Marin program provides a safety net for struggling pet parents
By Lisa Bloch

Working at Marin Humane, I witness a lot of heartwarming things: shelter animals going home with new families, worried pet parents reuniting with their lost companions, and troops of Girl Scouts touring our campus with big smiles on their faces.

Just as uplifting is seeing volunteers several times a week pull their cars up to a door at the shelter marked "Pet Safety Net." They fill their cars with carefully packed bags of pet food and supplies and head out to distribute them to homes throughout the county, ensuring the pets of those who are struggling are taken care of. They also ensure local food pantries are stocked with pet food as well.

Marin Humane's Pet Safety Net provides not only free pet food and supplies but also offers money toward veterinary care, low-cost behavior consultations and training, and even covers pet deposits for rental properties.

Just as important, the Pet Safety Net program runs free community clinics throughout the year in various locations. Working with established community groups, volunteer veterinarians and vet techs join our hardworking staff to provide free health exams, vaccinations, microchips, and more. These mobile clinics help pets and people from Sausalito to Novato and out to West Marin. The need for these services is great, evidenced by the long line of people and animals waiting for us even before we arrive.

We also run pop-up clinics at homeless encampments and other locations that reach those who could otherwise not access help.

Our Pet Safety Net is funded completely by grants and donations and has the dubious distinction of growing by 600% since the program's inception in 2018. I use "dubious" because this growth shows the tremendous need in our community.

A common reason people surrender their pets to shelters is that they're struggling financially to care for them. So while we used to measure our success primarily by the number of animals we took in and found new homes for, now — as strange as this may sound — we also measure it by how many animals we keep out of the shelter and in homes with those who already love them.

Marin Humane is not alone in recognizing the importance of helping keep pets with those who love them. Animal welfare organizations across the country are creating programs like ours where possible. The key is the “where possible” part. These programs cannot happen without the financial support of the community.

Marin Humane’s Pet Safety Net will be the focus of this year’s Fund-a-Need at our upcoming gala, “Tails by Twilight,” held on the shelter’s Novato campus at 5 pm this Saturday. Join animal lovers from across the county for this beautiful evening, which raises critical funds for animals. For tickets, visit marinhumane.org/gala.

As I’ve often written in this column, we’re so lucky to live and work in a county whose residents value animals and recognize the importance of the human-animal bond. The generosity of our community is truly inspiring.

To contribute to Marin Humane’s Pet Safety Net, go to marinhumane.org/pet-safety-net.

Lisa Bloch is the marketing and communications director for Marin Humane, which contributes Tails of Marin and welcomes questions and comments from the community. Visit marinhumane.org, find us on social media @marinhumane or email lbloch@marinhumane.org.