



SNIP rescued hundreds of animals from fires

This cat suffered burns during the Klamathon Fire and was subsequently surrendered to SNIP by its former owner. The cat is currently being fostered and on Aug. 20, his new owner will take him home. That new owner is a CAL FIRE firefighter, who has named the cat “Whiskers.” SNIP President Alisa Fraser said Whiskers is “doing awesome.” Though he is experiencing some lung issues as a result of the fire, his paws are healing well and fur is returning to places where it was burned away.

And over the past month, SNIP volunteers have been busy rescuing animals from the Klamathon and Carr fires.

The Siskiyou Spay Neuter Incentive Program, commonly known as SNIP, will be partnering with Siskiyou Domestic Violence & Crisis Center to provide a building with kennels that will house pets that come from domestic violence living situations. The partnership came after SDV&CC received a \$20,000 from Red Rover, which provides support and resources for pet owners in need. SNIP has \$7,000 to put toward the building – which will be built behind its current office on Executive Court in Yreka – but is hoping to raise more money from community donations in order to add more kennels to the building.

Over the past month, SNIP volunteers have been busy rescuing animals from a different kind of scary situation – the Klamathon and Carr fires. The volunteers helped move over 100 dogs and over 125 cats during the Klamathon Fire in Hornbrook, and over 750 animals during the Carr Fire.

The new building would help SNIP in its quest to provide for the welfare of animals, in addition to the extensive work the nonprofit does in offering low cost spay and neuter procedures for dogs and cats in Siskiyou County.

SNIP's history

SNIP was started 16 years ago by Cheryl and Tim Webber. The organization provides emergency fostering, rescuing and rehoming. Those services are in addition to the low cost spay and neuter services for which SNIP was originally founded, with the mission to end dog and cat overpopulation locally. Spay and neuter operations are performed by Dr. Dakota Woodard of Companion Animal Mobile Veterinary Services, based out of Dorris. SNIP President Alisa Fraser explained that Woodard makes nearly no money from the work, as the operations are offered at a significantly reduced price through SNIP.

Thus far, 2018 has been an eventful year for SNIP, Fraser reported. Six months ago, the nonprofit purchased a new space for its operations, located at 218 Executive Court in Yreka. The property has space behind the current building where SNIP hopes to build its new space for pets that come from homes affected

by domestic violence. Though the new building would be able to house other animals as well, animals with owners in domestic violence situations have an urgent need for a place to go.

“I don’t think a lot of people are aware that not having anywhere to take pets is a common excuse for people to stay in abusive situations,” said SNIP treasurer Jason Rutland. Ensuring that the SNIP facility always has room for those animals in particular is one of the organization’s primary focuses moving forward.

Fire rescues

Fraser thanked Heavenly Hauling Transport and Rescue, an animal hauling service out of Central Point, Oregon, for helping evacuate animals during the Klamathon and Carr fires. Heavenly Hauling owner DJ Longbrake provided her services to help transport animals away from harm.

Longbrake also helped take supplies to Trinity Animal Control in Weaverville during the Carr fire, as TAC had run out of animal food and crates. SNIP was able to facilitate the communication between TAC and Longbrake’s Heavenly Hauling.

Evacuating animals from the zone of the fires was a round the clock job, Fraser and Rutland said, with volunteers often working 24 hours a day to get the cats and dogs – and birds – to a safe place.

The emergency situations created by the Klamathon and Carr fires were the impetus behind another goal of SNIP’s; Rutland said that the creation of an easily deployable emergency kennel system will be invaluable in rescuing animals during disaster events in the future. This would mean a trailer filled with kennels that could be easily and quickly transported to a staging area.

Dogs rescued from the fires by SNIP were kept cool with fans and misters, Rutland said. Providing that comfort for the animals went a long way, he explained. “The dogs were wagging their tails, not barking. They were happy,” he said. It also helped that volunteers made sure the dogs were walked two to three times a day.

It was because of the Klamathon Fire, too, that Rutland began volunteering with SNIP in the first place. Since moving to Siskiyou County from the Ventura,

California, area with his wife and children seven years ago, Rutland and his family have lived off the grid. He and his wife run a Facebook page called Off Grid Living and Homesteading, which boasts nearly 300,000 members. He explained that one of the values that he's worked to instill in his five kids is to be of use to their community.

So when the Klamathon Fire broke out, Rutland set about figuring out how he could help. He was told by Siskiyou County Animal Control that pig food was needed at the fairgrounds, so he brought a load of food for the pigs around midnight. He also posted on the Siskiyou County Grapevine Facebook page, offering to help whomever might be in need during the fire. Not long after, he began helping out at SNIP, first with putting together kennels, and now as the organization's treasurer – a natural fit given his background in finance.

Rutland spoke about how he was impacted by helping get pets to safety during the Klamathon. "I watched people who had just lost everything find a little joy in having their animals right there with them," he said. Pet owners were able to sit alongside their animals in a cool space thanks to SNIP's efforts – a comfort that meant a lot to those who had just lost nearly everything.

People from the other end of the state volunteered to help SNIP with the pet rescues as well. Kelsey and Kurt Doehner of San Diego, California, stayed in Siskiyou County for days to help get animals to safety. Asked what was keeping them from going back home, Rutland said they told him they had never experienced anything like the community effort that sprang up after the fire. Seeing people do so much to help one another after so much tragedy, inspired them, and the couple now hopes to implement a "five-year plan" to move to Siskiyou County, Rutland said.

The community spirit in the county struck Rutland, too, especially having come from a large city in Southern California. "In Siskiyou County, everyone wants to help and make the community better," he reflected. He added, "And a lot of people don't have much money. It's great to see compassion as the exchangeable commodity."

How to help

Being able to make a difference in the lives of people and animals is both Rutland and Fraser's favorite part of what they do through SNIP, they said. SNIP runs strictly on volunteers, donations and grants, though the latter is not as easy to come by, in large part because of Siskiyou County's relatively low population.

While the \$20,000 grant awarded to SDV&CC coupled with the \$7,000 from SNIP will fund the construction of a building with four kennels, donations from the community are needed to add on more kennels, and to support SNIP's many services to Siskiyou County. Rutland is confident that locals will help the organization with those goals. "I have every confidence in this community that the help will come," he said, "I've seen it myself before."

To make a donation toward the new building goal, or to SNIP in general, send a check or money order to SNIP, 218 Executive Court, Yreka, CA 96097. Specify on the "memo" line if you would like the money to go toward the new building. To schedule a spay or neuter operation for your pet, call (530) 926-1196. SNIP is also in need of volunteers to help with paperwork for its spay and neuter clinics. Visit SNIP's Facebook page for more information.

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