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{ ANIMALS }

CARE4Paws

These days, it shouldn't be news to anyone that animal shelters across the country are busting at the seams with unwanted four-legged critters. In Santa Barbara, the nonprofit organization CARE4Paws is a community outreach program created for the express purpose of promoting responsible pet ownership through educational workshops, spay/neuter clinics, and adoption fairs. This summer CARE4Paws is hosting a number of events designed to help folks learn how to be conscientious pet owners.

CARE4Paws sponsors **spay/neuter clinics** at different locations in the area for spaying and neutering your dog or cat, as well as facilitating pet adoptions. By spaying or neutering your pet, you can help reduce the number of homeless pets, and also bring down the number of animals that go into shelters each year. The foundation works with area animal shelters to help increase adoptions and find each pet a loving family. (Check its Web site for the next spay/neuter clinic.)

According to CARE4Paws statistics, approximately 8 million to 10 million dogs and cats are given up to shelters annually. Local governments have to pay billions of dollars to have the majority of these euthanized. Currently, only about one out of every 10 pets finds a family. The ratio is even larger for pit bulls—one out of 600—which have a rather unsavory reputation that is sometimes undeserved. **Project ResponsiBull** focuses on the dos and don'ts of owning a pit, provides obedience training, and offers free spaying and neutering in the hope of reducing the large population that ends up in shelters. The next ResponsiBull workshop is July 20, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., at the Santa Maria Valley Humane Society, 751 Black Road; call 349-3435 or see smvhs.org.

Pet-care workshops are not limited to adults. CARE4Paws also sponsors **Pawsitive Thinking**, an hour-long elementary school program that teaches children basic animal care, how to incorporate a dog into the family, the importance of spaying and neutering, and common cat traits and behaviors, among other things. Teachers or parents can contact CARE4Paws to arrange a presentation. (There is a corresponding children's book entitled *Pawsitive Thinking: How to Be Your Pet's Best Pal*, which is available at the Tecolote Bookstore, 1470 E.



Valley Rd., Montecito. There will be a book-signing Saturday, June 19, 2-4 p.m.)

To top off the number of programs running this summer, CARE4Paws will be collaborating with area cat rescue and adoption agency **ResQCats** to spay and neuter at least 100 cats throughout the county. Just like with dogs, it is important to control the cat population to keep from overwhelming shelters that may not be able to support every cat they take into their care.

Other CARE4Paws offerings include the children's program **K9 and Feline Ambassadorships**, **VIP Shelter Tours**, and the second annual **Wags 'n' Whiskers Festival**, at which, along with activities such as animal training demos, pet portraits, and pet first-aid demos, shelters and rescue groups will show their adoptable dogs and cats. The event takes place Sunday, August 29, at Girsh Park.

So, while you're spending time with your furry best friend this summer, keep in mind what is best for them and remember to be a responsible pet owner. If you don't own a pet but would like to, consider adopting from one of the county's myriad animal shelters.

—Kelly Jones

4.1.1 For more information about **CARE4Paws** programs, call 968-CARE (2273), email info@care4paws.org, or visit care4paws.org.