



Victoria Manley

These kittens are some of the more than 40 animals currently housed at the Watsonville's new animal shelter.

Animal shelter opens its doors

By VICTORIA MANLEY

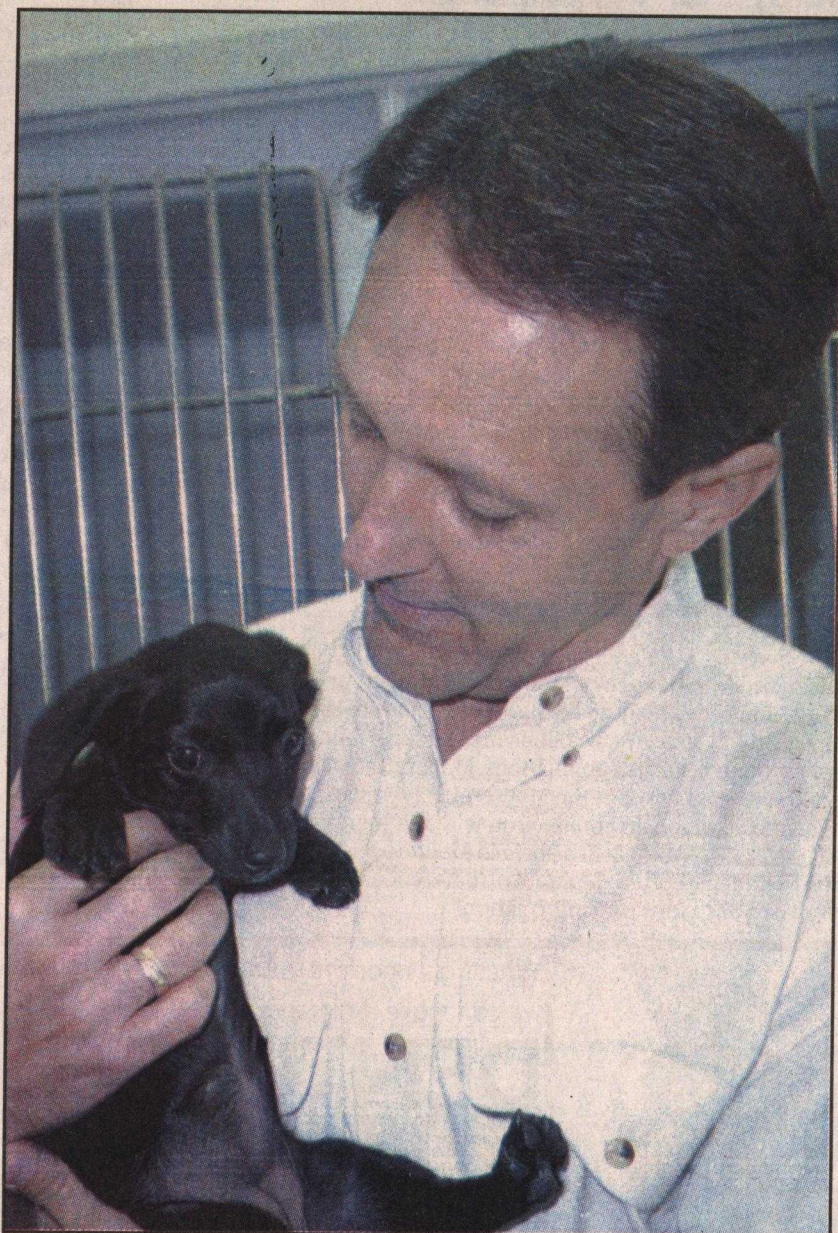
STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — Poodles, Siamese kittens and full-size tabbies — they were once roaming the city streets without a home. Now, thanks to a resident who passed away eight years ago and left money for their care, these animals now have a temporary home until they are ready for adoption.

The new Watsonville Animal Shelter welcomed residents to its open house Saturday, introducing those interested to the 40 animals housed in the facility. Adorable puppies, kittens and adult animals were up as potential adoptive parents cuddled and played with them.

Bill Meade, vice president for the non-profit organization set up to build the shelter, said its creation was made possible by Gabrielle Olive Vierra.

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Bill Meade, who oversees the management of the city's new animal shelter, holds a four-month-old puppy that is ready for adoptive parents.

SHELTER

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A native of France, Vierra was a long-time resident of Watsonville and was known for her love of animals.

"She wanted to see a shelter in Watsonville that was a life-saving place," said Meade, who oversees the management and care of the animals at the shelter.

"Our goal is not to be a shelter that just puts animals to sleep."

Meade said that in line with the shelter's "no-kill goal," they hope to maximize their amount of adoptions, emphasizing pet education for those who are going to adopt. They offer an educational video for the families and follow-up visits for the animals.

"The main problem is educating owners on being responsible for their pets," he said. "Animals are not things just to be thrown away like a broken toy."

Because the shelter is low on resources — there currently are only three staff members — they are seeking volunteers to help with fol-

low-up visits, fielding shelter sponsorship and animal grooming.

Visitors to the shelter enjoyed free drinks and pastries, and were offered tours of the facility.

Visitor Jane Soares said she was drawn to the shelter by her love of animals, and was impressed with the shelter's welcoming atmosphere for its residents.

"I didn't think it would be this big," she said. "It's neat."

Daniel M. Silvernail, the project architect for the shelter, said construction was a long time coming, with two site changes that delayed putting it up for more than a year.

"It's a lot more alive now," said Silvernail. "It's exciting that it's finished."

Meade said the facility, which has been open since mid-July, is intended to serve the people of Watsonville and the estimated 1,000 lost or stray animals in the city.

The shelter is open Monday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Tuesdays and Thursdays, when it is open until 7 p.m.

For more information on volunteer opportunities or adoption, call the shelter at (408) 728-6078.