

Bartlett's News Briefs

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STRUGGLING MOM FEELING BLESSED IN PACIFICA (INCLUDING THROUGH LOSS OF BELOVED FAMILY PUG)

AN INTERVIEW BY JEAN BARTLETT



photo courtesy of Curry and her family

Pugsley and Bella enjoyed a beautiful friendship.

Pugsley died right before Christmas.

"It was so unexpected and so hard," Curry said. "I don't know what we would have done without this wonderful, giving community."

Curry noticed her pug had a growth.

"Pugsley wasn't in any pain but I saw the tumor when he had to use the restroom."

Curry frantically called the Pacifica Resource Center ([PRC](#).) The local nonprofit's mission is to "support the economic security of Pacifica families and individuals by providing a safety net of food, housing assistance, and other critical services, including coaching, advocacy, information, and referral." In 2020, PRC served 1 in 10 Pacifica families. They would like to serve more. More than 5 in 10 families qualify but many are reluctant to ask for help.

Through PRC, an emergency veterinarian appointment for Pugsley was arranged. (Prior to the pandemic, PRC had a veterinarian onsite, one day, every other month, to give shots and check on the health of client pets. Those with pet needs during the pandemic should contact the Resource Center at 650-738-7470 for information.) In Pugsley's case, PRC contacted the Rockaway Ricky Memorial Fund.

The [Rockaway Ricky Memorial Fund](#) is a special fund under [Pacificans Care](#) (locals helping locals.) The fund "assists with the pet care needs for Pacifica seniors, the homeless and families in need. Donation funds are distributed by Pacificans Care to the Pacifica Resource Center and through Pacifica [Senior Services](#)." The fund is named for Rockaway Ricky, the beloved pet of Pacificans Care board member Christine Stahl. Rockaway Ricky passed in 2018.

To Curry and her daughter's shock, Pugsley had to be euthanized. His anal sac tumor was cancerous and had metastasized to his stomach. Curry and Victoria have cried many tears since Pugsley's death, but they have been really worried about their dog Bella. Bella and Pugsley were best friends.

"Pugsley and Bella couldn't be more different," Curry laughed. "Pugsley was a little furry ball of sun. He was laid back, he was happy, he was fun, he was busy, he was loyal and he was a clown. Bella, a Siberian husky, is like an extremely large house cat. She is aloof and very intelligent. Her mindset is her own and she would be happy to hunt and kill, and then bring us the resulting 'gift.' She was always happy to eat Pugsley's food if he didn't eat it fast enough. Now she is barely eating and has lost weight."

Due to Bella's depression and lack of eating, the RR Memorial Fund has helped Bella with needed medication and supplements. In addition, another member of the community has provided Bella with premium dog food.

"We love Bella dearly and I am taking her everywhere I go now, trying to help her feel less sad and remind her how much we love her. I don't know how we would have gotten through this without all this generous Pacifica support."

It was another life when Pugsley and Bella came to live with Curry and her infant daughter, Victoria.

"Ten years ago, we were living in New Orleans and I was volunteering at a dog shelter," Curry said, "and that's how I met Pugsley. Pugsley, who they estimated to be 2 or 3, had heartworms. The shelter couldn't treat his heartworms and they were going to have to put him down. I decided I would foster him and get him through his heartworm treatment."

An internal parasite transmitted through a mosquito bite, untreated heartworms can cause damage to the heart and lungs, and can result in death. The treatment is time intensive and costly. Many shelters cannot take on that kind of burden. Pugsley was successfully treated and while she was at it, Curry fostered another dog with heartworms. That dog was Bella, who is now 14.

"We additionally took a cat in, and as it turned out, also permanently," Curry said. "My friend lost her home, and her kids, and she asked me if I could watch her cat until she got reestablished. She then disappeared. Precious is probably around 10 years old now. Pugsley loved both Bella and Precious. But to this day, Bella would gladly eat Precious. But she is not allowed to! I keep them separated. They co-exist without ever seeing each other."

Curry is the mom of five. She met her ex-husband in her senior year of college when she was in the Army ROTC program. But when it came down to entering the U.S. Army, it didn't happen. In a head-on collision when she was 17, the Army decided to boot her for medical reasons. (Curry also has ADHD, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.)

Curry is a "military brat." She grew up along the Gulf Coast.

"My husband was a Marine. We lived in numerous places, but they included San Diego and Monterey. I did not have a career. I was a Marine Corps wife for 20 years and of course a mom: three girls and two boys. My eldest is 30 and my youngest, Victoria, just turned 11."

Curry said they call New Orleans the 'City of Second Chances.' But that turned out to not be true for her. Her marriage fell apart right before Victoria was born and in 2015, her second youngest, Patrick, passed away quite suddenly.

"Patrick had just turned 18 and he went to a party and despite being told differently and knowing better, he and some of his friends mixed pills they found with alcohol and we lost Patrick.

"When Patrick died it was too haunting for me to stay in New Orleans. I had met up with a former boyfriend and he, Victoria and I, and of course our pets, moved to Pacifica. Victoria was in first grade."

While Curry and her boyfriend have since parted, Curry and Victoria's housing has remained stable as has Victoria's school, Sunset Ridge.

"We chose Sunset Ridge because of the principal, Ellie Cundiff. She gave us a personal tour and we just love her. It's been a good school for Victoria."

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Because of the family's financial struggles, Curry also worried whether Victoria could keep up at school on their "ancient" computer.

"Once again, Pacificans came to our aid. Suddenly Victoria has a new laptop. She was also given some beautiful new clothes. We have also been so blessed with help from the Resource Center. They have been life savers; they are deeply caring human beings. And of course, while the passing of our Pugsley has been hard, all the support that was provided to help him, and us, through the end, really touched our hearts. If anyone knows of a pug in need of a home – we're all here, my daughter, Bella, Precious and me."

There was another surprise blessing. Bella landed the July "star" spot for the Rockaway Ricky, 2021 Dog Days of Pacifica Calendar. Just out, you can read about the calendar [here](#). Along with Bella, also included among the photos of dog's posing for this year's calendar theme, "Dogs of Essential Workers," is Mr. Chips. The 17-year-old American village dog is January's star spot. Mr. Chips is also the recipient of RR funds due to costly medication.

"This pandemic is hard," Curry said, "and I still see too many people around town not wearing masks. I also see that some stores are more lax than others. I shop at Grocery Outlet and the Dollar Tree because both stores are adamant, without exception, that people wear their masks and remain six feet apart. But most of us are good about doing the right thing. Together, for each other, we can do this."

The pandemic has put a stop to Curry volunteering with PRC. No one can. It's a safety issue. That's true elsewhere where Curry has volunteered. But Curry is so grateful for the friends she has made in Pacifica, particularly through the Pacifica Historical Society, and looks forward to the day when everyone can be together again.

"When I first moved here, I had no idea I would be on this side of income. But Pacifica has such nice people – and so many who really look out for their neighbors in a way I've never seen. I look forward to when I can help support others and give to these giving organizations. Plus, when all of our activities are limited to mostly being outside, I can't think of a prettier place to be. We're all so lucky to be in Pacifica. I couldn't feel more blessed."



photo by Curry

Victoria and Bella out for a walk.



Jean Bartlett is a longtime Bay Area features writer: Pacifica Tribune, Oakland Tribune, San Jose Mercury, San Mateo Times, Portraits & Roots, Marin Independent Journal, Twin City Times, Ross Valley Reporter, Peninsula Progress, Coastal Connections, Contra Costa County Times, Bay Area Business Woman and Catholic San Francisco. She is also an award-winning children's book author, a former Hallmark Card writer, a produced playwright and the author of two historical biography books on some of the more than 370,000 interred at Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery in Colma.