

# Animal shelter back on its feet

## Police are proud of transition, success

By VICTORIA MANLEY

STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — Watsonville police are proud of themselves and the job they've done handling the services at the city's animal shelter, now nearly two weeks since they took it over from the former occupants.

Watsonville Police Capt. Mickey Aluffi expressed satisfaction and pride Friday over the transition made between Humane Animal Care Services (HACS) and the Watsonville Police Department as managers of the shelter, now called City of Watsonville Animal Shelter.

"I'm very excited about it. I think it's in really good shape, and I think that the animals are receiving good care," Aluffi said.

Carrie Carlin of the police department is serving as interim facilities manager until the city selects a bidder to permanently run the facility. The shelter, located at 580 Airport Blvd., collects and receives stray animals, cares for them and releases them for adoption.

Carlin, who has been involved with the animal patrol for the 10 years she's been with the department, said she cares for the animals and their futures, and is working hard to make sure the transition in management is smooth for them and the community.

"With something like this, you

want to make sure the transition is as smooth as possible," Carlin said. "I want happiness, health and safety for these animals."

When the police began running the shelter Oct. 4, Carlin said, the facility was rather full with animals. Though many are still available for adoption, she said many have already been adopted and gone on to live in homes.

"The adoption rate is high — we are finding homes for these babies," she said.

Many of the animals that have not yet been adopted, she said, are pit bulls and Rottweilers — for animals such as these who are not being adopted, Carlin said she contacts animal rescue agencies, which seek particular animals for breeding, to find help.

Carlin applauded the outreach efforts by community members — she said there are currently about 15 volunteers at the shelter. "I have people calling every day who want to volunteer," she said.

Outreach is not just coming from Watsonville residents — Carlin said she is receiving help from as far as Scotts Valley. Shannon Henderson, office manager of the Scotts Valley Veterinary Clinic, has gathered various local veterinarians to donate their time and supplies to give free feline leukemia testing for the shelter's cats Monday.

Despite concerns expressed by former HACS staff and certain community members, Aluffi said he is pleased with Carlin's work, and that he is sure he appointed the right person to her job.

"It wouldn't be possible without her," he said. "We're really lucky to have her."

Aluffi said that since the city officially sent its request for proposals from potential bidders on the shelter early this month, he has received four — including at least one local animal care provider.

The deadline for submitting bid proposals comes Wednesday, and city officials will begin reviewing them the next day, he said.

Watsonville City Manager Carlos Palacios broke the city's contract with HACS two months ago, and the Watsonville City Council authorized last month that a request for proposals be sent out to prospective bidders.

Palacios went on record saying the city had "many, many problems" with the services HACS was providing, which included complaints about customer service and animal control.

The complaints did not go without argument from HACS Vice President Bill Meade, nor did the termination of their contract. City officials are currently anticipating litigation from Meade, who has retained a lawyer for consultation.