

HUMANITARIAN AWARDS

SPCA brings home national accolades

Animal Shelter

By ALIA WILSON

awilson@santacruzsentinel.com

SANTA CRUZ — Santa Cruz SPCA's Executive Director Lisa Carter was named the nation's top animal welfare lobbyist and her shelter landed third place for exemplary shelter in "The American Dog" magazine's first Humanitarian Awards this week.

Readers, subscribers and fans of "The American Dog" magazine — a "life-style" dog magazine — chose the winners by voting online for their favorite person or organization in 25 categories. Categories ranged from Service Dog Training Organization to Spokesdog for a Charitable Cause. Founded in 2006, the magazine is published quarterly and reaches about 500,000 people nationwide.

About 27,000 votes were cast for the contest, according to Carter.

The Santa Cruz SPCA's website also won first place for best animal welfare website.

"Looking at some of the sizes of the organizations we've gone up against and how amazing they are, it's like the biggest win I've ever won in my life," Carter said.

Carter was contacted by the magazine editor four weeks ago and told she



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Santa Cruz SPCA Executive Director Lisa Carter has been honored for her work by 'The American Dog' magazine. The Santa Cruz shelter also ranked third place for exemplary shelter.

had been nominated. The local SPCA crew rallied for Carter and the shelter by encouraging fans, friends and clients to vote online. The last day to vote was Dec. 5.

The big prize is a three-page spread in the magazine's next issue.

"Personally, for me, it's a validation," Carter said. "We went up against some people who are highly respected in the animal welfare industry who dedicate their lives just to lobbying."

Santa Cruz SPCA staff and Carter are no strangers to advocating for animals. About 15 years ago, their efforts helped pass the spay/neuter law in Santa Cruz County. Since the law has been in effect, euthanasia has decreased by 70 percent in the county, Carter said. She regularly travels to surrounding counties and across the nation advocating for spay/neuter laws.

Looking back at the past year, Carter said the shelter has faced several challenges, but passionate staff and volunteers constantly push things forward.

"Our biggest struggle has been food donations for our food bank, having to spend over \$600 for just one week last month to be able to help all of the people that were in line for food for their dogs and cats," Carter said.

"Although donations and adoptions have been down, volunteers and staff remain committed to keeping our adoption rates as high as possible."

To see the rest of the contest winners, visit www.theamericandogmag.com.