'We all want the same thing — To get these animals into good homes.'

WATSONVILLE

Shelter back in city's hands

By JULIET LEYBA

SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

oon, the Watsonville Police Department will be doing a lot more than writing tickets and chasing down criminals. Officers also will be responsible for overseeing dogcatch-

Don't be surprised if some officers end up adopting a pet or two.

The Monterey County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had run the shelter on Airport Boulevard, which houses up to 40 cats and 22 dogs, for the last 18 months. But staffing and logistical problems ended that arrangement, putting the responsibility back in the city's lap.

The Police Department's interim animal-shelter manager, Carrie Carlin, said the new arrangement has already resulted in one place-

"Yesterday I brought a beautiful stray German shepherd to the station and lo and behold Capt. Manny Solano fell for him. His wife came by and picked him up this morn-

With three young boys at the Solano home, the dog, tentatively named Duke, will get plenty of attention and exercise.

"The boys took to him right away. He's very sweet," said Solano's wife, Megan. "He loves the yard and is going to be a great addition to our family.

The Police Department got involved in running the shelter as part of deal struck between the Monterey County SPCA and the

city on July 7.

City Manager Carlos Palacios said city officials decided the most logical move was to have the Police Department return to running the shelter and taking over animal-con-

"In the past they have been the ones to run it and they enforce laws involving public safety and ani-

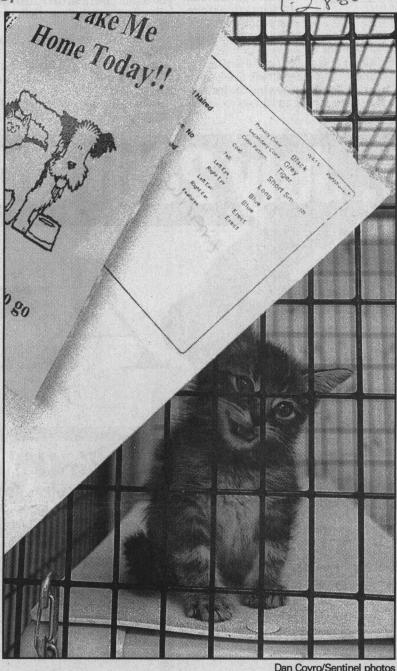
mals," he said.

Nan Williams, interim executive director of the Monterey County SPCA, said her organization was called in after the city ended a relationship with Humane Animal Care Services because of dissatisfaction with the quality of care and

But, the Monterey County group,



Mara Correa unhooks one of the Watsonville Animal Shelter cats from Annelise Merriner. The two teens volunteer their time at the shelter now being run by the Watsonville Police Department.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

The city will maintain a relationship with the Monterey County SPCA including 'animal trading' between Monterey and Watsonville to maximize the animal's exposure to the public.

with its own shelter to run an hour's drive away, wasn't able to carry on.

"What we thought it would be a win-win situation turned out to be too difficult logistically," Williams said. "Remote management left us understaffed and spending too much time on the road. We had to spread ourselves very thin to properly maintain both shelters.

The pressure mounted after the shelter lost two key employees, a supervisor and customer service representative a few months ago leaving no one at the helm.

In an effort to salvage the shelter before it turned into a "crisis situa-Williams arranged a meeting with Eric Frost, administrative services director for the city, and police Capt. Jim Brown to discuss the possibility of turning the shelter over to the city.

"The city has shown a great commitment to the shelter by agreeing to include it as a department under their control." Williams said.

Police Chief Terry Medina said several changes are planned at the

"We are going to make the current and future staff into city employees and ultimate management control will reside with Capt. Jim Brown. The shelter will essentially become one part of the Police Department.'

Euthanasia, however, will remain unchanged said Dorothy Lopez, the shelter's animal control

"We will continue with the onsite practice as needed. For us, it's the last resort and we try to limit it to severely injured animals.

Williams said the SPCA has agreed to maintain a relationship with the shelter as "knowledge consultants" and will contract out any training or expertise needed to help make the shelter a success.

Carlin, the interim manager, added that the relationship will also include "animal trading" between Monterey and Watsonville to maximize exposure to the public and to create a better chance for adoption.

"We all want the same thing," Carlin said. "To get these animals

into good homes.