

The FACE Foundation

The FACE Foundation was created in 2006 by a team of veterinarians and community members from the Veterinary Specialty Hospital in San Diego, California, with a mission to enhance and preserve the quality of life of animals by providing access to necessary medical care and education to the people of San Diego County.

BY REBECCA MCKINLEY

Photos courtesy of The FACE Foundation



There is really “something to bark about” in this issue of everydog! We recently found out about an amazing organization that goes by the name of the FACE Foundation. FACE is the acronym for Foundation for Animal Care and Education. This gutsy group of folks is making sure that animals receive the medical care they need when their owners are unable to afford the costs. They are also educating the public on ways to become responsible pet owners.

The FACE Foundation was created in 2006 by a team of veterinarians and community members from the Veterinary Specialty Hospital in San Diego, California. They chose to battle what is being labeled as “economic euthanasia.” This group came to realize that a significant pet population with treatable medical conditions was being euthanized because their owners did not have the money to have them treated. The official mission of FACE is to enhance and preserve the quality of life of animals by providing access to necessary medical care and education to the people of San Diego County. With very few Americans able to dodge the financial crunch of recent years, the number

of people unable to afford the critical medical attention that their sick or injured pets need, has increased at a disturbing rate. These medical needs are often sudden and totally unexpected, coming at a time when pet owners are struggling to make ends meet in an economy out of their control.

To their knowledge, the FACE Foundation is unique in that they are the only organization totally dedicated to offering the high level of care that they do to saving the lives of pets that already live in loving homes. These animals just belong to families that find themselves in precarious situations where they cannot pay for all, or at least part, of the needed emergency or critical care that their pets require. Treatment assistance is funded in the form of grants from the FACE Foundation with an average amount of \$1,600 per case. Up to this point, they have granted in excess of \$484,000 towards saving the lives of pets in critical need. They have rescued the futures of an astounding 294 animals. Having just experienced their biggest year yet with 112 cases in 2010, their goals for this year are even greater. In 2011 they hope to provide \$210,000 in grants to save 140 more pets. Already in January of this year alone, they granted \$30,000 to save family pets.

FACE serves the physical needs of both dogs and cats; however the majority of the people that contact them for assistance have dogs. They deal with a very broad range of medical issues, but one of their most common in dogs is fractures. This often occurs in small dogs when jumping from a bed or couch, or from being dropped or stepped on. Other typical cases that they deal with are dogs that have been hit by cars and pyometra in unspayed female dogs, a serious infection of the uterus that can be fatal if left untreated.

When working with people who love and adore their pets, but are facing dire circumstances, conversations often become emotional. The pet owners are very concerned about their pets, worried about their survival, and placed in a position of having to ask for the help of people they don't even know. The magnificent people at the FACE Foundation are very aware of the pain these pet owners are going through. In addition to providing financial assistance, they also offer emotional support and understanding to those going through such a difficult time.



The foundation performs their generous undertaking with only two full-time and one part-time paid staff members. They are also backed by a Board of Directors made up of eight concerned community members. On a daily basis there are usually 5-6 interns or volunteers in the office, helping with the day-to-day activities such as event planning, marketing, screening of potential cases and answering the phones. About 125 volunteers help out as needed during special events. FACE has worked with 53 vets throughout San Diego County who generously discount their fees by at least 25% to support the cause, with some providing even greater discounts.

This incredible organization has so many wonderful stories of success to tell, but we will share just a few to give you an idea of the work they do. Daisy is a very touching story of an American Bulldog mix. Her owner is a Marine from San Diego who has served multiple tours overseas. He came home from Iraq in December just a week after his daughter was born. The pregnancy was very high risk with danger to both the mother and child. Both of them



made it. Very soon after this, his grandmother who lives with the family, fell unconscious behind a locked door. Daisy stood by as they knocked down the door, and she slept by the grandmother's bed while she was hospitalized, waiting for her to come home. The next day, as the Marine was getting ready to go to the hospital to visit, Daisy chased a ball down the street and was tragically hit by a truck. Her owner was forced to watch as her body was dragged under the vehicle. She was badly injured, but still alive. At the animal hospital, the initial payment for surgery was \$2,000. Her owner told them to do whatever they had to in order to save her. After asking everyone to pray for his best friend Daisy, friends generously put together another \$2,500 to help and still that only covered a fraction of the necessary costs for Daisy to survive. Thankfully, after serving our country for eight years, this Marine's friends and the FACE Foundation stepped in to support and save Daisy. As a matter of fact, a couple of FACE donors volunteered to pay the entire remaining bill. Daisy is currently recovering and living happily with her Marine and his family.

Then there is Shadow, whose owners lived on a limited income while raising two young children. After ingesting snail bait, Shadow began to lose control of her back legs, started vomiting, experienced severe tremors and had to be rushed to the vet. She is alive today because of the financial assistance provided by the FACE Foundation... And there is Rocky who innocently coughed up a treat that somehow got stuck in his lung, causing pneumonia, and a great deal of pain. His little body was not strong enough to fight the infection, even with antibiotics. Lung surgery was his only option. Without the support of the FACE Foundation his owners would not have been able to afford the surgery, and his only option would have been euthanasia... Rambo's mom still cries tears of joy when she thinks of how FACE funded his life saving heart surgery, and just in time for him to celebrate Valentine's Day with his family... Even though we are a dog magazine, we just have to share one of their most interesting cases that involved two cats. They came into the world with birth defects that caused them to be born flat. They needed a specialized surgery that would give their rib cages a natural curve and prevent it from growing into their hearts, killing them before they were 12-weeks old. Because of their flat shape at birth, their owner gave them the appropriately cute names of Pancake and Tortilla! With a grant from the FACE Foundation, these adorable cats will grow



up to pounce and play just like they were meant to...and the list goes on and continues to grow.

A really terrific fundraiser that FACE does is to allow people to pay tribute to the unconditional love they receive from their pets by honoring or memorializing them on a Tree of Life Mural. This spectacular 65-foot mural is located at the Veterinary Specialty Hospital in Sorrento Valley. For a \$150 donation, a dog's name is painted on a leaf of the tree. For a very generous \$5,000 donation a full-scale rendering of the donator's dog is painted into the beautiful landscape. This is such a creative and fun way to show love to dogs, and to support the work that the FACE Foundation does to save lives and support families.

The FACE Foundation has come such a long way in a very short period of time, affecting the lives of so many animals and their owners. They will be celebrating their five-year anniversary this summer. Each year they strive to rescue the lives of more animals than the last. Their greatest need to continue their growth and life changing work

is monetary donations. As the money comes in, they turn around and grant it right back out to help pay the medical expenses required to assist struggling pet owners and their greatly loved animals. 🐾

Anyone wishing to assist the FACE Foundation with their mission, or to find out more, can contact them by phone at 858-450-FACE (3223) or visit their website at <http://www.face4pets.org>. Simply point to the About Us tab then click on Contact Us. While you are on their website, be sure to take a few minutes to look at all of their interesting information, great stories and wonderful photographs.

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