

Cancer leads to opportunity to help other dogs



It is a dog party/fundraiser at Basecamp Hotel for a canine nonprofit. Photo/Justine Lureva

By Terra Breeden

The C word isn't just something that afflicts humans. Dogs, too, can get cancer.

Victoria Rhodes knows this all too well.

Rhodes founded Wild Blue Dogs this year after losing her Welsh terrier Willy to canine cancer. Willy was diagnosed with cancer six years ago and given just six months to live. But Rhodes refused to accept that sentence. She spent a lot of time researching treatments for canine cancer, from oncology to homeopathy and provided Willy with the most advanced

treatments and care for his cancer.

“My dog’s six-month sentence turned into 3½ years because of the care he received,” Rhodes told *Lake Tahoe News*.

Through the process of saving her dog, Rhodes discovered the devastating effects that cancer was having on canines nationally.

Six million dogs are diagnosed with cancer in the U.S. each year. One in every three dogs in the U.S. gets cancer and most of the dogs who are diagnosed don’t survive the year.



Willy’s cancer diagnosis led Victoria Rhodes to help others. Photo/Justine Lureva

“You’re talking a very short life expectancy once diagnosed,” Rhodes said. “And a lot of people’s dogs are their companion. Over 70 percent of Americans own a pet and it’s a part of their family.”

One of the reasons canine cancer is causing such a high number of fatalities is because treatments like radiology and chemotherapy are so expensive. Most people don’t have health insurance for their dog and can’t afford to provide the care

needed to extend their pet's life.

Cancer treatment for dogs generally runs between \$5,000 and \$25,000. It's extraordinarily expensive.

Alpine Animal Hospital in South Lake Tahoe works directly with Wild Blue Dogs to fully fund treatment for dogs with cancer and families who need help providing treatments for their beloved pets.

"Wild Blue Dogs is a really cool program because it focuses on getting treatment to the families who need it and supporting the community," Rhodes said. "I really feel strongly that people should be able to keep their families together and my goal is to treat every dog that needs it."

Through her experience with her dog Willy, Rhodes saw there were no resources to help people whose pets had contracted cancer. So she decided to start the Wild Blue Dogs nonprofit.

"If people have kids, homes and bills, Wild Blue Dogs will help. It's a need-based provider not income-based," Rhodes said. "I feel you should be able to keep your life intact and still provide care for your animal."

Rhodes is passionate about helping dogs with canine cancer and she wants to do it in the Lake Tahoe community. Wild Blue Dogs helps fund treatment for Lake Tahoe dogs whose people need financial help.

"I want to help this community because I spent the last 20 years vacationing here with my dogs and I love it here," Rhodes said. "Lake Tahoe is a dog-loving community, but there aren't a lot of resources."

Now she needs the community's support to raise money for the nonprofit. On July 17 and Aug. 21 Basecamp Hotel in South Lake Tahoe is hosting Yappy Hour from 4:30-7:30pm.

"The money raised at Yappy Hour goes directly to treatment of

dogs in the Lake Tahoe community and helps dogs in need here,” Rhodes said. “You’re raising money to help your neighbors.”

The event at Basecamp Hotel features drinks and yard games for guests, a photo-booth where you can take a glamour shot with your canine companion, and a chance to meet with other likeminded dog lovers in the South Lake Tahoe community.

“It’s the most fun cocktail party in the world. You get to go with your dog and believe me, the dogs have the most fun, this is their social hour,” Rhodes said.

Basecamp Hotel will donate a percentage of sales from food and drinks sold at Yappy Hour to Wild Blue Dogs. People may also donate directly to the nonprofit.