

As low as \$60!



Welcome
Bonnie
Account Center
Log Out

[Back to Home](#) >

Monday, Jul 19, 2004

TimeOut

- Weather**
- 88°** Hi 88 Lo 59
Clear
- [Complete forecast](#)
- [Check traffic](#)
- Featured**
- [Olympics](#)
- [Summer movies](#)
- [Times Diet Club](#)
- [Teens page | LIP](#)
- Sections**
- [News](#)
- [Breaking News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [TimeOut](#)
- [• Movies](#)
- [• Video & DVD](#)
- [• Dining](#)
- [• Television](#)
- [• Theater & Dance](#)
- [• Music](#)
- [• Times Book Club](#)
- [• Fine Arts](#)
- [• Comics & Games](#)
- [• LIP](#)
- [• Celebrations](#)
- [• Calendars](#)
- [Business](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Columnists](#)
- [Arts & Entertainment](#)
- [Home & Garden](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Money Matters](#)
- [Perspective](#)
- [Travel](#)
- [Auto Plus](#)
- [Real Estate](#)
- [CareerBuilder](#)
- Expanded Coverage**
- [Presidential race](#)
- [Gov. Schwarzenegger](#)
- [Uncivil Servants](#)
- [Laci Peterson](#)

[email this](#) [print this](#)

Posted on Sun, Aug. 24, 2003

GARY BOGUE

ARF's sometimes rough, always rewarding journey

Life engenders life. Energy creates energy. It is by spending oneself that one becomes rich.

-- Sarah Bernhardt,

French actor

A LONG, LONG ROAD

The new ARF Adoption and Education Center is just around the corner from the Times' office in Walnut Creek, so I strolled over Wednesday morning to take a look at their fancy new digs.

Fancy is right and fantastic to look at, functional for humans and animals, and a fine place to work and visit.

As I wandered wide-eyed through the brightly lit, state-of-the-art building, I thought about the long and often winding road that Tony La Russa and his board of directors and the ARF staff and volunteers had to take to get here.

ARF blossomed into existence in early 1991, and its first "shelter" in August of that year was a donated little storefront in the Willows Shopping Center in Concord. The space was unused, so they let ARF have it for free until somebody rented it.

On Jan. 1, 1994, ARF began leasing a little store in the Concord Park and Shop center. They turned the store into the ARFMart, an upscale thrift shop that's still in operation today. The ARF staff worked out of a couple of tiny offices in back. It was so crowded that humans, dogs and cats shared the same spaces. It got a little awkward when one cat kept answering the phones.

Tony was managing the Oakland A's back in those days, and during baseball season whenever the A's



- [Iraq](#)
- [Where we live](#)
- [More special reports](#)
- [Other Editions](#)
- [San Ramon Valley Times](#)
- [Valley Times](#)
- [West County Times](#)
- [Brentwood News](#)
- [Concord Transcript](#)
- [Contra Costa Sun](#)
- [Ledger Dispatch](#)
- [The Record](#)
- [Walnut Creek Journal](#)
- [Hills Newspapers](#)
- [Alameda Journal](#)
- [Berkeley Voice](#)
- [El Cerrito Journal](#)
- [Montclarion](#)
- [Piedmonter](#)
- [Find it Fast](#)
- [Contests](#)
- [Archives](#)
- [Sports Scores](#)
- [Ski & Snow Reports](#)
- [Movie Times](#)
- [Find a Restaurant](#)
- [Event Calendars](#)
- [Discussion Boards](#)
- [Comics & Games](#)
- [Ski & Snow](#)
- [News by e-mail](#)
- [Services](#)
- [Search the Site](#)
- [Site Index](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Talk to the Times](#)
- [Send a Letter to the Editor](#)
- [Help](#)
- [FAQ](#)
- [Place an ad](#)
- [Advertise with Us](#)
- [Newspaper Subscription](#)
- [Shopping](#)
- [Grocery coupons](#)
- [Jobs](#)
- [Cars](#)
- [Homes](#)
- [Apartments](#)
- [Classifieds](#)
- [Newspaper Ads](#)
- [Yellow Pages](#)
- [Special Sections](#)
- [Danville Life](#)
- [More Sections](#)

had a game in Oakland, after it was over he'd jump in a cab, dash 35 miles out to the ARFMart in Concord, meet with the volunteers and give them a pep talk, then zoom back to Oakland to prepare for the next day's ballgame.

That's why ARF has so much energy. Tony and those energetic volunteers always have plenty to share.

They moved into an abandoned DOW Chemical Building in Walnut Creek in August 1997. It had no heat, no hot water, and when it rained, their fresh water came down through the holes in the roof. But it was free space and that meant more of their funds could be spent on rescuing animals.

In April 1998, they moved back to the ARFMart. It was now so crowded they had a rotating schedule so the staff could take turns bringing their dogs to work with them.

It was a big day in October 1998, when the overjoyed staff and volunteers leased a portable building and moved into a new location on Mitchell Drive in Walnut Creek. A real building, with real cubicles ... and room for cats, dogs, oh yes, and people!

A second portable was added in September 2000. ARF was growing rapidly. Funds were being raised to build their new shelter, animals were being adopted and special programs to connect people and animals were being developed.

And now, on Thursday, 12 years from when it started, Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation opened its just-completed 37,700-square-foot, \$16 million Adoption and Education Center to the public.

They still need to raise the last \$6 million to finish paying off the center, but with 30 employees, 500 volunteers and the support of caring people and businesses in the surrounding communities, I have no doubt they'll do it.

After traveling down a long, hard road to get here, they're not about to end the journey now.

The adventure is only just beginning.

(Check out this amazing place for yourself, 2-7 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays, and noon-5 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, 2890 Mitchell Drive, Walnut Creek. Turn off Oak Grove Road onto Mitchell, then take the first right turn into the parking lot.)

I'M TAKING A BREAK

Lois and I are off on a two-week adventure to explore Yellowstone National Park and see just how faithful Old Faithful really is.

I'll tell you all about it when I return for our usual morning cup of coffee together on Sept. 9.

Gary's here Tuesday-Friday & Sunday. Questions, comments to garybug@infionline.net, or Gary, c/o Times, P.O. Box 5088, Walnut Creek, CA 94596-0087; 925-977-8582; old columns at www.contracostatimes.com, click on Columnists, click on Gary.



**REAL
Cities** Click here
to visit other
Real Cities sites

[News](#) | [Sports](#) | [TimeOut](#) | [Business](#) | [Newspaper Ads](#) | [Classifieds](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Homes](#)
[About The Contra Costa Times](#) | [About the Real Cities Network](#) | [Terms of Use & Privacy Statement](#) | [About Knight
Ridder](#) | [Copyright](#)