

For Immediate Release
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Katrina Dogs Celebrate Mardi Gras in Oakland

Twenty two dogs and three cats arrive on Saturday, February 25, 2006

Oakland, CA: On Saturday, February 25th, 22 lucky dogs and 3 lucky cats became Bay Area residents. These were the latest animals rescued by **Hopalong Animal Rescue** in Oakland, CA. While revelers prepared to fill Bourbon Street, these furry creatures were bedded down with comfy blankets and food in a van driven by volunteers, and prepared to make the long trek west – to celebrate Mardi Gras and a new life in the Bay Area.

All of the dogs and cats were rescued from shelters in New Orleans, Louisiana and Gulfport, Mississippi, two areas decimated by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. In the six months following the hurricanes, life is still a struggle for many human and furry residents of these areas. While many human residents have moved on to seek employment and residency elsewhere, many animals still roam the streets or end up surrendered in shelters.

Hopalong rescuers were surprised at the seeming lack of progress in the months since the hurricane. “Working rescue in New Orleans 3 weeks after Katrina was overwhelming”, comments Sarah Cohen, Executive Director of Hopalong. “But the lack of obvious progress in the months since is really quite discouraging. This disaster is now out of the public’s eye, but clearly the suffering is continuing.”

With the situation still dire, euthanasia rates in many shelters reaches 90%. Folks who were able to evacuate with their pets have returned to find they have no home or no job. Unfortunately this leaves many with little choice but to surrender their pets to the nearest shelter. Already crowded with animals due to the lack of spaying/neutering, these family pets, along with a second generation of strays and newborns, are euthanized.

While the future is quite bright for the over 50 animals that Hopalong has rescued from Katrina-ravaged areas, Hopalong staffers can’t help but worry about the ones left behind. They hope that through fund-raising and increased public awareness more worthy animals can be saved. The dogs and cats that have been rescued all need medical attention, from spaying and neutering, to heartworm treatment.

These newest Bay Area residents can be seen on the website, Hopalong.org. For more information on how you can adopt or foster an animal, or to make a donation, please contact Andy Sharkey at 510/267-1915 X501 or email info@hopalong.org.