



Los Angeles County  
Animal Care  
Foundation



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

ANIMAL CARE  
& CONTROL

redefining  
CARE



# FAITHFUL *friends*

WINTER 2021



## APPOINTMENT-BASED SERVICES IMPROVE ADOPTIONS

The Los Angeles County Department of Animal Care and Control (DACC) implemented appointment-based services to continue serving the public, conduct adoptions, reunite lost pets with their families, and offer low-cost veterinary services while complying with physical distancing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. The appointment-based service has revolutionized how DACC serves the public, dramatically improved animal well-being in the care centers, and has created many other benefits for animals, residents, and staff.

Under full public access, potential adopters would often leave frustrated without an animal because the process was too complicated due to the heavy foot traffic and long in-person customer waiting lines. Under the appointment-based system, they no longer stand in long lines and then rush through the adoption process. Adopters have expressed great satisfaction with the appointment process.

Every customer's request is unique, and by using appointments to provide services, DACC staff can anticipate needs and be better prepared to devise an outcome plan for each animal. Appointments are conducted with a case-management approach, emphasizing the individual human-animal bond. With scheduled services, staff can provide individualized adoption services to best help a family connect with the pet most suited for their home, ensuring a meaningful and lasting placement for that animal.

Animal well-being has dramatically improved because the appointment system fosters healthy and nurturing environments for the animals. The constant foot traffic of complete public access caused constant barking and agitation, creating a chaotic, disruptive atmosphere in the care centers that caused fear, anxiety, and stress for the animals. The animals were in a constant state of agitation and had no relief from public disruption.

Under the appointment system, the animals are much more relaxed. A calmer and quieter atmosphere allows animals to relax, feel safer, and present better when potential adopters make an appointment to meet them. Able to sleep more and experience less stress, their immune systems are stronger. DACC's veterinary medical teams have seen dramatic decreases in upper respiratory infections, the most common ailment brought on by shelter environments — a 53 percent decrease for dogs and an 82 percent decrease for cats.

Additionally, animal care centers (ACCs) are not and should not be like zoos where animals are on display for public amusement and education. Zoos have natural habitats that are species-specific for the animals, visitors are kept at a far more comfortable distance from the animals, and the animals have hiding places they can retreat to if they want to avoid people or feel safe.

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# Love at First Sight

YOUR NEW BEST FRIEND IS WAITING FOR YOU

The Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) charitable foundation that supports the animals served by the County of Los Angeles Department of Animal Care and Control. The Animal Care Foundation provides help to approximately 25,000 animals each year. Through the leadership of a volunteer Board of Directors, money raised by the Animal Care Foundation is used in many ways to enhance the care and increase the adoption of unwanted animals.

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On August 1, 2021, DACC began an exciting animal adoption program designed to more efficiently and effectively place pets into their new homes. The program, called “Love at First Sight” (LFS) improves the adoption process by eliminating waiting lists and long customer service lines while providing concierge adoption services to prospective adopters. LFS has received many positive reviews from adopters, and adoptions have increased over the same period last year.

LFS provides a fast-tracked animal assessment and preparation process, making animals available more quickly for adoption. This process includes medical exams, spay/neuter, and behavior assessments. Once the animals complete this process, they are deemed “ready to go home” and made immediately available for adoption. In the past, adopters had to first select an animal and then wait for the process to take place. This often took several days. No more – they can take their new family member home the very day it is ready to go home!

Adoptions are on a first-come, first served basis. This eliminates the waiting lists of the past, which required staff to contact potential adopters who had expressed interest in an animal. This added several days to the animal’s length of stay while staff contacted people who had placed their names on a waiting list. No longer burdened with this administrative task, staff can now focus their time on adopters at the animal care centers and provide concierge pet selection services to help adopters find the perfect pet for their family.

Adopters self-schedule their appointments and complete their adoption questionnaires online. The advanced completion of the questionnaires allows staff to be fully prepared to assist the adopters when they arrive. People without internet access can contact DACC’s 24/7 communication center to make an appointment. DACC will also accommodate walk-in adopters if the appointments are not filled at the time of the walk-in.

At their appointment, adopters can view all the “ready to go home” animals and may interact with any that spark an interest. Thanks to this improved process, some longer-stay or animals with special needs have been noticed and adopted! Overlooked under the previous process, they are now better recognized as great adoption candidates. The Love at First Sight program has allowed staff to more strategically and effectively conduct adoptions, creating a better adoption experience for the pet owner and increasing animal adoptions. Staff and volunteers have commented that the process is easier for the community and helps more animals find homes. If you are considering adding a new pet to your family, we invite you to schedule an appointment and find your new best friend!



# APPOINTMENT-BASED SERVICES IMPROVE ADOPTIONS

*(Continued from page 1)*

Zoo animals are removed from public display if they are ill or exhibit behavioral problems. The ACCs are designed for basic care, and containment and animals are kept in enclosures where people can closely interact with and disturb them. When operating with full public access, DACC staff had to often ask the public not to shake or kick kennels, stick fingers through the chain link or cage barriers, and engage in other behavior disruptive and frightening to the animals.

This type of situation has been identified by nationally recognized “America’s Veterinarian”, Dr. Marty Becker, in his Fear Free Shelters program, which identifies minimizing movement, loud sounds, and people looking into cages as key to reducing fear, anxiety, and stress in shelter animals. DACC has provided Fear Free training to its staff and volunteers and relies on this gold standard for managing the animals’ environment in our care.

DACC is constantly focused on bringing visibility to all adoptable animals through current photos on our website and social media posts highlighting individual animals. DACC staff also conduct weekly virtual tours at several care centers and live Instagram feeds to feature dogs socializing in the play yards. The Department uses online Trello software to create visual boards that feature pictures and videos of cats and dogs in need of rescue by Adoption Partners and to feature animals being fostered in volunteer homes.

Appointment-based services are part of the portfolio of improvements made at DACC that received recognition of their success. The California State Association of Counties (CSAC) awarded DACC a Merit award in November 2020. In June 2021, DACC was awarded a National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award for Managed Intake and Enhanced Placement under the Community and Economic Development program category. In August 2021, DACC was awarded the Commissioners’ Legacy Award by the Los Angeles County Quality and Productivity Commission. All awards were for DACC’s new practices that include appointment-based services and enhanced placement programs.

DACC’s new approach to services has received national attention in the animal welfare field. In June 2001, DACC leaders presented DACC’s achievements at the Association for the Advancement of Animal Welfare’s (AAWAs) Spring Conference, the Best Friends Annual Conference in June 2021, and the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) Annual Expo in April 2021. DACC leaders regularly participate in the national leadership calls organized by Human Animal Support Services (HASS) and statewide calls organized by the California Animal Welfare Association. Los Angeles County is recognized nationally among animal welfare professionals as a leader in progressive programming that benefits animals and the public.



## DIRECTOR

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## ANIMAL CARE CENTER LOCATIONS

Agoura  
29525 Agoura Road  
Agoura Hills, CA 91301  
818-991-0071

Baldwin Park  
4275 N. Elton Avenue  
Baldwin Park, CA 91706  
626-962-3577

Carson/Gardena  
216 W. Victoria Street  
Gardena, CA 90248  
310-523-9566

Castaic  
31044 N. Charlie Canyon Road  
Castaic, CA 91384  
661-257-3191

Downey  
11258 S. Garfield Avenue  
Downey, CA 90242  
562-940-6895

Lancaster  
5210 W. Avenue I  
Lancaster, CA 93536  
661-940-4191

Palmdale  
38550 Sierra Highway  
Palmdale, CA 93550  
661-575-2888

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## A NEW LIFE FOR LENNY

By Thérèse McLaughlin

On August 23, I came to the shelter and adopted the boxer mix known as ASHER. I had gotten the report on him and couldn't wait for my meet and greet appointment and just showed up to get him. You were fabulous and helped me right away. HE IS A YUMMY SCOOP OF ICE-CREAM! He came home and was lovely while being introduced to his doggie siblings. Our giant Bloodhound puppy and he started playing immediately and only stopped when they had dinner and then passed out. He's bright, alert, curious, toy happy, playful, gentle, and super friendly. I have to say that the evaluation that was emailed to me before I came made the decision a no-brainer. I planned to introduce him to my husband outside when he got home, but Asher just put on a big grin and ran into my husband's arms and covered him in kisses.

I read his medical report and cried reading the wounds he showed up with. The medical team gave him back his health, I am so grateful!

At this writing, he is next to me on the bed, squeezed tightly into the crook of my arm. We have big plans for today — breakfast, a nap, play time, and then a trip to the pet store to get a perfect collar and his own comfy bed, then, maybe hike, depending on how tired we all are.

A story that I hope makes you smile and know that I see how hard your job can be, and the happy endings are so important to hear, because you are truly doing The Lord's work, and have given this guy, and this family, a reason to feel all the love in the world!

His new name is LENNY!

Much love from all of us to all of you!  
Thérèse McLaughlin, Lenny, and all the others!



## SENIORS ARE SPECIAL

By Donna Koch

Having two special needs cats that seemed to miss "their" dog who passed away a year ago, and missing him too, I wanted to have the joy of another dog in the family. But I was concerned about the cats adapting to another dog, potentially a much larger one, and any

stress generated by the process. One is 21 years old and the other, much younger, has a heart condition. I also needed a dog who was comfortable with other dogs, to be suitable for cageless daycare with other dogs of similar energy on workdays. One day when planning on donating some gently used towels to our local care center: I also made an appointment to view the kennels and some adoptable dogs. The first two we looked at were young, too energetic, and their social skills with cats were unknown. Someone mentioned another dog who had been at the care center a long time, and who seemed very friendly with everyone, dogs and humans. She was ten years old, and she had some medical needs. Staff at the care center seemed to be impressed with her kind disposition.

This ten year old girl was loving, gentle, and sweet: the perfect ambassador for a "pit bull" mix. It was an easy decision to foster her and see if she would fit in. With really good veterinary care, lots of love, and good nutrition, our pets can live a long life. This one of all the dogs we saw was the best candidate, and the notes from the care center when she joined other dogs for playtime seemed to confirm it.

The three months since we took her home have proven many times over that this was the right decision, and shortly after beginning our foster relationship, we adopted her. There may not be as many years ahead to enjoy this new blessing, but the quality of the relationship with her makes up for it. She is calm, extremely intelligent, easy to train, and gentle with the cats. Their relationship together is growing more comfortable each day. She has tail wags and kisses for everyone she meets! Not much fazes our senior "puppy", and she is loving and grateful always for the comforts of a new forever home. Her medical needs are not a "deal-breaker", as one never really knows medically what lies ahead for us or our pets, young or old.

Senior pets offer a great deal of satisfaction and love. I highly recommend taking a close look at any seniors offered for adoption — cat or dog. Make a difference to a senior, and the rewards are plentiful!



Donna and "Hula Girl", nicknamed because her happy tail makes her hips wiggle!





"I am so very thankful for the Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation for saving my dog's life. Our dog was attacked by another dog and we had to choose between putting him to sleep or getting him medical care. Luckily the Foundation was able to help us with some medical bills and our dog and our children are now very grateful and happy as can be!!! Thank you!!!!"

— Owner

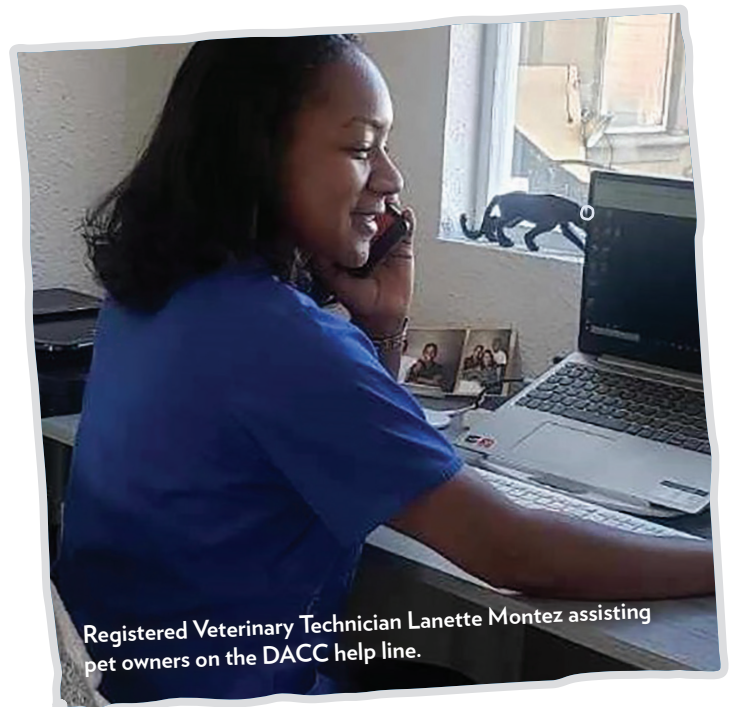
## KEEPING PETS AND FAMILIES TOGETHER

DACC and the Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation (ACF) are always looking for ways to reduce animal homelessness and enrich the lives of pets and their families. One way to do this is to address situations where pet owners feel they must relinquish ownership of their pets to DACC. In most of these cases, pet owners are experiencing a lack of access to affordable veterinary care and financial barriers regarding housing. Most pet owners want to keep their pets but are faced with the heartbreaking decision to relinquish them if they can't access care or services. It is situations like these where the Foundation has stepped up to keep pets and their families together and reduce the influx of animals needlessly admitted to the animal care centers.

In February of this year, DACC launched the ACF's Care Voucher program to help pet owners keep their pets. The Foundation provides financial assistance in recognizing the human-animal bond and keeping pets out of animal care centers and in homes where they belong. DACC provides information to pet owners to obtain solutions and resources to keep their pets. The ACF Care Voucher can be used to access services such as veterinary care, medically necessary grooming, temporary housing, and pet food and supplies. These are all essential resources to maintain the health and welfare of animals whose caregivers are facing challenges or hardships.

When a pet owner calls or visits any of DACC's seven animal care centers to surrender their pet, they are directed to the DACC Outreach Helpline, where trained staff work with pet owners to

identify solutions to keep potentially at-risk animals in their loving homes whenever possible. DACC is grateful to the ACF and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) for funding this important and lifesaving program.



Registered Veterinary Technician Lanette Montez assisting pet owners on the DACC help line.





## THE PURRFECT FIX



The Foundation and DACC have begun providing low-cost spay/neuter services for community cats to reduce the number of unwanted kittens born and subsequently euthanized. The program, called “Purrfect Fix,” is funded by grants and donations to the Foundation and is implemented by DACC.

Community cats are unowned, free roaming outdoor cats. They may be feral or friendly and are collectively called “community cats” because they do not have identified owners. They can be adults or kittens and may or may not have caretakers. These cats can live in isolation, in small groups, or in larger colonies. Community cats have established their places in the community due to the availability of food, shelter, and other resources and often thrive without human intervention. Removal of the cats does not reduce the population at their locations because more cats will move in to take their places due to the availability of resources. Instead, to control the continued growth of populations, community cats should be spayed or neutered to halt the breeding cycle and returned to where they were living.

Purrfect Fix is a program that collaborates with local community cat organizations that are already helping cat caretakers in Los Angeles County. The Purrfect Fix program will spay or neuter the cats, vaccinate them against rabies and other preventable cat diseases, and treat them for fleas and worms. After surgery, the cats return to their home environments, where they can continue to thrive but not produce unwanted offspring.

Purrfect Fix has provided services at the Lancaster and Palmdale animal care centers in collaboration with Forgotten Angels Cat Rescue, and the Downey animal care centers in partnership with South Gate Cats.

The Foundation is committed to continuing Purrfect Fix through donations to the Foundation that will pay for continued programming. Community cat surgeries are being incorporated into surgical schedules at all DACC animal care centers so this important service may continue. Donors interested in contributing to the Foundation’s charitable work may do so by visiting the Foundation’s website at [www.lacountyanimals.org](http://www.lacountyanimals.org).



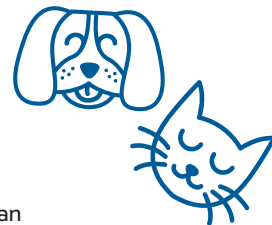


# Memorial Gifts

The Foundation gratefully acknowledges the following donations.

**Michelle Aguilar** – in memory of Momo  
**Edward Anderson** – in memory of Jonesy  
**Christine Arias** – in memory of Oreo & Ditto  
**Sheila Bigelow** – in memory of the 528,000+ lives lost to Covid-19  
**Rochelle Bracken** – in memory of Spike, Muffin & Kiara  
**Californina Community Foundation** – in memory of Charles R. Pollock  
**Elizabeth Chavez** – in memory of Lobito  
**Fong-Fong Chu** – in memory of Gladstone Esworthy  
**Clare Durand** – in memory of Francis Bosque-Miller  
**Harold & Gloria Estabrook** – in memory of Jack  
**John & Diane Gunther** – in memory of Bucklee Duque  
**John & Diane Gunther** – in memory of Lexie Barnfield  
**John & Diane Gunther** – in memory of Hunter King  
**Sally Hall-Schmauss** – in memory of Dixie Slawta  
**Sally Hall-Schmauss** – in memory of Samantha Trudeau  
**James & Dana Henchey** – in memory of Peabody  
**Colleen Howell** – in memory of Herbert Vervalin  
**Christina James** – in memory of Herb Vervalin  
**Neva Jordan** – in memory of Herbert Vervalin  
**Janet Kaneshiro** – in memory of Maddie Yorita  
**Elizabeth Kelly** – in memory of Pebbles  
**Lisa Kelly** – in memory of Jack

**Donna Koch** – in memory of Max Harrison  
**Donna Koch** – in memory of Bear Hau  
**Mitchell & Ann Kolacinski** – in memory of Honey  
**Thomas Lamog** – in memory of Bear Lichenstein  
**Ka Yee Cherry Lee** – in memory of Lucy  
**Hsin Liao** – in memory of Hero  
**Larry & Margaret Lousen** – in memory of Al Harman  
**Robert A. Lyon** – in memory of Josh Christ  
**Marcia Mayeda** – in memory of Auggie East  
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**Yolanda Prendiz** – in memory of Maggie  
**Shirley Pritchard** – in memory of Brian & Nellie Pritchard  
**Stephanie Qin** – in memory of Gamby  
**Alejandra Rich** – in memory of Malika  
**Travis Ryan** – in memory of Josh Christ  
**Sally Sheinberg** – in memory of Pixel Aldrich  
**Rachel Sherrell** – in memory of Moose Greenwood  
**Stephanie Smith** – in memory of Katrina  
**Elizabeth Stothers** – in memory of Rusty & Orion  
**Lindsay Vaisman** – in memory of Cramer Bossuk  
**Mary Wang-Boucher** – in memory of Lucky  
**Richard Watters** – in memory of Nicky  
**Grace Weinstock** – in memory of Olivia Altman



# Honorarium Gifts

The Foundation gratefully acknowledges the following gifts made in honor of special people and animals.

**Jose Aleman** – in honor of Tiita Miia Beebee Macias  
**Efrain & Esperanza Amaya** – in honor of Kitty, Kiki, Gigi & Cuqui  
**Rauha Azzolino** – in honor of Bella  
**Joy Bird** – in honor of Darryl & Victoria Bird's 3rd Anniversary  
**Rochelle Bracken** – in honor of Kupcake  
**Allison Cardona** – in honor of Betsey Webster's Retirement  
**Carrie Carroll** – in honor of Mikki Schultz's Birthday  
**Judy & Darrell Danford** – in honor of Missy  
**Erin Davis** – in honor of Sally & Jim's Wedding  
**Susan Diamond** – in honor of Grace Goldenberg's Bat Mitzvah  
**Harold & Gloria Estabrook** – in honor of Duke

**Patricia Garrett** – in honor of Sam Hepner  
**Rudy Heredia** – in honor of Max  
**Vera Layton** – in honor of Baby  
**Leah Mendelson** – in honor of my dog's surgery anniversary  
**Gloria Moronez** – in honor of Ginger & Ruby  
**Stephanie Odella** – in honor of Emma Helbling's Birthday & Meowtastic  
**James Pulli** – in honor of James Hurley's kindness  
**Maribell Ramos** – in honor of Belle  
**Robert & Patti Sargent** – in honor of Lili  
**Mary Stromberg** – in honor of Claudia Spelman's Birthday  
**Blaise Tracy** – in honor of Mollie  
**Kimberlee Watkins** – in honor of Princess  
**Mary Anne Wayne** – in honor of Shi Young Kim  
**Rachel Weissman-Hohler** – in honor of Kiza Hilton



## PARKER'S DREAMS CAME TRUE

Parker was a lovely 25-year-old quarter horse who was found loose on the streets of Compton in early March 2021. DACC officers and the Sheriff's department responded to rescue him, and our caring officers brought Parker to the Baldwin Park ACC's horse facility for evaluation.

DACC's medical team found Parker to be underweight and desperately in need of dental and farrier treatment, signs of long-term neglect. Parker also had canker in his hooves, a severe infection caused by moist or dirty environments, as well as a large mass on his genitals that required surgery to move his urinary tract. Our partner equine veterinarians and farriers were able to address all these issues on-site except for the mass. Parker was just a wonderful, sweet horse, and the DACC team felt he would be a great candidate for the Dreams Come True program.

They reached out to Mission Equine Hospital in San Juan Capistrano, where Drs. Karura Watanabe and Caitlin O'Shea performed a successful perineal urethrostomy surgery and provided post-operative boarding and care. Parker gained back his weight, his coat improved, and he was adopted by the equine rescue group All Seated in a Barn, who placed him with Tango's Wings in Paso Robles to be placed into a new, loving home.



A healthy and happy Parker recovery.

## MEET NEW BOARD MEMBER TOM TANAKA

Tom Tanaka has a long career as a Human Resources leader driven to build scalable organizations and environments where people thrive. He has extensive experience in global, pre-IPO, and public high-tech companies during periods of large-scale change and growth. He is now at JPMorgan Chase through their digital transformation.

After years of volunteering and giving back through youth baseball, hockey and lacrosse, Tom is eager to give back to communities in a new way. He is doing so with the Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation, which fuels his passion for animals and ocean life.

Tom and his wife Kim now live in San Clemente after raising their two sons in the San Francisco Bay Area. While in the Bay Area, they had the great fortune to adopt and bring Mango, a very active Labrador Retriever, into their family. Being on the ACF Board and liaison to the Carson/Gardena animal care center will fulfill Tom's desire to give other people, families, and pets the same fortune he and his family have had with Mango.



Tom Tanaka



# 20 YEARS IN REVIEW – ANIMAL CARE

By Marcia Mayeda, DACC Director



A few years ago, I was looking through my childhood artwork and projects that I had saved. As I reminisced over the paintings, stories, and sculptures, I noticed that every item was about animals. I began thinking of what a one-dimensional child I was. Didn't I have any interests other than animals? Then I came upon a grade school story I wrote about meeting a Leprechaun. I was so relieved to find I had another topic in my collection.

In this story, I asked the Leprechaun many questions to find out where he hid his gold, and through negotiations, I convinced him to take me to the treasure. We traveled some distance until he brought me to the gold, and I made him give it to me so I could ... *buy all the animals in the world!* I laughed at this story and realized my love for animals was my destiny from the beginning.

**DACC is the largest animal care and control agency in the country,** so I guess my Leprechaun story has come true in a way. July 2021 was my 20 year anniversary of leading DACC. As I reflect on all the improvements made over the years I am exceedingly grateful to the staff and volunteers who have worked alongside me to successfully implement these changes and make DACC the nationally recognized industry leader it is today. I am also thankful to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for their trust in my leadership and support of our mission.

When I joined DACC, I discovered philosophical and operational differences from what I knew as best practices. DACC had an approach more reminiscent of the 1950s. I was shocked to see that the largest animal control organization in the nation was so far behind the times.

I set forth to change the organizational culture from a “dogcatcher and dog pound” mentality to a progressive animal welfare organization that it is today. Thankfully, I had many supporters in the department that also wanted to see these changes. We began making changes right away, and these continue even today as we discover better ways of serving our community. We are a learning organization and are constantly scanning the environment to identify best practices.

## The Year 2001

When I joined DACC, animal care was substandard. Overcrowded and decaying cages and poor sanitation were often the case. Dog runs had three to four large dogs per run, creating a stressful environment and competition for food, water, and resting space. Fights were not uncommon. Cats were housed in small cages – feral cats in old primate research cages – in dark and neglected rooms. Multiple cats were put in cages together without enough room for proper distancing, eating, and elimination. Cleaning practices were poor, resulting in animal disease and odors that discouraged adoptions. Dogs were fed by large hanging self-feeders, which were not cleaned regularly, spread disease, and made it impossible to properly observe if a dog was eating enough. The food was of poor quality and minimal nutrition.

In 2001, DACC only had six veterinarians and six registered veterinary technicians to care for more than 90,000 animals each year in six facilities. All dogs and cats are required by law to be spayed or neutered before adoption. The medical staff only had time to focus on spay/neuter surgeries and not on the general health of the animals in the care centers. Most surgeries were performed in dilapidated single-wide trailers that had outlived their suitability for use. Medical issues, including simple upper respiratory disease, were not observed nor treated and resulted in a high euthanasia rate. DACC did not even vaccinate against kennel cough, the most prevalent canine illness in animal shelters.

Twenty years ago, there were no behavioral enrichment programs to reduce animal stress and make them more adoptable. Behavioral assessments were not conducted, and we could not provide any informed recommendations to potential adopters. The lack of enrichment contributed to the stressful environment, lowering animals' immune systems and making them more susceptible to disease.

Most appalling, 70% of the dogs and 79% of the cats were euthanized instead of finding live outcomes such as return to their families, adoption, or placement with animal rescue groups. I immediately told DACC managers that we would strive toward a 90% live release rate for our animals. They thought I was a crazy “humaniac” but I knew I needed an audacious goal to really change how they viewed their responsibility to the animals and the public. And so we began.



# THE YEAR 2021

We have significantly reduced euthanasia to just 12% for dogs and 34% for cats through many approaches. Although it will always be necessary to euthanize to end an animal's suffering or protect public safety from a dangerous dog, we continue to identify innovative strategies to reduce these percentages further.

Since 2001, the County and DACC's supporting nonprofit foundation, the Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation (LACACF – [www.lacountyanimals.org](http://www.lacountyanimals.org)), has invested millions of dollars into improving the care center environments. New spay/neuter clinics, cat housing (including new cat cages, cat solariums, exercise pens, portals to double the size of cat cages, and outdoor "catios"), dog play yards for exercise and socialization, new or refurbished dog kennels, new horse barns, and livestock housing, improved HVAC systems, and adding our seventh animal care center in Palmdale have all elevated the quality of housing and care for the animals. We have also completed a Facilities Master Plan for the renovation and replacement of our aging animal care centers when funding becomes available.

We have implemented state-of-the-art disinfection protocols, automatic dog waterers, commercial washers and dryers to launder bedding, and commercial dishwashers to properly clean food and water bowls. These all have contributed to a great reduction in disease by providing more sanitary environments and have increased the comfort of the animals.

We incorporate industry best practices of animal care center management into our operations. DACC has implemented the nationally recognized *Socially Conscious Animal Sheltering* operating framework based on respectful treatment of animals, placing every healthy and safe animal, transparency and leadership, thoughtful public policy, and safe communities. We have adopted the *Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare*, the international standard for housing large numbers of animals. The Five Freedoms are freedom from hunger and thirst; discomfort; pain, injury, or disease; fear and distress; and freedom to express normal behavior. We have also implemented the specialized animal handling program called *Fear Free Animal Handling* to reduce fear, anxiety, stress, and frustration for animals in our care.

Our medical team has expanded to 13 veterinarians and 28 registered veterinary technicians to care for about 19,000 animals/year in seven animal care facilities. DACC follows shelter medicine best practices as recommended by the Association of Shelter Veterinarians. All animals receive intake and exit examinations, core vaccines, flea/tick treatment, and preventative and supportive care. We now provide individualized medical treatment for each animal and perform other surgeries beyond routine spay/neuter to save animals' lives. The LACACF's *Dreams Come True* program and the organization Healthcare for Homeless Animals pay for extraordinary medical procedures for animals admitted into our ACCs, saving countless lives each year.

LACACF's *Grooming Gives Hope* program pays for professional groomers to groom severely matted animals, usually with underlying medical problems that can then be treated.

We have a professional animal behaviorist on staff and a team dedicated to providing environmental enrichment through toys, dog playgroups, cat habitat expansion, horse exercise turnouts, specialized enclosures for reptiles, and other means. We provide objective assessments of animal behavior and make sound recommendations for the most suitable placement.

It is so rewarding to see the transformation we have made for the animals in our care. I no longer cringe when I visit our ACCs but am overjoyed to see the outstanding care our team is providing.







Animal care agencies play a critical role in helping people and the animals they care about. One of the most rewarding parts of my work has been reuniting lost pets with their families. It is extremely frightening for pet parents whose beloved animals have gone missing and equally terrifying for the animals who have lost their way. While I have many fond memories of seeing joyous reunions between lost pets and their families, one in particular always brings a smile to my face.

In the late 1980's I worked at the Helping Hands Humane Society in Topeka, Kansas. One day as I walked through the kennels, I noticed a huge black dog, about 100 pounds, with extremely long ears and soulful eyes. Because of his long ears, deep jowls, and sad eyes, I could tell he clearly had some Bloodhound in him. He had a glossy coat, was in good condition, and had that look I often see in the eyes of lost pets that says, "I have a family!". He stood out as something special to me, and I made a mental note of his presence in our shelter.

This was before the internet, social media, mainstream use of microchips, and other resources we use today to reunite lost pets and their owners. We relied on the local newspaper's daily lost and found ads to reunite lost pets and their families. As I was reviewing the lost and found ads later that day, I saw the ad that I was sure was this dog. He was identified as a black Labrador Retriever/ Bloodhound mix named "Droopy" (I'm sure in reference to his pendulous ears). Droopy was lost while his family was camping along the Kansas river about 20 miles from our shelter. Being a Bloodhound mix, I'm sure he became fascinated with the smorgasbord of smells he found and just kept following his nose until he became lost. He followed the river for 20 miles until he arrived in our city, where an animal control officer found him and brought him to safety at our shelter.

Droopy belonged to a family who lived in Wichita, which is about 140 miles from Topeka. They had searched frantically for Droopy near their campsite to no avail and had to return home, praying that the ad in the local newspaper would bring him home. I immediately called the owners, who were overjoyed beyond belief, and immediately drove the two hours to our shelter to reclaim him. They later sent me the kindest note and a bouquet of flowers to thank me for reuniting them with Droopy. He clearly meant the world to them. Animal shelters play critical roles in maintaining the human-animal bond. DACC has made tremendous strides over the past 20 years in improving its work in this area.

### The Year 2001

In 2001, DACC's operations did not focus on public service in terms of striving for excellent customer service or engaging the community to further the cause of animal wellbeing. DACC's approach was very enforcement-driven, and flexibility in addressing pet owners' needs was not seen as necessary. Efforts to reunite them with pets like Droopy were scattered and not part of the daily expectations of the staff. People reclaiming their lost pets sometimes could not afford to pay the impound fees required to redeem their pets and had to leave them with DACC. The adoption process was arduous because of long lines in care center lobbies and the time it took to work



through the process, and sometimes people were left in frustration without adopting a pet. No efforts were made to implement promotions, reduced costs, and other incentive adoption programs to get more animals adopted.

Without a mutual understanding of resources and intentions, many staff viewed animal rescue groups with animosity or ambivalence instead of developing working relationships to save animals. There was also a sense of competition, rather than collaboration, with other animal agencies in the region. Aside from public rabies vaccination clinics, the community provided no resources to assist them with their animal needs. Care center volunteers were strongly discouraged and, except for a dedicated group at the Agoura Animal Care Center, were almost nonexistent.

Long lines of customers plagued the care centers, creating anger and frustration for the people who needed our help or were trying to comply with pet licensing requirements, as well as extreme stress for our overtaxed workforce. County residents in the Antelope Valley were frustrated being served by a communications center nearly 100 miles away in the city of Downey, where staff found it difficult to efficiently dispatch calls given the Antelope Valley's unique geography.

DACC accepted all animals brought to us without question and without providing intervention services so families could keep their pets. This flood of animals even included capturing and accepting healthy wildlife that were a nuisance to residents. Because California Fish and Wildlife regulations prohibit relocating wildlife further than one mile from where they were captured, the only option provided for wildlife brought in by the public was euthanasia. This did nothing to resolve the concerns about nuisance wildlife as other animals quickly filled the void left by the removed ones, and the problems continued.



## THE YEAR 2021



Twenty years later, we have completely reversed the old approach to customer service and community engagement. We constantly consider and implement service improvements to provide better customer service and ensure all staff observes them by requiring training and regularly updating our policies and procedures.

DACC has improved its pet reunification strategies in several ways. The Shadow app, accessible through our website, is a tool for people who have lost or found pets to connect and reunite with them. We also provide information and advice about using social media and local neighborhood online groups to help lost pets find their way home. Our officers carry microchip scanners in their trucks and scan every animal they capture; animals with microchips are taken directly to their homes and immediately reunited with their owners whenever possible. We are currently exploring the use of facial recognition software for pets to further our efforts. DACC works with pet owners experiencing financial hardship who wish to reclaim their lost and impounded pets and reduces or waives fees when possible. Grant funding and donations largely subsidize these costs.

DACC and the Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation (ACF) also collaborate to address situations where pet owners feel they must relinquish ownership of their pets to DACC. For example they are experiencing a lack of access to affordable veterinary care or other financial hardship in caring for and keeping their pets. The ACF funds the Care Voucher program, which DACC staff employ to help pet owners in need of financial assistance, and refers people to local participating providers of veterinary services, temporary boarding, grooming, pet food, and other essentials. The ACF and the agencies that provide grants have stepped up to keep pets and their families together and reduce the influx of animals needlessly admitted to the animal care centers. With their support, DACC staff have the resources to provide substantial assistance to pet owners in need with the goal of allowing them to keep their pets.

DACC's move to appointment-based services has eliminated customer waiting lines, improved service levels, reduced the length of stay for our animals, and increased adoption rates. Appointments allow DACC staff to better prepare to provide the best adoption experience for visitors and make better matches with available pets. Dogs and cats that were often overlooked in the past get more visibility with this approach, and many special needs or long-stay animals have found new homes this way.

Our newly launched **Love at First Sight adoption process provides a fast-tracked animal assessment and preparation process so animals are made available more quickly for adoption**, and adopters can easily identify which animals at the care center are ready to go home the same day. This process includes better coordination of the required medical exams, spay/neuter, and behavior assessments. In the past, adopters had to first select an animal and then wait days for the process to take place, often making multiple trips to the care center. No more – they can take their new family member home that very day!

The ACF and DACC have also begun providing low-cost spay/neuter services for community cats to reduce the number of unwanted kittens born and subsequently euthanized. Purrfect Fix is a program that works in collaboration with local community cat organizations who are already helping cat caretakers in Los Angeles County. Purrfect Fix will spay or neuter the cats, vaccinate them against rabies and other preventable cat diseases, and treat them for fleas and worms. After surgery, the cats are returned to their original environments, where they can continue to reside but not produce unwanted offspring.

DACC now has a vibrant volunteer program with several full-time volunteer coordinators on staff. In 2019 we had more than 1,300 volunteers putting in a total of 44,341 hours helping animals at our ACCs, assisting during special events, and during emergency evacuations. While in-person volunteering has decreased understandably because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are now recruiting and engaging volunteers to assist us again after implementing new health precautions. Volunteers are invaluable to helping DACC implement its animal welfare and adoption programs and maintain community engagement.

DACC now has an established Adoption Partner program for organized 501(c)(3) nonprofit animal rescue groups so they can act as partners in our efforts to rehome animals. Some of these animals need further medical or behavioral treatment, and Adoption Partners can provide this assistance through their programs. This system provides a structured means of notifications and outreach to Adoption Partners so they can adopt animals in need of their services. We now have partnerships with more than 380 animal rescue organizations!

We no longer accept healthy wildlife and now only accept those that are sick or injured. We work closely with wildlife rescue and rehabilitation groups to help these animals recover and return to their native habitat. We have also established a second communications center at our Lancaster Animal Care Center that is dedicated to servicing the unique geographical needs of the Antelope Valley.

DACC now partners and collaborates with animal agencies throughout the state, and especially in southern California. We have Mutual Assistance Agreements with 20 regional animal care and control agencies to help each other during wildfires, mudslides, or other disasters and emergencies. DACC participates in the California Animal Welfare Association's (CalAnimals) programming and training. Other cross-agency partnerships include working on large-scale animal cruelty cases together. We are happy to help our colleagues in animal welfare protect people and animals in our communities and theirs.

DACC's approach to serving the community has changed from an enforcement-heavy, bureaucratic authoritarian agency to a community resource agency that assists residents with their animal problems, values animal life-saving programs, and collaborates with other animal groups and agencies to bring the best resources to the community. It is an honor to be entrusted with these important responsibilities, and I salute the dedicated staff and volunteers who work every day to meet our mission.

**Marcia Mayeda**

You can subscribe to Marcia's blog here:

[www.animalcare.lacounty.gov/directors\\_blog](http://www.animalcare.lacounty.gov/directors_blog)