

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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**East Bay Pets Have Full Bellies Thanks to Berkeley Humane, International Fund for Animal Welfare and World Central Kitchen**

***Dog and Cat Food Now Available at World Central Kitchen Food Pantries***

BERKELEY, Calif –Families in need can now pick up dog and cat food at Oakland Unified School District food distribution sites. This new initiative between the Berkeley-East Bay Humane Society (Berkeley Humane), International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) and World Central Kitchen extends Berkley Humane’s Pet Food Pantry across Oakland, starting at Elmhurst United Middle School and moving to food distribution sites across the city. Already, over 1800 lbs of food have been distributed to food distribution sites.

Compassion, kindness, and concern for each other is everything right now – and that includes the pets in our community. Though many of Berkeley Humane’s programs are suspended due to the COVID-19 health crisis, their Pet Food Pantry has remained a top priority.

**TWEET THIS:** Dog and cat food at @WCKitchen Oakland locations, thanks to new partnership with @Berkeleyhumane and @action4ifaw

Over the last three weeks, Berkeley Humane has seen a sharp increase in requests for food from the Pet Food Pantry, pointing to the very real financial impact COVID-19 is already having on families and people who have few resources. When someone must choose between feeding themselves or feeding their pet, they often will go hungry to make sure their pet is fed.

“Last year Berkeley Humane distributed over 5,000 pounds of dog and cat food to help the most vulnerable pet owners/guardians in our community,” said Jeffrey Zerwekh, Executive Director of Berkeley Humane. “We are thrilled to partner with IFAW and World Central Kitchen to make it easier for our communities to access nutritious food for their dogs and cats. We have every reason to believe that the demand will be significantly greater in the months to come.”

With all the shelter animals in foster homes, the Berkeley Humane volunteers who normally clean litter boxes and walk dogs are coming together, wearing protective gear and adhering to all social distancing guidelines, to create food packages for dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens.

These packages are delivered to Oakland Unified School District’s food distribution sites where they are offered to all families.

“We’re so glad to add pet food to our food distribution sites,” commented Preston Thomas, Oakland Unified School District’s food distribution coordinator. “It can make all the difference for our families.”

World Central Kitchen has currently established twelve locations throughout Oakland to provide healthy food to area families in conjunction with Oakland Unified School District. IFAW was eager to join forces once again with World Central Kitchen by supporting and connecting Berkeley Humane’s Pet Food Pantry to this feeding program, addressing the growing need to get pet food to those who need it most.

“In the course of IFAW’s disaster response work, we have had the privilege of working with many incredible teams from World Central Kitchen. With so many communities overwhelmed meeting basic daily care needs right now, pet food assistance is critical for families in our communities. An initiative like this, which will help keep families together, is at the core of our work,” said Kelly Johnston, IFAW Disaster Response Program Officer.

“Our Pet Food Pantry has been a vital part of the area’s safety net for years,” noted Dan Lang, President, Berkeley Humane Board of Directors. “At this time of crisis, we have the opportunity now to come together with some amazing organizations to help even more pets and the people who love them.”

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Photos available here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/u1mqsl6i8eeu9pz/AAC659_TvdlSU8A3IeVsCkIea>

**About Berkeley Humane**

With its origins dating back to 1895, today Berkeley Humane serves the people and animals of our community by providing life-saving programs for cats and dogs, cultivating compassion, and strengthening the human-animal bond. With the support of a dedicated and talented volunteer and staff team, Berkeley Humane intakes animals from municipals shelters around the Bay Area who are often in need of medical care, improved nutrition, enrichment and lots of love. In 2019, Berkeley Humane conducted over 1,200 adoptions and touched the lives of an additional 1,000 additional pets through related services. Learn more at [www.berkeleyhumane.org](http://www.berkeleyhumane.org).

**About World Central Kitchen**

World Central Kitchen is a team of food first responders, mobilizing with the urgency of now to get meals to those who need them most. We're activating hundreds of restaurants and kitchens to feed marginalized and vulnerable communities and our brave medical professionals on the front lines, in order to make a meaningful impact in the fight to keep everyone fed, and to support the distressed restaurant industry. We know that a nourishing meal in a time of crisis is so much more than a plate of food---it's hope, it's dignity, it's a sign that someone cares about you and that you are not alone. Learn more at [www.wck.org](http://www.wck.org)

**About International Fund for Animal Welfare**

The International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) is a global non-profit helping animals and people thrive together. We are experts and everyday people, working across seas, oceans, and in more than 40 countries around the world. We rescue, rehabilitate, and release animals, and we restore and protect their natural habitats. The problems we’re up against are urgent and complicated. To solve them, we match fresh thinking with bold action. We partner with local communities, governments, non-governmental organizations, and businesses. Together, we pioneer new and innovative ways to help all species flourish. See how at ifaw.org.

**About the Oakland Unified School District**

In California’s most diverse city, Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) is dedicated to creating a learning environment where “Every Student Thrives!” More than half of our students speak a non-English language at home. And each of our 83 schools is staffed with talented individuals uniting around a common set of values: Students First, Equity, Excellence, Integrity, Cultural Responsiveness and Joy. We are committed to preparing all students for college, career and community success.

To learn more about OUSD’s Full Service Community District focused on academic achievement while serving the whole child in safe schools, please visit OUSD.org and follow us @OUSDnews