



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Contact:**  
**Roberta Kahn**  
**925-296-3107**  
[rkahn@arf.net](mailto:rkahn@arf.net)

### **TONY LA RUSSA'S ANIMAL RESCUE FOUNDATION PAYS OFF SHELTER LOAN**

WALNUT CREEK, California – January 7, 2008 – The 17-year-old dream of Tony and Elaine La Russa has come to fruition. Tony La Russa's Animal Rescue Foundation (ARF) is pleased to announce that the loan on its 37,700 square foot shelter in Walnut Creek, California has been paid in full.

Due to funding from Bank of America, ARF was able to build and then move into its facility in August 2003. In December 2007, Maddie's Fund generously offered a final matching grant to help retire the remaining balance on the loan. Through the generosity of many donors and the tireless efforts of the La Russa family, ARF board of directors, staff and volunteers, the building mortgage was retired ahead of schedule. "ARF is grateful so many people have teamed up with the organization to make the world a better place - where deserving pets and loving people can thrive together, but there's still plenty of work to be done," says Tony La Russa, co-founder of ARF.

More than a shelter, the facility is a community center which provides a home base for ARF's innovative programs which touch the lives of thousands of animals and people in need. In addition to the rescue and adoption of abandoned cats and dogs, ARF provides educational programming for children at schools through ARF's Learning Center and at Chris Adams Center, a county residential facility for troubled teens located in Contra Costa County. ARF also provides low cost spay/neuter surgery, essential veterinary care and pet food to low income families, along with its "Pet Hug Pack" by which therapy animals visit thousands of individuals in hospitals, rehabilitation centers, schools and adult day care facilities.

With the mortgage paid in full, more of ARF's donated funds can be applied directly to support these programs and ARF also looks to complete needed repairs and improvements to the shelter. Elena Bicker, ARF's executive director says, "ARF's life-saving work provides for the basic needs of dogs and cats during the time they have no home, no family, and no ability to see or hope beyond the present. ARF needs more friends so the shelter may be kept warm, rescue vehicles filled with gas, and the magical touch and unconditional love brought to people in need."

ARF is completely private and receives no contract or government funding. ARF saves the lives of loving dogs and cats who have run out of time at public shelters. ARF gives another chance at life to dogs and cats who otherwise would have been killed. ARF provides the care and attention they need, including spay or neuter surgery, until ARF finds them a new home of their own. ARF's People Connect programs strengthen the human animal bond for the elderly; residents of assisted living centers, teens at juvenile hall, high school students, grade school students and young children through programs that are national models of excellence. ARF programs allow people to experience the unconditional love and acceptance of dogs and cats. People Rescuing Animals...Animals Rescuing People...® .

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P.O. Box 30215 • Walnut Creek, California 94598 • 925-256-1ARF • Fax 925-977-9079 • [www.arf.net](http://www.arf.net)