2023 Volunteer of the Year Nomination: Burt Greenspan & Donna Kalal
Submitted by: Marin Humane

1. Briefly state the organization's mission and services offered. How long has the nominee volunteered for the organization, including the number of years served and type of service?

The mission of Marin Humane is to transform lives through exceptional animal care, humane education, and advocacy. Every day, we inspire compassion and positive relationships between people and animals. We bring animals and humans together, forging a bond that impacts not just our homes, but makes our neighborhoods happier and healthier. And no one does more to make that happen than Marin Humane.

Some of our services include:

- Animal Adoptions
- Animal Services for Marin County (*enforcement of ordinances, dog licensing, cruelty investigations, wildlife rescue, and lost and found services*)
- Dog and cat training classes and seminars as well as consultations
- Youth programs
- Pet Care Assistance for pet guardians in need
- Volunteer Engagement
- Animal-Assisted programs, including therapy visitations and classroom and library visits
- Pen Pals program at San Quentin
- Animal responders in disasters and emergencies
- Safe harbor for animals in families impacted by domestic violence

Husband and wife, Burt Greenspan and Donna Kalal joined the Marin Humane volunteer team in 2016. They have served in a few volunteer roles, including walking the shelter dogs, assisting in dog training classes offered to the public, and walking dogs of seniors in our Pet Care Assistance program. Their crowning achievement and greatest impact has been in leading the "Scenting for Shelter Dogs" program for the past seven years! They make a tremendous impact in the lives of the shelter dogs every day they set foot on our campus, which is currently three days a week, volunteering nearly 600 hours so far this year!

2. Using examples from 2023, describe how the nominee has shown dedication and commitment to the organization or its constituents.

When a dog comes into the Marin Humane shelter it can be an overwhelming and stressful experience for them. Staff and volunteers do what they can to mitigate the stress of the shelter environment. About seven years ago, volunteers Burt Greenspan and Donna Kalal were taking their own dogs to classes called Nosework that involved a dog using his nose to "sniff out" various scents, which provides great satisfaction. After a few sessions watching how their dogs were enjoying and relaxing from the Nosework searches, they experienced a "light bulb" moment: Nosework (also known as Scenting) would greatly benefit the shelter dogs, too!

Thus, Burt and Donna started the Scenting for Shelter Dogs program at Marin Humane. This duo hosts Scenting for Shelter Dogs in two-hour sessions three times a week, rain or shine. In 2023, an average of 20 – 25 shelter dogs visit the class between 75 – 85 times each month. It is truly extraordinary dedication from this amazing team.

Here's a little background on why Scenting is so valuable to the shelter dogs: Kathleen Call CNWI, CPDT-KA and Marin Humane Nosework Instructor shares that "scent work regulates heart and respiratory rates, reduces blood pressure, increases focus, encourages elimination and expends energy. From a neurological perspective, the activity fires the seeking mechanism in the brain, which produces dopamine, (the I Can Do neurotransmitter). When seeking stops (dog finds food) this fires the pleasure center, which produces endorphins (runner's high). But wait, there's more. The activity also provides information about the environment. Information *calms dogs with fear, anxiety and/or stress* (FAS) because it allows them to thoroughly investigate and analyze any possible threats or opportunities in the environment. *This creates a sense of agency, which is of particular importance to shelter dogs who have limited control over resources or options*."

While the shelter dogs receive physical exercise twice daily, morning and evening, it's Burt and Donna's Shelter Scents program that provides mid-day mental stimulation, right before the dogs' "quiet time." *The dogs are so tuckered that they easily drift into deep sleep, which means they aren't experiencing stress in the kennel.* Not only is this therapeutic for the dogs, but the resultant calm makes the evening walk go much better. We also provide the dogs with playgroups and kennel enrichment, like puzzle toys; however, staff feel that Shelter Scents is the most effective enrichment for the shelter dogs.

Burt and Donna work as a team, and there wouldn't be a Scenting for Shelter Dogs program without the *both* of them -- they are two sides of the same coin! Burt and Donna remind volunteers weekly of the schedule and encourage new volunteers to join the scenting enrichment time. Donna takes copious notes of each dog in each scenting session, tracking their progress. Donna also donates and cooks all the chicken used in the scenting work! Chicken is a unique 'scent' for the shelter dog and is usually highly motivating. It is high value enough that most dogs will be enticed to do scenting, bringing a shutdown dog out of his shell in order to 'play the game. In fact, eating out of a box is confidence building, which is quite beneficial to shy or shutdown shelter dogs.

Additionally, Burt films every dog in each session, sharing the videos with the volunteers who work with the shelter dogs. Burt also writes a recap email following each session with very entertaining information and stories. Both Burt and Donna set up the scenting searches each session. Setting up searches takes into account where each individual dog is with their Nosework training. Some may still be on primary; some may be searching all three odors without pairing. They have to take these things into account so they can set the appropriate search/create the 'just right' odor puzzle to grow the individual dog's skill. Burt and Donna work with two Behavior & Training staff weekly to chat about the dogs, their scenting progress, and noticeable (and positive) changes in behavior.

Burt and Donna have been committed to this important, therapeutic program for seven years (only taking time off during 2020). Every week, staff notice positive changes in the behavior among the dogs going to Scenting for Shelter Dogs sessions. After scenting any dog that partakes in the

enrichment is visibly calmer and a calmer dog always shows better to a potential adopter. The volunteers express their enjoyment of our scenting program all the time and love to see the shy dogs come out of their shells and the wild dogs calm down and focus on a single task. After all, a calm, unstressed dog is what we hope for in an animal shelter environment. With Burt and Donna's efforts, they're helping shelter dogs get adopted. And that directly serves the Marin Humane mission and community!

3. Illustrate with examples how the nominee made a significant, positive impact on the organization or the community they serve during 2023.

In 2023, Burt and Donna have undeniably made a significant and positive impact at Marin Humane, leaving an indelible mark through their unwavering dedication and innovative contributions. These two exceptional individuals have become the heartbeat of our Scenting for Shelter Dogs program, exemplifying what it truly means to be engaged, compassionate advocates for our furry friends.

One of the most remarkable aspects of their involvement is their boundless enthusiasm and energy. Burt and Donna are at the shelter thrice weekly, working tirelessly to ensure the well-being of shelter dogs. Their engagement is infectious, inspiring other volunteers to take advantage of the Scenting program.

Their genuine love for the shelter dogs is evident in every interaction. They take the time to understand each dog's unique personality, cataloguing their search history, and videotaping each search. It's heartwarming to see shelter dogs light up in their presence, knowing that they are going to have a rewarding experience in their Scenting program.

While Burt and Donna have performed a variety of other volunteer roles, their crowning achievement is the "Scenting for Shelter Dog" program. This inspired initiative not only enhances the mental stimulation of our shelter dogs but also increases their chances of adoption. By teaching dogs to detect scents and providing them with a sense of purpose, Burt and Donna have significantly improved the dogs' quality of life and their prospects for finding forever homes.

In 2023, Burt and Donna's remarkable dedication to the Scenting for Shelter Dog program has proven to be transformative, creating a brighter future for countless shelter dogs and leaving a profound, positive mark on our animal shelter community.

4. Based on what you know about the nominee, how have they contributed to promoting a culture of equity, belonging and fairness within the organization or community.

Marin Humane is an Open Door shelter and as such we serve the community by taking in stray animals, owner-surrendered animals, and provide a host of other services to a wide diverse county.