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## **9<sup>th</sup> ARF Academy Awards Showcases Singing, Dancing, Debonair Dogs: Event raises funds for free spay & neuter services**

**Thousand Palms, CA – April 8, 2009:** The 9<sup>th</sup> annual ARF Academy Awards show, spotlighting dogs and their owners in eight different contest categories, will be held on Sunday, May 3, from 2:00pm – 5:00pm at the Westin Mission Hills Resort in Rancho Mirage. This year the ARF Academy and Animals Samaritans SPCA have teamed up to raise funds for Animal Samaritans' No-Cost Spay & Neuter Fund.

The ARF Awards are modeled after the famed movie awards, and include a special "Osker" trophy for each prize-winning pet owner. Local celebrities will judge dogs in the following categories: Best Celebrity Look-Alike, Owner & Pet Look-Alike, Best Dressed Pooch, Best Trick, Best Dancer, Best Singing Voice, Most Unusual Costume, Best Pet Couple. The Awards show, buffet and entertainment event cost \$55 to attend. There is no additional cost to enter your dog in one of the contests. Whether or not their canine competes, pet owners are welcome to bring their well-behaved dog on a leash.

Additionally, pet owners can enter their cats in the Feline Photo Contest. Pictures may be submitted by email to [acrist@animalsamaritans.org](mailto:acrist@animalsamaritans.org), or snail-mailed to Animal Samaritans, PO Box 513, Thousand Palms, CA 92276. Winners will be announced at the event. There is no cost to enter. Animal Samaritans' participation in this year's ARF awards replaces their involvement in the annual Pets On Parade luncheon.

In the field of Animal Welfare, spaying and neutering is recognized as the most effective way to control animal overpopulation and the resulting homelessness, abuse and euthanasia of unwanted cats and dogs. The funds raised from this event will provide assistance to income-qualifying residents in need of spaying and neutering their animals. Additionally, the funds help pay for free spay and neuter services for feral cats.

"Last year Animal Samaritans provided more than \$97,000 in free spay & neuter services to the community," notes Animal Samaritans Executive Director, Fred Saunders. "In these times of economic hardship, the funds we raise from the ARF Academy Awards will help us help those who need our services most."

Download entry forms online from the Special Events page at [www.animalsamaritans.org](http://www.animalsamaritans.org), or call 760-343-0837 for more information.

Animal Samaritans SPCA, a 501 (c) non-profit organization founded in 1978, is committed to improving the lives of animals and people. As the Coachella Valley's most comprehensive animal welfare organization, they strive to one day eliminate the needless suffering and abuse of homeless and unwanted animals. Programs and services in place to save the lives of healthy and treatable animals include prevention through humane education, low-cost and no-cost spay and neuter, low-cost vaccinations, low-cost dental care and pet wellness exams, microchipping, animal sheltering and pet adoptions. In addition, more than one hundred volunteers from their Animal Assisted Therapy programs visit disabled children in special needs classrooms, nursing homes, and hospitals, while their Animal Assisted Activities teams see residents at Juvenile Hall.

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