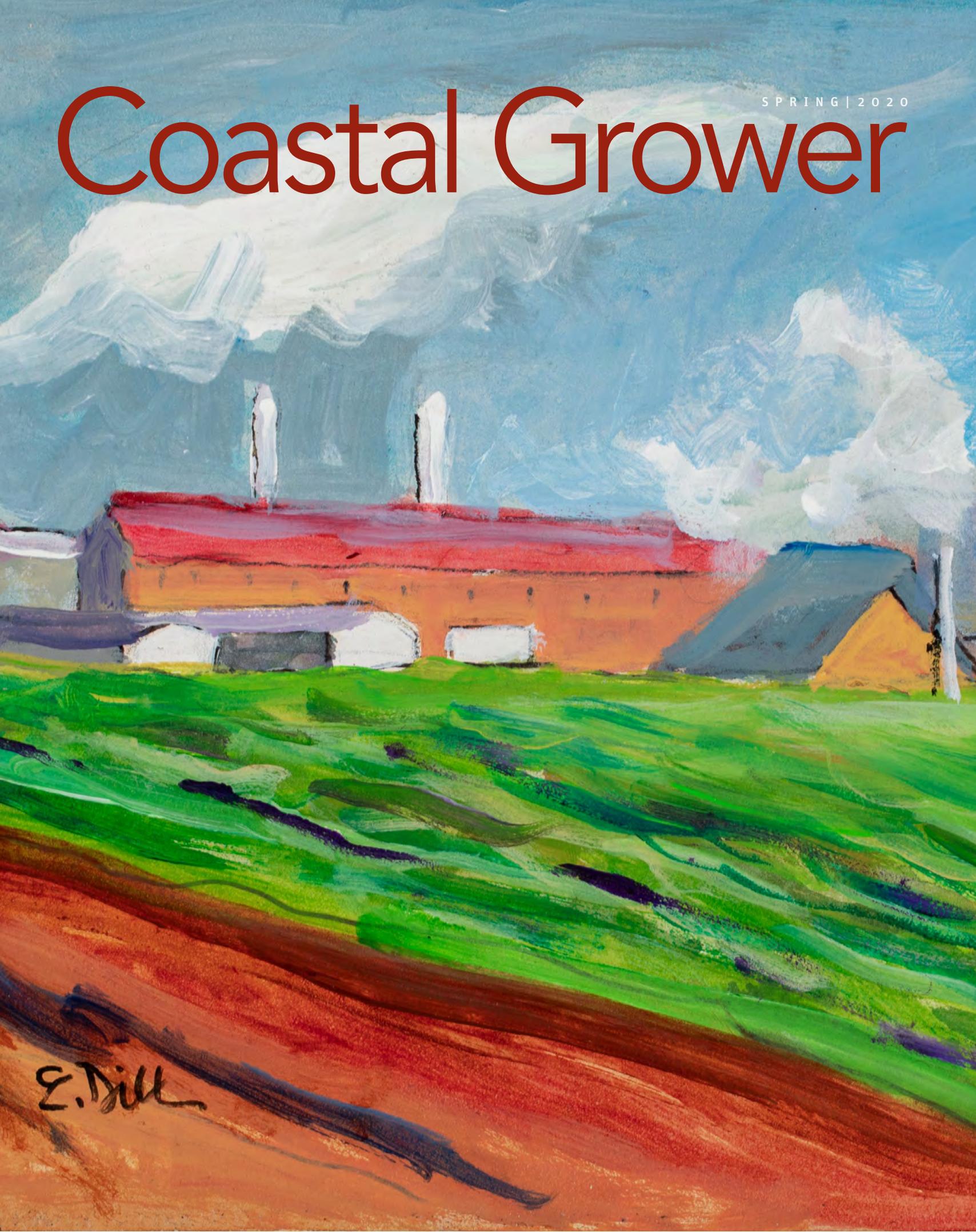


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Max's Helping Paws Foundation

Monterey County's Fastest-Growing Animal Care Non-Profit Grew Out of Grief and Financial Pressures

By Mac MacDonald



Two years ago Dyana Klein was in the depths of a grief so profound she could barely get out of bed. Now she's heading one of Monterey County's fastest-growing non-profits dedicated to helping animals — Max's Helping Paws Foundation (MHPF) — named after the four-legged companion she was grieving over.

"We all experience loss and there's a lot of things you could do with loss," says Klein about the loss of her beloved miniature pinscher, Maximilian, two years ago. "But this was the most powerful and profound loss I've ever experienced. It was debilitating. I wanted to move on, but nothing felt enough or worthy of moving on."

While still in the depths of her grief, her husband Dr. Jonathan Fradkin, a veterinary internist, mentioned that his boss had been thinking of starting a non-profit organization to help people and their pets. She and her husband knew firsthand the financial pressures pet owners experience when dealing with a pet with a life-threatening condition. They spent thousands of dollars on medications and treatments to heal Max's

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long-term illnesses, which included diabetes and a rare form of kidney cancer. That seed of an idea became a way that they could help pets and their financially strapped owners and to honor the memory of Maximilian.

"That was all I needed to hear, that was it," she says about the idea that broke that downward cycle of grief for her. "That would be enough. Max would be on every step of this journey, and here we are, two years later and we're still talking about him!"

She adds, "The next day I jumped out of bed and got to work. I turned my pain into power and purpose."

Thus was born Max's Helping Paws Foundation, which, of course, was named after Maximilian (full name Maximilian Amadeus, named in part after the pop tune "Rock Me Amadeus"). Klein said Max, who she regarded as her son, had a huge personality and was very intelligent, so he needed a big name that fit. So, the foundation would need a fitting name too.

"The name says what it's supposed to be," she says. "I wanted to hear it, to feel it, and I did, and my husband did, and we were off and running. It all came out of pain and passion."

Klein said their approach was "slow and steady," to start raising funds, recruit local veterinary partners and build from the ground up.

"We didn't want to stop once we started," she says. "Once we had veterinary partners we had credibility and the community has been unbelievable in terms of their support. The people in the community have come out in full force to support us, it's just humbling, I can't believe it. We're very proud of where we are now, we've provided more than \$140,000 in financial assistance in two years."

The goal with the foundation was to eliminate financial euthanasia, surrender and suffering of severely ill or injured pets by providing their owners assistance with the costs of urgent medical care. Klein believes that financial circumstance should never decide a companion pet's fate.

With that in mind, the foundation recently launched an unprecedented two-year pilot program that provides for pets with chronic conditions. MHPF's Continued Care Program will provide up to two years of ongoing financial support to responsible families whose dog or cat faces a chronic illness.

Originally from Long Island, New York, Klein has a degree in marketing, and a

background owning a successful dog daycare, training and boarding facility, Run 'Em Ragged, in Sunnyvale, California. She founded the daycare when she couldn't find a pet daycare center that fit all the needs of Max. "I couldn't find one, so I built one — literally," she says about the full-service 12,000-square-foot facility.

She is currently the owner of New Marketing Factory, Inc., a marketing consulting firm based in Carmel Valley.

And she's not slowing down. She wants to keep raising funds for the foundation, increase the amount of caps and coverage it offers and maintain the strong relationships they've created with their (so far 23) veterinary partners.

"It's a lot to do, but we're up to the challenge. Community awareness is key, to get that exposure and awareness out there," she says. "My dream is to be such an exemplary organization that it would be a template for other communities. I always have big dreams!"

Since it first started providing financial assistance in mid-2017, MHPF has approved more than \$140,000 in financial assistance

and has helped hundreds of pet families deal with financial hardship. MHPF also helps senior, low-income, veteran, disabled, disadvantaged, and homeless in-need responsible pet owners.

Diagnostics is just one of the categories of coverage, so that MHFP can help owners make informed decisions and to educate themselves as to all their options. MHFP unique in this aspect. MHFP also has a no-contract relationship with its veterinary partners, making for a very organic and personal connection. MHFP is based in Monterey County and serves only Monterey County.

MHFP's primary program is the Veterinary Care Financial Assistance Program, which provides one-time grants for 50 percent of the cost of treatment (to a maximum of \$1,500 per injury or illness). The Veterinary Care Financial Assistance Program is divided into two sub-categories of care:

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1. Critical Care: MHFP's core program that provides acute, emergency, diagnostic, and stabilization care for up to 12 weeks. Unlike other programs, the Critical Care program fills a gap in our community by providing funds for initial diagnostics and stabilization so that pet owners do not have to relinquish their pets or choose euthanasia without knowing if the life of their pet might have been saved.

2. Continued Care: MHFP's pilot, chronic care program providing long-term care that extends beyond 12 weeks, and provides ongoing financial assistance for pet owners for up to \$6,000 over two years. Continued Care provides aid for pet owners whose pets

have been diagnosed with a chronic condition (such as diabetes, chronic renal failure, or cancer), and covers diagnostics, recheck and monitoring examinations, medications and treatments provided by MHPF partner veterinary practices throughout Monterey County. Pet owner's cost-share is required but support by other organizations or individuals is counted towards the owner's share of expenses.

Conditions covered for eligible pets in this pilot program include, but are not limited to, endocrine disease, cardiopulmonary disease, digestive disease, urinary disease and cancer.

MHPF is the first animal welfare organization in Monterey and Santa Cruz counties to launch a long-term care program like this in Monterey County.

"To see pets suffer, or to see pet owners consider euthanasia or surrender because of financial circumstance is heartbreaking," said Klein. "With our help, we can keep families together and keep giving deserving Monterey County pets a second chance. Financial circumstance should never decide a companion pet's fate." **ce**



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