

# Dee Dee Drake has a big heart when it comes to animals

BY JAN HOVEY  
LODESTAR LIFESTYLE

Dee Dee Drake, CEO of the Calaveras Humane Society (CHS), has dedicated more than 25 years to the care of unwanted dogs and cats, and finding forever homes for hundreds of available pets each year. Her energetic and positive outlook is a true benefit to CHS, its pets and Calaveras County residents.

Dee Dee was raised in the East Bay and earned a bachelor's degree in English at the University of California, Berkeley. While in college, she worked at the San Francisco American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) for about five years and then moved to Sacramento where she worked 15 years at the Sacramento ASPCA. During this time, her family purchased a cabin in Arnold, and she was smitten.

"I knew I wanted to live here, but I thought it would be difficult to find a job in my line of work," she shared. "I signed up for the Calaveras Humane Society's email list, and lo and behold, a few months later they were looking for their first full-time director in 2016. I got the job, and it was exciting for me

to take on an organization on a smaller scale and help to expand its services."

"At this time CHS was trying to merge with the Calaveras County Animal Shelter, but it didn't work out," she continued. "So, I spoke with then board president, JoAnn Kromfols, about creating a new shelter from scratch for the organization. She was amazing during her long term as president. Our vision was to create a warm and welcoming environment for pets and people in Angels Camp, and CHS purchased the 1920s farmhouse on Highway 49, which was dilapidated. So, a complete 'nose-to-tail' renovation was necessary. The property itself had many incarnations – as a restaurant, Angels Camp Veterinary Hospital, a chiropractor's office and a vodka distillery!"

"We worked with Dean Morris Construction, and opened the new facility in mid-2019," Dee Dee recounted. "We purchased dog suites and cat condos and continue to offer new programs."

The programs Dee Dee is most proud of are the Pet Food Bank, which services 250 low-income households annually to keep their pets, and

distributes nine to 11 tons of food, all provided by donations. Another is the Senior Veterinary Assistance Program, which pays a good percentage of the bill for a one-time vet expense for low-income seniors, whether for preventative care or emergency services. "We just received



Courtesy photo

**Dee Dee Drake oversaw the transformation of an old farmhouse to the brightly colored Calaveras Humane Society's new headquarters and adoption center.**

another grant from the Calaveras Community Foundation, which has funded the program since 2017," said Dee Dee. "We also offer seniors half price off the adoption fee if the animal is 3

years (old) or older, and waive the fee for any military veteran."

"Pet adoptions have been much more successful than I expected," Dee Dee beamed. "We charge a very reasonable adoption fee, considering that we include dental, spay/neuter, vaccine, heartworm and flea control services prior to adoption. We actually can lose money on adoptions, but we want to keep it affordable."

"Our volunteers are wonderful and provide the extras for the animals – enrichment, exercise and cuddles," she relayed. "Anyone wishing to volunteer may visit the CHS website, [www.calaverashumane.org](http://www.calaverashumane.org), to see when the next training and orientation is scheduled. We have a very dedicated group, so openings don't happen that often."

The CHS Adoption Center, 1209 Highway 49 in Angels Camp, is open Wednesdays through Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., and walk-ins are welcome. "Those seeking to adopt a specific breed or color of pet can call us, and we'll do everything we can to get them what they want," added Dee Dee.

Volunteers also crochet blankets for the animals, which gives

them something familiar when they go to their new forever home. And students who need community service put on food drives for the Pet Food Bank.

"We average about 500 adoptions a year," Dee Dee said.

tions have been down since the pandemic, as all non-profits have experienced. Residents can opt to make a donation on our website and have the ability to donate on a monthly basis, as well. That really helps our bud-



Courtesy photo

**No metal bars in this facility! Cats and kittens are housed in either glass-fronted condos or in the cage-free Cat Lounge, complete with climbing structures, a fully enclosed "catio" and plenty of snuggling spots.**

"About 75% of our animals are transferred from the county animal shelter and Tuolumne Animal Control. I have a great working relationship with Mike Vasquez from CCAC. We've known each other a long time when we worked at the SF ASPCA. They do everything they can to keep from euthanization and deserve more funding."

She continued, "Cash dona-

ting process and helps us to say 'yes.'"

"I have been bowled over with how supportive the residents are," she added. "I love what I do, and I love living here."

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