



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WTLC Becomes First Orange County DV Shelter to House Pets

FULLERTON, CA (August 4, 2017) – This summer, WTLC became the first domestic violence and human trafficking shelter in Orange County to house the pets of survivors alongside their owners, thanks to grant support from the American Kennel Club Humane Fund and RedRover.

RedRover awarded WTLC the Safe Housing Grant in the amount of \$6,000 to support the shelter's transition into a pet-friendly space, while The AKC Humane Fund provided \$3,000 to further support the program.

As the oldest domestic violence service provider in Orange County and the third oldest in the United States, WTLC has historically prioritized innovative solutions to ensuring services are accessible to all of Orange County's survivors. In 2016 WTLC's Legal Advocacy team became BIA-certified, allowing survivors whose immigration status was keeping them in an unsafe relationship to access support. This year WTLC launched the Mobile Advocacy program, through which survivors in the community can meet with Advocates to receive services from their home, outside of an emergency shelter setting. In keeping with the organization's focus on accessibility, and to meet the needs of survivors with animal companions, WTLC made the decision to transition the shelter facility into a pet-friendly space.

Chief Executive Officer Gigi Tsontos said, "If your pet is a member of your family, it becomes an impossible decision to leave them behind in an unsafe environment, even if it means remaining in a violent home yourself. WTLC is so grateful to RedRover and the AKC Humane Fund for their support in providing another option to the survivors and pets of Orange County."

WTLC is currently able to accept indoor pets that share their owner's living space, and is in the process of constructing an outdoor kennel space for larger or outdoor pets. When construction is complete, WTLC will be able to shelter up to 16 animals at one time, including cats, dogs, rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, ferrets, gerbils, rats, mice, and fish. WTLC also partners with local veterinarians and animal shelters to ensure even pets that are unable to be housed at WTLC's facilities due to size or city ordinances will be safe while their owner pursues their recovery at WTLC.

About WTLC:

WTLC is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping individuals and families escape the depths of domestic violence and exploitation by providing the tools and resources to build self-esteem and empower people for independent living. If you or someone you know is the victim of abuse, contact our 24-hour bilingual hotline at (877) 531-5522 or love@wtlc.org. For more information about WTLC, visit: www.wtlc.org.

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