

## Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society Announces Innovative New Kitten Nursery Program

*Society Estimates Hundreds of Young Kittens Will Be Saved From Euthanasia*



BERKELEY, CA –The Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society (BEBHS) announces the launch of their Kitten Nursery, a one-of-a-kind program in the Bay Area designed to provide around-the-clock care for vulnerable newborn kittens that flood East Bay animal shelters year-round. Sadly, hundreds of kittens under eight weeks of age are euthanized within their first hours in local shelters due to the continuous care they require.

BEBHS, like most animal shelters in the U.S., run foster programs that arrange for foster homes to care for underage kittens. But when a major fire in May of 2010 destroyed most of BEBHS' shelter

facility, the 84-year old organization was left with no housing for cats. BEBHS had to rely completely on a limited number of volunteer foster homes to care for both existing animals and incoming kittens, pushing the organization to think outside-of-the-box and find new and innovative ways to make room for this helpless population. As a result, the exciting new Kitten Nursery pilot program was born. According to Interim Executive Director, Stephanie Erickson, "The number of kittens requiring foster care has always exceeded the number of foster homes available. The Kitten Nursery program is a creative way to address this issue so that we can save more lives."

The Kitten Nursery, which admitted its first kittens in early September, is located in a facility separate from the main BEBHS shelter and hospital facilities. Trained caregivers work 24 hours a day to provide age-appropriate feeding, supportive care, and socialization for kittens rescued from local municipal shelters. Caregivers perform special care routines daily to meet the physiological and emotional needs of the kittens.

BEBHS modeled its Kitten Nursery after the Paws to Success program at the San Diego Humane Society & SPCA. This is BEBHS' first 24/7 animal care operation, the first program of its kind in Northern California and one of only a handful operating in the U.S. BEBHS estimates that the program will save up to 300 kittens during its first six months of operation. Already, more than 80 kittens have been taken in, including 23 who have graduated from the nursery and been placed into adoptive homes.

Although this innovative program will allow BEBHS to save more kittens, Board President Eric Bohr notes that the Kitten Nursery can only alleviate the number of kittens euthanized at local municipal shelters. "The nursery will help many kittens who otherwise would not have a chance. Unfortunately, the program is not the answer – it will not stop kittens and cats from entering shelters. That can only happen through spay and neuter initiatives and public education, which will take time and collective effort from the community."

Join BEBHS as it celebrates its Kitten Nursery Program with the public at a "Kitten Shower" event to be held this Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup> at redhound pets, a retail pet supply store, located on College Avenue in Oakland from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.. Guests may bring donated items for the nursery to this baby shower themed event, interact with some of the Kitten Nursery residents, and learn more about this new program. redhound will donate 5% of

proceeds from all items purchased during the event and 10% of the proceeds from any “wish list” items purchased for the Nursery will be donated to BEBHS to support Kitten Nursery operations.

You can help support BEBHS’ Kitten Nursery program by:

- Attending the Kitten Shower event on Saturday, November 19<sup>th</sup> from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at redhound pets.
- Donating a needed item to the Nursery from BEBHS’ Kitten Nursery Wishlist
- Making a monetary donation to help fund the operation of the Kitten Nursery

Visit <http://www.berkeleyhumane.org/programs/kittennursery> for information about our wishlist or to make a donation.

Please note the Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society’s Kitten Nursery is not open to the public. If you find stray kittens or have a litter that you would like to relinquish, please contact your local shelter.

### **About Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society**

In April 2009, Berkeley Humane received national acclaim as a recipient of the Maddie’s Fund Lifesaving Award with The Berkeley Alliance for Homeless Animals Coalition. It was the first time a coalition in the state of California was selected for the prestigious honor. Berkeley Humane has also distinguished itself by saving and placing over 40,000 homeless dogs and cats since it was founded in 1927. The group has also performed 35,000 spay-and-neutering surgeries to help prevent overpopulation, and distributed more than 7,000 pounds of free pet food since founding its *Pet Food Pantry* program just last February. Among its other unique services, Berkeley Humane has matched up hundreds of seniors to pets in *their* golden years; trained thousands of owners and their dogs on how to live a rewarding coexistence; and provided pet-related services to over 100 low-income seniors and people with life-threatening illnesses or disabilities. It also continues to host a monthly support group to help grieving animal lovers through their pet losses.

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