

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LIFE

SCENIC LAGUNA BEACH

DESTINATIONS
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ISSUE

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*A Tradition in Living Pictures
by Festival of Arts*

PLUS:

L.A.'S GRAND
CENTRAL MARKET



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“IT’S AN UNFORTUNATE FACT THAT MOST PEOPLE DON’T TREAT DOGS AND CATS LIKE MEMBERS OF THEIR FAMILY,” SAID KIM SILL, FOUNDER OF SHELTER HOPE PET SHOP IN THOUSAND OAKS. “EVERY DAY I GET BETWEEN 25 TO 50 EMAILS OR TEXTS INFORMING ME OF DOGS AT A SHELTER ABOUT TO BE EUTHANIZED OR, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE’S 40 DOGS IN VICTORVILLE IN A HOARDING SITUATION. IT’S NEVER ENDING.”

It was during Sill’s childhood in Georgia where her love of animals began.

“My daddy was a social worker for the Georgia Baptist Children’s Home,” said Sill. “During the summer he would take me with him. I saw him pick up children from foster care situations that had gone wrong. A lot of times those kids would have a garbage bag with their items, and they might have picked up a stray dog, the only thing giving them comfort and love. I saw two-fold, the human condition of how the animals were helping the kids. I saw how the humans were not taking care of the kids and getting a social security check every month just to have a kid at their house. These poor defenseless animals were now lost and had to be taken to a shelter. I learned as early as seven years old that something had to be done. My dad could help the kids and I could help the animals.”

Since the 1990s, Sill has made it her mission to rescue animals in need of a loving home. A former actress, Sill went undercover with Last Chance for Animals, a non-profit that exposes and investigates animal exploitation and cruelty.

“I loved animals, but I wasn’t sure I wanted to give up my acting career to go into working with them,” said Sill.

Through LCA founder, Chis DeRose, she became aware of animal issues and documented her undercover experiences through film footage.

“I gotta tell you, it became my life,” continued Sill. The footage debuted in 2015 as a documentary called *Saved In America* to show the public her journey as an activist, along with the support of animal-loving celebrities like Kim Kardashian, P!nk, Cesar Millan, Sharon Osbourne and Katherine Heigl.

“I wanted people to understand that America is not really taking care of their animals,” explained Sill. “A lot of big organizations that spend millions of dollars on ads during the holiday season are collecting the money, but it’s not trickling down to the animals in need. Smaller local organizations are the ones rescuing the animals.”

Earlier on, Sill protested local pet shops obtaining dogs from puppy mills. Her desire to continue acting waned and she focused only on finding solutions to what she was witnessing first hand.

“By protesting, it gave me a voice to talk to the customers,” she said. “A lot of people were very receptive. In fact, in the Malibu area, there was a shop called Pet Headquarters. While outside the shop, I met Sharon Osbourne and convinced her to adopt a dog I had rescued from a puppy mill.”

Two of the places Sill protested were reorganized as humane pet shops; the other four closed. In 2009, when Katherine Heigl, a friend

“SHELTER HOPE PET SHOP, A NON-PROFIT VOLUNTEER CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION, HAS RESCUED AND RE-HOMED 4,000 DOGS.”



Katherine Heigl



of Sills, visited OrangeBone on Melrose Avenue, which Sill had helped convert to a humane pet shop, gaining her national press attention. California is the first state and only state in the nation that has banned the sale of mass-produced dogs, bunnies and kittens.



In 2011, Sill opened Shelter Hope Pet Shop to make the animals she'd rescued available for people to adopt. later she opened a shop in Sacramento, and three years ago, one in Valencia to adoption all dogs are vetted — checked for microchips; spayed or neutered not already; receive a dental exam and checkup for tumors or lumps; vaccinated and groomed, as well as quarantined for two weeks, in case of kennel cough adopted, renowned trainer, Cheri Lucas, is available to work with the animals.

“The way Shelter Hope Pet Shop is set up is for people to see the animal environment,” said Sill. “In most cases people walk in to the shop and it's like a regular puppy mill pet shop. But then they start reading the stories of the pets and they're like, wait a minute, these are rescue dogs.”

Shelter Hope Pet Shop, a non-profit volunteer charitable organization, rescued and re-homed 4,000 dogs. They rely on donations and charge adoption fees, which can always be negotiated. SHPS is clean, doesn't smell like a kennel, and you see right off the bat it's a friendly environment visited by children, seniors, and the disabled.

“Two dogs were adopted by the McConaughy family, Matthew and Cecilia said Sill. “Fortunately, they looked online and found us. They didn't want their daughter exposed to an actual shelter. They came in, felt this was different and it was a great experience. I'm proud to see the original concept that I had was needed.”

SHPS works with the National Charity League, local organization, and the Veteran's Association. Every day, two Vietnam Vets sit with the dogs, and the community helps SHPS remain a sustainable business model. If an animal group is interested in running their own Shelter Hope as a franchise, Sill tracks the process, secures leasing or a free space. Foster care is also available for people who want to take on an elderly pet or one with medical issues.

“I think it would help people to understand that animals want to be socialized in a loving environment,” explained Sill. “[At Shelter Hope] all the dogs are available for adoption. If you don't see one you want to take home, that's okay. If you want to take a dog home for a play date and do a trial run, it doesn't cost a penny. I don't want to judge people; if you've gotten a dog from a shop that could have been from a puppy mill, take that info and do better. If you love animals, I want you to come into our shop. We need help. We aren't going to solve this problem by ourselves.” ♦



Kim Sill and Chris DeRose

Cesar Milan and Kim Sill

