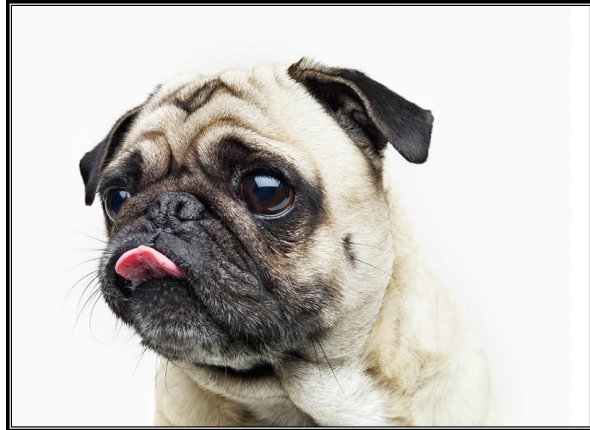


HOMELESS IN PARADISE

March 7-13, 2019

PENINSULA PULCHRITUDE - Part 10



IS WELCOME FINALLY COMING FOR UNSHELTERED WOMEN AND THEIR DOGS?

By Wanda Sue Parrott

EVALUATING homeless women and their companion dogs could have taken hours at the February 27 meeting of Friends of Homeless Women, outreach arm of the Fund for Homeless Women.

If time and space permitted, the topic could also fill this edition of Cedar Street Times.

Why?

Because unsheltered women with pets compel people to ask:

Q. *“Why are homeless women willing to risk freezing to death if indoor shelter is available?”*

A. Because dogs aren’t allowed in most of the shelter programs for homeless women.

That’s also true for homeless men with dogs, but last week’s focus was on women only in the packed church full of people who joined the Q&A following the panel’s presentation of “Women without Shelter and their Dogs—Serving Women with Companion Animals.”

Panelists at the monthly meeting in St. Mary's by the Sea Episcopal Church in Pacific Grove were Carrie Broecker, Peace of Mind Dog Rescue, Pacific Grove; Barbara De Groot,

From the Heart Dog Training, Salinas; Evangeline Ochoa, Gathering for Women, Monterey.

Barbara Baldock, a volunteer with Monterey Peninsula SPCA, was also there to promote spaying and neutering of dogs and cats to prevent unwanted and/or homeless animals.

Trainer De Groot said a canine certified as a trained service dog and/or prescribed as an emotional support animal may be permitted entrance to places where simple "pets" are not allowed. Also, dogs can serve as companions, guardians, and "fur" babies all in one four-footed friend, and such dogs come in many sizes.

My question was prefaced by this true experience.

What Happens If A Homeless Woman's Dog Bites Someone?

Two years ago, I was bitten by a friendly tiny dog at a Christmas I-HELP for Women dinner where I was a hostess at my church.

"He'd greeted everyone lovingly like a little holiday elf after his owner broke the rules and let him in," I explained.

"No one objected. He was on his pet mom's lap when I came near her. Ouch! He bit my hand hard enough to draw blood.

"I reported the incident to the I-HELP monitor, but not to the authorities, because I'd heard they euthanize dogs that bite, decapitate them, and have their heads tested for rabies. The dog and I both lived. We never saw his owner again."

My questions were:

Why did such a friendly dog bite me?

What would have happened to him if I'd reported being bitten?

Panelist Barbara De Groot said, "The lap is a small dog's territory, and it defends its owner in that small space."

A Monterey police officer explained, "The dog would have been quarantined for ten days. If you showed no sign of rabies, the dog would have been released."

What Happens If A Homeless Dog's Human Is Sick Or Dies?

According to Carrie Broecker, Peace of Mind Dog Rescue cares for the dogs of elderly, ill, disabled and even homeless individuals who can no longer care for their pets, or who simply need temporary care until they recover.

There are other agencies and organizations that care for homeless women and their dogs, including Doctor Dani, DVM, whose mobile veterinary clinic based in Pebble Beach makes house and homeless vehicle calls.

Dogs may also be surrendered to the SPCA in the event owners are permanently separated from them through illness, death or other circumstances.

Crunching The Numbers

The current estimate of homeless women in the area is 600. Last week, Kate Daniels Kurz, interim executive director of Gathering for Women, told Seaside City council that of the 932 homeless women GFW served last year, more than 250 were from Seaside. Others came from all points on and around the peninsula.

Thirty-seven percent of the peninsula's 2,837 homeless persons in 2017 were females.

According to the Fund for Homeless Women, motto of which is "Dedicated to shelter, safety and community," the oldest homeless woman served this year was age 88.

Approximately 48 percent of the homeless women are 50 and older.

Each night at least fifty women sleep safely because of programs funded by the Fund for Homeless Women, including: One Starfish Safe Parking Program, 25; Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program (I-HELP for Women), 13; Women in Transition, 12.

Number of women sleeping outdoors or in cars with their dogs at this time is unknown!

Fur Babies Versus Business Partners

Men also have companion dogs, often exhibited as sidekicks that attract sympathy, empathy, and generosity from those being solicited for cash donations. Women are usually more motherly or grandmotherly.

At my bank in Monterey last Tuesday, I saw a gray-haired woman pushing a tiny white dog clad in a pink dress inside a zippered mesh SNOOZER kennel on two wheels. I followed her outside and asked, "Does she sleep in the kennel at night?"

"No," the woman said and slammed her vehicle door, meaning: *Mind your own business.*

Is Shelter Possible For Homeless Women With Dogs?

Yes, according to Evangeline Ochoa from Gathering for Women. Plans on the GFW drawing board include possible future approval of a portion of parking space behind the main building for accommodation of dogs of day-center guests while the women are transported to Seaside for overnight stays in the emergency shelter approved by Seaside City Council last week.

Early the next morning, guests would be transported back to the day center at 147 Eldorado St., Monterey, where breakfast and lunch are served five days a week. GFW's success is due to its 200+ core of volunteers.

If approved, the plan should be implemented and operational within two years.

Gathering for Women began with a grant from the Fund for Homeless Women.

Fundraiser To Benefit The Fund For Homeless Women

According to Kathy Whilden, co-founder of the Fund for Homeless Women along with Marian Penn and Rev. Michael Reid, "We like to have meetings where we can bring up the issues and questions and let responses come forward. We certainly don't have the answers, but we are focused on bringing forth the questions."

For details about Friends of Homeless Women and its future Friends of Homeless Women meetings, visit: <http://fundforhomelesswomen.org>.

The public is invited to the "Who's Got Their Back?" wine, appetizers and special live auction fundraiser celebrating the seventh anniversary of the Fund For Homeless Women at the Montrio Bistro, 414 Calle Principal, Monterey, Thurs., March 14, 5:30 - p.m. \$100 per person. Call Rev. Michael Reid at 831-915-7799 or reserve directly from Eventbrite.com.

Pictures:

LOST AND FOUND

By Granny Annie*

Baby love, baby me.

Let's not say maybe. We

ought to be--got to be--

made for each other.

Dog kisses that smother

me aren't for another.

As we flee from the pound,

to our new life we're bound--

two lost souls now found.

(Photo courtesy of Clip Art)

*"Granny Annie" sketch by Harold E. Grice, 2016

Granny Annie, fictitious character from the 1-act play "The Houseless Hussies" by Harold E. Grice, is a co-creation of Wanda Sue Parrott. Note how she looks like her dog!

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This column appears in the Cedar Street Times at www.cedarstreettimes.com.

Contact Wanda Sue Parrott, 831-899-5887, amykitchenerfdn@hotmail.com

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