

ST. HELENA STAR

WineaPAWlooza 2016 raises \$1.75 million for animal welfare

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TIM CARL For the Star

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Napa Valley's Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch raised \$1.75 million at its third annual WinePAWlooza event held July 23 at the Gamble Family Vineyards.

"We are in awe at the support and generosity of our community and of our guests," said Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch's founder, Monica Stevens. "Our goal is to give animals in need a voice, and these proceeds allow for us to continue our mission, providing care and services for animals in need throughout the area."

Lifetime animal advocates Monica and her husband, David, founded Jameson Animal Ranch Rescue 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. As a part of JARR's mission they provide transitional and permanent shelter coordination, adoption and rescue services, and pet food and pet care assistance for seniors, the homeless and low-income families.

"Beyond being a no-kill rescue and sanctuary in the Napa Valley for companion and farmed 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," Monica said.

In the short span of two years the Stevenses have created what many are calling a model for community-based animal care and they have embarked on an ambitious new phase to obtain and build an animal-rescue center in the Napa Valley.

"JARR is making an impact, but the next big goal is to find 50 acres in the Napa Valley to build our rescue center," Monica said. "We already have plans for the center and have been humbled to have the opportunity to work with a world-class team on this project, including Napa Valley icon Howard Backen of Backen, Gillam & Kroeger Architects and Tim McDonald of Centric Construction.

Last winter, JARR bought a 40-acre parcel in the outskirts of Pope Valley but the Stevenses realized it wasn't large enough for what the need is. They plan to keep the property and it will become a sanctuary.

"My wife, Anne, and I believe this project is a very worthy cause that we want to support," Backen said in a video highlighting the work done so far on what will be a state-of-the-art cage-free animal rescue facility and sanctuary that will serve both the physical and emotional needs of all of its animal residents and provide an educational center for the community.

"The work Howard and Tim have done is truly spectacular," Monica said. "What we've found through our efforts up to this point is that first there is an overwhelming need out there. But we've also found that we live in a community that is kind, compassionate and willing to support worthy causes that reflect the values of this special place. We are finding support and encouragement all around the valley and beyond."

"I think what JARR is doing is inspiring," said Doug Keane, former owner of Cyrus and now co-proprietor of Two Birds One Stone restaurant, just north of St. Helena. "Two Bird One Stone

has worked with 750 Wines to help support their efforts by including them in our 'Charity List' program that donates all the proceeds of certain wines to benefit the Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch."

Keane is no stranger to ending animal-cruelty efforts, having co-founded Green Dog Rescue in Sonoma, a cage-free, no-kill rescue center. And Two Hands One Stone is not the only local restaurant supporting JARR: During July, Farmstead donated all the proceeds from their corkage fee to the rescue center.

"The outpouring of support is wonderful," Monica said. "At the recent WineaPAWlooza, generously hosted at the stunning Gamble Family Vineyards, we had over 50-plus of the best vintners serving their wines and our guests enjoyed tasty bites from many of our valley's top chefs. Besides that, the auction lots were over the top."

This year's live auction was presided over by the entertaining and effective auctioneer Fritz Hatton, who touted unique offerings such as two barrels of wine made from the grapes of famed Napa Valley grapegrower Andy Beckstoffer and from the bombastic and successful winemaker Russell Bevan, with their joint effort bringing in \$300,000.

"I think what Monica and David have started here is so important," said Bevan. "Although I'm a 220-pound guy that can bench press 420, I also share kitten and puppy videos all the time. In a world that is full of turmoil, it's critical that we come together and find ways to reduce the suffering of animals. Bottom line is that Jameson Animal Rescue is helping animals and all of us — I'm proud to be involved."

Other offerings included special tastings with legendary Marcassin winery owner and winemaker Helen Turley and another offering in which the winning bidders were treated to a Michelin-star-rated weekend that included eating at some of the Napa Valley's top restaurants, including the French Laundry, the Restaurant at Meadowood and Solbar. At the end of the night Hatton asked that the guests raise their paddles to provide funds to support efforts to help end animal hunger through their food assistance program. After only a few minutes the generous crowd had donated an additional \$600,000 to the cause.

"What we know is that animals continue to suffer out there," Monica said. "But what we also know is that there are so many kind people, too. We are proud to be bringing them together in a single cause. To the community of supporters we offer our deepest and profound thanks and gratitude. There's more work to do, and we look forward to the day when we have secured our ranch, but it's important to acknowledge this moment and honor it with gratitude."

Jameson Animal Rescue Ranch is a 501(c)(3) registered nonprofit organization. To learn about the ranch and how you can help, visit JamesonAnimalRescueRanch.org or follow them on Facebook at facebook.com/JamesonRescueRanch.