



9/25/25 Media Release

Sheriff's Animal Control Supervisor Stefanie Geckler Elected President of the California Community Animal Response Teams; Sheriff's HEART Recognized as Rescue Model to Emulate Statewide

Nevada City, CA – On Sept. 22, the Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) Animal Control Supervisor, Stefanie Geckler, was unanimously elected president of the California Community Animal Responses Teams (Cal CARTS), an organization dedicated to elevating individual CARTS throughout California by sharing best practices, developing standardized training programs, enhancing state integration of CART responders, and augmenting funding availability for CART sustainability and interoperability.

Her presidency came about organically, according to Geckler, driven from her desire to elevate animal care, resources, and emergency support in not only Nevada County, but throughout California communities.

"When I joined the Cal CARTS board in March of this year, I had not intended to become the future president, but the more I shared about our own operations in Nevada County, the more our board saw an opportunity to enhance animal rescue operations throughout the state, inspired by our very own Sheriff's HEART model."

The Sheriff's HEART, also known as the Sheriff's Humane Emergency Animal Rescue Team, was introduced to the community in Jan. 2023 by Sheriff Shannan Moon, who saw a need for increased animal support during emergencies, and Geckler, a long-term animal care and rescue advocate and member of the Sheriff's Animal Control team for 16 years.

Today, the 501(c)(3) non-profit organization is managed by Geckler who oversees over 100 highly skilled and trained volunteers. In 2024, the team completed over 2,700 hours of training and responded to two emergency animal evacuations. They also train and certify alongside local firefighters, such as the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District and Higgins Fire Protection District, to offer a unified, multi-agency response when animals are in active fire zones and other dangerous predicaments.

Within the Sheriff's HEART 100-plus volunteer team is a certified Large Animal Technical Rescue (LATR) team, 30 people strong, who are trained to rescue larger animals that may be trapped, stuck or otherwise incapacitated, such as horses, donkeys, cows, and related. In 2024, the HEART LATR was one of two rescue teams chosen for the 2024 TEVIS CUP, a historic endurance ride spanning 100 miles in one day, starting in Tahoe and ending in Auburn. In 2025, the HEART LATR was the sole rescue agency selected to support TEVIS. For both years, HEART LATR was on standby to provide animal care as needed and rescue, should any accidents occur.

“We are fortunate that there are many people willing to join CARTS throughout California to help with animal rescues, but not all have had the opportunity for the level of training our team has received, which can be a detriment in emergencies,” explained Geckler. “We recognize the need to empower animal rescue volunteers with the best training and tools possible and it’s an honor that the Cal CARTS board views our Sheriff’s HEART as a way to bridge the gap for others.”

With the Sheriff’s HEART highlighted as the model to emulate throughout the state, Geckler and Cal CARTS board members will be working closely with the California Veterinary Emergency Team, the California Office of Emergency Services, and the California Department of Food and Agriculture to create and introduce an Animal Emergency Resource (AER) standardized guide for training requirements and certifications that will be available to all CARTS statewide for future utilization.

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