

CATalyst

Tree House Humane Society Magazine Winter 2021

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VISION

Every cat thrives.

MISSION

We empower communities of caregivers to protect, nurture, and support new solutions so no cat suffers.

VALUES

Compassion powers us. Respect is embedded in all we do. Innovation fuels us. Good isn't great enough. Together we are stronger.









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@TreeHouseCats

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

In a challenging year, our lifesaving work continued and even grew with your support.

How do you sum up 2020 in a few short words? 2020 has been a year unlike any other. At Tree House, we're taking this moment to reflect on our wins (big and small) and say thank you to our Tree House community:

- Our resilient staff
- Our amazing board and volunteers
- Our dedicated and generous community of donors and partners
- Our compassionate adopters, colony caretakers, neighbors, and community members

You have inspired us, kept us going, and helped our Tree House adapt and grow to help every cat thrive. We recognize it takes so many people, talents, and backgrounds to make Tree House the magical place it is.

Though we were closed for 12 weeks in 2020 and have had to operate at reduced capacity due to COVID safety measures, we not only adopted and placed 909 cats but saw growth and improvement in key areas:

- \$\frac{1}{2}\$ 1,189 spay/neuter + life-saving surgeries (10% increase over 2019)
- 963 cats fostered (98% increase over 2019)
- 4,455 community cats for (6% increase over 2019)
- Average length of stay improved from 44 days to 31 days



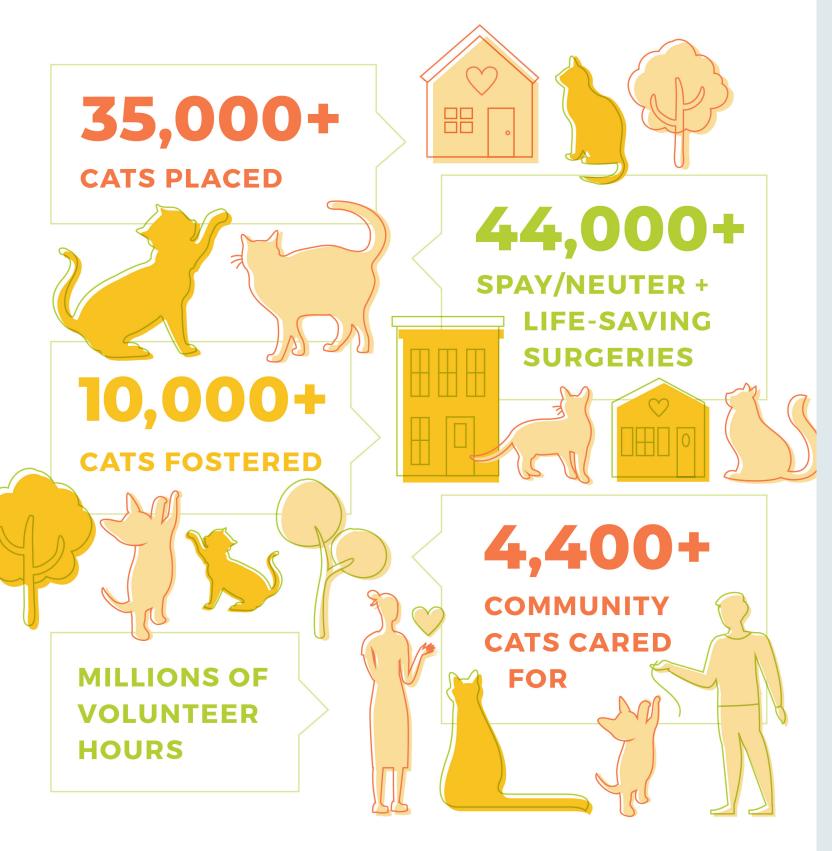
Beyond the numbers, we completed the build out of our soon-to-open Tree House Veterinary Wellness Center. We forged new partnerships and teamed up with new organizations to help animals in need. Our frontline staff has gone above and beyond to make Tree House a clean, safe place for staff, visitors, and felines to return. And through social media and online events, we've found other ways to bring Tree House to you -and provide stories and moments that brighten your days.

In 2021, we celebrate 50 years of revolutionizing life for the cats who share our community-and beyond. While we are still in the midst of the pandemic and some parts of our everyday world are at a standstill, we at Tree House draw strength from our community, from you. And we will continue to advance our mission in small and big ways.

Raissa Allaire, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



50 YEARS



All thanks to you. #TreeHousePride

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY!

Tree House was founded in 1971 on the dream of a group of volunteers who wanted better things for Chicago's homeless animals.

Fifty years later, Tree House has remained a magical place that inspires awe in cat lovers around the world. It is obvious that Tree House was built with the love, hard work, and dedication of caring people, and is part of what makes Tree House so special.

We've come a long ways since our humble beginnings. Pictured left is what we've accomplished in the last 50 years.

This isn't just 50 years of Tree House. It's 50 years of "we." Fifty years of joining together with you, our impassioned community of caregivers. Fifty years of realizing our vision of a world where every cat thrives.

WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED

Innnovation is in our DNA

We started 50 years ago as a pioneer in the field of animal welfare. That's our history, and our future. Since those early days, we've revolutionized life for the cats who share our community—and beyond. This year, we'll open our doors to even more animals with our Veterinary Wellness Center.

Our Community Cats and Cats at Work programs are poised to grow exponentially, and we're working on making our adoption processes even more accessible and educational.

YOU ARE THE HEART OF TREE HOUSE

What started as a dream 50 years ago is now a magical place where cats thrive. Tree House was built with love and that heart beats in every cat we save and in every family we help. You have made our house a home. Our branches wouldn't reach so far and wide, our roots wouldn't be so deep and strong, were it not for the amazing generosity of our supporters like you.

This year, we're saying thank you as we continue to invest in the community that made us who we are.

OUR LOGO EVOLUTION

1971



2008



2019



LEARN MORE AT TREEHOUSEANIMALS.ORG/50

TREE HOUSE HISTORY

By Sonia Ramos

FOR TREE HOUSE, TURNING 50 years old marks a half century of nonstop innovation and commitment to saving the lives of stray, sick, and injured cats.

The idea behind Tree House was born in 1971, when a group of animal lovers formed an informal coalition with a California-based organization called Pet Pride.

Their goal was to improve animal welfare for homeless animals in Chicago. By 1975, Pet Pride was rebranded to the Tree House Animal Foundation and Tree House moved into its new cozy home at 1212 West Carmen Ave.

Seventy lucky kitties in the area at that time moved out of their foster homes and into the new digs, which were the first of its kind to feature cageless sheltering for cats. The late 70's were just the beginning of what was yet to come.

Fast forward to the 80's, which was not just the era for big hair and punk rock music but was

also the era in which Tree House started to make moves toward expanding its community services. We developed our Pet Food Pantry, began offering spay and neuter services to the public, and reshaped our admission program to help even more cats find loving homes.

In 1988, Tree House began to provide housing for cats with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV). This bold step in animal welfare came at a time when the virus was relatively new and not well understood. After prolonged research, however, it was discovered that FIV+ cats can live normal lives and even cohabitate with non-FIV+ cats.

This turning point would later serve as the future inspiration for Tree House to begin admitting and adopting out FeLV+ cats (read more on page 7).

As we entered the mid 2000s, Tree House created what is now known as its Community Cats program, which manages feral and free-roaming cats throughout Chicago's urban landscape.









The Cats at Work program soon followed suit in 2011, which places feral cats who are in need of relocation at Chicago homes and businesses as a humane method of deterring rodents. After Tree House's Community Cats program became more established, it became clear by 2014 that Tree House had outgrown its home at 1212 West Carmen Ave.

And so, in 2017, we were able to open our state-of-the-art new home at 7225 N Western Ave in West Rogers Park. Thanks to the help of generous donors, our current home is a bright and environmentally friendly home for our resident cats, complete with a cat café, open-air catios, and an in-house clinic.



So, what's next for Tree House? This year, we're opening the doors to our low-cost Veterinary Wellness Center, ensuring everyone has access to affordable vet care for their animal family. We're continuing our dedication to implementing a Socially Conscious Sheltering model within our work, leading the way towards a better future where no cat suffers. We're on track to grow our Community Cats and Cats at Work programs to new heights, making a difference in our neighborhoods and backyards.

And it's all thanks to you.

POSITIVELY POSSIBLE

Helping FeLV+ cats land on their feet

By Caryn Tomasiewicz

This year, we're highlighting the ways Tree House has made great strides in animal welfare in the past 50 years and as we look to the next 50.



Until recently, it was widely believed that cats diagnosed with Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) were too sickly to be adopted and too contagious to live in a shelter. Thus, thousands of cats were euthanized each year without ever having experienced the comfort of a home. But recent studies indicate that a positive diagnosis is only part of the story. Encouraged by new findings, Tree House joined other pioneering shelters in a shared mission to improve the experience and perception of FeLV+ cats.

About Feline Leukemia Virus

Feline Leukemia Virus compromises the immune system, making it harder for cats to fight off illness. It is transmitted by saliva, nasal excretions, or passed from an infected mother cat to her litter but cannot be transmitted to humans or other species.

Standard tests detect whether the virus is present at that precise moment but cannot indicate whether or when a cat may develop symptoms. The virus can lie dormant for several years, and healthy adult cats often fight off the infection completely. Kittens, however, are more vulnerable and quickly become ill if exposed.

Increasingly, studies show that FeLV is less contagious than previously believed. New studies also suggest that adult cats are more likely to become infected if they are bitten by an FeLV+ cat than they are through shared food bowls and mutual grooming. This is good news because it means we have the ability to





mitigate risk by keeping cats indoors, spaying and neutering, and making litter boxes, water bowls, and perches plentiful.

Their moment(s) in the sun

In 2016, Tree House decided it was time for FeLV+ kitties to have a shot at adoption. Putting these special souls front and center was key to our strategy. We began by moving FeLV+ cats into their very own colony room, so they could socialize with each other and show off to potential adopters. When the Cat Café opened in 2019, there was no doubt who would rule the space. Increasing their visibility created opportunities for



us to speak with visitors and demystify the virus and in turn, we improved their chances of adoption.

Stress can trigger illness more easily in FeLV+ cats, so those who prefer the quiet life can find refuge in foster homes. Many go directly from foster to their new home via the Shelter Skippers program.

Saving more lives requires us to reach beyond our four walls, so we launched a marketing campaign complete with a unique FeLV+ logo, television appearances, and social media postings.

Implementing new programs and questioning long-held beliefs is scary. Without the support of our Tree House family, we might not have been bold enough to try! But thanks to your willingness to travel this new road with us, over 100 FeLV+ cats have experienced the peace that comes with knowing you belong.

= ADOPTION SUCCESS =

We love to hear from Tree House alumni! This month, we're celebrating Gerriette, a cat who has thrived because of Tree House's mission, and James, a pet parent who embodies it.

ABOUT GERRIETTE

In 2016, Gerriette was diagnosed with Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) and a rarer disease called Immune Mediated Hemolytic Anemia (IMHA).

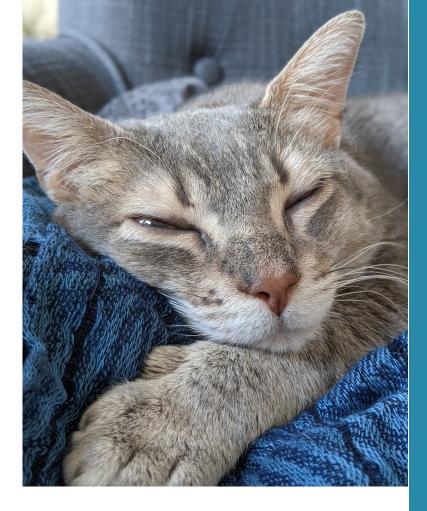
Based on this diagnosis, James's vet believed Gerriette, who was two-and-a-half years old at the time, had a roughly 5% chance of making it to age four. As their bond grew stronger, James remained set on providing her the best life possible for the next couple of years.

In Spring 2018, just before Gerriette's fourth birthday, James was accepted to the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

"A dreadful anxiety swept over me. Would she survive the next few months?" James wondered. "Would I be able to take her to Scotland with me? Would she survive the trip in her condition? How on earth could I give her up? I thought, 'she hasn't quit on me, so how could I give up on her?' A life without Gerriette seemed unfathomable."

Six months later, James and Gerriette had traveled across the Atlantic. Last September, they celebrated their two-year anniversary in Scotland. She beat the odds, and this beautiful cat is now six-and-a-half years old. Her adoption profile labeled her a "silvery mermaid." As you can see, that's still the case.

"It would be wrong to suggest that Gerriette's condition hasn't made things more difficult. At times, it surely did. But [those difficulties] pale in comparison to the moments where Gerriette has shown herself to be every bit the Queen Feline she always was and will be."



Gerriette is a shining example of why Tree House is so proud of the work we do. With support from adopters like James and shelters like us, cats like Gerriette can have long, normal, and loving lives. Take it from James:

"Illness is not a burden, but a part of life to be navigated together.

That is to say, a cat with FeLV, or a similar illness, deserves as much of a normal and loving life as a cat free from illness. I helped Gerriette, and in return she helped me get through undergrad in my mid 20s and settle into my life overseas—my first time ever out of the United States," he said.

"If we fight for cats with FeLV, they will [surely] fight alongside us."

= JOIN OUR MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAMS! =

It's like Netflix, but for cat care!

Tree House cats rely on support from donors like you. Every year, donations big and small allow us to do things like connect cats with local business owners, open a brand new care facility, and take care of the thousands of cats that come through Tree House. By becoming a monthly donor, you can sponsor the cats of Tree House on a recurring basis. Depending on how you want to give, you'll get exclusive benefits, newsletters, merch, and more!

Sponsor Cat

Our long-running Sponsor Cat program directs your monthly donation to the cats that are most in need. Long-stay cats, animals with chronic medical conditions, outdoor colony cats... animals who rely on your love and support to thrive.

By joining Sponsor Cat, you can support our new Tree House Outdoor Colony! Pavlov's Cat (top right), Penelope (top left), and Gilmore Girl (bottom left) moved to the Tree House parking lot in February 2019!

Join the 50 Club

Celebrate Tree House's 50th
Anniversary by donating
\$50 per month (or a \$600
annual gift) and be part
of our 50 Club! Benefits
include recognition on a
commemorative sign at Tree
House and in this magazine,
a private tour, and good
kitty karma!







=MEET TREE HOUSE=

Sonia Ramos

SHELTER STAFF LEAD

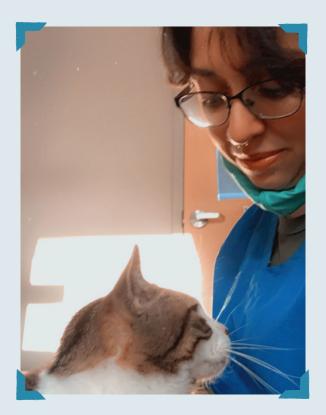
When anyone comes to Tree House, our shelter staff are the first people they meet. Along with our volunteers, they're the shining stars of Tree House: part kitty caretaker, part matchmaker. Meet Sonia Ramos, one of our Shelter Shift Leads!

WHAT'S YOUR HISTORY WITH TREE HOUSE? WHEN DID YOU START?

I started out at Tree House as a caregiver volunteer in May 2014 after just completing my junior year of high school. I was not able to have pets of my own and I was considering a career in veterinary medicine so that prompted me to volunteer at an animal shelter after doing some research. I am so glad I discovered Tree House because I don't think I would be where I am today if I did not. I loved every single hour spent volunteering at our Carmen location and at our current shelter. In 2018, I was hired as part of the Shelter Staff team and I was a senior in college. By November 2019, I was promoted to Shelter Shift Lead and that is my current position today. I cannot wait to see how much more I'll grow at Tree House!

WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE PART OF YOUR WORK AT TREE HOUSE?

My favorite parts would have to be working one-on-one with adopters to find their perfect cat match as well as regularly finding ways to improve our behavior counseling program. I consider cats (and myself, go figure) to be very misunderstood and I enjoy doing everything I can to clear up the common stereotypes and misconceptions that are attached to cats. Cats are sensitive, goofy, and loving animals.



WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT TREE HOUSE'S MISSION/VISION/VALUES?

I love that Tree House is committed to and fueled by innovation.

We are always looking for ways to grow, expand, and promote our values to ensure every cat thrives.

WHAT DO YOU DO OUTSIDE OF TREE HOUSE?

Outside of Tree House, I enjoy reading, writing for Tree House in addition to writing fiction stories (mostly spooky ones), binge watching shows on Netflix, indulging in retail therapy, watching too many TikToks for my own good, and spending time with my close friends. Also, while I'm not currently volunteering due to their COVID-19 protocols, I am a volunteer at Evanston Animal Shelter as well and I started volunteering there the same year as Tree House. Animals are my jam! I am also in the process of applying to grad school at Loyola University Chicago (my undergrad school) to pursue my master's degree in English since my ultimate career goal is to become a published fiction author.

TREE HOUSE TRAILBLAZER

Sabrina MacLean

By Eileen Meyer

For half a century, Tree House has revolutionized life for the cats who share our community – and beyond. As part of our 50th anniversary, we will be showcasing and celebrating trailblazers –- leaders and learners dedicated to pioneering new ways to advance animal welfare.

Sabrina MacLean is a renaissance woman: she studied philosophy. She's a jazz enthusiast who wrote for Chicago's *Downbeat* magazine. Collecting art, making jewelry, and preserving the Latin language are among Sabrina's hobbies.

Caregiving is another of Sabrina's passions. She established a plant-care business. Sabrina did volunteer work helping Sudanese refugees, and she supported a school for Haitian girls.

Sabrina is also a cat lover and longtime friend to Tree House, which she served and supported for more than three decades. Among other roles at Tree House, Sabrina was a pet therapy volunteer, an adoption counselor, a member of the animal care committee, and a board member. Sabrina funded the BDVM MacLean Spay/Neuter Clinic in Bucktown, among other initiatives. She valued Tree House's professional staff working with volunteers to accomplish the organization's mission.

Sabrina and her fellow former board member, Robin Dillow, were leaders at Tree House, and they were also hands-on cat care providers. Robin fondly recalls them helping a feral cat and introducing her kittens to a feral house. Robin describes: "It is a blur,





but I remember I was grabbing kittens, dropping in the carrier while Sabrina held it and kept them inside, and we managed to get the entire litter in minutes. It was chaotic and frantic, but we both were thrilled!"

In the late 90's Sabrina funded an FIV adoption room, and she enhanced the design of the unit by adding elements that are standard today. Robin explains: "Sabrina funded and supported the rethinking of care for animals in a shelter environment including those that were ill. . . She always believed in working on behalf of those who needed it the most..." Sabrina's efforts created a safe, functional space where ill cats could live peacefully instead of being euthanized as they would be at other facilities.

Sabrina is a true pioneer.

Robin reflects that to Sabrina this means "building and creating so others can move forward."



=ANIMAL WELFARE =

A look back, around, and forward with Dr. Roger Haston

By Raissa Allaire & Eileen Meyer

Dr. Roger Haston, President of The Institute for Animals and former Chief Analytics Officer of PetSmart Charities, presented to Tree House's Board of Directors last year. Dr. Haston's presentation provided an analysis of the successes, tough realities, complexities, and trends in animal welfare as well as a glimpse of what the future has in store for animal welfare organizations.

Humane solutions

Dr. Haston provided a brief animal welfare history, demonstrating an optimistic picture. In 1970, 17-25 million pets were euthanized; by 2020, that number was less than one million. "The world that existed in 1970 has no resemblance to the world that exists today in a modern animal shelter," Dr. Haston shares.

He further notes that in 1986, only four states considered animal cruelty a felony. Now, all states have some degree of legal protection for animals.

Cat-focused care



COMPARING FRAMEWORKS: PAST AND FUTURE



	Traditional	Social Change
Primary Purpose	End pet homelessness	Improve communities through pets
Style	Intervention	Prevention
Key Objectives	Adoptions, save lives	Community engagement Value of pets
Metrics for Success	Live release rate, adoptions, enforcement	Building relationships, Trust Empathy for animals
Solution Driver	Animal welfare orgs	Community members
AWO Role	Program Doer Shelter Focus	Facilitator Community Focus
Center of Focus	Animal	Human-animal relationship

Cats exist on a spectrum-adoptable, indoor cats on one side, unownable, feral cats on the other. The traditional shelter model does not address cats' full spectrum of needs.

Dr. Haston notes that pet adoptions at retail pet stores are "changing the landscape," especially for cats where a "staggering number of cats," are adopted.

Increasing care costs

Analyzing data from shelters country-wide, Dr. Haston notes a nearly 150 percent cost increase between 2000-2015. He explains that animals that could not be helped before can now receive increased veterinary and behavioral services.

An integrated future

Cat and dog overpopulation has decreased in the Midwest and other regions. Cat intake by shelters, Dr. Haston notes, is declining.

How does this impact animal welfare's future? The next stage is about improving communities through pet care. The landscape has moved from hyperlocal and shifted beyond the backyard with the rise of transfer partnerships. It involves working with human and animal services to build empathy for animals and to keep them with people who love them.

Tree House is beginning its strategic planning for 2022-2024 and Dr. Haston's presentation has helped inform our discussions. How can Tree House evolve and innovate, where would we have the most measurable impact, and how can we best meet the changing needs? Stay tuned!

Tree House Humane Society, with its programs in adoptions, foster care, community cats, and working cats, is able to provide a more holistic approach to cat care beyond the traditional shelter model.



When you visit the
Veterinary Wellness
Center, you'll see a
beautiful new mural from
artist Andrea Jablonski.
Community is at the heart
of what Tree House does,
and so we brought in a
Chicago artist to welcome
you to our new addition.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR HISTORY AS AN ARTIST.

Polish-born, Chicago-bred. I make my living primarily as a muralist and painter (residential, commercial and prop/event). I also fabricate items for special events and pop-ups, including doing work for nonprofit art organizations and music festivals. Basically any project that is unique, fun and a creative challenge. If I can't make it for you, I bet I can find someone who can as I am grateful to be part of an incredibly talented creative community here in Chicago.

YOU WORKED WITH TEENS THROUGH CHICAGO'S AFTER SCHOOL MATTERS PROGRAM FOR THIS MURAL. TELL US MORE! WERE THE STUDENTS INVOLVED THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS?

I teach a painting class and have involved the teens in several commercial projects. I like to teach the real life experience of working with a client, coming up with a design, figuring out a plan, etc. The final design of the mural does not incorporate their sketches. However, I will be framing a collage of the work for the opening of the new wellness center because they are just too good not to be shown in some way. I am always amazed at the creativity I see in their work.

HOW DOES THE PROCESS OF PAINTING A MURAL WORK? WHAT ARE THE STEPS?

It differs from project to project and these lessons are learned through experience.

I usually ask a lot of questions of the client, get inspiration pictures and a palette and visit the site if possible. I am a believer that something cool can be achieved with any budget. It is just a matter of communicating and being creative, sometimes thinking outside the box. I can paint in many styles

so that gives me the ability to satisfy a diverse range of clients and really focus on creating something specific and personal to a given space.

DO YOU HAVE ANY OTHER WORK AROUND TOWN OR SOMETHING YOU'RE WORKING ON NOW?

I do! From Rogers Park to Oak Park and in between. I love to revisit old murals - good memories and good lessons! I recently completed my first on-street (asphalt) mural in Lincoln Square. It was super challenging coming up with a design that would make sense from ground level as well as a bird's eye view and meet the client's needs/wants. I am looking forward to what this year brings as it gets warmer!

LEARN MORE ABOUT ANDREA AT ANDREAJABLONSKI.COM



=ASK THE EXPERT

About the VWC with Dr. Emma Klein

This year, Tree House is embarking on one of its most exciting ventures yet: the Veterinary Wellness Center. This new center, is the result of years of hard work, dreaming, and generous support. We're so excited to celebrate this landmark anniversary by increasing our capacity to meet the needs of our communities and expand care to dogs.

Dr. Klein and her team have been working tirelessly to open the Veterinary Wellness Center, and we caught up with her between projects.

Read on to learn more about the brand-new Veterinary Wellness Center!



Why is Tree House opening the Veterinary Wellness Center?

Tree House is excited to launch the Veterinary
Wellness Center and expand access to veterinary
care to more pets and the people who love them.
The Veterinary Wellness Center (or "VWC") primarily
offers low-cost spay/neuter surgery and preventive
medicine, such as vaccines. Costs of veterinary
services are an understood barrier to care for
many households, especially those experiencing
unpredictable financial circumstances.

Tree House understands that there is no correlation between a person's financial situation and their desire to help their pets. We also understand the invaluable impact of the human-animal bond and feel everyone deserves the benefits of companionship. The number one reason for pet relinquishment in most animal shelters is cost of care. By offering these services, more owners can provide their pet with the healthy start everyone deserves. Ultimately, this can keep pets in their homes and out of the shelter.

Furthermore, the VWC will increase our ability to provide more TNR (trap-neuter-release) services for Chicago's community cat population. TNR is known to improve the health of community cats and reduce the spread of infectious feline diseases. It is also the most effective and humane method for controlling colony sizes and unwanted litters,

which lead to overpopulation issues and shelter crowding. Community cats presented for TNR services also receive life-saving vaccines, including a rabies vaccine, which is an important public health measure.

Is the VWC a full-service vet clinic?

The VWC is not a complete alternative to full-service veterinary clinics. We still recommend clients establish a relationship with a local clinic for when their pets need further care or become ill. We believe our services will deliver a big impact on the longevity of each pet's life. In addition to spay/neuter, vaccines, and other basic or preventive wellness care, we will provide invaluable and empowering client education. These efforts do not only benefit the pets, but the health of the community as well.

Furthermore, studies have shown that the majority of families who visit non-profit clinics had never established a previous relationship with a veterinarian. However, given the opportunity to empower and educate pet owners on the importance of animal health, pet owners were more likely to later visit a full-service clinic for other needs. Tree House is hopeful to create a network of local veterinarians willing to join us in our community outreach efforts.

OUR IMPACT TOGETHER WE THRIVE

2020

4,455
community
cats for

6% increase over 2019

909

cats adopted in homes and working placements 1,189

spay/neuter + life-saving surgeries

10% increase over 2019

963

cats fostered

98% increase over 2019

97%

live release rate

31

days average length of stay

Improvement of 13 days over 2019

35,706

social media fans

22% increase over 2019



MAKING AFFORDABLE VET CARE A REALITY



VETERINARY WELLNESS CENTER

COMING SPRING 2021

treehouseanimals.org



7225 N. WESTERN AVE. CHICAGO, IL 60645



Plan Your Legacy

YOUR GIFT MATTERS.

When you include Tree House Humane Society in your estate plan, your generosity provides life-saving resources to give cats a second chance at life and a loving home. Thank you for ensuring that Tree House can support homeless cats well into the future.

You decide how to give. Uncover the giving option that works best for your goals.

Visit: treehouseanimals.planmylegacy.org