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# WineaPAWlooza 2017 raises \$1.3 million for animal welfare and rescue — but who is rescuing whom?

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Rob Johnson and his pig, Mr. Moo, headed this year's WineaPAWlooza Pet Parade.

- Tim Carl photo



Bill Vizza, one of first volunteers at Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch is a “dog walker extraordinaire, according to Deassa Binstock, left, manager of adoptions and foster care.

Tom Gamble, owner of Gamble Family Vineyards, readies for the 4th annual WineaPAWlooza auction to benefit the Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch. The event took place on the Gambles’ vineyards in Oakville and included one of their wines, Cairo Cabernet Sauvignon, which was named after one of their rescue dogs.

- Tim Carl photo







From left, Deassa Binstock, manager of adoptions and foster care, co-founder of Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch, Monica Stevens and volunteers, Julie Bradley and Tina Crivell, prepare for the Pet Parade with a rescued donkey and goat at the fourth annual WineaPAWlooza event, held at the Gamble Family Vineyards in Oakville.

- Tim Carl photo

When Tom Gamble saw the puppy on the side of the road, he hesitated for only a second before pulling over.

“He was chasing a car down the side of the road, and when it didn’t stop for him I just pulled over,” Gamble said as he readied for the fourth annual WineaPAWlooza auction held at the Gamble Family Vineyards in Oakville.

“When I opened the passenger side door he ran up, gave me a lick and then jumped right into the car,” Gamble said. “By the size of the ticks on him he must have been out there for days, maybe longer. We named him Cairo, but his nickname was Velcro because we were pretty much always together. He has

since died, but he's still remembered. We named a wine after him that we are serving to the guests tonight.”

The proceeds of the WinePAWlooza annual auction go to Napa Valley's Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch.

“We are grateful to the Gambles and the entire community for their overwhelming support of JARR's mission,” said the organization's founder, Monica Stevens. “The success we've had helping animals is my motivation to keep going. I don't get paid — I am like any other of the many volunteers that help. For me physically, this is demanding but worth every drop of effort.”

## **Lifetime animal advocates**

Stevens and her husband, David, founded the ranch in 2014. The Stevenses, owners of 750 Wines, an exclusive retail wine shop in St. Helena, created the nonprofit to end animal cruelty and overpopulation in the Napa Valley and beyond. As a part of their mission JARR provides transitional and permanent shelter coordination, adoption and rescue services; pet-food and pet-care assistantship for seniors, the homeless and low-income families; and more.

“Since our inception we have helped place over 500 rescued animals with adopted families,” Stevens said. “And in just the last year alone we have spayed or neutered over 1,000 animals, had 500 animals vaccinated and microchipped, funded 20 emergency surgeries and we've gone from three to 12 programs that are all based on helping animals, including launching Ella's CatHouse in January.”

## **Napa's newest cathouse**

Located at 1009 Caymus St., Napa, the recently opened Ella's CatHouse and Catnip Bar is a cage-free, no-kill adoption center for cats. It is the first of its kind in the Napa Valley. The center is named after JARR's past WineaPAWlooza auction chairwoman Vanessa Conlin's beloved cat, who died in 2016.

"Cats are not like dogs that you can just take on a leash to a possible foster family, and so Ella's allows people to come get to know these animals in a relaxed space," said Brenda Jones, who is one of the volunteers — called a lead-cat specialist — at the center. "Since we opened six months ago, we've had 42 cats adopted. The space also allows people to come learn or just hang out with cats if for whatever reason they can't have one where they live."

## **Reducing kill rates**

"At one point, Napa County had a 48 percent kill rate for cats that had been placed in shelters — Ella's provides another way to reduce that number," Stevens said. "Of course that rate has also been decreased dramatically as a result of Measure A that we got passed with 78 percent of the vote in Napa just last year."

Beyond being a no-kill rescue and sanctuary in the Napa Valley for companion and farm animals in trouble, part of JARR's mission is to provide supportive services such as spaying and neutering for those owners who cannot afford them.

"We not only place animals in forever homes, but through our emergency and assist fund we've been able to help existing pet owners keep their animals." said Deassa Binstock, manager of adoptions and foster care. "Part of what we

do is to help educate people on animal care, but we also train animals. And we're not just helping dogs and cats. We've rescued donkeys, rabbits, horses, pigs, goats, any farm or domestic animal, we've even done some chinchilla rehoming as well."

## **Planning**

In three years, the Stevenses have created what many consider a model for community-based animal care that will include building an animal-rescue home base in Carneros.

"We just went into contract for a 4-acre property down in Carneros," Stevens said. "The property is \$2.3 million and will serve as our headquarters. It's cooler down there for both the animals and people. It is also the gateway to the Napa Valley, which we feel is appropriate — people stopping in to see the animals before they come to this farming community."

## **Treating both animals and auction attendees well**

"I believe that you can judge a farming community by the way it treats their animals," said Carlo Mondavi, owner of RAEN Winery and grandson to famed Napa vintner Robert Mondavi. "I support JARR because animals need a voice and need to be protected and cared for. We have the wherewithal to do this and so we should."

As a part of Mondavi's support, he acted as co-chairman of the auction this year, helping to bring in offerings from some of the valley's most prestigious wineries, and even a little beer.

"In collaboration with Jasmine Hirsch of Hirsch Vineyards and Tesla, the car company, we've created a dream weekend for lovers of pinot noirs from our

vineyard on the Sonoma coast,” Mondavi said. “We’ve also donated a weekend for 10 people with my business partners Elliot Taylor and Jacob Busch. This lot includes a weekend experience and a barrel of our Barrels and Sons Brewery pilsners-style beer that we make right here in the Napa Valley.”

Prior to the auction, guests enjoyed a wine tasting with more than 50 local vintners and restaurants sharing their wine and food, with only one restriction.

“We are a no-kill organization, so we only serve vegetarian and vegan fare — it’s only right,” Stevens said.

“It can be a challenge to find just the right vegan match that pairs with wine,” said Ethan Speizer, owner of Nuri catering in Napa. “I cook lots of types of food, but people are shifting and chefs are getting creative, finding ways to make it work. People now not only want to eat healthy, delicious food, but they also want to feel good about what they are eating. Plus we live in a place where fresh vegetables are spectacular, so there’s lots of options.”

After enjoying the initial libations, guests, volunteers and animals all gathered to form a Pet Parade as they made their way to the auction tent, where Napa Valley auctioneer Fritz Hatton encouraged the packed house to raise their paddles for the cause.

The night was full of surprises: an unveiling of an emergency trailer for horses and large-animal rescue, heart-felt stories of rescue animals changing the lives of families and even a chance to dance to live music from the local band Wrist Rocket. By the end of the night, it seemed that no guests walked away unmoved.

## **Saving souls**

“Cairo passed, but he was my constant companion for 15 years,” Gamble said.

“We were inseparable — Velcro — and I am pleased that tonight we’ve shared our ranch and some of our Cairo wine.”

After a long pause, he continued.

“I’ve rescued a few animals in the past, and you learn pretty fast that you might save their lives, but that they save your soul.”

Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch is a 501 c (3) registered nonprofit organization.

To learn more about the ranch and how you can help,

visit [www.jamesonanimalrescueranch.org](http://www.jamesonanimalrescueranch.org) or [www.facebook.com/JamesonRescueRanch](https://www.facebook.com/JamesonRescueRanch).

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