



## Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter

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### Animal Shelter Benefit Shop Seeks Support for Major Changes

*Santa Cruz, CA* – The SCCAS Benefit Shop, a funky little re-sale shop at the corner of Felt Street and 17<sup>th</sup> Avenue since 2018, will be closing its doors on Saturday, March 1, 2025 due to the end to its lease. If adequate funding and insurance can be secured in coming weeks, it will re-open in April as an independent non-profit venture called Love Animals Benefit Shop (LABS), possibly nearby, in the East Cliff Village shopping center.

The Benefit Shop originally opened in November, 2014 in the historic bungalow behind the Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter, now called “the Annex,” making productive use of what was unused space at the time. It became a steady revenue stream for the Animal Shelter: from 2014 to the end of 2024, sales of eclectic donated items at the Benefit Shop netted \$262,912, which was donated directly to Animal Shelter operations. Total revenue from the Shop over 10 years was \$594,308, with \$331,395 in expenditures, which included some remodeling and fixtures, utilities and upkeep, and pay for a single ½-time contracted Shop Coordinator.

Since there is no other municipally-owned and insured property for the Shop to occupy, the Shelter has had to make the painful decision to close the Shop as a part of shelter operations.

Current Coordinator Lea Goodman and the team of dedicated Shop volunteers, however, all ardent supporters of animal welfare in Santa Cruz County, are determined to find a way forward for the shop, which also plays an important role in recycling, reuse, and upcycling in the community and provides volunteer opportunities and a gathering and social activity for people with diverse abilities and interests.

“The result is that a warm, inviting, hard-working and close-knit community of volunteers, donors, and customers has formed, and no one wants to see that lost,” said Amber Rowland, General Manager of the Animal Shelter. “Unfortunately, the Shelter just doesn’t have a space for the Shop now, nor the funds to pay for retail space.”

When the Shelter began a remodeling project in 2018, space was desperately needed for spay/neuter and other veterinary services. The Santa Cruz County Parks Department, with whom the Animal Shelter frequently partners for community events, stepped up and allowed the Shop to move into their building on Felt Street, and the Shelter’s clinical operations were moved into the Annex Building, which allowed critical prevention services to continue during remodeling of the main building. Parks offered extremely generous rent and allowed local

artist Janice Serilla to decorate the building with delightful and colorful animal murals, now a local landmark.

The original commitment from Parks was just 2 years, but now, after nearly 7 years, the Parks Department needs their Felt Street space for operations and program growth. Without another County-owned property available, the Shop needs to close. The Animal Shelter and the Shop team understand and respect this need, and appreciate all the years of support from Parks Director Jeff Gaffney and all the staff. Their generosity made an enormous impact for the Shelter and the community for nearly 7 years.

The dedicated Benefit Shop group has set up a Go Fund Me and have made plans to form a new 501c3, with the aim of operating a re-sale shop and again donating any profits to groups doing critical work to prevent animal homelessness and over-population: the Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter, Project Purr, and Friends of Watsonville Animal Shelter (FOWAS). Project Purr was once funded almost entirely by its "Rescued Treasures Shop," but that shop had to close several years ago when the landlord stopped donating the retail space and sold the property.

“We’re hoping the community will step up to support the unique and multi-faceted work of the Benefit Shop team,” said Goodwin, “which just wants to creatively re-use and recycle for the collective goals of spay/neuter, ending pet homelessness, and supporting the community's well-being. We encourage people to continue to donate, to volunteer, and to support animal welfare in whatever way they can.

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### **About the SCCAS Benefit Shop**

The SCCAS Benefit Shop is not currently accepting donated items. Current inventory is greatly reduced for clearance to simplify moving to a new location. The Shop is open Thursday – Saturday 11:00 – 5:00 through March 1, 2025.

### **About Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter (SCCAS)**

The Santa Cruz County Animal Shelter is an open-admission municipal shelter which welcomes animals in need, and provides outreach, prevention and animal protection services County-wide. The main shelter in Santa Cruz at 1001 Rodriguez Street is open 11:00 – 6:00 daily. Listings of found and adoptable pets and other information can be found at [www.scanimalshelter.org](http://www.scanimalshelter.org).