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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **A New Countywide Program Provides a Safe Haven for Pets of Domestic Violence Victims**

*Santa Barbara County, Calif., January 30, 2020* – As of February 1, for the first time in Santa Barbara County, domestic violence victims will be able to bring their pets as they seek shelter from abusive partners. C.A.R.E.4Paws, together with Domestic Violence Solutions for Santa Barbara County, local animal shelters and pet service providers, is launching Safe Haven, a new program designed to provide temporary, anonymous refuge for pets of those fleeing domestic violence.

Beginning immediately, victims of abuse are able to leave with their pets and come into emergency shelters managed by Domestic Violence Solutions. C.A.R.E.4Paws will arrange for confidential foster care or boarding. Once the survivor is safe and stabilized, pets and owners are reunited. Logistical partnering agencies include Advanced Veterinary Specialists (AVS), Animal Shelter Assistance Program (ASAP) as well as Dog Adoption Welfare Group (DAWG) and Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society, two groups that are in the process of merging.

This program serves a critical need. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, every minute in the United States, 20 people suffer abuse by an intimate partner. More often than not in these situations, the abuse involves everyone in the family, including pets. Abusers will harm or kill an animal to control other family members and prevent them from speaking up and leaving. In surveys of women entering domestic violence shelters, as many as 85 percent reported that their pets had been threatened, tortured or killed by their partners.



“I am confident that the partnership between Domestic Violence Solutions and C.A.R.E.4Paws will become an essential part of the services we offer to those shelter clients who have pets,” said Jan Campbell, Executive Director of Domestic Violence Solutions. “Knowing that their beloved pets are safely and confidentially housed helps to mitigate trauma suffered by domestic violence survivors and their families.”

According to Isabelle Gullo, C.A.R.E.4Paws’ Executive Director and cofounder, pets enrolled in Safe Haven will not only be sheltered with love, but will have access to veterinary care in C.A.R.E.4Paws’ mobile veterinary clinic as well as behavioral training, depending on a pet’s individual needs.

“Our program will provide a much needed safety net for abuse victims with pets, and we hope that more victims will leave their abusers knowing that their pets will be well protected and cared for.” Gullo continued. “Statistics from other communities that shelter pets of domestic violence victims show that the return rate to an abusive partner is significantly lower for women and children with animals.” Also, she noted, the unconditional love, loyalty and emotional support that animals offer can give people the strength and courage they need to create change and keep moving forward.

For more information about C.A.R.E.4Paws’ Safe Haven program, visit [care4paws.org/safehaven](https://care4paws.org/safehaven) or contact C.A.R.E.4Paws at [info@care4paws.org](mailto:info@care4paws.org) or (805) 968-2273.

### **About C.A.R.E.4Paws**

C.A.R.E.4Paws—short for Community Awareness, Responsibility & Education—works to reduce pet overpopulation, keep animals out of shelters and improve quality of life for pets and pet owners in need. The organization was founded in 2009 with the goal to alleviate the burden of Santa Barbara County's shelters by intervening before animals become homeless. Its critical services include free spays/neuters, low-cost vaccine clinics and intervention programs that keep animals in their homes, such as affordable veterinary care and delivery of pet food. Most services are provided through the organization’s own mobile clinic. Additionally, C.A.R.E.4Paws provides a Paws Up For Pets youth program and bilingual community outreach that inspire compassion and accountability for animals. The nonprofit just launched Pet Emergency Training (P.E.T.) for First Responders and a program to assist victims of domestic violence. Learn more at [care4paws.org](https://care4paws.org).

### **About Domestic Violence Solutions**

Domestic Violence Solutions for Santa Barbara County provides the county’s only 24-hour shelter services for victims and their children, as well as transitional housing programs for domestic violence survivors. DVS also operates four 24-hour hotlines; accompanies law enforcement on domestic violence calls; works to prevent domestic violence through teen outreach and education programs; and provides comprehensive counseling services to men, women, and children affected by domestic violence. For more information, please call (805) 963-4458 or visit [dvsolutions.org](https://dvsolutions.org).