

The Tucson

January/February 2026



Cover Story:

Spay and Neuter
Efforts See a Renewed
Increase in Advocacy
Throughout
the Southwest

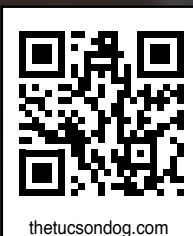
A publication dedicated to
promoting the human/animal
bond and raising awareness of
shelter and rescue animals.

Features:

Engagement —
The Basis of Successful
Dog Training

Waddling into the Spotlight:
Penguins Take
National Penguin Day

Cats &
Horses Too!



This magazine is
FREE
to a good home.

Cover star: Ziggy





The Tucson Dog Staff & Writers



Heather McShea - Publisher/Editor - Heather is the former owner of a Home Health Care company, where she often helped hospice patients find loving homes for their beloved pets. She's worked with The Tucson Dog since 2017 and became its owner in 2022. A lifelong love for her own pets, Heather's home is frequently filled with visiting neighborhood dogs, earning it the nickname "the neighborhood dog park.. Email: heather@thetucsondog.com



Rebecca West - Staff Writer - Rebecca is a freelance writer and editor for print and digital who loves to travel the globe. A life-long pet owner, she adores animals and has taken part in fostering dogs for military members during deployment. She has given many rescued and surrendered dogs the forever home they always wanted, and her two favorite canine quotes are, "Be the kind of person your dog thinks you are," and "My dog rescued me."



Candice Eaton - Cover Photographer - The award-winning photographer behind C. Eaton Photography, captures the heart and soul of every pet and their owner's unique story so that they can keep them forever. With a deep passion for storytelling, Candice ensures that each portrait is a heartfelt tribute to the special bond between pets and humans. When she's not behind the lens, you'll find her soaking up Arizona's 300 days of sunshine or gearing up for her next big adventure.



Bonnie Craig - Staff Writer - Bonnie works as an educator and artist. She lives with her family which consists of 3 dogs, 3 cats, and lots of plants and chickens. They control her life, and she wouldn't have it any other way. As well as writing, she enjoys painting and playing music. She is passionate about the natural world and loves gardening, botanizing, hiking, and camping. Most evenings she can be found in the garden listening to the chickens and playing endless games of fetch with a certain ball-obsessed border collie.



Susan Stolar - Account Executive Susan has built an accomplished career in marketing communications & media relations. She started her career in New York City, her hometown. In 2000, she relocated to Tucson and established a consulting business. Susan now serves on the Board of the Father's Day Council, is a member of the Blues Music Foundation, and volunteers for animal rights organizations. After moving here, her first stop was the Humane Society, where she adopted two rescue dogs. While volunteering at Pawsitively Cats, she added a cat to her family. Susan's fur family now includes Homer, her senior cat, and her recently rescued senior poodle, Lucky.



Jeremy Brown - Staff Writer - An animal lover for life, Jeremy has been a dog trainer for over 16 years. As the Area Trainer for Petsmart he trained dog trainers for years and opened The Complete Canine 7 years ago. A therapy dog evaluator for years, he founded Kienrnan's Kindness, a local therapy group that spreads kindness and also trains the Pima County Sheriff Therapy dog program. A Graduate from Indiana University and Applied Animal Behavior from University of Washington. He has four dogs; Archie, Lacey, Louis and Sabine, with the first two being therapy dogs. Email: completecaninetucson@gmail.com



Cindy Lee - Staff Writer/Account Executive Cindy Lee, Account Executive for The Tucson Dog magazine, where she brings more than 20 years of experience in marketing, advertising, and sales to the team. A native Tucsonan with a deep love for pets—especially her beloved Poodle/Bichon mix, Chole—Cindy has dedicated her career to helping businesses grow through creative advertising solutions. She has worked in print, television, and online media, and now combines her expertise with her passion for dogs to support The Tucson Dog magazine and its community events.

THE TUCSON DOG

TheTucsonDog.com

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Want to share your story and comments with the Publisher?

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All stories and articles in this publication are written and reviewed by real humans.

The Tucson Dog reserves the right to editorial control of all articles, stories and Letters to the Editor. *The Tucson Dog* assumes no responsibility for errors within its publication. The views herein do not necessarily represent the policies of *The Tucson Dog* and should not be construed as endorsements.

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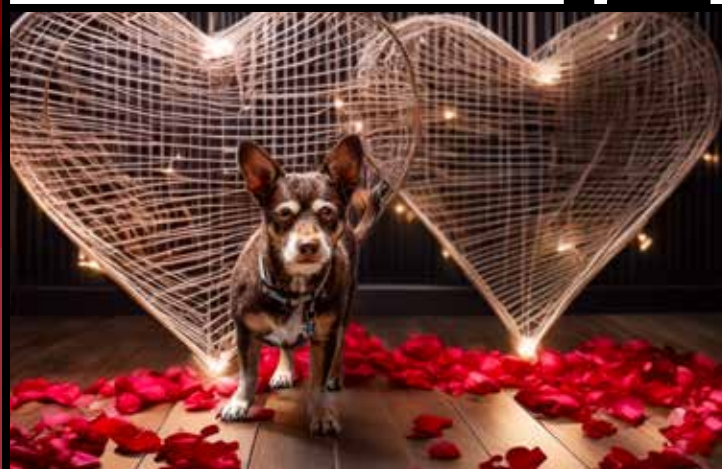
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The Leader of the Pack Speaks

Dear Friends and Fellow Animal Lovers,

A new year always arrives with a mix of excitement, hope, and reflection, and 2026 is no exception here at *The Tucson Dog*. As we step into this fresh chapter, our commitment to the pets and people of Pima County remains stronger than ever.

This year, *The Tucson Dog* is dedicating a significant portion of our mission to education on the value and importance of spay and neuter programs and responsible pet ownership. These topics are not just statistics or policies. They are life-changing tools that reduce shelter overcrowding, improve animal health, and strengthen the bond between pets and their families. Education saves lives, and we are proud to help lead that conversation in our community.

We're also thrilled to announce the launch of *The Tucson Dog's Junior Journalism Program*! This new initiative invites young aspiring writers and journalists to share their voices, stories, and perspectives on pets, animal welfare, and the human/animal bond. We believe empowering the next generation to tell meaningful stories is an investment in both our community and its future. If you know a budding young writer with a passion for animals and storytelling, we encourage them to get involved.

While the new year inspires forward motion, it has also brought a moment of deep personal loss for me. I recently made the heartbreaking decision to help my sweet little Marley, of 17 years, cross the Rainbow Bridge. Saying goodbye was one of the hardest moments of my life, but it was also filled with love, dignity, and compassion. My home feels very different now without his loving presence.

During this tender time, I was guided with extraordinary compassion by Dr. Lisa with **Lap of Love** at-home euthanasia services, who brought calm, grace, and gentleness into one of life's most difficult moments. Being able to hold Marley in my arms as he passed peacefully was a gift I will always cherish. Marley's passing was peaceful and beautiful in the way only love can allow. Thank you as well to **Aqua Crossings**, who ensured the entire process was handled with respect and care.

I am fortunate to be surrounded by loving friends, family, their furry companions, and the TD community. In time, routines will shift again, and joy will find its way back. This is the price we willingly pay for absolute, unconditional love. When I am ready, I will tell Marley's full story. He will never be forgotten.



As we move forward into 2026, I do so with gratitude for our readers, our community, and contributors while honoring the love that pets give us so freely.

Have a Happy New Year!
With appreciation and heart,
Heather McShea
Publisher & Editor-in-Chief

THANK YOU

The Tucson Dog extends heartfelt thanks to the Feder family for allowing Ziggy to grace our January/February cover. A happy little dude with a lot of personality, Ziggy beautifully represents this issue's powerful message on reducing pet overpopulation and saving lives.

DONATE

WE GREATLY APPRECIATE YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS to *The Tucson Dog* during these trying times. Your donation will help us to continue serving our community by continuing to promote local shelters and rescues (at no cost to them), helping homeless pets find homes, providing local resources and events, and continuing to share heartwarming stories about local people who give their lives to saving animals and animals saving humans.

Please send donations and your story, if you'd like to share, to:
heather@thetucsondog.com or call 520-345-2801.



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A Decade of Caring, Paw by Paw



Since 2016, the Keeping Families Together program has helped 75,000+ families keep their beloved pets out of the shelter.



In 2020, Smoothie the Cat needed a new jaw. Friends of PACC gave her and 1000s of other cats lifesaving care, and a 2nd chance.



Since 2020, Friends of PACC has been named Readers' Choice Best Non-Profit for six years running.



In 2022, Huskies Luke, Avalanche, and Kolby needed new legs. Friends of PACC gave them and 1000s of other pets lifesaving care, and a 2nd chance.



Since 2022, the Tucson Subaru Pets of Pima Parade has become Tucson's biggest animal companion event. Join us March 8, 2026!



Averting an Epidemic. In 2022 we provided \$100,000+ in preventative care to save PACC animals from multiple outbreaks.



Rolling out in 2023, Karen's Karing Van is our mobile vet clinic, annually providing care to 1000s of underserved pet families.



Founded in 2024, our Spay/Neuter Support project makes preventative care affordable for 1000s of pet families each year.



Open in 2025, the Friends Pet Clinic makes veterinary care accessible to the most vulnerable pets and families in our community.



In 2026, the East Side Adoption Site will finally bring adoptable cats and dogs to east Pima County, finding new homes for 1000's of pets.



Friends of Pima Animal Care Center turns 10 this January! What an incredible decade it has been—challenging at times but deeply rewarding. We're proud to share the Top 10 moments that your support made possible over our first 10 years.

Find out more at www.friendsofpacc.org

Friends of PACC Celebrates a Decade of Caring: Paw by Paw

Story by The Team at Friends of Pima Animal Care Center



Homer, keeping busy.

The Friends of Pima Animal Care Center, the official nonprofit partner of our community animal shelter, turned 10 years old this January. That's 70, in dog years.

Throughout January and the remainder of 2026, the organization will be celebrating its accomplishments and thanking the 1000's of people who have been friends to PACC and vulnerable pets through their donations.

The nonprofit was founded in conjunction with the renovation of Pima Animal Care Center in the mid-2010s. The PACC renovation was funded by voters through the approval of Prop 415, and County and community leaders involved with the effort knew that Pima needed more than just a new shelter to achieve the lifesaving goals of its residents. From this realization sprang the vision for Friends of PACC.

Tammi Barrack, who served as Friends of PACC's founding Board Chair, said, "Friends of PACC was a result of the community coming together to build a better Pima Animal Care Center. It meant we needed to support our community by being the fundraiser for the many animals that would find themselves in need at PACC."

On January 28, 2016, Friends of PACC received its official recognition as a 501(c)(3) organization, marking its official birthday.

Fast forward to today, and it's fair to say that the vision of the organization has been fulfilled. Friends of PACC has been an integral part of PACC becoming a national model for lifesaving and animal shelter best practices. Over those same 10 years, PACC has been widely recognized as one of the most successful large-volume public shelters in the country.

A key to that success is Friends of PACC's ability to support special needs animals at PACC and to fund proactive community-based programs helping pets before they end up in the shelter. Without such support, pets brought to PACC with significant illness, injury, or behavior challenges would face significant obstacles to finding a new home. Additionally, community programs such as Keeping Families Together and the Karen's Karing Van avert the surrender of 1000s of pets to PACC by helping families before shelter intervention becomes necessary.

"Friends of PACC's growth and success have been astonishing to watch over the last 10 years," shared Pima County Administrator Jan Leshner. "Its positive impact on PACC and animal lifesaving in Pima County cannot be overstated. They are an invaluable partner."

Friends of PACC estimates that its programs have impacted as many as half a million vulnerable pets over its first 10 years. With the recent addition of new large-scale programs such as the public-facing Friends Pet Clinic, new East side PACC Adoption Center (EPAC), and Animal Restoration Kennels (ARK), it is anticipated that those numbers will grow exponentially over the next 10 years.

What started as a vision to support PACC and improve live outcomes at the shelter has morphed into something much bigger. With an eye to the future, Friends of PACC's leadership is focused on working with PACC to develop and expand lifesaving programs.

"All of this incredible work has been fueled by the generous support of our donors, who truly are the friends of PACC," shared the nonprofit's CEO,

Torre Chisholm. "But there is still so much more to be done for vulnerable pets, so as part of the celebration, we are launching the Next 10 Fund, which will fuel the next generation of innovation. The next 10 years of lifesaving starts today," he added.



As part of the 10th anniversary, Friends of PACC is celebrating its Top 10 Accomplishments from 2016-2026. Here are a few of our favorites:

Hope for the Huskies, Luke, Avalanche, and Kolby needed new legs. Friends of PACC gave them lifesaving care, new legs/paws, and a 2nd chance.

Tucson Subaru Pets of Pima Parade has become the area's biggest animal companion event and one of the most unique experiences in the West. Join the fun March 8, 2026!

East side PACC Adoption Center (EPAC) is finally bringing adoptable pets to the East County. We can't wait for the opening of this long-needed facility.

You can see the rest at this site: friendsofpacc.org

Pets of Pima Parade & Friends of PACC Festival
Sunday, 3.8.26 • Historic 4th Avenue
Parade @ 10am • Festival @ 11:30am

Join us with your pet(s) and family on the Yellow Brick Road through the Fourth Avenue District. Team up with colleagues from work or come watch as a spectator, as we set off to see the wonderful pets of Pima!

Scan QR for more information or to register today! Proceeds benefit Friends of PACC's lifesaving programs.

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National Train Your Dog Month

Story by Meganne Carpenter,
Regional Scout for Camp Bow Wow Tucson and Tucson East

National Train Your Dog Month has been celebrated for years now. Every January is a reminder that dogs need regular training and socialization to become well-adjusted! Training is a lifelong learning process and helps keep dogs mentally sound, strengthens and maintains the bond with their owners, and provides a great way to communicate with each other.

Celebrate **National Train Your Dog Month** by incorporating training into your daily schedule using positive methods. Training your dog for 5-15 minutes a day is easy to accomplish and you will still reap all the benefits.

Yes, teaching basic obedience is a great thing for any pup to learn, but training isn't just about learning how to sit or stay on cue. Dogs are learning all of the time, and there are other ways you can sneak training into your routine and keep it fun!

Tricks – these cute, fun behaviors are taught just like obedience, but can sometimes feel more exciting to teach. Tricks are best taught once a dog has mastered a few of the basics as these may be part of the trick. One example is, to teach a dog to crawl, it's good to have a solid down already in your dog's vocabulary.

Games – many pups love to play with us, and games can also take on training elements because games come with rules! For example, you may play fetch with your pup, and the only way your pup gets the toy thrown again is to release the toy and let you pick it up to throw.

Sports – like games, dog sports have rules to play. Sports like agility, barn hunting, nosework, freestyle, rally, frisbee, and more all have

training elements built in that a dog needs to learn and continue to use when participating in the sport. A great example is nosework, where a dog learns to signal to his owner when he has found a particular scent.

Daily Routine – many people include training in their daily routine without even realizing it! Little things like waiting for a pup to sit before putting food down or asking for him to wait at a doorway while you open it are practicing training and good manners. You can add to your daily training routine by mixing up what cues you give your dog before going outside, mealtime, walks, on walks, or even starting a game. This can help ensure your pup is listening to you as well and not only responding to the environment.

If you're having trouble teaching your dog a new behavior or want additional training support, consider finding a Dog Trainer near you. Incorporating positive reinforcement methods, like rewarding good choices with treats, praise, or play helps your dog learn more effectively while building their confidence. Consistent, compassionate training not only leads to a happier, better-behaved pup, but it also strengthens the bond you share and makes your time together even more rewarding.



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Calendar of Events

JANUARY EVENTS

Sat. Jan. 3, 8-9am

Puppy Yoga at Sol Dog Lodge

The most joyful way to start your day – Puppy Yoga at Sol Dog Lodge, 11862 N. Tangerine Business Loop, Marana. Adoptable puppies from Oracle Animal Rescue & Rehab. \$20 pp. Advanced registration required: (520) 886-7411

Sat. Jan. 3, 10am-11am

Donuts, Donations, & Dogs

Pet food collection for the Marana Food Bank at Sol Dog Lodge, 11862 N. Tangerine Business Loop, Marana. Free donuts & coffee when you stop by. Bring your pet food donations (opened bags are welcome). SolDogLodge.com

Sat. Jan. 3, 11am-3pm

Dog Fair at the 4EvrRanch

Wag in the New Year with your furry friend! This FREE-entry event is packed with games, food, vendors, a K9 costume contest & adoptable dogs. Be one of the first 100 K9s thru the gate & snag a special doggie bag full of goodies, all in a playful, pet-loving atmosphere. Parking \$5, 714 N. Madison St., Benson 85602.

Sat. Jan. 3, 10am-12pm

Southern Arizona Beagle Rescue

Playdate in the Park! We have a 'beagle play date' the 1st Saturday of each month at the small dog park inside of Reid Park. Bring your beagles & have some fun in the sun beagle style! Info at (520) 247-7720 or soazbeaglerescue.com.

Sat. Jan. 3, 11am-2pm

Southern Arizona Cat Rescue

PetSmart Adoption Event

Most Saturdays you'll find us at PetSmart located at 4374 N. Oracle Rd. with adoptable kitties! Visit sacatrescue.org or FB/IG @sacatrescue for more info.

Sat. Jan. 3, 10, 17, 24 & 31, 10-11am

Goat Yoga in the Park

Join us Saturdays for an a.m. goat yoga session at Udall Park at 7290 E. Tanque Verde Rd., 85715. Sign up at goatsoftucsonyoga.com or call (503) 507-8639 for more details.

Sat. Jan. 3, 10:30am-2pm

Cherished Tails Senior Sanctuary Adoption Event at PetSmart

The 1st Saturday of each month we will be at the PetSmart at Orange Grove & River with adoptable pets. 3850 W. River Rd., Tucson 85741

Sat. Jan. 3, 5pm-8pm

Corks and Caribbean Rhythm Four Tails Tasting Room

Escape the winter chill along with your four-legged friends & celebrate Island Style. Steel drums, a glowing fire, & a glass (or two) raised high to the New Year. (623) 693-6547 info@fourtailsvineyard.com

Sun. Jan. 4, 11, 18 & 25, 10-11am

Goat Yoga in the Park

Join us Sundays for an a.m. goat yoga session at Denny Dunn Park at 4400 W. Massingale Rd., 85741. Sign up at goatsoftucsonyoga.com or call (503) 507-8639 for more details.

Sat. Jan. 10, 9:30am-1:30pm

Pancakes for Pups Fest

Enjoy a pancake & waffle buffet with 100% of the proceeds going to benefit Hope of Deliverance Rescue & St. Francis UMC's missionaries. There will be adoptable pets, vendors & presentations. \$10 pp. 4625 E. River Rd., Tucson 85718 hopeofdeliverance.org

Sat. Jan. 10, 10am-2pm

Paws without Borders Adoption Event at Dogs-n-Donuts

Meet adoptable dogs from Paws without Borders at Dogs-n-Donuts. To learn more, go to facebook.com/events/1204163741214133

Sat. Jan. 10, 10am-1pm

Arrow's Landing Animal Rescue Adoption Event at Cal Ranch Tucson

Meet adoptable dogs the 2nd Saturday of each month. All animals are spayed/neutered, microchipped & vaccinated. 6363 E. 22 St., Tucson

Sat. Jan. 10, 10:30am-2pm

Cherished Tails Senior Sanctuary Adoption Event at PetSmart

Every 2nd Saturday of the month we will be at the PetSmart at Grant & Swan with adoptable pets. 4740 E. Grant Rd., Tucson 85712

Sat. Jan. 10, 10am-4pm

MVHS Animal Club's Street Fair Winter Animal Express

Benefitting PACC, Happy Tails Animal Rescue will be in attendance. There will be vendors & games at Mountain View High School, 3901 W. Linda Vista Blvd., Tucson 85742

Sat. Jan. 10, 7pm-9pm

Movie Night with Cats at Hunter's Kitten Lounge

We have lots of kitties here who would love to snuggle up & watch with you while you hang out at the cat lounge. *Free drink & snack with lounge entry for this 2-hour cat lounge session.

Sun. Jan. 11, 10am-1pm

11th Anniversary Celebration Open House for A Loyal Companion

Join us in celebrating 11 amazing years of helping dogs live their best, most mobile lives & craft toys & personalize wooden cutouts for the K9s at PACC while here. Kathy's Dog Cookie Buffet will be there. Grab a to-go bag for your loyal companion. Info: aloyalcompanion.com/events

Sun. Jan. 11, 2pm-4pm

Musical Canine Freestyle Club Open House Recruitment Event

MCFC is looking for enthusiastic dog/handler teams to join in community service projects. A nonprofit performing since 2004, they welcome newcomers to visit them at Oh Behave Pet Training, 6121 E. Broadway Blvd. #139, Tucson 85711. RSVP (520) 241-0293

Wed. Jan. 14 & 28, 4pm-5pm

Pathways for Paws Drive-Thru Community Outreach Clinic

at 2035 E. 17th St. offers vaccines, microchips & nail trims for a small donation via cash, Venmo, Zelle & Apple Pay. No debit/credit cards. More info at pathwaysforpaws.com.

Thur. Jan. 15, 10am-2pm

Food for People's Pets Pantry

The Hermitage No-Kill Cat Sanctuary's Food for People's Pets Program at the Michael Cannon Community Pet Food Pantry collects donations of dog & cat food all year long & distributes it to organizations & people/pets in need. 5278 E. 21st St., Tucson (520) 571-7839

Thur. Jan. 15, 4pm-5pm

Pathways for Paws Drive-Thru

Community Outreach Clinic at 8796 E. Broadway Blvd. (Taylor Tack & Feed) offers vaccines, microchips & nail trims for a small donation via cash, Venmo, Zelle & Apple Pay. No debit/credit cards. More info at pathwaysforpaws.com.

Sat. Jan. 17, 10:30am-2pm

Cherished Tails Senior Sanctuary Adoption Event at PetSmart

Every 3rd Saturday of the month we will be at the PetSmart at Wetmore & Oracle with adoptable pets. 4374 N. Oracle Rd., Tucson 85705

Sat. Jan 17, 12pm-3pm

Arrow's Landing Animal Rescue Adoption Event at Bark 'N Berry

Come meet adoptable dogs & take home your new best friend! 6121 E. Broadway Blvd., Suite 138, Tucson 85711 barknberryaz.com

Sat. Jan. 17, 10am-11:30am

Knit Pet Bed Crafting Class

Head on over to Hunter's Kitten Lounge & learn how to make a chunky knit pet bed while enjoying the company of adorable cats & kittens. Each entry will include supplies to create your own bed to take home. Ages 14+

Sat. Jan. 17, 11am-2pm

S. Az. Reptile Rescue & Education Adoption Event at Bookman's East

Come learn about reptiles with Certified Master Herpetologist Cressi Brown at Bookman's Speedway & Wilmot location & meet your new pet. (808) 747-6445

Sat. Jan. 17, 9am-10am

Pathways for Paws Drive-Thru

Community Outreach Clinic at 2812 W. Alvaro Rd. (Lazy V) offers vaccines, microchips & nail trims for a small donation via cash, Venmo, Zelle & Apple Pay. No debit/credit cards. Info at pathwaysforpaws.com.

Sat. & Sun. Jan. 17 & 18, 10am-2pm
Penguins in the Desert Party at Dogs-n-Donuts

Penguins & pups - what could be cuter? Celebrate World Penguin Day (1/20/26) this weekend with penguin themed pics with your pup courtesy of Woofies. There will be penguin-themed activities, prizes, & more. PenguinsintheDesert.com

Sat. Jan. 24, 10am-2pm

Paws without Borders Adoption Event at Dogs-n-Donuts

Meet sweet adoptable dogs from Paws Without Borders at Dogs-n-Donuts. Learn more at Dogs-n-Donuts' Facebook Event page.

Sat. Jan. 24, 5pm-8pm

Tucson Action Team's 2nd Annual Black & White Fundraiser

Nothing brings people together like good food, great drinks, & a whole lot of fun—especially when it all supports a meaningful cause like helping families who can't afford it to spay & neuter their dogs. Check out TAT's website for tickets & location. tucsonactionteam.com

Sat. Jan 24, 12pm-2pm

Hope of Deliverance Adoption Event at Bark 'N Berry

Come meet adoptable dogs & take home your new best friend! 6121 E. Broadway Blvd., Suite 138, Tucson 85711 barknberryaz.com

Sat. Jan. 24, 9am-10am

Pathways for Paws Drive-Thru Community Outreach Clinic

at 7400 N. Oracle Rd. (Post Workspaces) offers vaccines, microchips & nail trims for a small donation via cash, Venmo, Zelle & Apple Pay. No debit/credit cards. More info at pathwaysforpaws.com.

Thur. Jan. 29, 7:30pm

Arizona Hockey Puck & Paws Game

Bring your well-behaved pup with a \$5 pup ticket purchased at the box office on the day of the game with the purchase of your ticket. All pup ticket sales go to AZ Rescue Life, who will be at there with adoptable pets, info on the rescue & ARL swag!

Calendar of Events

Sat. Jan 31, 12pm-2pm
French Bulldog Adoption Event at Bark 'N Berry Ice Cream Parlor
Freedom Frenchie Rescue (out of Phoenix) will be driving down with sweet adoptable Frenchies in need of loving forever homes. 6121 E. Broadway Blvd., Suite 138, Tucson 85711
barknberryaz.com

Sat. Jan. 31, 1pm-4pm
Paint Your Pet at the Hotel McCoy!
Tix include 11x14 canvas custom-traced with your pet's image & patient, personalized instruction from Painting & Vino Tucson. Food & drink available for purchase. Signups close 1/28. Tickets at paintingandvino.com. Hotel McCoy 720 W. Silverlake Rd., Tucson 85713

FEBRUARY EVENTS

February- Stay Tuned for PET VALENTINE'S PHOTOS - DATE TBD
-at Bark 'N Berry Dog Ice Cream Parlor. Check our website Barknberryaz.com as the date draws nearer!

Every Day from 10am-2pm
Moon & Stars Animal Rescue Feline Adoption Events
Sweet adoptable cats at the Grant & Swan PetSmart location waiting for furever homes! (520) 322-5080
4740 E. Grant Rd., Tucson 85712
moonandstarsanimalrescue.org

Sun. Feb. 1, 1:30pm-2:30pm
ALC Book Club Meet
Life is better with dogs — & a book about dogs! Join us at A Loyal Companion to share your favorite dog titles & share with us why you enjoyed the book. We'll also have a book swap to share copies with other dog lovers in our community. Remember it's BYOB(ook). For more info, aloyalcompanion.com/events.

Sun. Feb. 1, 8, 15 & 22, 10am-11am
Goat Yoga in the Park
Join us Sundays for an a.m. goat yoga session at Denny Dunn Park at 4400 W. Massingale Rd., 85741. Sign up at goatsoftucsonyoga.com or call (503) 507-8639 for more details.

Sat. Feb. 7, 8am-9am
Puppy Yoga at Sol Dog Lodge
The most joyful way to start your day — Puppy Yoga at Sol Dog Lodge, 11862 N. Tangerine Business Loop, Marana. Adoptable puppies from Oracle Animal Rescue & Rehab. \$20 pp. Advanced registration required: (520)886-7411.

Sat. Feb. 7, 10:30am-2pm
Cherished Tails Senior Sanctuary Adoption Event at PetSmart
The 1st Saturday of each month we will be at the PetSmart at Orange Grove & River with adoptable pets. 3850 W. River Rd., Tucson 85741

Sat. Feb. 7, 14, 21 & 28, 10am-11am
Goat Yoga in the Park
Join us Saturdays for an a.m. goat yoga session at Udall Park at 7290 E. Tanque Verde Rd., 85715. Sign up at goatsoftucsonyoga.com or call (503) 507-8639 for more details.

Sat. Feb. 7, 10am-2pm
Dogs-n-Donuts Adoption Events
In conjunction with various local rescues, we now have adoption events most Saturdays at our bakery. Details on our website. dogsndonutstucson.com

Sat. Feb. 7, 6:30pm-8:30pm
Bingo at Hunter's Kitten Lounge
Come get your Bingo on at Hunter's & enjoy the company of adorable & adoptable cats & kittens. 5319 E. Speedway Blvd., Tucson 85712
Info: hunterskittenlounge.org

Wed. Feb. 11 & 25, 4pm-5pm
Pathways for Paws Drive-Thru
Community Outreach Clinic at 2035 E. 17th St. offers vaccines, microchips & nail trims for a small donation via cash, Venmo, Zelle & Apple Pay. No debit/credit cards. More info at pathwaysforpaws.com.

Thur. Feb. 12, 4pm-5pm
Pathways for Paws Drive-Thru
Community Outreach Clinic at 8796 E. Broadway Blvd. (Taylor Tack & Feed) offers vaccines, microchips & nail trims for a small donation via cash, Venmo, Zelle & Apple Pay. No debit/credit cards. More info at pathwaysforpaws.com.

Sat. Feb. 14, 5pm-8pm
Sip & Serenade at the Four Tails Tasting Room
Celebrate love (including your four-legged loves) this Valentine's Day at Four Tails Tasting Room. Join us for an enchanting evening of wine, music, & romance. Savor Four Tails wine & seasonal bites while enjoying live music under the Sonoita sky.
info@fourtailsvineyard.com

Sat. Feb. 14, 10am-1pm
Arrow's Landing Animal Rescue Adoption Event at Cal Ranch Tucson
Meet adoptable dogs the 2nd Saturday of each month. All animals are spayed/neutered, microchipped & vaccinated.
6363 E. 22 St., Tucson
Sat. Feb. 14, 7pm-9pm

Movie Night with Cats at Hunter's Kitten Lounge
We have lots of kitties here who would love to snuggle up & watch with you while you hang out at the cat lounge. *Free drink & snack with lounge entry for this 2-hour cat lounge session.

Sat. Feb. 14, 11am-1:30pm Valentine's Day Taco Bar & Bingo Fundraiser
Taking place at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, this fun event, featuring tacos & bingo, benefits the Arrow's Landing Animal Rescue. 2145 S. Coronado Dr., Sierra Vista 85635

Sat. Feb. 14, 10:30am-2pm
Cherished Tails Senior Sanctuary Adoption Event at PetSmart
Every 2nd Saturday of the month we will be at the PetSmart at Grant & Swan with adoptable pets. 4740 E. Grant Rd., Tucson 85712

Sat. Feb. 14, 9am-10am
Pathways for Paws Drive-Thru
Community Outreach Clinic at 2812 W. Alvaro Rd. (Lazy V) offers vaccines, microchips & nail trims for a small donation via cash, Venmo, Zelle & Apple Pay. No debit/credit cards. Info at pathwaysforpaws.com.

Sun. Feb. 15, 10am-2pm
Valentine's Day at Dogs-n-Donuts
Enjoy a day of full hearts with Southern Arizona Golden Retriever Rescue & the Southern Arizona Heart Walk. Meet SAGRR alumni & learn about joining Dogs-n-Donuts team at the 2026 Southern Arizona Heart Walk held at Reid Park on April 18, 2025. Learn more at Dogs-n-Donuts' Facebook Event page.

Sun. Feb. 15, 10am-2pm
Paws without Borders Adoption Event at Dogs-n-Donuts
Meet adoptable dogs from Paws without Borders at Dogs-n-Donuts. Learn more at Dogs-n-Donuts' Facebook Event page.

Thur. Feb. 19, 10am-2pm
Food for People's Pets Pantry
The Hermitage No-Kill Cat Sanctuary's Food for People's Pets Program at the Michael Cannon Community Pet Food Pantry collects donations of dog & cat food all year long & distributes it to organizations & people/pets in need.
5278 E. 21st St., Tucson 85711, (520) 571-7839

Sat. Feb. 21, 10am-1pm
MegaAdoption Event at the Market
Meet adoptable pets from multiple rescues, shop pet vendors, plus a pet parade with costume contest & more at the Foothills Community Market located at 7325 N. La Cholla Blvd., Tucson 85741 (S. parking lot).

Sat. Feb. 21, 6pm-7:30pm
Wine Glass Painting with Cats at Hunter's Kitten Lounge
Join us for a fun evening of painting surrounded by the fun yet soothing company of adoptable cats & kittens while you decorate & personalize your one-of-a-kind wine glass. For more info: hunterskittenlounge.org

Sat. Feb. 21, 9am-10am
Pathways for Paws Drive-Thru
Community Outreach Clinic at 7400 N. Oracle Rd. (Post Workspaces) offers vaccines, microchips & nail trims for a small donation via cash, Venmo, Zelle & Apple Pay. No debit/credit cards. More info at pathwaysforpaws.com.

Sat. Feb. 21, 11am-2pm
S. Az. Reptile Rescue & Education Adoption Event at Bookman's East Come learn about reptiles with Certified Master Herpetologist Cressi Brown at Bookman's Speedway & Wilmot location & meet your new pet. For questions, (808) 747-6445.

Sat. Feb. 21, 10:30am-2pm
Cherished Tails Senior Sanctuary Adoption Event at PetSmart
Every 3rd Saturday of the month we will be at the PetSmart at Wetmore & Oracle with adoptable pets. 4374 N. Oracle Rd., Tucson 85705

Sat. Feb. 21, Time TBD
"BARK BBQ" & Adoption Event
Join us for a fun pet-themed "bark 'n bbq" at Bark 'N Berry with a variety of local pet-related vendors, a vaccine clinic, adoptable pups, & fun activities for the family. 6121 E. Broadway Blvd., Suite 138, Tucson 85711 barknberryaz.com

Sun. Feb. 22, 9am-4pm
Pet CPR/First Aid Certification at Sol Dog Lodge, 11862 N. Tangerine Business Loop, Marana. \$175 for pet owners & professionals. Through lecture, demo, & hands-on practice you'll gain the skills to respond when your pet needs you most. Includes handbook & certificate of completion. Call (520) 886-7411 to register.

Sat. Feb. 28, 10am-2pm
Paws without Borders Adoption Event at Dogs-n-Donuts
Meet adoptable dogs from Paws without Borders at Dogs-n-Donuts. Learn more at Dogs-n-Donuts' Facebook Event page.

Sat. Feb. 28, 10am-4pm
16th Annual Rodeo Days Arts Celebration
From vendors & live music to pet adoptions, this event is brought to you by Plaza Palomino & includes a silent auction from Tucson Action Team to help fund essential spay & neuter work. Auction includes hotel stays, golf packages, beauty, restaurants, & much more!



Cover Dog Story

Spay and Neuter Efforts See a Renewed Increase in Advocacy Throughout the Southwest

Story by Rebecca West



Spay procedure

Spay and neuter isn't just about curbing chronic overpopulation problems. It's about saving lives. When you read that, you're likely thinking about animals left to fend for themselves on the streets, who die from malnutrition, disease, abuse, or injuries from things like car accidents, fights, and other equally depressing factors. You might also be thinking of dreaded E-lists, where perfectly healthy animals are put down due to a lack of resources to adequately care for them.

Each year, nearly a million dogs of all ages, breeds, and sizes are euthanized or suffer as strays here in the U.S.

According to the ASPCA, 334,000 were euthanized in shelters, and 524,000 were transferred to other organizations in 2024, the latest year for statistics. That's not including unaccounted-for strays that never make it to shelters or rescues. These appallingly high numbers are attributed to unplanned litters that could have been prevented by spay and neuter.

But there are other compelling reasons for doing it. Ensuring your dog is spayed can spare them a grisly death or, at the very least, weeks of recuperation from near-death due to pregnancy and delivery complications. Small female dogs that have inadvertently mated with larger dogs often experience complicated deliveries and may die. To compound matters, the puppies frequently expire during birth as well. On average, it takes only 20 minutes to perform a spay procedure and 10 minutes for neuter.



Dr. Stacey Thomas, DVM.
(Photo courtesy Far Fetched Charities)

The Far-Fetched Vet

Enter Far Fetched Charities. One of the veterinarians behind the organization is founder and CEO Dr. Stacey Thomas, DVM, who performs spay and neuter procedures in Texas, Arizona, and Alaska's Kenai Peninsula. Thomas and her partners' goals for the nonprofit are to "bring spay, neuter, and wellness services to places where veterinary care is scarce or non-existent through collaboration with local rescues, shelters, non-profits, and NGO's." Besides her own charity, working with PACC, and being listed on the board of directors for Blackberry Creek Farm Animal Sanctuary in California, Thomas is connected with Yaqui Animal Rescue in Sullivan City, Texas, near the border

of Mexico. The rescue held a gala back in late November and gave a special shout-out to Dr. Thomas, who they noted as "the driving force" behind opening their low-cost clinic at Donna North High School.

Known as the Veterinary Animal Science Program, in 2025, Yaqui and the clinic were reportedly responsible for altering more than 620 pets, preventing thousands of unwanted litters, and making a real impact in their community.

Dedicated to serving underserved communities, they continue to work toward improving the lives of animals in the Southwest.

At the November Tails for Hope Gala referenced earlier, they received an inspiring message from celebrity veterinarian Jeff Young of *Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet* on the *Animal Planet* channel, who reminded guests that "spaying and neutering is the ONLY solution to our stray overpopulation problem" today. His message was said to energize the room and reaffirm why this work matters so deeply. ([Watch the video here: youtube.com/watch?v=6eNmKljKeF4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6eNmKljKeF4))

We asked Dr. Thomas what she saw as the most significant barrier to spay and neuter—lack of funds, access or availability, and/or lack of understanding/education about its importance—and she replied that lack of funds ranked highest, followed by lack of understanding/education. Thomas also provided us with other helpful information as to how sterilization can be beneficial.

Repeated pregnancies, especially back-to-back, are exhausting and can lead to malnutrition, health complications, and a shorter lifespan for female dogs and cats. (Note: cats can reproduce three to four times a year and dogs twice a year.)

Another reason to get them fixed is that there are grave medical conditions that spay and neuter can help negate, so it's not just about reducing unwanted litters. For instance, spaying can assist in sidestepping pyometra, a serious infection of the uterus, and keep other illnesses at bay, such as reducing the risk of mammary cancer.

TVT cancer among intact animals is higher as well. TVT is a contagious cancer that spreads through direct contact, usually during mating, but also by licking or sniffing tumor cells. While it's highly treatable with chemotherapy, surgery, or radiation, with a good prognosis if caught early enough, why would you want to risk putting your dog through that and the cost associated with it? And there are so many other maladies and conditions that can be avoided through spay and neuter.

"But we can't just rely on spay and neuter as a solution. The public needs to be educated on the fact that it's a community effort. Spread the word. Recognize that you, as an individual in our community, can take ownership of the problem," Dr. Thomas pointed out.

In her own words, the Scarritt Foundation has been very generous to PACC and Dr. Thomas, who said that the grant she received from them enabled her to further her own charitable foundation's aspirations after applying and qualifying for funding.

So, just who are they? Based here in Tucson but built, as they put it, for a global mission, the Foundation is dedicated to supporting 501(c)(3) organizations that rescue, rehabilitate, and rehome animals, while also funding critical veterinary care for pets whose families are facing financial hardship. In December, we had an opportunity to speak with its founder, Adrienne Williams, for this story.

As to the Foundation's creation, she explained that she was initially inspired by her third great-grandfather, Nathan Scarritt's legacy of service, and that the Foundation's goal is to support "those on the front lines of animal rescue and rehabilitation."

A successful businesswoman with five companies and 147 employees worldwide, this is her first foray into the non-profit world, so she's admittedly on a learning curve and trying to treat the Foundation as a business.

Q. What inspired you to get involved in animal welfare?

A. I grew up in Sedona when it was still a small town, and my brother and I found a cat one day that my parents let us keep. Then I got a dog in the 1st grade.



Adrienne Williams (Photo courtesy Scarritt Foundation)

I loved animals and eventually told my parents that I wanted to become a veterinarian. But once I found out that I would have to cut into them as part of my job, I decided I just couldn't do it. I

couldn't cut into an animal even to help it or save its life. I just couldn't.

Then I decided I wanted to be a boss after seeing the film 9 to 5. But in my case, I wanted to head an animal rescue. In 2023, I realized I had the resources to finally do something about it. I looked at the Angel Charity and thought they had a recipe for success and real impact. I used them as my model for what I wanted to accomplish and how to go about it. Now, I want to take everything to the next level and go global. Animals have always been very much a part of my and my family's lives.

Q. What's the focus of the Scarritt Foundation?

A. We have three pillars. The first is animal companions of the unhoused. When unhoused pets in Pima County become ill or are injured, access to veterinary care is nearly impossible. Through our partnership with the Tucson Independent Veterinary Alliance (TIVA), we provide essential medical supplies and equipment needed for volunteer veterinarians—retired, independent, and corporate—to offer free, life-saving care.

We'll also be working with the Health Department via our PUP Outreach program. PUP stands for Pets of the Unhoused in Pima County. They'll send out a county health worker for people to meet with when we go on these outreach initiatives in areas that need help with a focus on spay and neuter.

("The Pima County Health Department provides mobile preventative services to community members who experience barriers in accessing healthcare. Our new partnership with the Scarritt Group will enable the community members we work with to obtain vitally important veterinary care services they may not otherwise receive. We look forward to continuing to build this relationship to improve the lives of the citizens of Pima County," Michelle Moore, Title X Program Manager for Pima County.)

The second pillar is families facing financial hardships. When a pet is ill or injured, and families are struggling to make ends meet, we offer grants through our partnership with TIVA to fund critical, life-saving veterinary care, ensuring that every pet receives the treatment they deserve.

The third is assisting local 501(c)(3) rescue organizations. These groups step in when no one else will and devote nearly every waking moment to pulling animals from what are often desperate situations, nursing them back to health, and placing them with families or persons who will love them. We do this by providing grants so that they can keep doing the work that matters most—paying vet bills, buying food, covering transport costs, and simply keeping the lights on and the doors open.

One Tail at a Time

The Foundation works closely with Asavet Charities, which performs low-cost and no-cost spay and neuter procedures across the Southwest. Williams noted that Dr. Karter Neal has spayed and neutered as many as 150,000 pets over the course of her career. Dr. Neal suggests the locations to focus on, and Scarritt team members accompany her to provide support, including handing out people

food and food from a pet pantry they put together at Scarritt's offices.

Additionally, they also bring blankets, towels, leashes, collars, harnesses, and booties for those in need. They use apps such as Nextdoor, Facebook, and Instagram to facilitate shout-outs to the community when help is needed, with Williams praising their response.

The groups' missions align well, as Asavet's emphasis is on spay/neuter, wellness, and providing access to care for those who otherwise find veterinary support inaccessible due to economic or geographic reasons. They offer subsidized care to owners in need and underserved areas of the Southwest, including several indigenous nations. You're probably familiar with their mobile unit made possible through a donation by the Bonnie Kay Trust Fund.

Making an Impact

This year, the Scarritt Foundation has \$400,000 earned grant money they obtained in less than a year through simple donations like their 5 to Thrive Program ("Can you imagine the impact if everyone would donate just \$5 a month, the difference we could all make?" Williams asked.) and large donors, including from the Furball Fundraising Gala to be held each year in the fall.

The best part is that all the money they receive in donations locally goes to support animals here in Pima County. In other words, if it was raised here, it stays here. It's pretty refreshing and almost novel, considering that with so many charitable organizations, you aren't always certain where your money will be applied or distributed.

Another point is that donations are not used to pay salaries or administration costs, because the Scarritt Group companies absorb them for the Foundation. Even the expenses regarding the Furball Gala in October 2025 were covered by sponsors, not donors.

Of that money, \$200,000 is going towards critical care and impact. They will host another fundraising and informational event this spring, which will be a lot less formal than the Furball Gala, with details to come. They will also be having free Lunch and Learn events to educate the public, with lunch sponsored by the Scarritt Group.

When asked what she'd like people to know that might not be covered on the website, the answer was, "A hundred percent of donations go towards the mission. We will be transparent with published financials so people know where they stand. We're looking to bring more funding into the community, more volunteers, and more support to provide more impact."

They will need hundreds of volunteers to help support their mission in the community, so if you're interested in being a part of something bigger, reach out to them. To learn more about the grant program, visit their website at scarrittfoundation.org.



Dr. Karter Neal (Photo: AZ Heartfelt Hounds)



(Photo courtesy Asavet Charities)

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A VISIT TO THE DOGHOUSE

All the dogs on these pages are available for adoption at the time of this publication.
Interested in meeting any of these adorable friends? Some get adopted very quickly, so please go ahead
and contact the group listed with the picture to find out more.

Pathways for Paws

Pathwaysforpaws@yahoo.com
pathwaysforpaws.com/adoption-application

NANUQ

I love making friends with everyone & enjoy playing with my foster siblings. I'm working hard on my manners, especially when I get a treat for doing right. Sometimes I like to wander, so a secured yard would be best for me to stay put. I'm a 1 y/o Husky mix who's vaccinated, chipped, neutered & ready for adventures!

CURL

I'm a playful little goofball ready to find my own family. I was born at the end of May & have been working very hard on my potty, kennel, & leash training. I love when anyone comes to greet me & will show you my smile. I'm microchipped, neutered, & vaccinated, so I'm ready to be your best friend!

ALEK

I'm a sweet 8 y/o Poodle mix who had a tough beginning. I was initially found in a badly matted state. Once groomed, however, we discovered I was a handsome little man underneath! I'm a total gentleman, & just look at my incredible teefers! I'm up-to-date on vaccines, microchipped, & neutered. ed, neutered, vaxed & chipped.

Cherished Tails Senior Sanctuary

Main Campus: 520.616.0171 PO Box 631, Marana, AZ
<http://form.jotform.com/cherishedtails/dog-application>

FIGGY

I'm a gentle soul who could easily fit into lots of different types of home situations. In typical pug fashion, I'm a connoisseur & lover of all food. A sweet, easy going & funny senior gal, I walk nicely on leash, am crate trained, have good house manners, & mostly housebroken with a dog door but also use potty pads.

PRINCESS

A tad shy in new situations, I warm up quickly & am a mild tempered girl who's about 7 y/o. I'm ok with other K9s but would prefer to be your only dog. Well behaved, I walk pretty well on a leash but could use a bit more work. I have nice house manners, use the doggy door, & do ok in a crate.

SPOTS

I'm a 6 y/o 50lb Heeler-mix fella who's the ideal combo of medium energy & expert-level loungeur. I enjoy walks, car rides, & most dogs. I can be a bit cautious with new folks & I don't like cats. My foster mom can tell you more about me, so please call & ask away.

Hope of Deliverance

Hopeofdeliverancerescue@gmail.com,
hopeofdeliverance.org/adoption-application (330) 647-9963

GOLIATH

Ever heard of a "Velcro Dane?" That's me! I'm Goliath, a cat & dog loving 5 y/o who's the epitome of a Great Dane - calm, steady, & giant body-pillow material. At 160 lbs., I'm a big boy but I do not need big space & I'll keep your home in tip-top shape, I promise!

CASSIA

Hi! I'm Cassia, & if you're looking for a 'dog for your dog,' I'm your girl! A 1 y/o boxer mix who weighs 70 lbs., I LOVE to play with my furry & human foster siblings! I've been in foster for 8 months now & no one has even had a meet with me yet! Crazy, right? Hope to meet you soon!

Paws Without Borders (PWB)

(520) 289-0549 pawswithoutborders.org/contact-us
pawswithoutbordersus@gmail.com

EVE

I'm a stunning 5 y/o purebred Alaskan Husky weighing 40lbs & packed with personality! I love meeting new people & get along with other dogs. Food & toy motivated, I'm easy to leash, but I pull moderately, so a harness is recommended while I practice my loose-leash skills. A joyful companion, I'd thrive with plenty of mental & physical enrichment.

BUTTERCUP

I'm a calm, gentle-energy 2 y/o Chinese Shar Pei-German Shepherd mix who's ready to trade shelter life for couch cuddles & sunlit strolls in a forever home. I prefer a place with no other dogs or with a respectful male dog my size (36lbs.), but no cats or small dogs. I'm spayed, up-to-date on shots, kennel trained, & well-behaved.

ROMEO

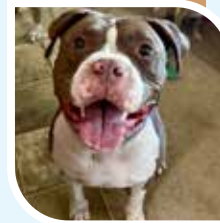
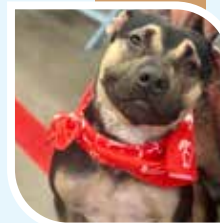
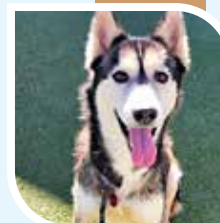
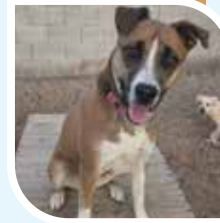
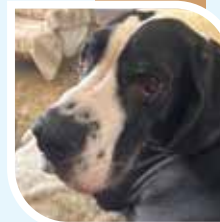
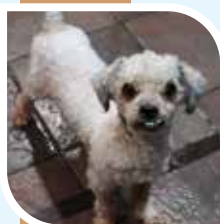
I'm Romeo! I'm 3-4 years old, 67lbs. of muscle, zoomies, & rom-com energy (with better abs). I'm obsessed with fetch, love a good road-trip, crate & potty trained, & a total snuggle champ! I'm looking for mature, drama-free love—no cats, kids, or tiny critters, please. I'm loyal, will keep you entertained with my endless jokes, & I promise I'll never ghost you.

The Animal League of Green Valley (TALGV)

Adoption fee: \$125 • TALGV (Appointments 10-2 daily) • 520-625-3170

HARLEY

I'm a mature 10 y/o, 70lb Pointer- mix girl who wants to be your one & only companion. I've lived a while in a foster home, so my resume includes reliable house training. Additionally, I have impeccable manners, love walks & car rides, & I adore kids. I come with Vet Care Support for Life.





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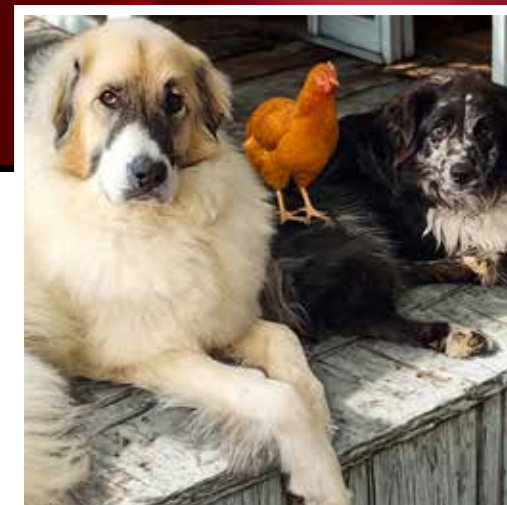
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The Ranch Dog Diaries: From Hero Dreams to Farm Dog Realities

Story by Leo
Alpha of
Anecdotes



Leo and Jax

People think working dogs just trot around looking majestic or ride sheep while a nature documentary plays. Nope. Here, I start every day like the Walmart greeter of the backcountry - security, counselor, and emotional support staff for animals with behavior issues who eat grass for a living.

Real Working Dog Business

This is serious work. Great Pyrenees aren't just majestic creatures. I've dealt with wandering toddlers, pack coyotes, and a raccoon with surprisingly sharp claws and obvious mommy issues. I was spinning for my life! Every perimeter walk is pure professionalism.

The Perimeter Check, Morning Edition

Before the sun shows up, I'm running security, counseling livestock, and still wondering why I'm called a 'hero.' I check fence lines, sniff out suspicious activity, and make sure no coyotes left passive-aggressive "messages" overnight.

Jax joins me, physically. Mentally? He's busy watching reruns of the Meeker Classic Sheepdog Trials like a football fan analyzing game tape. "Leo, look! THAT flank command was perfect!" Meanwhile, I'm like, "Jax... they're border collies. You're doing fine."

Walk Through & The Chicken Riding Situation

Once the perimeter is secure enough for creatures with the decision-making abilities of a teenage human, we start the walk-through. Goats put on their daily demolition derby. Sheep stare and blink slowly, like they're buffering. Chicks scatter like someone yelled "Chick-fil-A."

Then there's Marge, our lame-legged chicken, who rides Jax like he's her personal chauffeur. He trots around with this Hen riding him like she bought a ticket. The crazy thing is, he doesn't notice. Should I tell him? I don't think so, I kind of enjoy it.

Midday Disaster

Just after lunch, the goats discovered the new gate, rammed it and scattered. Jax pretends he's qualifying for the Meeker Trials. I trot behind, seasoned and unimpressed, my bet's on the untouched grass 20 feet away. I won the bet, and we rounded them up - including the ringleader with a criminal past.

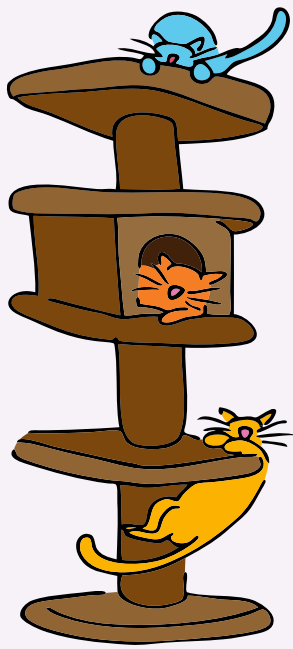
Night Perimeter & Reflections

At night, coyotes get bold, chickens get reckless. The desert cools, and Jax hums the Meeker theme music beside me. Back on the porch, Jax flops down, Marge still riding like a rodeo queen. The ranch is safe. Chaos is contained. And Jax? For all his quirks, he's becoming one hell of a working dog.

Tomorrow, we'll do it all again. Goats, sheep, and chicken rodeos - because that's ranch life. And honestly? I wouldn't trade it.

~ Leo, still a hero... if you squint and tilt your head.

Loosely based on some true working canine events, filtered through Leo's "couch potato" lens.



The Scratching Post: Cats for Adoption

All the cats on this page are available for adoption at the time of this publication.
If you are interested in meeting any of these adorable kitties, please contact the group listed with the picture.



Southern Arizona Cat Rescue

Website: sacatrescue.org, sacatrescue.org/contact-us,
sacatrescue.org/adoption-application (520) 200-1643



PANDA

I'm a 1.5 y/o tiny sweetheart with big princess eyes & a playful, happy spirit. I may have a few congenital differences, but I run, jump & play just like any other cat! I love tunnels, cozy beds & playing chase with other cats. I do need help with bladder & colon expression 2-3x daily & wear a diaper, but I'm an easy girl to care for! I adore other cats & will need a feline friend.



BENNY

I'm a sweet 2 y/o boy with a big purr & an even bigger heart. I'm playful & often show my softer side by flopping down & rolling over to offer my belly for pats. While dogs aren't my thing, my playfulness & affection make me a wonderful companion who's sure to bring joy to my forever family as an only cat.



FROSTING

I'm a little 4 m/o cuddle-bug who loves nothing more than curling up in your lap & purring away through ear scratches. Though blind, I play & explore with the same curiosity as any kitten—especially when noisy toys are involved! My adventurous spirit & loving nature shine through every day.

SOS Cat Rescue AZ

Info@SOscatrescueAZ.org,
soscatrescueaz.org/adoption-application, (520) 445-3889



NALA

Hi! I'm a 2 y/o girl with a big personality. I play hard & snuggle even harder. Sometimes, I use my mouth to express my excitement, so no tiny humans, please! I can be a bit possessive with my humans, so I'd love to be your one & only feline companion.



SALEM

I'm an outgoing gal with a quirky side & cranky meow. I can live with calm, submissive animals, but honestly—I prefer ruling the castle solo. With 10 years of snuggle experience, I'm a certified "Velcro cat" & love nothing more than to cuddle with my human.



TAMA

I'm a gentle, almost 1 y/o boy who lives for love & attention. I can be shy at first but once comfortable, I will start purring the moment we make eye contact & continue as long as you're nearby. I'm a devoted foodie, & a master of soft paw pats when excited! I'd love a home with patient parents & pet siblings to play with.

Hermitage No-Kill Cat Shelter & Sanctuary

5278 E. 21st St., Tucson 85711 www.hermitagecatshelter.org
Adoption application: shelterluv.com/matchme/adopt/HERM/Cat



VEDANTA

I'm quite the extroverted girl, & I would love to have a human of my very own! I came to The Hermitage because I'm FeLV+ & they can help me find my own person. I'm chirpy & get along great with other kitties! Come down & see my sweet face & beautiful eyes in person!



ICEBERG

Are you looking for your own Cat to keep an eye on you? I'm Iceberg, & I'm the absolute best Human Supervisor, ever! I'm 8 y/o & currently hang out in the DDD room, as I do need a special diet. I'm sweet, love humans, & am a laid-back boss! Hire me today!



OPINIA

Almost 4 y/o, I was found outside in the cold & a kind human brought me to The Hermitage a year ago. I broke my ankle a long time ago, so I have a sassy walk to match my sassy-self! Need a companion kitty who's charming, beautiful, & torti-ful? That's me!!!

♥ The Animal League of Green Valley (TALGV) Adoption fee: \$50 • TALGV (Appointments 10-2 daily) • 520-625-3170



WHIMSEY

I'm a 7 y/o tabby girl who has been at TALGV for 3 years, so now they'll give my adopter vet care support for life! In my previous home, I loved to play with my toy mouse & wand toys. I'd love a rescuer with patience & a kind heart. Please call about me soon.



RILEY

I'm a hefty 6 y/o with a handsome orange tabby fur coat. Over a year ago a kind person found me on their patio & brought me to TALGV. The volunteers have proclaimed I'm a sweet cat who deserves a calm & loving fur-ever home of his own. Please make an appointment to meet me!



SMITTY

I'm a laid back & social 9 y/o brown-ticked tabby guy with big green eyes. So far, I've been good with other cats, turtles, dogs, & birds. I love head scratches & treats. I have controlled diabetes & come with TALGV's vet care support for life. Please call about meeting me.

Makes No Scents: Pets Experience Scents on a Whole Different Level

Story by Dr. Lisa S. Newman, The Holistic Animal Care Shoppe



Many pet parents rarely get clear answers about those nice-smelling sprays, scented candles, plug-ins, dryer sheets, and “odor-neutralizing” miracle products; that they can pack a dangerous chemical punch for the four-legged (and feathered) members of your household. Often deadly. Science backs this up — loudly.

Humans treat scent as décor, pets treat it as DATA! Their noses aren't just more sensitive; they're biologically supercharged to record hundreds of

smells simultaneously. Should we consider this as a possible trigger of seizure activity?

- **Dogs:** Roughly 220 million scent receptors (our 5 million can't compare) can become confused.
- **Cats:** With 45–80 million receptors, plus extremely efficient scent pathways, they often suffer quickly.
- **Birds:** While species differ, many parrots and raptors have far more refined chemical-sensing abilities than once believed. It is not uncommon for birds to suddenly die from aerosol exposure to certain items. Remember, feathered friends are 'the canaries' to our environmental demise.



A study in *Chemical Senses* (Walker et al., 2017) notes that animals with “heightened olfactory tissue absorb airborne chemicals far faster than humans.” That means when you spritz your favorite scent, your beagle gets a chemical tsunami.

Now pair that with pets' faster metabolic rates, and you have a combo that can accelerate toxic effects! They absorb more, process it faster, and if the substance is harmful, trouble hits earlier and harder before their body can detoxify its lung tissues and protect vital organs.

What's Hiding in Those Nice-Smelling Household Products?

More than you bargain for. Many popular air and fabric-freshening products contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs):

- **Benzene** – Canine lymphoma, anxieties, mental confusion
- **Formaldehyde** – gastrointestinal and squamous cell carcinomas
- **Toluene** – affects their central nervous systems
- **Phthalates** – in food/chews, plastic dishes, toys(!) disrupt endocrine function, damage liver and kidneys

A widely cited study in *Environmental Science & Technology* (Steinemann, 2016) examined 25 popular air fresheners and scented cleaning products:

- Shockingly, **100%** emitted VOCs
- Almost **33%** “released chemicals classified as toxic or hazardous” under U.S. federal law
- **None** ‘listed’ these chemicals on their labels



Your home smells “fresh,” but the health risks to all your family members are serious! Pets inhale these VOCs, absorb them through their paw pads, and ingest them through grooming. Birds, whose air-sac respiratory anatomy is unbelievably efficient, are especially vulnerable. The same Teflon fumes that kill birds in minutes make them crash harder with artificial fragrances. Even several ‘natural’ essential oils have killed.

But Natural Essential Oils Are Safe... Right?

If only. ‘Natural’ doesn't mean non-toxic! Often far from it, especially with so many pop-up marketplaces featuring unproven products, even known brands bought out and cheapened, now flooding the market. Buyer beware. Essential oils that commonly trigger known pet toxicity:

- **Tea Tree** (*Melaleuca*) oil – cats, kittens and puppies are extremely sensitive
- **Pennyroyal** – liver toxicity in dogs
- **Eucalyptus** – neurotoxicity, seizures
- **Clove, cinnamon, citrus oils** – GI and neurological issues, paralysis
- **Wintergreen** – (*Methyl salicylate*) is highly toxic and potentially fatal, especially to cats and dogs. Exposure, even in small amounts, can lead to severe poisoning because pets, particularly cats, lack the necessary liver enzymes to metabolize it effectively. Yet, I found it in many pet care remedies.
- **Ylang ylang** – respiratory distress in cats, confusion
- **ANY aerosolized oil** for birds – universally dangerous



A 2014 study in the *Journal of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care* analyzed essential oil toxicity cases and found that even topical applications caused liver failure, neurological issues, and respiratory collapse, especially in cats, whose livers lack certain detox enzymes. Seek proven brands with proper formulation teams behind their natural products, rather than corporate marketing departments.

Spraying your dog with “natural lavender calming mist”? This calms your senior dog the first week, but then may start exhibiting stress.

Diffusing oils may be confusing your pet's DNA! Candles, Incense, Wax Melts, Laundry Sheets & Fabric Softener are all hidden dangers.

Paraffin candles are basically mini pollution factories. When burned, they release chemicals:

- **Acetone** – poisons through ingestion, inhalation, or skin absorption, leading to symptoms like vomiting, lethargy, difficulty breathing, and neurological signs.
 - **Benzene** – Respiratory distress, tremors, and lethargy, especially from acute exposure to petroleum products like cleaning agents, gasoline or solvents. Long-term or repeated exposure, for example to products like plug-in air fresheners which can release benzene, has also been linked to an increased risk of cancer in dogs, particularly lymphoma. Signs of poisoning can include stumbling, excessive drooling, seizures, or difficulty breathing.
 - **Toluene** – exposure includes vomiting, lethargy, respiratory distress, seizures, incoordination or tremors
- (continued on page 19)



- **Flea and Tick Treatments** – Some older or less regulated flea and tick dip products have been found to contain organic solvent carriers like toluene. Avoid chemical pest products, especially monthly treatments of actual poisons! Read all labels. · Grooming Products: Toluene may be present in certain beauty or human-grade products that people might mistakenly use on their pets, such as some nail polishes or nail polish removers, which are not advisable for use on animals.

- **Household Items** – Pets can be exposed to toluene through accidental ingestion, inhalation of fumes, or skin contact with household items like paints, paint thinners, adhesives, and some floor cleaning products.

- **Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT)** – a ‘related’ chemical used as a preservative in several pet foods and treats, is distinct from toluene itself yet is also a controversial ingredient with documented health concerns. According to Journal of Environmental Science and Pollution Research (2015), mix that with synthetic scent oils (imagine that seasonal housewarming candle), and your living room “becomes a low-grade hazard zone” for pets lounging at floor level where particulate matter is densest.

Incense? Even worse. Studies show incense smoke contains “higher concentrations of particulate matter than cigarette smoke.” That’s a hard no for pets with small lungs, sensitive mucous membranes, or pre-existing respiratory conditions. Especially birds!

Meanwhile, scented fabric rinse balls or “fresh-linen” dryer sheets leave behind a serious residue containing:

- **Quaternary ammonium compounds** are also commonly used as disinfectants in veterinary hospitals and boarding facilities! Don’t wear this next to your skin. Awareness of the severity of these poisonings and the potential for fatal outcome, is important.
- **Synthetic fragrances** – cause respiratory issues, skin irritation, and long-term health issues with endocrine disruption and organ damage.
- **Methylisothiazolinone** – used as a preservative, can cause skin irritation, allergic reactions, and potential neurotoxicity, especially in pets with sensitive skin.

These chemicals can trigger:

- **Contact dermatitis**
- **Asthma flare-ups**
- **Eye irritation**
- **Digestive problems, if ingested**

A study in Air Quality, Atmosphere & Health (*Singer et al., 2016*) confirmed dryer vent emissions from scented laundry products contain hazardous VOCs, including carcinogenic acetaldehyde. The number one household cause of indoor pollution leading to life-long allergies, asthma and ultimately several environmental cancers.

Environmental Toxins & Rising Pet Cancer Rates
Multiple veterinary epidemiology studies (*Reif et al., 1998; Glickman et al., 2004*) highlight significant correlations stemming from household chemical exposure:

- **Lymphoma** in dogs
- **Thyroid cancer** in cats
- **Bird respiratory** cancers plus sudden death syndromes
- **Bladder cancer** in pets exposed to lawn chemicals, carpet and indoor fragrances



More recent research shows our modern indoor environments contain 2–5× more chemical pollutants than outdoor air (EPA, 2020). Pets spend 90% of their time inside. No surprise that oncology clinics are seeing skyrocketing cases of even more serious pet cancers in both dogs and cats. Birds often die prior to diagnosis.

The Upside: Detox & Immune Support Are Powerful Allies. Holistic veterinarians and naturopathic animal nutritionists increasingly recommend:

- **Homeopathic detox** protocols proven in targeting liver, kidney, and lymphatic drainage
- **Herbal support** (yellow dock root, milk thistle, turmeric, astragalus, burdock, red clover)
- **Nutraceutical immune boosters** (medicinal mushrooms, antioxidants, trace minerals, sprouts, yogurt)
- **High-quality natural foods and treats** suitable for your specific pet’s needs, fresh and nutritious

These strategies help the body eliminate accumulated toxins plus strengthen the immune system’s response. While not magic bullets, they’ve shown promise in providing both detoxification efficiency and improved vitality, especially for pets in homes where total toxin elimination isn’t achievable.



plain yogurt

Bottom Line? Protect Their Noses, Protect Their Lives

If it smells ‘too good to be true,’ your pets are probably absorbing it faster than your nose can enjoy it. The good news is that reducing indoor toxins is totally doable – skip fragrance-heavy products, ventilate often, use unscented cleaners, and explore truly pet-safe alternatives. Vinegar and baking soda still works to clean tough spots. Pure vanilla in a shallow dish will absorb everything foul, while citrus extracts repel pests!

Your home will still smell great - just not at the cost of your best friend’s health. Plus, you’ll save money.

For more information contact **Dr Lisa Newman** at **The Holistic Animal Care Shoppe** • 5905 E Speedway Blvd #111 • (520) 886-1727

The information provided in this article is for educational and informational purposes only. The Tucson Dog magazine does not provide veterinary medical advice. Always consult a licensed veterinarian before making changes to your pet’s diet, administering supplements, or using alternative therapies.

Waddling into the Spotlight: Penguins Take National Penguin Day

Story by Heather McShea

Every January 20th, the world pauses to celebrate creatures who dress better than most of us at weddings: It's **National Penguin Day**. With their tuxedo plumage, these comedic charming, flightless creatures may look like they're dressed for a formal, but beneath the dapper exterior lies a life of grit, underwater finesse, and some very real conservation challenges.

Before we dive (*like a penguin at 20 mph*) into why these birds matter, let's start with the delightful, the odd, and the downright unbelievable facts that make penguins one of nature's greatest hits.

Here are a few fun (*and surprising*) Penguin tidbits.

* Commonly asked, are Penguins birds or fish?

The short answer: penguins are birds. More specifically, they belong to the class Aves (*birds*) and the family Spheniscidae (*Penguins, exclusively composed of their 17-19 living species and their extinct relatives.*) They have feathers, a beak, and lay eggs, just like other birds.

But, unlike many birds, penguins are built for swimming. Their wings are modified into flippers, excellent for diving. They spend a huge chunk of their lives, up to 75%, in the ocean, coming to land only to breed and molt. Meanwhile, most of us complain about getting into a pool if it's under 85 degrees.



Underwater, they move with such agility and speed (*up to ~15 mph*) that they almost seem like fish, but they remain birds.

So yes, penguins are definitely not fish, even if they are masters of the deep.

* Emperor penguins, the giants of the penguin world, can dive over 1,800 feet in search of food. These birds take deep-sea exploration to a new level.

* Their "tuxedo" is camouflage, not couture: When seen from below in the water, their white belly blends with the surface light; from above, their dark backs help them disappear into the deep. Fashion and function.

* Unlike dogs, who shed constantly, penguins molt all at once. They go through a full "catastrophic molt," dropping all their feathers in a short time. It's dramatic. And very fluffy.

* Penguins can drink seawater. Special glands above their eyes filter salt, a very handy trick in a world where the ocean is your kitchen.

* Diet-wise, penguins eat things like krill, squid, and small fish, but they can also get into trouble when those food sources decline due to overfishing.



* Like us, they propose with rocks. Male penguins often present the perfect pebble to their mate... romantic, efficient, and far more affordable than a diamond ring at the mall.

* They have distinct voices and can recognize their mate's call in a crowd of thousands. It's like trying to find your best friend at Costco before a holiday, but they manage it flawlessly.



Penguins are more than just adorable belly-sledding daredevils. Many species are facing serious threats. Climate shifts, declining fish populations, human disturbance, and oil spills place many species at risk. The good news? Around the world, a handful of dedicated organizations work tirelessly to keep penguin populations stable, healthy, and wild.

Here are a few major rescue and conservation programs worth knowing:

1. SANCCOB – South African Penguin Rescue

The Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds has rescued and rehabilitated tens of thousands of penguins from oil spills, starvation, and habitat loss since 1968. Their work includes chick rearing, medical care, and emergency response. www.sanccob.co.za

2. Mystic Aquarium – U.S. Penguin Breeding Programs

Mystic Aquarium in Connecticut participates in the Species Survival Plan for African penguins, maintaining healthy genetic diversity and helping support worldwide rescue partners. www.mysticaquarium.org

3. Los Pingüinos Natural Monument – Chile

This protected island sanctuary maintains strict no-fishing buffers and habitat protection for Magellanic penguins, helping stabilize populations even as pressures increase along other parts of the Chilean coast.

For more: patagonia-chile.com/destino/magdalena-island/?lang=en

On the more concerning side: Humboldt penguins, which live along the coasts of Chile and Peru, are under severe threat. According to recent reports, their numbers have dropped drastically. Threats include marine pollution, disturbances to nesting sites from human activity, and disease (including avian flu), especially in the context of climate anomalies like El Niño.



A Desert Magazine... Talking About Penguins? Yes, absolutely. Even though we don't have penguins waddling around Arizona, caring for their future is part of a global conservation ethic. By raising awareness (*like National Penguin Day*), we shine a light on species far from our backyard but connected in the broader circle of life.

The rescue stories, from oiled birds to breeding programs are powerful examples of how people can make a difference and remind us that individual actions (*donating, adopting symbolic eggs, supporting conservation orgs*) do add up.

Penguins are proof that animals don't have to share our climate to share our hearts. And honestly: who doesn't want to spend a few minutes thinking about the world's most charming little birds - the ones who can't fly, won't stop swimming, and always look ready for a black-tie event.

From the Director's Desk

Eastside Adoptions Just Got Easier: PACC's Big Step Forward

Story by Steve Kozachik Director of PACC

At the November 4th Board of Supervisors meeting a new lease was approved that will expand the reach of the Pima Animal Care Center. The lease would not have been possible without the financial support of Friends of PACC. And the success of the new adoptions center will be seen by the reaction coming from the community.

Roughly 60% of all adoptions at PACC are made to families living in the western portion of Tucson. Being located at 4000 N. Silverbell makes it a long haul for people living on the east side to come and add a new family member. We at PACC understand that. We're offering a product – the intent of the new Eastside PACC Adoptions Center (EPAC) is to take that product to where the customers are.

The new eastside site was not the only location we considered. With the help of the Pima County real estate division, Friends of PACC executive director Torre Chisholm, and I toured several other facilities before landing on what will be our eventual new home. From the standpoint of size, floor plan, location and cost, the new EPAC checks all the right boxes.

The new site is a former mortgage brokerage. On the interior there are rows of individual offices that once housed individual mortgage brokers. Each of those 10'x12' offices will soon house one or two new pups from PACC. In addition there are 3 larger rooms that were once used as meeting or conference room spaces. Those will soon house 5-7 kennels for PACC dogs. And there are meet and greet areas located down the center of the space.

The location (7225 E. Broadway, suite 140) is immediately adjacent to a karate school. One concern voiced early-on by the landlord was whether our dogs would impose a noise burden on the karate tenants. In order to accommodate that concern we have dedicated the office spaces that lay along the common wall to storage, an employee/volunteer break room, an office for the store manager, and two rooms for cats. Time will tell if the karate yelling imposes a noise burden on the cats.

In December the county selected a general contractor through a competitive bidding process. Per the terms of the lease we don't begin paying monthly rent until the middle of February, 2026. My goal is to get the tenant improvements completed as close to the date when we begin paying rent as possible. I know enough about the construction process to realize that we've given the GC an extremely short window. But everyone involved is aware of the aspirational goal and I have total confidence that everyone involved is working hard to get EPAC up and running as quickly as possible.

When the adoptions center is opened it will house between 35-50 dogs. All of them will be selected from pups that are currently at the Silverbell shelter.



Providing a greeting to a lonely friend.
Go to www.pima.gov/2562Browse-Shelter-Dogs



Jasper, PACC A8587206.

Go to www.pima.gov/2562Browse-Shelter-Dogs

Each will arrive at EPAC already altered and vaccinated so they'll be ready to be taken home the day a new family falls in love with them. The same will be true of the cats. We anticipate roughly a dozen cats being at the eastside adoptions center at a given time. The cats will also have their own meet/greet room.

It's important to note that the eastside center will be solely for adoptions/fosters. We will not have a clinic at EPAC to perform medical procedures. We will not have intake staff to facilitate people dropping off strays. And we will not have an Animal Protection Service unit located at EPAC for enforcement activities. The eastside location will be solely to help PACC west on Silverbell find homes for dogs and cats, and through that to help alleviate the overcrowding we routinely experience.

Interviews for the EPAC full time staff began in December. Once we have that staff in place we will begin to recruit volunteers. Neither the main PACC shelter nor EPAC can operate successfully without a strong volunteer involvement. We're anticipating a favorable level of interest coming from eastside residents once we begin that recruitment process.

The conditions at our main PACC shelter are noisy, crowded and not at all similar to what our animals will experience in your home. If you've ever visited our partner Tucson Rescue Now (Grant and Swan) you've seen how a more mellow environment allows the pups to show their true personalities. That's what we also anticipate will be the case at the eastside. Consequently, we expect the length of stay for the dogs will be much less than what we see at PACC west. And that will mean we'll be able to continually decrease crowding at PACC. Everyone will benefit. That's the goal.

Stay tuned for our grand opening. We hope to see a full house and to see our pups and cats end up in brand new homes. With much gratitude to Friends of PACC, I join the current PACC staff in looking forward to the opening of this new PACC chapter. Who knows? If EPAC works we may continue looking for other shelter opportunities.

Want to help? Donate: www.friendsofpacc.org/support-pacc-pets
or Volunteer: www.pima.gov/2795/Volunteer-with-PACC



Great Horned Owls: Why Pima County Residents Need to Slow Their Roll

Story by Rebecca West

Photos courtesy of Tucson Wildlife Center

As a desert dweller, the last thing you want to see is a great horned owl embedded in the grill of your car or truck. If you're a motorcyclist who comes into contact with one of them on a long stretch of lonely road, you could end up laying your bike down and find yourself in the hospital with blunt-force trauma. With their nearly five-foot wing spans, massive talons, and incredibly sharp hooked beaks, they are a force to be reckoned with. But what about the damage or death to the birds themselves?

Unfortunately, the Tucson Wildlife Center (TWC) knows all too well the consequences for these impressive creatures, with its rescue team responding to no less than three separate great horned owl rescues in quick succession this past fall. In each case, the owls were discovered injured near a roadway after presumably colliding with moving vehicles. All adults, the birds suffered a combination of head and eye trauma, plus varying degrees of fractures from the impacts.

At the time of the events, TWC noted, "Thanks to fast action by our rescue team and our veterinary staff, all three owls are receiving medical treatment and are responding well to rehabilitation. We are hopeful each will make a full recovery and return to the wild." We spoke with Hubert Parker, Development Director at TWC, in December to find out if or when the birds were able to be released. He confirmed that they had, in fact, returned them to the wild a few weeks earlier after their treatment and healing were complete.



As to treatment, we asked how one goes about dealing with fractures and broken bones in a bird. Owls, like most birds, have hollow bones, or more precisely, pneumatized bones, which are lightweight but reinforced with internal struts for strength. Parker explained that the fractures were carefully wrapped while they healed, and no splinting was required. One of the owls with ocular injuries will sadly suffer from a degree of permanent vision impairment, but not enough to keep it from successfully hunting or flying.



Native to the Americas, these powerful apex predators are highly adaptable hunters scouring forests, deserts, swamps, and coastlines for a diverse diet that includes skunks, opossums, snakes, squirrels, voles, frogs, lizards, insects, scorpions, and occasionally fish. They'll even eat other predatory birds, such as crows and, believe it or not, raptors like falcons and ospreys, which are apex

predators themselves. Aggressive in their pursuit of food, they are sometimes called tiger owls.

During the fall, as nighttime encroaches earlier and earlier, and throughout the dark winter months, the Tucson Wildlife Center reminds the community to use extra caution when driving after dark, particularly through rural stretches with open desert and utility poles. They also recommend you reduce your speed, use high beams when safe to do so, and remain alert for wildlife along the roadside. As TWC points out, "a few extra seconds of awareness can save a life—maybe even that of one of these magnificent owls."

They further explained that, "Great horned owls fly and hunt low to the ground, especially at night, scanning roadsides for prey such as mice, rats, and rabbits that are attracted to the warmth of pavement and roadside vegetation. When headlights suddenly illuminate an owl's eyes, their vision takes longer to adjust compared to daytime birds. That reaction time—combined with the silent glide of their wings—makes them tragically vulnerable to vehicle strikes."

Displaying both crepuscular and nocturnal activity, great horned owls are most active at dawn and dusk, but they are also considered nocturnal, meaning they hunt throughout the night, so be aware when lighting conditions are low. The point is that while you can have unexpected contact with them throughout the year, you have a greater chance during autumn and winter months due to longer periods of darkness versus spring and summer when it remains light longer.



While their numbers were up in the late '80s and throughout the 1990s, they started to fall around 2000, leveled off from there for a while, and then began to drop again in 2023.

If you would like to volunteer or help patients at the Tucson Wildlife Center, like these great horned owls, go to their website to sign up or donate. You can also sponsor resident animals. Another way you can contribute is to visit their wish lists on Amazon or Chewy by scanning this code, which will also take you to other options connected to TWC.

Additionally, their annual fundraiser will be held on March 8, 2026, at Loews Ventana Canyon Resort, with the proceeds amounting to roughly a third of the Center's overall yearly budget. Tickets are available online at tucsonwildlife.com/2026-annual-benefit/ with early-bird pricing before February 1, while they last.

tucsonwildlife.com



Taylor Jaramillo

View on mobile



Training Engagement: The Basis of Successful Dog Training

Story by Patricia Cook and Kari Cleland

Understanding engagement can help your dog training move to the next level. When in class, your dog might sit when you give the command, but if they keep looking at the team training next to you, they're distracted. You might be able to redirect their focus back to you, but you haven't captured their engagement. If they were engaged, they would not be interested in that dog or team at all. So, what exactly is engagement, and how do we build it?

Canine Engagement

Engaged dogs are actively involved in the activity you are performing together, and they don't want it to end. Think of your dog's face when you play fetch in the backyard. That happy, "throw it again!" face, the play bowing—that's engagement. An engaged dog is 100 percent focused on their human. They



Kiowa, a four-month-old Australian shepherd, is completely engaged with his owner. Notice how he is ignoring all the distractions around him.

want to work with you, and they ask for that interaction to happen. If you are the one trying to get your dog's attention, your dog is not engaged.

Engagement is at the heart of successful training. It can be hard to capture and keep your dog's engagement in a training situation. Many dogs are easily distracted by other dogs, smells, or people nearby. You are competing with all of those distractions in the environment. This is why engagement is a crucial skill in helping your dog learn to ignore distractions, regardless of the environment. Your dog will be focused only on you.

How to Build Engagement

Building engagement isn't easy, particularly with puppies who are exploring a whole new world. But with time and commitment, you will have a dog that finds you the most wonderful, exciting, and interesting entity in the entire Milky Way. To begin, play this game: get a handful of your dog's favorite treats, and show them to your dog. If they make eye contact with you, reward them with one treat.

Repeat this process for three or four treats. Then, when your dog is looking at you, toss the treat to the right or left.

If they run and get the treat, and return to you and immediately look at you, repeat this process, but throw the treat to the other side. Only throw the treat if the dog is looking at you—that's engagement. Your dog is asking you to interact with them.

It might sound counterintuitive, but for this next exercise, you will need a dull or uninteresting location. Go somewhere with limited distractions and allow your dog to explore. When they get bored with sniffing and turn their attention to you, reward them. No cues, no bribes to get them to look at you. The reward is for their choosing to engage with you, not the environment.

In short, it was reinforced that you are the most exciting thing ever. Its attention should remain on you. If it wavers, your location isn't quite dull enough, so start over somewhere else. That's the first step in teaching engagement. There are additional steps to foster engagement that can be explored with a positive trainer.

Engagement Makes Learning Fun

Engagement fosters the bond with your dog. It encourages learning because if your dog is engaged with you, they are not distracted by the environment around them. An engaged dog will behave better when tested in a real-life situation. And it's just more fun to work and play with a dog that wants to be there as much as you do.



Zima, a twelve-year-old Samoyed, remaining engaged with her owner even while walking through the busy university campus.



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