

HOMELESS IN PARADISE

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Column #97



Part 3 - HOMELESS WOMEN'S DOGS

Wonder woofers and owners who won't live without them

By Wanda Sue Parrott

“**HOUSING FIRST!**” If you were a homeless woman, or on the verge, housing would be your top priority.

Alas, affordable housing is so lacking in Monterey County, that “housing first” is the slogan all agencies, both public and private, use in dealing with affordable housing across the board.

A special category of need exists that involves homeless women with pets, a few being cats and the majority dogs. The exact number of Monterey's homeless pet owners is unknown.

Overnight Dog Housing Needed

Landlords don't want pets and agency-housing doesn't usually allow them.

Homeless women don't want to give up their dogs, so they sleep in their cars or on the street to be with their animals.

One reason for temporary suspension of the Interfaith Homeless Emergency Lodging Program for Women (I-HELP) was the fact female guests weren't willing to give up their canine companions in exchange for food, personal amenities and shelter.

Suggestions have been made that an I-HELP for Pets program be devised through which pets can be sheltered at a designated location, then reunited with their owners during the daytime hours.

Between 400 and 500 homeless women were estimated to live on the Monterey Peninsula before the Soberanes Fire dislocated residents who were burned out over the past three weeks. Of this number, an unknown percentage includes pet owners who consider their four-legged friends as more than just canines. They're their Wonder Woofers.

A Few Words About Wonder Woofers

Cici is a poster-dog for this column. She's a loving Dalmatian-Pit Bull mix seen above celebrating her 10th birthday last month. Cici is a Wonder Woofer. Along with her Wonder Worker owner, Cici is homeless.

Since Cici can't define Wonder Woofer, I'll try.

A Wonder Woofers is a warm-blooded furry friend who speaks from the heart in arfs, ruffs, and woofs we humans call barks. A Wonder Woofers is on the job 24/7, never complaining.

A Wonder Woofers likes to snuggle and wiggle and lick, as well as serenade his or her human with love songs sung unconditionally through squeals, whimpers, whines and hums.

A Wonder Woofers's vocal range is extensive, also being capable of issuing protective warnings by yipping, growling, and snarling if danger exists.

CeliaSue Hecht, Cici's loving owner, is a former journalist who's so devoted to her pet that she defines herself as a "dog traveler."

Unlike many homeless women who don't know where to turn or how to get started to solve the housing crisis, CeliaSue is a 66-year-old articulate activist. Despite having survived breast cancer and being in need of medical care and housing, CeliaSue is seeking solutions to the housing crisis. A current example is this ad in Craigslist:

Rvs For Seniors With Dogs

If you live on the Central Coast of California and have an RV, camper, or trailer you're not using and would like to provide a home for a senior or veteran, please call CeliaSue at [702-225-8206](tel:702-225-8206)...she has a list of those in need of housing.

Hundreds of senior women have been displaced with their pets. Single women without children, women who are not mentally ill, not drug addicts, not alcoholics, with low income, not working or cannot find work, veterans, and other seniors with dogs, over 50 years of age, some ill and whose health has deteriorated without shelter.

Thank you for your kindness. <http://monterey.craigslist.org/rew/5728749956.html>

Recently, a gentleman called me and offered his camper as quarters for a homeless woman, but the Yodel Poet (machine) cut off his name and phone number. Sir, if you read this column, please call again!



Fundraising Calendar For Housing First Agenda

These events are coming up to help further the Housing First motto, so mark your calendar:

STAND DOWN FOR HOMELESS VETERANS—a biennial event at old Fort Ord motor pool maintenance area—Fri., Aug. 19 through Sun., Aug. 21. Details at www.vtcmonterey.org, 831-883-VETS.

HOMELESS OUTREACH MONTEREY—advocates warming shelter in Monterey—Mon., Aug. 22, 1 p.m., First Presbyterian Church, Fellowship Hall, 501 Eldorado St., Monterey. Contact slarson2130@gmail.com.

ANNUAL PASTA WITH THE PASTORS—all-you-can-eat Italian meal with beverage to benefit I-HELP—Thurs., Aug. 25, 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., San Carlos Parish Hall, 500 Church St., Monterey, tickets \$15 age 12 and older, \$10 for ages 4-11 from WeHelpIHelp@gmail.com, www.WeHelpIHelp.org, 831-251-8663.

SUPER FLEA—Fri. Aug. 26 & Sat., Aug. 27, 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., the Monterey Peninsula's favorite, most-fabulous flea market of the year, Unitarian Universalist Church, 490 Aguajito Rd., Carmel. The UUs support I-HELP and Gathering for Women. Admission free.

HOUSING ISSUES WORKSHOP OPEN HOUSE—Monterey's planning commission is soliciting input from the community on a variety of affordable housing and related issues--Wed., Aug. 31, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., Monterey Youth Center, 777 Pearl St., Monterey. Admission free, Contact Elizabeth Caraker, Principal Planner, 831-646-1739.

Pet pals might not be on specific agendas, but each event is worth woofing about!

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