

THE LOOK AHEAD

# Watch live competitive painting, see the best of Utah gymnastics and have a laugh with Shakespeare

Journalists across our newsroom give you this heads-up on the week to come. Here's what you can expect Jan. 2-8.

THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

**Watch live competitive painting »** Ever heard of live competitive painting? Experience it for yourself at Art Battle SLC, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Wednesday at Soundwell (149 W. 200 S., Salt Lake City). Watch as local artists create paintings in 20 minutes, then vote for your favorites to help determine the winner. Additionally, all artwork will be available for sale via silent auction at the end of the

night. Artists interested in participating can register at [bit.ly/3ez0bix](http://bit.ly/3ez0bix). Tickets are \$20 at the door or \$15 online at [bit.ly/346U2bs](http://bit.ly/346U2bs). Note that this is a 21+ event.

**Drink to the new year »** Start off the new year with wines from around the world at the Gallivan Center's Wine Night (239 S. Main St., Salt Lake City) from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Thursday. The event will feature Italian Prosecco, Spanish Cava, California and French

sparkling wines. Guests must be 21+. Tickets are \$45 and available online at [bit.ly/3qvsrL](http://bit.ly/3qvsrL).

**See the best of Utah gymnastics »** The Rio Tinto Best of Utah NCAA Gymnasts Meet will feature gymnasts from the University of Utah, Brigham Young University, Utah State University and Southern Utah University competing in a one-day event Friday at the Maverick Center (3200 S., Decker Lake Drive, West Valley City). Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the show starts at 7 p.m. Tickets start at \$25 and can be bought online at [bit.ly/319P10H](http://bit.ly/319P10H).

**Have a laugh with Shakespeare »** Grassroots Shakespeare Company presents "The Merry Wives of Windsor" on Thursday, Friday and Saturday at the SCERA Center for the Arts (745 S. State Street, Orem), with each show starting at 7:30 p.m. The collaborative touring ensemble creates productions inspired by the Bard's original staging techniques, and interacts with audience members for an immersive theater experience. Tickets are \$10 for seniors and children, and \$12 for adults. Buy them online at [bit.ly/3pB95LS](http://bit.ly/3pB95LS).

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## Domestic violence can endanger pets, too. A Utah bill would offer them more protection.

The proposal, sponsored by state Rep. Angela Romero, would allow pets to be included in protective orders.

By CONNOR SANDERS  
The Salt Lake Tribune

On an armchair in Kristina Pulsipher's office sits a pillow look-alike of Littlefoot, one of the first cats ever sheltered at Ruff Haven Crisis Sheltering, where Pulsipher serves as executive director.

A man living in a van had dropped Littlefoot off at the Salt Lake City facility, which offers emergency refuge to pets, Pulsipher said. The man had suffered a life-threatening head injury and was afraid of losing Littlefoot before he found Ruff Haven in June 2020, the same month the shelter opened.

The shelter aims to help all pets in crisis, often assisting owners facing housing insecurity or medical treatment. But about 15% of its clients are survivors of domestic violence, depicted in several photos that dot the back wall of Pulsipher's office. Ruff Haven allows survivors to board their pets at the shelter as they plan to escape their abusers — a service that is not common in Utah, a state that offers few protections to such pets.

"You hear a lot in animal rescue about how we hate people and we love animals," Pulsipher said. "That is not our mission. We don't say that here. ... Our clients are animal welfare heroes."

And Pulsipher remembers them all. New bill would protect pets, which are 'lifelines to many'

Domestic violence is prevalent in Utah, advocates say. But discrepancies in how it's reported to law enforcement agencies make it difficult to get a complete and accurate idea of just how prevalent it is.

In Salt Lake City, officers have responded to 736 family offense crimes as of November 2021, according to data tracked by the department. While that tally is lower than the 789 family offenses reported in all of 2020, it's well above the average of 614.3 reported from 2017-2019.

Domestic abuse is often fueled by a perpetrator's desire for power and control over a partner, Liz Sollis, spokesperson for the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition, said. Pets also can become targets for domestic abuse — used by perpetrators to exercise authority over victims.

"They can hold us hostage, if you will," Sollis said of perpetrators. "So if they know that the partner who they're abusing has ties to the animal, they could keep the animal from them or threaten to hurt them."

Earlier this year, a red heeler named Dixie was intentionally set on fire and abandoned near Interstate 80 in Tooele. A man lit Dixie on fire to get back at her owner, with whom he had a previous relationship, police said. Dixie suffered second- and third-degree burns and had to be put down.

In July, another man was arrested after police said he lost his temper with his puppy and killed it in Herriman. A month later, authorities said a West Jordan man — who was the subject of two ongoing domestic violence investigations — tortured, shot and abandoned a 9-month-old puppy off State Route 111. The Husky-mix, which was never found, was presumed dead, police said.

Pets are treated like property under Utah law, Pulsipher said. If a person leaving an abusive relationship drops their pet off at an animal shelter in the meantime, their abuser could potentially claim the animal as their own.

Following Dixie's death, Pulsipher is working with the Humane Society of Utah on a

bill to change that. "We realized this is the moment for us to be able to, unfortunately, take this horrible incident and hopefully turn it into something good," Pulsipher said.

The bill, dubbed "Safe Pets, Safe People," would allow for pets to be included in court-issued protective orders, granting them a legal layer of protection from abusers. Rep. Angela Romero, D-Salt Lake City, is sponsoring the measure, which is still being drafted.

Currently, 35 other states offer such protection to pets. Romero, who considers pets a part of the family, said she has seen domestic violence situations where a pet's been killed by a partner. She is confident she'll find a co-sponsor on the other side of the aisle.

"At the end of the day, this is about power and control," Romero said. "This is about someone trying to control the situation. ... And they know how important pets are as lifelines to many people."

### 'SOMETIMES WE CAN'T LET PETS COME IN'

Even if the bill isn't passed, Jennifer Campbell, executive director of the Utah Domestic Violence Coalition, said it's important for survivors to include pets in their safety plans.

"If they're in an abusive situation and want to leave, their pet doesn't have to be a barrier for them to get help," Campbell said.

Campbell noted that service providers throughout the state are trained on the dynamics of domestic violence and animal abuse. Sollis also noted that survivors often rely on their pets for support as they grieve the loss of the partner they thought they knew and loved.

"Pets can be our best, closest and safest companions, right?" Sollis said. "They offer unconditional love; they're there for us through thick and thin."

But in Utah, some shelters for domestic violence survivors don't allow pets unless they are certified emotional support animals — access that's required by law. And the size of some shelters can make it difficult to accommodate all pets.

"It's not because they're a mean animal," Kristen Floyd, executive director of Safe Harbor Crisis Center in Farmington, said. "[Pets] also have experienced some trauma, and they get triggered by the loud noises or the kiddos that are playing in the common area."

Floyd estimated that between 30% and 50% of people who arrive at Safe Harbor have a pet they want to bring with them.

Safe Harbor currently allows animals to stay in residents' apartments and has an outdoor boarding space designated for dogs. A grant-funded expansion will eventually allow that space to board cats as well, but for now, not every animal can come in, Floyd said.

"Sometimes we can't let pets come in if we've got severe allergies, and that's the struggle that you deal with..." Floyd said. "You don't want to negatively affect another resident that's trying to stay there and be safe and be stable as well."

Safe Harbor partners with Animal Care of Davis County to pay for boarding there, Floyd said. Without a protective order for pets, though, it is possible for abusers to show up to Animal Care of Davis County and demand that the pet be released to their care.



RICK EGAN | The Salt Lake Tribune  
Kristina Pulsipher and Stan Stensrud hold Charlie and Hydea at Ruff Haven pet shelter.

"That is a scary thing for clients that we're serving: 'If I leave this animal and I walk away to stay in the shelter, is my offender going to find out that it's there, and go and get it, and harm it?'" Floyd said.

The shelter also works with Nuzzles & Co. Pet Rescue in Summit County, but that can be too far for some residents to take pets, Floyd noted. It also can be difficult for people who are transitioning out of shelters to find pet-friendly apartments in the area, according to Floyd.

In Salt Lake City, more than 20% of the families living at the Young Women's Christian Association have pets, said Priscilla Rountree, a spokesperson for YWCA. The nonprofit has a partnership with the Humane Society to provide food, equipment and toys for pets staying there and works with the Fourth Street Clinic in Salt Lake City to designate them as emotional support animals.

The Community Abuse Prevention Service Agency in Logan, and Seek Haven in Moab, also allow service animals and partner with other nonprofit agencies to care for other pets, officials said.

Anyone who is experiencing domestic abuse may call 1-800-897-LINK (5465), Sollis advised. If a shelter can't house a pet, Campbell indicated that service providers will work with survivors to find temporary boarding for animals.

### 'WE'RE NOT A TRADITIONAL RESCUE'

At Ruff Haven, pet owners can leave their animal at the shelter for as many as 90 days, but Pulsipher said pets often stay for longer. Many of the dogs and cats under Ruff Haven's care are taken into foster homes by volunteers.

The idea of Ruff Haven first started in 2019 when Pulsipher, Stan Stensrud, Marisa Hernandez and Kimo Pokini — all of whom previously met through other charitable organizations — found there was a niche need in the community for emergency animal boarding. The founders modeled Ruff Haven after other facilities across the country that offer similar services.

Hernandez already owned the boarding facility at 1370 South and 400 West. After

creating a space to care for cats, dubbed "Purradise City," Ruff Haven was ready for operation.

The shelter coordinates visits and walks so owners can spend time with their pets. Foster families regularly send photos of the animals to their owners. Pulsipher noted she often has to replace the tissue box in her office.

"These are people who are not abandoning their pets," Pulsipher said. "They're making, literally, life sacrifices to keep their families together. And that's the kind of thing that people need to hear."

The nonprofit organization holds clinics across the valley to offer spay and neutering services, veterinary care and pet vaccinations for people facing housing insecurity.

Pulsipher said there are usually 50 to 60 animals at the shelter at once, with around 25 new intakes per month.

One of Ruff Haven's earliest clients was a woman who surrendered her cats while leaving an abusive relationship.

Pulsipher said that woman eventually became a member of Ruff Haven's board of directors.

"We're not a traditional rescue, because the pets already have a family," she said. "They don't need us to rescue them from anyone. We think our reunification rate is about 90%."

Stensrud himself recently fostered a dog named Bella for a family in a homeless shelter. The family moved into permanent housing the day before Thanksgiving, he said. Returning Bella was a moving experience for him.

"It just really makes you appreciate people and their struggles and what they're going through, and the tenacity that they have," Stensrud said. "Their pet really saves their lives. It really gives them that person that doesn't judge them, doesn't matter what situation they're in."

Moving forward, Romero hopes that "Safe Pets, Safe People" will give survivors their "power back," and help ensure that pets "will not be used as a form of manipulation."

"This would give the survivors reassurance that they could leave the situation," Pulsipher said, "and know that if their abuser were to come after them or their pet or something like that, they could call the police and there would be a protection there."

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