhance animal well-being and improve adoptability, such as: environmental enrichment and socialization strategies,

behavior modification counseling and training, foster care, and mobile adoption. We also work closely with the community to provide adoption counseling, pet retention services, spay/neuter assistance and education, pet lost and found, humane education, collaborative rescue efforts, and volunteer opportunities.