



Media Release

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Demolition Crews Tear Down Burned Animal Shelter Cause of Fire Still Unknown

Escondido, Calif. – Nearly three years after a devastating fire destroyed the Escondido Humane Society's animal shelter and killed 115 animals, the remaining structure at Kit Carson Park in Escondido is being torn down Friday by Escondido Sand and Gravel Company.

"This marks the end of an era for us," said EHS President and CEO Phil Morgan. "Our new Animal Care Center is open now and even though we will never forget that terrible night, we want to put it behind us. We are looking forward to a better future at our new center."

The original 12,000 square foot building was constructed in the mid 1970's and was the home of EHS for more than 28 years. On Jan. 20, 2001, a late night blaze destroyed the facility. Only portions of the walls, floors and foundation remain as a remembrance of that tragic night.

Investigators from the Escondido Police and Fire Departments, the U.S. Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and arson teams from the San Diego police and San Diego County sheriff's departments all took part in analyzing debris from the site. However the intensity of the fire destroyed many clues and the cause is still undetermined. The case remains open and investigators have no new leads regarding the fire.

After all evidence was gathered, the remaining structure was declared unsafe. For the past two years the area has been fenced off and used only for storage. After this weekend, it will all be removed.

Escondido Sand and Gravel Company was awarded the demolition project for a cost of \$30,000. Morgan said EHS had received two other bids in the \$70,000 to \$80,000 range but that George Weir, president of Escondido Sand and Gravel Company, had agreed to take on the project as a gift to the community.

"We feel that this is for a great cause," Weir said. "We would hate for the Escondido Humane Society to have to spend that much money for something so tragic that happened so many years ago. I'd rather see the money they saved on this project go towards caring for the many animals coming in today."

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ADD ONE – Crews Tear Down Burned Shelter

The city of Escondido leases the land the building resides on from the Escondido Union School District and sublets it to EHS for \$1 per year. According to the lease, the Humane Society must return the land to its previous condition prior to leaving.

“I’d like to thank the city of Escondido and the Escondido Union School District for all the support they gave us over the years at Kit Carson Park,” said Morgan. “We couldn’t have come this far without their help.”

Once the remaining structure is leveled, the land will continue to be used for animal-related purposes. For the next few months the Hidden Valley Obedience Club will conduct animal training at the site until the opening of the club’s facility, which is being constructed across from the Mayflower Dog Park near EHS’s new Animal Care Center on East Valley Parkway.

About Escondido Humane Society

EHS is a non-profit organization that promotes responsible pet ownership by teaching compassion, respect and caring treatment for all living creatures. EHS advocates the elimination of animal abuse, pet overpopulation and homelessness among companion animals and finds new homes for surrendered, stray and abandoned animals. Additionally, EHS provides animal control services for the cities of Escondido and San Marcos. Its 15,000 square foot Animal Care Center located on East Valley Parkway in Escondido, Calif. accommodates over 10,000 animals every year and features 82 canine kennels, 72 cat condos, 17 outdoor wildlife holding cages, and 36 kennels for its foster care program. For more information about the Escondido Humane Society and its new facility, visit the EHS website at www.escondidohumanesociety.org.

For more information about the Escondido Humane Society’s demolition project or to arrange for photos, footage or interviews, please contact Lesley Henrie at 760-888-2240 or 760-594-7602.

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