

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 7, 2014

**spcaLA presented more than theory on how to cure violence, nationwide**  
*spcaLA's jTLC™ increases empathy in juvenile offenders*

**Los Angeles, CA** – Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Los Angeles (spcaLA) and the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office shared the cure for violence on a national platform: spcaLA's Teaching Love and Compassion Program for Juvenile Offenders (jTLC)™. spcaLA and the DA's Office presented jTLC at the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys' 4<sup>th</sup> National Animal Cruelty Prosecution Conference yesterday in Atlanta, GA.

jTLC is a two-day, court-mandated course that pairs teens with shelter dogs to help certain juvenile offenders identify and break the cycle of violence. Participants in the program have been found guilty of crimes ranging from bullying to animal abuse. jTLC is the only program of its kind in the United States. spcaLA is in the process of preparing the jTLC curriculum for use by other juvenile offender systems.

“One of the most revolutionary things about jTLC is that we *know* it works. jTLC participants show a marked increase in empathy and have a lower recidivism rate,” said spcaLA President, Madeline Bernstein. “The jTLC presentation opens a national dialogue about how to prevent violence by reigniting empathy.”

spcaLA's jTLC program has been in practice for one year, with an additional two years as a pilot program. Participants in jTLC take pre- and post- surveys to measure empathy (Bryant Empathy Index). As part of her doctoral dissertation research, spcaLA Director of Humane Education Melanie Wagner, M.S. Ed, evaluated these surveys. The results are compelling: students expressed an increase in empathy after completing jTLC ( $p < .01$  for all cases).

In the Los Angeles program, jTLC participants are selected from the Los Angeles County District Attorney Juvenile Offender Intervention Program (J.O.I.N.). Initial findings show that J.O.I.N. students who also participate in jTLC have reduced recidivism rates as compared to J.O.I.N. students who did not participate in jTLC.

----- MORE -----

2-2-2

jTLC is based on spcaLA's award-winning at-risk youth violence prevention program, Teaching Love & Compassion (TLC)™. Since 1996, TLC has helped over 500 youth from at-risk communities. The program is designed to prevent animal cruelty and in turn prevent violence toward people. The TLC program helps students identify and break the cycle of violence through positive feedback, building self-esteem and increasing respect for all living creatures.

####

**Established in 1877, spcaLA is an independent, nonprofit animal welfare organization serving Southern California. There is no national SPCA, parent organization, or umbrella group that provides financial support. Donations run programs and services including Cruelty Investigation, the Disaster Animal Response Team, Humane Education and a variety of shelter services.**