

## **Riverside Humane Society Pet Adoption Center Has Urgent Need for Foster Care and Pet Therapy Volunteers**

RIVERSIDE, CA, April 10, 2008 – Spring has arrived...the peak season for litters of kittens and puppies resulting from countless cats and dogs that have not been spayed or neutered.

Already the Riverside Humane Society Pet Adoption Center (RHSPAC) in Riverside is becoming overwhelmed with newborns.

"They're coming in by the dozen in boxes, crates, carriers and cages!" says Jill Coleman, foster care coordinator and an adoption counselor at the center. "We're in dire need of volunteers who are willing to foster kittens especially, but also puppies."

In 2007, as many as 25 volunteers gave 8,583 hours for foster care, a 238 percent increase in hours over 2006. Most foster care is for animals too young to be adopted and can include taking in motherless newborn kittens and puppies that have to be bottle fed. It also can entail caring for a pregnant cat until she gives birth and then keeping her and the kittens until they're 8 weeks old and ready to be returned to the center. In addition, there's the occasional need to care for an adult cat or dog that's recuperating from surgery or is ill.

RHSPAC provides foster-care training, as well as food and supplies for the animals; volunteers provide the care and love. Some "empty nest" volunteers have found fostering to be a rewarding hobby.

"Pet overpopulation is a taxing and costly situation not only for our facility but for all shelters, rescue groups, and city/county governments," says Denise Perry, director of operations for RHSPAC. "However, we can't let the innocent animals suffer and die, so we continue to do the very best that we can."

"Pet owners need to know that there's low-cost spay/neuter assistance available. Financial need isn't necessarily a requirement to qualify," she adds. "If people would call us, we'd be more than happy to provide them with information on available programs."

### **Pet Therapy Volunteers**

RHSPAC also would like more volunteers for its pet therapy program. Currently, 20 volunteers take dogs on a monthly basis to 18 convalescent, rehabilitation, hospital and assisted-living facilities in the city of Riverside.

"The pet therapy program is a win-win situation," says Jackie Lamirande, volunteer services manager for RHSPAC. "The residents and patients look forward to seeing, petting and holding the dogs, and the dogs receive valuable socialization. They become more comfortable with riding in cars, going into new environments, and being petted and hugged by loving strangers."

"We would love to fill all the requests for pet therapy visits that we receive from facilities, but we don't have enough volunteers," she says. "Last year, we had 20 volunteers giving 497 hours of their time for pet therapy. Many of them go to more than one facility each month. Visits take place Monday through Friday."

In order for dogs to be selected for the pet therapy program, they are evaluated by the center's animal care staff for appropriate social behavior and manners and must be in good health.

In 2007 RHSPAC volunteers donated a total of 19,273 hours for the animals. Currently, there are 130 active volunteers, Lamirande reports. Volunteers are required to be at least 16 years old, attend a one-hour orientation as well as a training class in their area of interest, and must donate a minimum of four hours a month in order to remain on the active roster.

"RHSPAC has a very dedicated team of volunteers...women and men of all ages and walks of

life," Lamirande states. "Many have been with us for more than 12 years, and they come from Riverside, San Bernardino and Orange counties." Lamirande, who was a volunteer for several years before being hired as volunteer services manager, lives in Laguna Beach.

To learn more about volunteering, contact Lamirande at 951-688-4340, ext. 306 or visit [www.petsadoption.com](http://www.petsadoption.com).

The Riverside Humane Society Pet Adoption Center, located at 6165 Industrial Ave., Riverside, is a non-profit public benefit charitable organization. The center accepts owner turn-ins of cats and dogs and transfers from area animal-control shelters. No healthy, adoptable animal is ever put to sleep. Prior to adoption, each animal is either spayed or neutered and microchipped, receives all necessary vaccinations and medical care, is monitored for physical, emotional and mental health, and is socialized.