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Monica Schmidt Named Director of OC Animal Care

SANTA ANA, Calif. (April 10, 2024) – Following a nationwide recruitment process, the County announced on Wednesday that Monica Schmidt has been selected as the new Director of OC Animal Care. Her start date will be April 19, 2024.

“Ms. Schmidt has over 16 years of high-volume shelter experience and has played a critical role at OC Animal Care since 2020,” said Donald P. Wagner, Chairman of the Orange County Board of Supervisors. “Her industry knowledge, leadership, and passion for animal welfare have been evident throughout her tenure, making her the most qualified candidate for the position.”

Monica graduated from Sam Houston State University in Texas with a degree in political science and began her career in animal welfare at the Houston Humane Society, where she served in a series of progressively responsible positions. She played a key role in a variety of diverse animal welfare experiences including hurricane disaster response, large-scale hoarding and animal cruelty seizures, and day-to-day shelter operations, all of which developed Monica into a proven leader in the animal industry. In 2016, she was presented with the Houston Police Department’s Humanitarian Service Award in recognition of the creation of Monty’s Task Force, a multi-agency initiative aimed at bettering the lives of horses and their owners, and in 2017, she was featured by KPRC as part of their spotlight on Women Making a Difference for her work helping thousands of pets find homes.

“Monica has extensive experience working with local nonprofits and community groups and a deep understanding of the complexities in animal welfare,” said Doug Chaffee, Vice Chairman of the Orange County Board of Supervisors. “She has used her knowledge and unique skills to enhance our shelter’s programs and services during her tenure, and I know Monica will continue to lead the extraordinary OC Animal Team successfully.”

Monica joined the County of Orange in 2020 as Assistant Director of OC Animal Care, then was promoted to the role of Interim Director in 2023. During her tenure as Interim Director, Monica managed and directed the day-to-day operations of the County’s largest animal shelter. Under her guidance in 2023, OC Animal Care had over 14,700 animal intakes, 55,679 field responses, 9,027 dogs and cats were reunited with their families, adopted, or transferred to rescue partners, 2,910 pets were fostered, and the shelter boasted a save rate for dogs of 93.85 percent.

In addition to this, Schmidt played a crucial role collaborating with leadership on strategic initiatives, identifying gaps in animal care programming, and developing solutions based on industry best practices.



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“We’re excited to welcome Monica Schmidt as the new director of the largest municipal animal shelter in Orange County,” said Supervisor Andrew Do, First District. “OC Animal Care plays a crucial role in Orange County, providing shelter and services to over 14,700 animals each year. Monica’s leadership as interim Director, leading the successful monthly Drive Thru Pet Pantry distributions, has demonstrated her commitment to the agency.”

“Monica’s commitment to creating a positive atmosphere for both the Animal Care staff and the animals they serve is commendable,” said Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento, Second District. “Additionally, her cooperation in accommodating our office’s request to open the animal shelter to the public seven days a week, without requiring an appointment, is highly appreciated. I have full confidence in her ability to further enhance OC Animal Care.”

In recent months, Schmidt’s leadership during the recent Tustin Hangar Fire incident, mobilized the agency’s response, pivoting to continue to provide services for the community while leveraging industry contacts to swiftly decrease the number of animals on campus through sponsored transports, including 109 dogs to the ASPCA Shelter in Ohio. Additionally, Monica guided the OC Animal Care team in developing and launching several pilot programs to determine the best balance of smart programming and community interests, which resulted in the introduction of Daily Adoption Options and a new dog foster program to support getting animals out of the shelter and back to loving homes.

“Within the last few years, animal shelters across the country experienced unprecedented overcrowding and understaffing after animals were returned to shelters at alarming rates. Orange County was no exception. Since taking the helm at OCAC, Ms. Schmidt demonstrated her visionary leadership through working with staff, volunteers, and the community to increase staffing and programs that expand public access to the shelter so more furry friends found loving families. Now, the shelter is in a better position to handle fluctuating numbers of animals. In this new role, I remain confident in Ms. Schmidt’s ability to continue our progress and keep animals healthy, happy, and safe at the shelter as they await forever homes within the community,” said Supervisor Katrina Foley, Fifth District.

“My career has been all about helping animals in need, and that’s what this team at OC Animal Care does best,” said Monica Schmidt. “I look forward to this next chapter as Director of OC Animal Care and what we can achieve as a municipal shelter, working together with the community, toward the shared goal of improving the lives of people and pets in Orange County.”

For more information about OC Animal Care, please visit OCpetinfo.com.

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