



ANIMAL CHARM Members of CAPE strive to protect animals in trouble.

Animal Welfare
The Good Life

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How CAPE is changing the lives of homeless animals forever | **BY LESLIE PATRICK**

Once upon a time there lived a potbellied pig named Gus, who enjoyed nothing more than to frolic about in the mud. One day, Gus' owners left him all alone; abandoned in his pen without a speck of food or drop of water. A week went by, and just as Gus was about to give up all hope, he was rescued by the Center for Animal Protection and Education (CAPE). Now Gus is a happy pig, wallowing in the dirt and reveling in the fact that he was delivered into a new, carefree lifestyle. But this is not the end of this tale; in fact, it's just the beginning.

Nestled amongst the mottled redwoods of Ben Lomond lies CAPE headquarters. The four-legged residents here are as content as can be. There's Nester the donkey, Donald the turkey, and various chickens, cats and dogs. And, of course, Gus the pig, now contentedly ensconced in a pen with his girlfriend Phoebe. This integral community nonprofit organization dedicated to the humane treatment of the animal kingdom is a veritable dream come true for homeless animals in dire need of loving homes. Begun in 1992, the goal of CAPE is to provide care and assistance to neglected animals—big or small. Ninety-nine percent of the ani-

mals CAPE assists are rescued from animal shelters, when the creature has less than 24 hours before it is euthanized. Once the animal has been rescued from imminent death, it is placed either in a foster home or housed at CAPE where its personality can be evaluated and it can garner socialization, housetraining, and other skills that will make the animal more likely to be adopted. Most of these rescued animals are placed in foster care provided by numerous volunteers. Between 60 and 70 animals are placed in these homes each year, with a grand total of 1,262 adopted over the past 16 years. While this number seems like a triumph, "It's a drop in the bucket compared to the countless homeless animals still out there. It's getting more and more difficult to place the animals because for the past few years, people have started doing so much online. Nowadays, animals in the local shelters are having to compete with websites like petfinder.com. I always tell people that if they want to adopt an animal, visit the shelters first," says JP Novic, Executive Director and one of the co-founders of CAPE. Many of the animals CAPE rescued were not initially adopted from shelters because they were considered too old or because they

had a medical condition. But once the animal is taken under CAPE's wing, it is assured a loving home for the remainder of its days. "We have a rigorous adoption program to ensure the best fit for all parties – it's like adopting a child!" says Novic.

By working collaboratively with other organizations in Santa Cruz County, CAPE is able to find the best solutions for homeless animals. CAPE also diligently works to educate the community by giving presentations in schools and adult community groups on topics including pet overpopulation, the use of animals in medical research, and other consequential animal rights issues. Educational television programs and documentary films—including *Old Friends*, a documentary featuring the joys of animal adoption that has won awards at various film festivals—round out the educational components CAPE offers. A partnership with Compassion Without Borders has also enabled CAPE to reach out to stray and abused dogs in Mexico, providing them with new, loving homes in the U.S. for the remainder of their days. Novic says, "We advocate on behalf of all living beings that they be treated humanely." Now there's a happy ending for you.