

What elevates a Superstar above the everyday, powerful and extolled performer? What separates the legendary from the merely famous? In a year marred by Wall Street greed, beggarly banks, and investment scoundrels, the best, most-obvious answer might just be generosity.

This holiday season, Animal Samaritans was fortunate enough to be one of the charities to benefit from Barry Manilow's "A Gift of Love" concert series at the McCallum Theater. With worldwide music sales of more than 75 million and hits spanning over four decades, it's clear Barry Manilow has nothing to prove. So why did he do it? I suspect it's because at the core of his music—his gift—is a compassionate heart.

Anyone with a pulse knows times are tight. Many local nonprofits are cutting staff and services in an effort to simply stay afloat. Even then, we know some won't make it. According to The Desert Sun, Barry's concert series raised close to half a million dollars for 25 Coachella Valley charities. Barry, if you're listening, thank you, thank you, you've made a meaningful difference. The more than \$22,000 dollars you raised for Animal Samaritans alone is greatly appreciated. Without such kindness many of our programs would cease.

Our No-Kill Animal Shelter is a prime example. No one makes a profit by housing, feeding, and providing free vet care to homeless animals; animal shelters are notorious money-drains. Our Humane Education Program, which provides services in both English and Spanish to more than 20,000 local school children each year, is another non-revenue generating cost center. In our Animal Assisted Therapy Program we pair suitable therapy dogs and cats with disabled children, hospital patients, and nursing home residents; it's alive and well because of charitable giving. For the second year in a row, we've given more than \$100,000 dollars back to the community in the form of free animal spay & neuter services to senior pet owners, and for the reduction of feral cat colonies. What's more, we are near completion on our new, state of the art veterinary clinic—and the loan must be repaid. Again, charitable contributions play a pivotal role in our success.

Many communities have famous actors, athletes, and musicians living among them, but here in our Desert we have a genuine Superstar. Barry Manilow's compassion and generosity reminds us that not all icons are self-absorbed, and that, as strange as it sounds in this day and age, some stars love helping others even more than money or fame.

Fred Saunders
Executive Director, Animal Samaritans SPCA