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Upcoming FACE Foundation fundraiser targets pet 'economic euthanasia'

BY KELLEY CARLSON

Bags & Baubles is back.

For the third consecutive year, the Foundation for Animal Care and Education — also known as FACE — will hold its increasingly popular silent-auction fundraiser to assist family pets in need of critical or emergency care.

The event is slated for April 28, from 1 to 5 p.m., at Casa de Cinira, the Rancho Santa Fe home of FACE President Cini Robb. Designer handbags and jewelry will be up for bid, as well as items from the new "Men's Section," including ties, belts and wallets.

Bags on the block will be in varying styles, colors and sizes — including some that are leather-free — with price ranges that fit nearly everyone's pocketbook. Some of the designers of these new and "gently loved" items include Banana Republic, Big Buddha, Christian Dior, Prada, Marc Jacobs, Ralph Lauren, Gucci and Balenciaga. Bidding starts at 10 percent to 15 percent of retail value.

Among the donated baubles guests can compete for are an 18K White Gold Diamond Handbag Pendant and Chain, a Tiffany Somerset ring, and Judith Ripka necklaces and rings.

The auction items can be previewed on the Bags & Baubles Facebook page, www.face4pets.org, or bagsandbaubles.org, so people can decide what they want to bid on ahead of time. There are currently more than 300 handbags available, but the number may grow as FACE is accepting donations up through the event.

As for the auction itself, it's likely to be lively.

"The ladies get very enthusiastic about it; they have fun with the bidding wars," Executive Director Stacy Steel said.

Along with the auction, there will be a raffle of high-end items such as a brand-new Louis Vuitton handbag, jewelry, and spa and skin care-type items. Tickets are three for \$25 or 15 for \$100, and guests will receive a complimentary ticket if they purchase them ahead of time.

While browsing, bidding and socializing, people will be able to nosh on appetizers and sip on wines.

And once again, Lulu the dachshund — a FACE success story who suffered from disc herniation — will make an appearance and have several clothing changes.

"It will be a beautiful day," Steel predicted.

In 2012, about 300 people attended Bags & Baubles — which is FACE's biggest annual fundraiser — and this year, a crowd of about 400 is expected, she said.

Steel also noted that 100 percent of this year's proceeds will go to FACE.

The nonprofit, headquartered in Sorrento Valley, was established in 2006 by a group of veterinarians who were distraught over the rise of "economic euthanasia," in which pets are left to suffer or are euthanized when their owners can't

afford the cost of treatment. The organization provides part and full financial assistance.

To request help, pet owners can call FACE at (858) 450-3223, and fill out a one-page application that can be obtained through the organization's Web site, www.face4pets.org. FACE will then obtain paperwork from the veterinarian and request proof of financial hardship from the owner.

According to Steel, turnaround can be as short as one hour, and normally occurs within 24 hours, depending on the nature of the emergency.

The organization works with 80 hospitals in the area, and veterinarians working with FACE will discount their fees by 25 percent.

To date, about 675 animals have been assisted by FACE. One recent case involves Malakai, a 5-year-old German shepherd mix. He was standing on furniture in front of a second-story apartment window, slipped and fell through the screen to the ground, and fractured both of his front legs. Malakai's left foreleg required two pins; his right foreleg needed a steel plate and 12 pins, and his bone was fused to his ankle. His owner, Lara — a former member of the U.S. Marine Corps and a full-time college student with limited income — had to carry her large pet up and down the stairs at her apartment complex while he recovered. With financial aid from FACE, Lara was able to afford the care for her dog, which the nonprofit's staff affectionately nicknamed "the gentle giant."

Since it issued its first grant in August 2007, FACE has contributed about \$1 million in assistance, and funding is primarily provided by individual pet owners, with additional contributions from hospital partnerships. Special fundraising events are held throughout the year, such as Bags & Baubles.

Last year, Bags & Baubles raised \$130,000, and the goal for the 2013 event is \$150,000, Steel said. Sponsorships are still needed, and they are tax-deductible.

Admission to the event is free, but an RSVP is required. The location's address is provided in a confirmation e-mail. Register at www.bagsandbaubles.org or www.face4pets.org, or call Brooke Haggerty at (858) 450-3223.



Malakai in a double cast
COURTESY OF FACE FOUNDATION



FACE Grantee Lulu Howland
SOUBLET PHOTOGRAPHY