

Club Deals!

Exclusive Club Event!
MAGIC MOUNTAIN
May 3 – \$23.99!
Last Chance!
- SEE BACK PAGE

Play Ball!
Angels, \$22-\$52
Dodgers, \$26
- SELECT GAMES
- SEE PAGE 40

The Cheapest Movie Tickets In the City!
SEE PAGE 45



Alive!

Los Angeles Animal Services

To the **RESCUE!**

Animal Services' SMART rescue team, a national leader, goes in harm's way to save creatures in danger. **SEE PAGE 6**



Founder and leader of the SMART rescue team, Armando Navarrete, Acting Lieutenant for Special Teams, during a recent training exercise in Elysian Park. At his feet is an artificial horse used in training.

Alive! photo by John Hawkins



City Employees Club of Los Angeles
120 West 2nd Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

In This Issue:

Deadline: April 15

Mother's Day Tributes

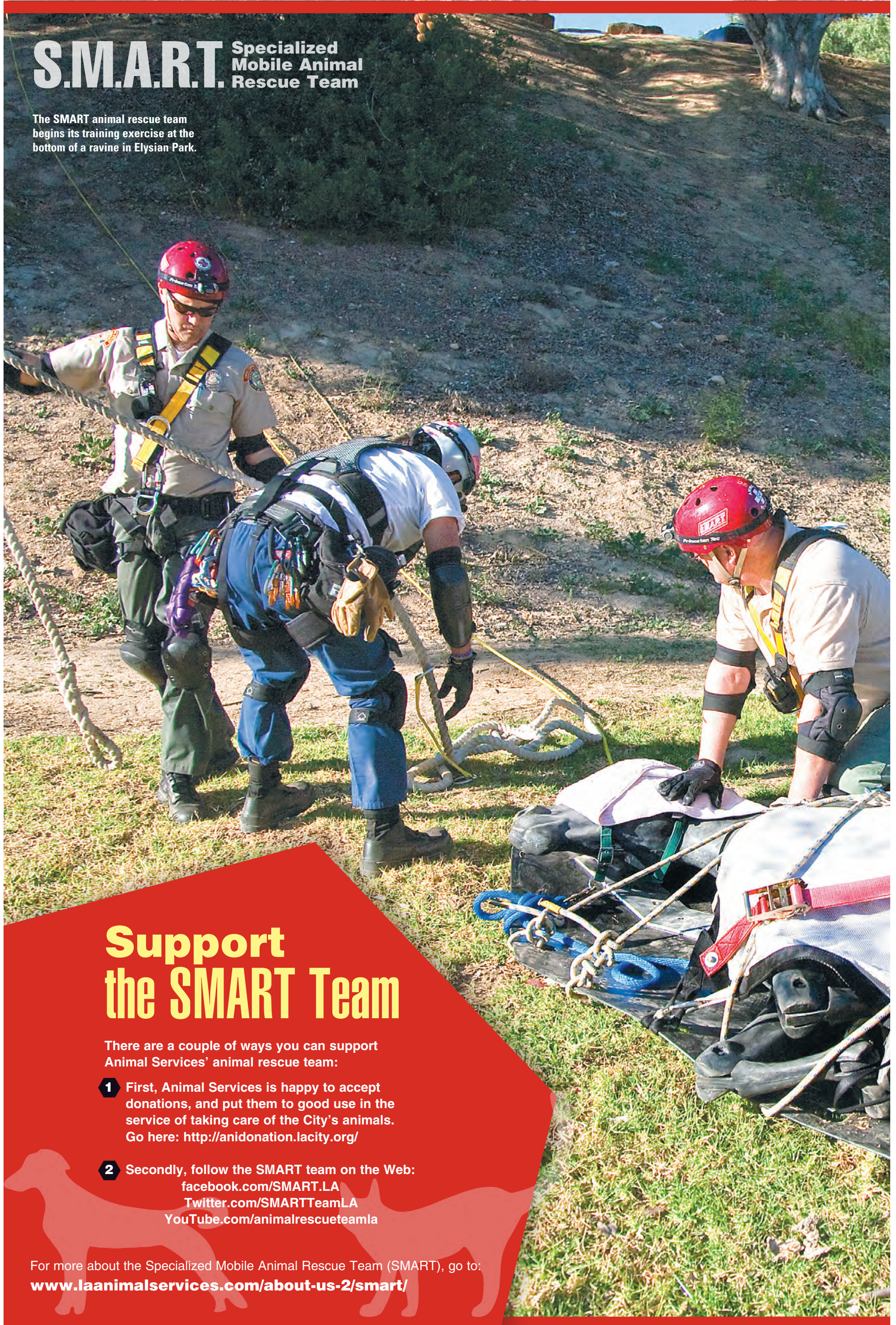
See page 42

Honor your Mom with a photo greeting!



S.M.A.R.T. Specialized Mobile Animal Rescue Team

The SMART animal rescue team begins its training exercise at the bottom of a ravine in Elysian Park.



Support the SMART Team

There are a couple of ways you can support Animal Services' animal rescue team:

- 1 First, Animal Services is happy to accept donations, and put them to good use in the service of taking care of the City's animals. Go here: <http://anidonation.lacity.org/>
- 2 Secondly, follow the SMART team on the Web:
[facebook.com/SMART.LA](https://www.facebook.com/SMART.LA)
[Twitter.com/SMARTTeamLA](https://twitter.com/SMARTTeamLA)
[YouTube.com/animalrescueteamla](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...)

For more about the Specialized Mobile Animal Rescue Team (SMART), go to:
www.laanimalservices.com/about-us-2/smart/



Los Angeles Animal Services **To the**

RESCUE!

Started by one person but now an international leader, Animal Services' SMART rescue team goes in harm's way to save creatures in danger. The team now boasts an impressive 100 percent save rate.

Photos by Tom Hawkins, Alive! and courtesy Animal Services

Chalk it up to the man with dedication, a clear vision and a can-do spirit.

The SMART Concept

When Animal Services employee Armando Navarrete created a dedicated team to rescue animals nearly 10 years ago, he was all on his own – he did all the organizing, and the thousands of dollars in equipment expenses came from his pocket.

SMART is a team of innovative trailblazers taking animal rescuing to a new level. The dedicated team has rescued hundreds of animals, with an average of two calls per week, and enjoys a 100 percent save rate. When not called upon to perform special animal rescues, the SMART team members work as normal Animal Control Officers.

It has all paid off. His small but dedicated band is now officially recognized by the department, is winning national awards, and has become a model for animal rescue teams throughout the world.

CONTINUED, PAGE 8



Alternate Team Leader Annette Ramirez rescues a puppy in tight quarters.

S.M.A.R.T. Specialized Mobile Animal Rescue Team

— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7



The team is developing standardized guidelines for small animal rescues in an urban environment and natural terrain, because the services provided are groundbreaking and there are no standards set for rescuing animals in situations of extreme distress.

Swiftwater Certified

SMART is NFPA (National Fire Protection Agency) certified to perform swiftwater rescue operations across the country. In July 2009, SMART went through swiftwater rescue training, spending two days at Kern River performing mock rescues during the day and night. The team has modified human rescue techniques and applied them to saving animals.

Department Support

When Armando, now an Acting Lieutenant for Special Teams, brought his concept to then-new General Manager Brenda Barnette, asking for the department to support what up to then had been supported out of his own pocket, he wasn't sure what her response was going to be. But she got behind the effort, and over a period of a few years, the SMART Team is now fully supported with proper equipment and training.

Animal Services had three rescue teams in place, but in February 2012, it consolidated them into one Special Operations Unit. The Department further unified the Small Animal Rescue Team and Department Air Rescue Team (Large Animal Rescue Team – DART) into one joint venture, now called the Specialized Mobile Animal Rescue Team (SMART). This reorganization resulted in leveraging staff to do more than one function, as staff was cross-trained to support each other. The end result is that more staff is available for emergency call outs and Departmental field support. Most importantly, the Department is able to provide increased quality and improved services to the public while maximizing safety and support to its personnel.

The SMART team has a 100 percent save rate since they began using their specialized training, experience and knowledge for rescuing small and large animals in distress. The Special Operations Unit, including the SMART team, is under the command of Director of Field Operations Mark Salazar. The SMART team consists of ten LA Animal Services Officers and one Registered Veterinary Technician. ■



The Rescue Training Exercise

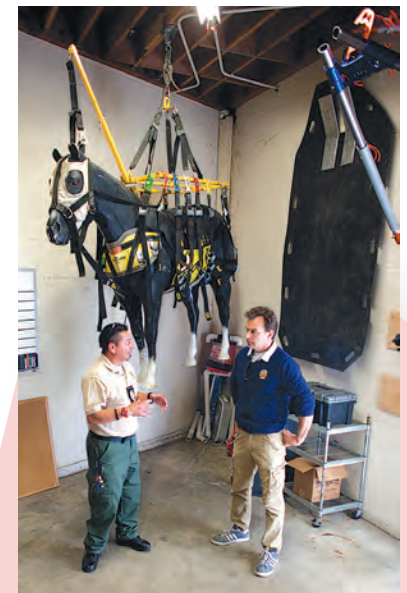
On Feb. 28, *Alive!* cameras caught up with the LA Animal Services SMART team performing a rescue exercise in a ravine at Elysian Park. The "animal" being rescued was a synthetic horse, of the same approximate weight and size of a real horse and designed for rescue exercises. Animal Services owns two such synthetic horses for training.

STEP 1 Storage

The SMART rescue team is headquartered at the North Central Animal Shelter on Lacy Street. The team stores and maintains its equipment at that location.



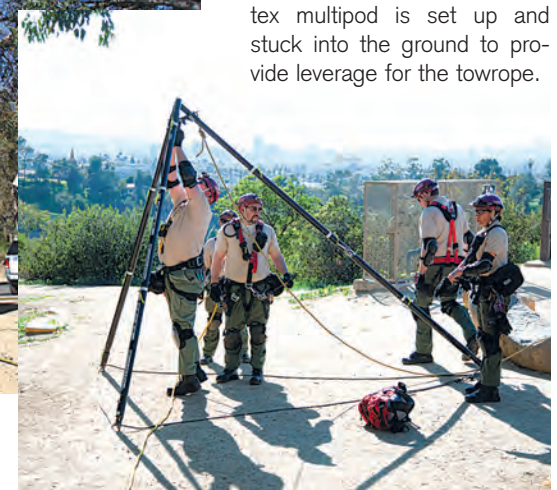
The SMART team's equipment outside one of its rescue trucks.



STEP 2 Set Up



The team is called to a rescue site. Here in this exercise, they set up at the top of the ravine above the "horse" to be rescued. Tires on the rescue vehicles are blocked.

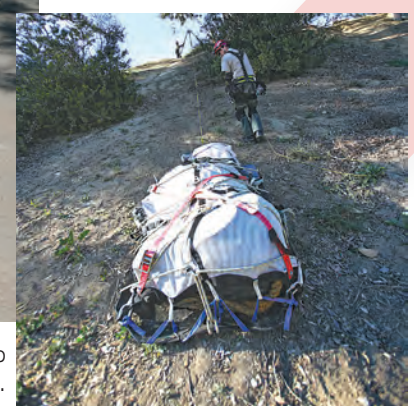


The three-legged Arizona vortex multipod is set up and stuck into the ground to provide leverage for the towrope.

STEP 5 Heavy Lifting



LEFT: The team leader shouts "Haul on!" and the team members grab the long towrope (tripled over via pulleys) and pull the "horse" up the ravine. Winches are not used, as the rescue team prefers the control afforded to a manual pull. It's good old-fashioned muscle work, as a horse can weigh more than 2,000 pounds.



RIGHT: The animal is pulled up the ravine toward its rescue.

The Alive! Interview

STEP 3 Rappel

The veterinarian/technician is always first down, to assess the status of the animal and provide medical care. Here, Vet/tech Ramon Garcia rappels down the side of the ravine.

RESCUE!



Ramon Garcia.



Hugh Briefman.



Glen Julian.

Next down the ravine are Animal Control Officers Hugh Briefman, the team's Large Animal Rescue Coordinator, and Glen Julian, the team's equestrian expert.

STEP 4 Caring and Preparing



ABOVE: The Vet/Tech and Animal Control Officers treat the wounded animal, place a sled under it, and prepare it to be pulled up the hill. Here, as would occur in a real rescue, a towel is placed over the face of the "horse" to protect its eyes from dirt during its transportation up the hill.



ABOVE: The towrope is tossed down the ravine.



LEFT: After attaching the towrope, the team maneuvers the sledged animal into better alignment for the pull-up.



On Friday, March 1, *Alive!* editor John Burnes interviewed Mark Salazar, Director of Field Operations, 2 years of City service, Club Member (left), and Armando Navarrete, Acting Lieutenant for Special Teams and team leader for the SMART team, 17 years. The interview took place at the SMART headquarters conference room in the Animal Services North Central Shelter.

'Rescuing Animals [Is] My Calling'

Alive! So tell me in layman's terms – what does the SMART Team do?

ARMANDO NAVARRETE: The SMART Team is a search and rescue team for animals, just like for people. If an animal gets stuck or trapped, or is lost somewhere, we do exactly what a search and rescue team would do for humans, except we do it for animals.

And are you 24/7?

ARMANDO: Luckily, we're 24/7. That's a blessing. Anytime someone calls, whatever time of day or night, on holidays, at two or three in the morning, we can respond.

And are there limitations to what you do? Are there any kinds of rescues that you shy away from, or don't do for certain reasons?

ARMANDO: We can pretty much do anything, except for those around high power lines. Anything above the standard house voltage, 120 or 220 volts, we can't do because of the danger of electrocution. On power poles, we're limited to where the data lines are, which are about 20 to 25 feet up. Any higher than that, we need the assistance of the DWP.



Acting Lt. Armando Navarrete explains some of the team's awards.

I see. So you wouldn't turn that rescue down, you would just have to call DWP to come in?

ARMANDO: Right. They usually like us to stand by, because they're not the animal handlers. We can at least give them some of our equipment. They take it up there, they rescue the animal... or if the animal jumps or falls, we're down below to try to catch it.

Are there any types of animals that you, for some reason, wouldn't be able to rescue for size, or remoteness or anything like that?

ARMANDO: The biggest animal we rescued was a 2,000-pound horse, which obviously can't be lifted by humans. We were able to use an apparatus to get it out of the situation, and then prep it for a helicopter lift, whether it's County Sheriff's Dept. or L.A. City Fire with their helicopter, whoever is available.

How many rescues do you do a year?

ARMANDO: That's been going up and up and up. In 2009, we had 67. In 2010 we had 69. In

2011 we saw an increase, because we had more freedom to go out versus having to wait for someone to check it out first, assess it, and then maybe call us. So in 2011, we had close to 120. And in 2012, we ended with 163.

Wow. So you've more than doubled.

ARMANDO: Yes. We're very busy every day. [When not called upon to perform special animal rescues, the SMART team members work as normal Animal Control Officers.]

Elite Team

How does a SMART member get picked? What are the qualifications?

ARMANDO: It started almost five or six years ago where it was just a matter of people having the passion to do it, to go above and beyond. Most of us come from a rock-climbing background. To climb heights is fun for us. To do it on the job had us saying, "We're getting paid to do this?" So it was very simple.

Since then, we've interviewed candidates to make sure that people were willing to do what we do, to train and maybe put some extra money in on their own, because some of the training wasn't covered by the City. The selection process is just like anything else. We sent out a flyer, saying, "Who's interested?" We took their résumé, found out their qualifications, interviewed them, and then selected the best person we thought would be a good fit for the team.

MARK SALAZAR: The team members work every day as Animal Control officers out in the field. They're deployed citywide. When a rescue comes up, Lt. Navarrete contacts the districts to see whom he can pull. Right now there isn't a need to recruit for any more. Originally, it wasn't necessarily an application process. It was just the passion of people coming together and saying, "We want to do this. Can we do this?" And the Department allowed that to occur.

Origins

It was quite a journey as to how the SMART Unit came about. Tell me how it started.

ARMANDO: It started back in 1999, or 2000. I got hired on as an Animal Control Officer with the City of L.A. I thought, "That's what I want to do." I wasn't a law enforcement person. I never wanted to be a fireman. But rescuing animals was something I felt was my calling.

When I signed up, we didn't have any rescuing. There weren't a lot of rescues going on because of a lack of training, equipment and support from upper management. I felt that we needed to have a team that does what the Fire Dept. Search and Rescue teams do for people. It was kind of a no-brainer. It didn't exist, though, so why not just create it? That was the easy part, just thinking about it.

When we pitched it to the department back

S.M.A.R.T. Specialized Mobile Animal Rescue Team

— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

The Alive! Interview



Acting Lt. Armando Navarrete.

in 2000, they pretty much said, “This is too expensive, plus too dangerous. Just let the Fire Dept. handle it.” But they weren’t doing it. That we weren’t doing it didn’t sit well with me. As an agency that provides service, we were really providing a disservice. So we just marched forward and said, “Let’s just do this.” We had no support, but we did it within the realms of what we had. If there was a feline in a tree, our old manual actually said, “You shall not climb it unless you have a plan.” So we started making plans before our rescues. And the supervisors at the time scratched their heads, saying, “Well, it is in [the manual]. So go ahead!” That’s how we survived the first five or six years without a real team or the right equipment.

You were out of pocket there for your own equipment.

ARMANDO: Yes, we were out of pocket for quite some time. And the equipment that we were buying was the wrong equipment.

Do you have any idea how much you have spent?

ARMANDO: The first year, we didn’t know what we were doing. It was about \$5,000. And then every year it cost a little more. I took my savings and thought, “This is what I want to do for the rest of my life.” I spent \$5,000 or \$10,000 a year, because it was important to me to be safe and keep my team safe.

MARK: When we were looking at developing a budget to support the team properly, we had them do an assessment of what the value of the equipment was that they had to date. And I believe it was just in excess of about \$20,000.

Wow!

MARK: We developed a budget that would support that type of maintenance annually, so that they can replace gear that you really don’t want to use more than once or twice for life safety. They’re now able to do that. We’ve developed a budget to annually take care of their team and provide a great service for the community.

Efficiency

In the last couple years there’s been some restructuring.

MARK: Yes. We realized that, with the budget in the City, departments have to do more with less. We came up with a concept of putting all of our special unit teams under one roof, under one supervisor, the Acting Lieutenant here. It protects a group of individuals that can specialize in the fields, in the areas that we need them to. It provides an opportunity for cross training, so that if somebody in his unit is out, he’s able to pull from one of the other specialized units to help come and assist. And we brought the Large Animal Rescue Team and the Small Animal Rescue Team under one hat and called it the Specialized Mobile Animal Rescue Team.

That’s SMART.

MARK: Right. To be responsible with our resources, why not have them team together, and have a larger pool of officers that we can pull from for rescues 24/7?

Makes sense.

MARK: We’ve been able to expand our training opportunities for more regular and thorough training than what we’ve had.

ARMANDO: The training was one of the things that we harped on since Day One. So now we have two trainings, at least, a month, sometimes three. We have specialized training in Swift Water Rescue from certified instructors. And then recently we were certified as Rope Rescue Technicians, which pretty much is the highest level of rope rescue. We can set up rigging for hauling and lowering people. We can build a zip line across big gaps almost anywhere.

So when did Animal Services really get behind the effort?

ARMANDO: They really got behind it when [current General Manager] Brenda Barnette came onboard, in 2010. And then later that year, Mark was assigned to us, and that’s when we got the support we needed. From then it’s been nothing but support ever since.

MARK: We wanted to try to protect what we considered important assets in the Department, and one of those resources was our Special Operations team. We brought all of those folks under one roof, and put them under Acting Lt. Navarrete here.

Armando, when you went to Brenda, the new General Manager, you weren’t sure how it was going to go, did you?

ARMANDO: I believed in it, and I knew it worked; I’d seen it work. I feared that she wouldn’t see it the way I saw it. But luckily, she saw it exactly like I did. She saw the future of it. I came out of that meeting very excited and thinking the future is going to bright for this team.

A great moment for you!

ARMANDO: Oh, it was.
MARK: We’ve had tremendous support from Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and members of the City Council. Our General Manager, Brenda Barnette, really is a visionary for this Department. She’s 100 percent right for the job. And in this environment today, we continue to be challenged. In a lot of ways, this Special Team really is the heart of the department because they demonstrate how much we here at Animal Services care for animals, and to what great lengths we are willing to go to take care of the pets and any animals in the City of Los Angeles. Our ultimate goal is that every animal is safe and finds a home, and our mission is to see that one day we truly will be a no-kill City here in Los Angeles. We continue to encourage spay and neutering and adoptions from City Shelters, so that one day we don’t have to take in another animal, and that they can go straight to a home. We’d love to see that. This team continues to exemplify that. They always promote what we do here in the shelters – to try and care for these animals properly and get them into good homes.

ARMANDO: Yes... the animals that are not owned, we work really hard to get them a home.

Memorable Rescues

Tell me about a couple of your favorite rescues.

ARMANDO: The first one that really solidified what we do was a rescue we did in 2011 of a dog that we named Chanel. She was in the L.A. River channel. We think she either fell in, or someone threw her in. The walls were about 15 to 20 feet high of solid cement. You can’t drive vehicles in there. We sent people in there safely with the ropes that we’ve learned from training. We lowered three rescuers in; I was one of them. When we got down there, to our surprise, we saw this skin-and-bones cat just crying at us. So we thought, “Well, now it’s a dual rescue. Let’s get the cat out first.” Once we got him out, the dog was the next challenge. Even an injured dog can bite. We didn’t know the temperament of the dog. Surprisingly, this dog came waddling over to one of the rescuers, and put her head on her lap, as if to say, “Take me out of here.” We put her

in a special harness for dogs, and we hoisted the dog and the rescuer out. The great news is that the cat got adopted two weeks later. And then Chanel, through a lot of Facebook campaigning and a lot of hustling, she got a happy home four months later. Her name now is Lulu.

And then the second rescue was last year. It showed Mark and Brenda’s ideas in action with the unified two teams, the large and the small animal teams. We got a call for a horse in a swimming pool.

An empty swimming pool, right?

ARMANDO: Yes. And of course it was in the middle of summer. It was about 100-plus degrees



The SMART team rescues a horse in the middle of a dry swimming pool.

in Sun Valley, and when we got there, sure enough there was a horse laid out at the bottom of this 10-foot pool. We had to think fast as to how to get this animal out of there. It took the two teams. We put the people who were familiar with the horse in the pool. They secured it in the rescue blanket. And then the rest of us set up the rope rigging. This horse weighed about a thousand pounds. We had to get the horse from the deep end to the shallow end, and then hoist it out, with eight people. We couldn’t get a helicopter in there because of the wires. And to get heavy machinery in there from the Fire Dept. would mean they’d have to knock over a few walls to attempt it.

Right.

ARMANDO: So we did what we’ve trained for. It was a picture-perfect rescue. You couldn’t ask for a better rescue. It was done in less than 30 minutes, which is phenomenal for a 1,000-pound horse in a swimming pool.

MARK: One of the real tributes that we celebrate with this type of a rescue also is that the community did not have to deploy a Fire Dept. rescue team to go out there and to take care of this type of a rescue. We were able to save some City resources and still have a successful rescue. We see it as a tremendous service to the community.

One of our goals going forward is to go out to the training sessions or to meetings at the LAPD and LAFD and talk about our resources that are available. A lot of times, we find that the field crews themselves don’t necessarily know to call us. We’re looking ahead to be able to do that.

Awards and Leadership

You’ve won a couple of awards. Tell me about them.



Mark Salazar, Director of Field Operations (left), Club Member, and Acting Lt. Armando Navarrete display one of their awards.

MARK: Last year, we received notification from the City that they were looking at ways to appreciate the work that some of the City Departments have done in providing good quality services to the community while being mindful of budget constraints. We received recognition for the work that we did by being able to put together a team of all of these different types of units, being permits, wildlife, large and small animal rescue,

and provide better service to the community without any department increase in cost. And that is what we were recognized for in December. [*Alive! March, page 26*]

And you won a national award, too.

ARMANDO: Right. 2012 was a big, big year for us.

It was!

ARMANDO: Last June, we were recipients of the Higgins and Langley Award in Swiftwater Rescue. In the search and rescue world, it’s equivalent to an actor winning the Academy Award. Just to get nominated was, for me, phenomenal. We thought, “We’re not going to win. We’re an animal rescue team. These people who are being nominated are all in the [human] search and rescue world and have had years of experience and expertise.”

But I got word that we actually won! I couldn’t believe it at first. It was really nice to be in the company of actual search and rescue personnel. And here we were, this animal rescue team, solely comprised of Animal Services Personnel, which was unheard of. It was a very great honor for us to get that award. We have it framed in our offices, because it’s just one of the best things that’s probably ever happened award-wise for us.

MARK: One of the nice recognitions that we received afterwards was from other teams that for years have been trying to win it. And here we were, our first time, and we received the recognition. People were awfully nice to comment on that. We’ve received contact globally from it. It really brought a lot of nice prestige to the City of Los Angeles.

ARMANDO: When you get the calls from other agencies across the nation, it’s like, “Wow!” And then when somebody Facebooks you from New Zealand and says, “We love what you do. We’re trying to do the same thing,” it’s amazing. It was really nice to see all these people not laugh at us for what we do, because it’s animals.

Our goal is to be able to show other people how it can be done. We started with a thousand dollars and passion and a goal. We hope that, in the future, everyone will have a team like this.

A Born Rescuer

You started this team out of your own idea, your own wallet, and your own energy. Obviously, this service to the City of LA means a lot to you.

ARMANDO: It means a great deal to me. I started in this department back in 1997 thinking we were going to rescue animals. And I was frustrated that when we’d get these calls in, we couldn’t do anything about it. The Fire Dept. was busy, so they couldn’t help. They’re here for the humans.

It was really tough for me to see these animals in distress and not be able to do anything about it. So out of that came the team. And it seemed doable. It was a sacrifice, but it was well worth it.

You were born for this role.

ARMANDO: As corny as it may sound, I say that it’s my calling. We have yet to walk away from a rescue scene [without trying]. We may leave after four or 10 hours of trying, only to go home and brainstorm another solution, buy something new or fabricate something that’ll work, and come back the next day and then we’re successful.

Thank you very much for your time.

ARMANDO: No problem. Thank you.
MARK: Thank you.



The Higgins and Langley award. SMART is the first animal rescue team in the world, comprised solely of Animal Services personnel, to win a Higgins and Langley award in swiftwater rescue.

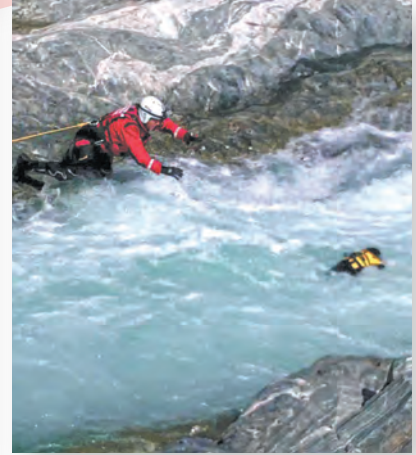
The Alive! Feature

STEP 6 Real Rescues!

Alternate Team Leader Andrew Redfield rescues one of five kittens from under a house.



BELOW: Vet/tech Ramon Garcia performs a rescue at the team's swiftwater rescue training.



Alternate Team Leader Annette Ramirez rescues a deer from a well.



Alternate Team Leader Annette Ramirez rescues Lulu out of the LA River.

BELOW: Vet/tech Ramon Garcia grabs a kitten 40 feet up a tree.



The SMART Team, standing, from left: Officers Verna Riparip, Andrew Redfield, Armando Navarrete, Ernesto Poblano and Glen Julian, and Vet/Tech Ramon Garcia. Kneeling: Officers Yvette Smith, Annette Ramirez and Hugh Briefman. Not pictured: Officers Tami Shepphird and Sean McCarthy.



Alternate Team Leader Annette Ramirez displays some of the team's gear.

Mission Accomplished

The team celebrates a successful rescue. If this were a real situation, the animal would be given additional medical attention if necessary.