

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Hospitality House Turns to Community to Help Launch New Pet Program

Grass Valley, Calif. (Sept. 4, 2019) – Hospitality House is em-“bark”-ing on an important initiative to integrate homeless people with pets into its shelter, but it can’t launch the new program without the community’s support.

The new pet program is designed to help homeless pet owners receive shelter and services at Hospitality House without the need for pet separation in exchange for assistance.

“If I had the opportunity, I would shelter at the Hospitality House, if I could bring my dog with me,” said Shaun Bryant, a local homeless veteran. “Without her, I wouldn’t even consider it.”

Bryant has owned Sky, an 11-year-old Austrian Sheppard mix, since she was just 8 months old. Bryant puts Sky first and ensures she eats two to three times a day; he would rather stay homeless and forgo shelter at Hospitality House than be separated from his only loving, stable companion.

This sentiment isn’t exclusive to Bryant; it’s a known barrier preventing dozens of local homeless men and women from receiving shelter and was reaffirmed during the January 2019 Point-in-Time Count when 50 homeless pet owners participated in a pet survey.

All 50 participants were asked if they would shelter at Hospitality House if they could sleep with their pet. A whopping 76 percent (38 individuals) indicated yes. However, the survey results also revealed that if Hospitality House could only offer pet shelter offsite in a different location, only 24 percent (12 individuals) would utilize the shelter.

“People living in camps and on the streets aren’t willing to part with their pets, even for just one night of sleep and services, and we understand this,” said Isaias Acosta, Operations Manager of Hospitality House. “When people are living on the street, and all they have left in the world is their pet, they are not going to separate from their loved one. Pets are family. It is our hope to keep families together whether or not we are talking about people or animals.”

In order to assimilate the pet program into the shelter, staff has researched and budgeted extensively, and has partnered with several local animal organizations to understand the full undertaking of the program, including Sammie’s Friends, Nevada County Pets in Need, Grass Valley Animal Shelter, Pine Creek Veterinary Clinic, AnimalSave Spay, and Pound Puppy Rescue, all of which have acted as advisors and expressed their sincere support of the program and its hopeful debut.

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“Sammie's Friends so appreciates the work that Hospitality House does to help the homeless people in our community,” said Cheryl Wicks, Co-Founder and President of Sammie’s Friends. “We do everything we can to support the homeless animals in our community, including a program to provide medical care and spay/neuter for folks who can't afford it. We, along with the other animal organizations, are so happy this program will help keep the animals and their people together. It is heartbreaking to see people and their pets out in the elements because there has been nowhere they can spend the night together except outside. This is a hopeful time. We and the other animal organizations will continue to do our good work for the animals and support Hospitality House in this endeavor.”

To offer complete care to pets for one year, Hospitality House anticipates an operating budget of \$30,000.

“These costs have been methodically calculated,” explained Nancy Baglietto, Executive Director of Hospitality House and former Executive Director of Friends of the Alameda Animal Shelter. “We cannot in good faith accept any pets at our shelter unless we can provide them with appropriate preventative care. Being able to assist with licensing and supporting medical needs are also essential. This includes taking immediate action if a pet is in clear medical distress, behavioral testing to ensure every staff member, volunteer and guest at our shelter remains safe, along with a multitude of services to ensure the success of the program.”

With the community’s support, the pet program could launch as early as November of this year and would provide animals with indoor shelter, food, licensing, veterinary care, spay and neuter, wellness checks, flea and tick treatment, medications and even medical operations if needed. Most importantly, it will keep homeless pet owners together with their loved one at the shelter so they can benefit from the shelter’s programming to help transition back into housing, which is the ultimate goal.

“We can’t launch our pet program alone because it will take the support of the community to make it happen,” added Acosta. “While our priority is always to provide shelter and care for homeless people, Hospitality House knows firsthand that we can do an even better job if we can open our doors even wider to those living on the streets if we are able to also welcome their furry family members.”

To help launch the pet program at Hospitality House, those interested are invited to visit [hhshelter.org/pets](http://hhshelter.org/pets) to make a gift and/or mail a check payable to Hospitality House at 1262 Sutton Way, Grass Valley, CA 95945 and write “pet program” in the memo.