

SUMMER 2021



TREE HOUSE
HUMANE SOCIETY

50
YEARS

INSPIRING
CONNECTING
THRIVING

THE CATalyst

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TREE HOUSE
HUMANE SOCIETY



50 Years of Inspiring Community

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Let us know what you think!
Email your comments to
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CALENDAR

Cat Walk
August 21

Clear the Shelters
August 23 - September 19

Cat'bare
October 14 & 21

Empty the Shelters
December 8-12

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Earlier this year, one of our amazing supporters shared this sentiment with me: "Tree House puts the human in humane." This powerful statement defines one of our hallmarks. At Tree House, animal care and people care go hand in hand.

On our 50th anniversary, we reflect on our people – our Tree House community. Tree House Humane Society started with passionate animal advocates who opened up their homes to save homeless animals.

Through the years, countless members of our community have shaped Tree House and our vital work to help every cat thrive. In this issue, you'll meet Carla Miller, one of our longest-serving volunteers who has helped Tree House care for our special needs and senior cats for almost two decades.

Fast forward to 2021. We welcome new members to our community -- board members, staff members, and partners, who have infused our work with new ideas, energy, and enthusiasm. You'll meet some of them in this issue! We continue to approach our mission with an innovative spirit, hope and determination every day, and we never lose sight of what's at stake. As we witnessed and experienced the pandemic's unprecedented challenges, we remained steadfast in our purpose.

At shelters like Tree House, we have a unique front row seat to the bond between animals and humans. The bond is real. We know that the number one reason why these bonds are often broken is due to access to veterinary care. We believe that by creating more access to affordable vet care, we can keep more families together and prevent animals from entering shelters in the first place.



In April 2021, we opened our Tree House Veterinary Wellness Center, generating positive media attention and overwhelming public response. In our first eight weeks of operation, we have helped more than 800 animals. Special thanks to the 535 investors to the Veterinary Wellness Center campaign for your commitment to health equity and for your philanthropic leadership. And a big thank you to our partner Merrick Pet Care by providing a free bag of pet food to our Wellness clients during the first few months of operation.

As reopening continues, Tree House invites our community to celebrate our 50 years -- share the love online, attend our events, or volunteer. We couldn't be more excited to celebrate with you all that Tree House has accomplished (and will accomplish) in partnership with you.

We are keeping all of you (and your kitties) in our thoughts and hearts.

Raissa Allaire, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

—TREE HOUSE KICKS OFF KITIZEN SCIENCE PROJECT—

By Eileen Meyer

Our Community Cats

Tree House's Cats at Work have been making news: *The Independent*, NPR's Morning Edition, *People Magazine*, Al Jazeera, even Stephen Colbert and Saturday Night Live; everybody's talking about our Cats at Work. We couldn't be more proud!

Currently, we manage and sponsor over 1,000 colonies of more than 4,000 community cats.

Cats at Work is a last resort for community cats who cannot be adopted or cannot be returned to their original neighborhood. Our Cats At Work program has placed 1,000 cats since it was founded in 2012.

Innovation defines us

At Tree House, innovation is in our DNA, and it's fueling another important partnership that's impacting our Community Cats. Kitizen Science, an animal welfare research nonprofit based in Washington, is helping us generate data about our efforts. This helps us measure our impact.

Kitizen Science is committed to "monitoring the impact of spay/neuter programs on free-roaming cat populations." Kitizen Science uses population modeling techniques from wildlife and population ecology. Kitizen Science conducted a pilot study in New York before expanding to Chicago and Phoenix.

Starting this summer, Tree House and Kitizen Science volunteers will conduct a cat survey over multiple weeks.

A fitting partnership

Led by Sabrina Aeluro, Kitizen Science is a winner of the Petco Innovation Showdown. By partnering with Kitizen Science, our volunteer team is able to assist with this data collection project without disrupting our Trap, Neuter, Release (TNR) and community support services through our Community Cats program. The results of this study will help our future efforts and will inform TNR programs nationwide.

The goal is to document cat population sizes and directly measure the impact of our Community Cats program's TNR work.

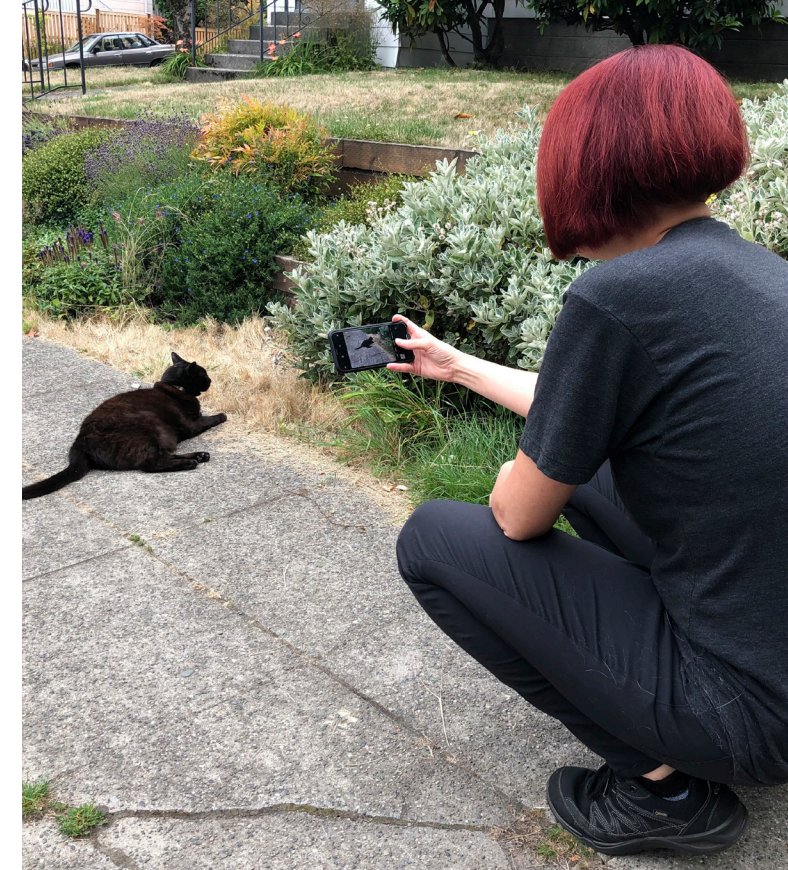
We need your help!

The project will monitor six years of annual free-roaming cat population growth and change, starting in 2021 and ending in 2026. This year, Tree House volunteers conducted surveys throughout the month of June and early July. This is a long-range study, and there will be future opportunities each year.

What volunteers can expect

Volunteers will follow a walking route and photograph any outdoor cats they encounter. After images are submitted through a secure smartphone app, the photos are sorted and processed. They are then sent to a quantitative ecologist, who analyzes the data and applies modeling methods to generate a rigorous, science-based population estimate.

Tree House is proud to assist with this work by recruiting volunteers, sharing data from our Community Cats program, and leveraging our 14 years of active work in the field.




GET INVOLVED

 **Learn about Kitizen Science:**
www.kitizenscience.org

 **Learn more about this project:**
www.treehouseanimals.org/engage/kitizenscience

 **Volunteer and invite your friends and family for future surveys:**
www.treehouseanimals.org/engage/kitizenscience/

 **Engage with us on social media!**

MERRICK GIVES BACK

Sara Stigberg

Do you ever notice that Tree House feeds its furry residents solely Merrick food? Merrick Pet Care provides all the yummy, nutritious food for resident cats at Tree House because they are truly committed to the idea that every pet should have the best nutrition.

Merrick serves as the exclusive feeding partner to several shelters across the US, including Tree House. This couldn't happen without the Merrick Gives Back program. I recently spoke with Jillian Smith, Merrick's Director of Communications, to learn more.

According to Smith, the Merrick Gives Back program has been a cornerstone of Merrick since the company was founded. They have always believed in giving back to the community—it is “true to who [they] are.”

Smith says: “Giving back is foundational. As Merrick has grown through the years, one thing that has [always] been important to the team, to the company, and to the people, is giving back. It's written in our core values. It goes with the mission to improve the lives of pets and their parents.”

Merrick was founded in 1988 by Garth Merrick, who was cooking meals for his dog in his kitchen in Hereford, TX so that he could ensure she was getting the best food around. About seven years

ago, they opened a sales and marketing office in Evanston. Even though Merrick has grown and expanded all the way to Chicago, they “still hold true to the vision and beliefs that started it all.” Merrick believes that everyone can, and should, make a difference. “This attitude of service motivates [us] to help each other,” says the company's website, “and contribute more than is asked to our Merrick family and community.”

Merrick started to work with Tree House shortly after their office in Evanston opened, and they continue to expand their relationship to this day. Before the pandemic, local Merrick staff visited Tree House to build shelters for community cats as a team-building activity, but they also wanted

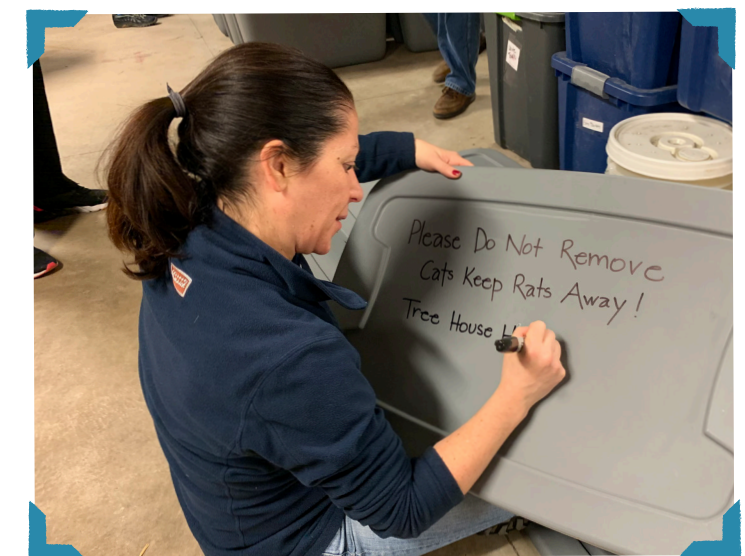


to “do something for the cat community at large,” according to Tree House staff.

Beginning this year, in addition to feeding Tree House's resident cats, Merrick now provides food for Tree House's Community Cats program, which cares for over 4,000 cats in managed colonies through the support of registered caretakers. Merrick's lead veterinarian, Dr. RuthAnn Lobos, was connected with Tree House in an advisory role to provide nutrition educational opportunities and to be a resource in helping to decide which food might be best for cats in the shelter's care, according to Smith.

Dr. Lobos shares that she “loves sharing the power of pet nutrition ... [because] quality nutrition can make a visible difference in the appearance and activity of dogs and cats and can strengthen the amazing relationships we share with them.”

Smith says Merrick is looking forward to continuing to work even more with Tree House! She says: “There's always more we could be doing to give back to our communities. We will continue feeding all of the cats in Tree House's care and will find opportunities for the team in Chicago to get more involved to continue to grow our relationship.”



ADOPTION SUCCESS

Bayani

By Lisa Zaccone

GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES.

This is what Johnny learned after adopting his very first pet, 10-year-old Mona, from Tree house in February of this year. Instantly drawn to her round ears, green eyes, and small stature, Johnny knew they were meant to be together. Mona's existing health conditions, which include kidney disease and deafness, were not deterrents. According to him, he was "jet set" on her from the very beginning.

Now called Bayani, ("heroine" in Tagalog), she enjoys playing with her laser pointer, which she hunts down with her "grinch" paws. She also really loves to nap! Bayani opts for Johnny's lap whenever available. Other favorite spots include her hammock and in between the bedsheets, where she sleeps next to Johnny's shins.



Some traits that Johnny finds amusing about his new pal are the woeful stares she gives him when she wants something, her raspy meow, and her one-fang grin. She follows him around, begging for pets and scratches. Every time he looks at Bayani, Johnny just wants to cuddle her.

According to Johnny, Bayani is the sweetest, most loving cat. He hopes she lives out her golden days in kitty bliss and would adopt from Tree House Humane Society again in the future!

TREE HOUSE TRAILBLAZER

Carla Miller

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 our pioneers.

Meet Carla Miller -- one of our longest-serving volunteers, who has helped Tree House care for our special needs and senior cats for almost two decades.

Life-long cat enthusiast Carla Miller has been a Tree House volunteer for 18 years. She first got involved when one of her cats passed away unexpectedly. Carla was seeking a new cat to round out her trio.

Caring for her pets made Carla adept at caring for animals with special needs. She first joined Tree House as a clinic volunteer and over the years has

adopted several senior cats. "We may not have had many years together, but they were quality years. It is so rewarding to see the joy and appreciation from a senior cat who finally gets their forever home. I look forward to adopting more seniors," she explains.

Carla appreciates Tree House's progressive approach. "Tree House has been a trailblazer since its inception 50 years ago. We were one of the first cageless shelters in the country. We have developed programs to help FIV+ and FeLV+ cats have a chance at adoption," she notes. "And we have helped to change local Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) laws and save more lives with our Community Cats and Cats at Work programs. I look forward to seeing what other advancements we can help make in the shelter world, and how we can work with other shelters across the country to achieve the same goals."

Carla's volunteer work has helped her forge a deeper connection to her pets. "Working in the clinic has taught me so much about my own cats. I've learned to be more alert to their medical and emotional needs," she shares.

What resonates with Carla the most is "all the amazing cats I have met over the years. It's always so exciting when a cat that has been overlooked for too long finally finds their forever home."



COMMUNITY CATS: THE SPECTRUM OF SOCIALIZATION

By Anna Marketti

Tree House’s mission is to ensure that every cat thrives—we extend that sentiment to truly every cat, including outdoor cats, which you might be familiar with as “feral” cats.

Feral a bit of a misnomer, anyways—this dichotomy of indoor vs outdoor cats paints cat socialization as a polar designation when in reality, it’s more like a spectrum. The Alley Cat Allies describe it well in their article, “The Cat Socialization Continuum: A Guide to Interactions Between Cats and Humans.”

Author and Alley Cat Allies founder Becky Robinson puts it best when she says, “Some cats want to sit in your lap every minute of



every day. Some cats live outside and only enjoy limited interaction with the caregivers who feed them. Some cats want nothing to do with people and will avoid all contact. Many cats will weave between those different behaviors over time. All deserve our protection and respect.” At Tree House, we feel similarly in that all cats are deserving of our care and respect, even if they aren’t all cuddly yarn swatters.

Our Community Cats program works with registered colony caretakers throughout the city to ensure outdoor cats have all of their basic needs met while also being available for veterinary care throughout the cats’ lives. The caretakers provide food, shelter, and water after Community Cats Traps the cats, Neuters them, and Return them to their original habitat. We ensure the cats are up to date on their vaccinations as well so they’re able to live long, happy lives outdoors.

Outdoor cats are considered domesticated cats, but Robinson points out that domestication and socialization aren’t the same thing. She writes: “A species is considered domesticated when it has generationally adapted to live with or among people in order to benefit from them.” Even though outdoor cats are happy living their lives outside and are often too fearful of humans to approach us, they’re still considered domesticated due to their proximity to human civilization.

There are several things to look for to help determine whether a cat is a true outdoor cat or a stray housecat, including how readily (if at all) they approach you, whether they’ve been ear-tipped, how well-groomed they appear, and whether they’re alone or with other cats. But these signs alone aren’t the last word. Just because you see a cat outdoors doesn’t mean it’s unsocialized, and just because you see an outdoor cat allowing their caretaker to pet them doesn’t mean they’re socialized. According to Robinson, a cat’s socialization is built on experience and exists on a continuum that can change as the cat’s life goes on.

Whether we’re adopting friendly cats to loving homes, caring for strays, or providing heated shelter to outdoor cat colonies, you can rest easy knowing Tree House is there to ensure that every cat thrives, no matter where they fall on the socialization spectrum.



A NEW COALITION SUPPORTING PETS AND PEOPLE

By Eileen Meyer

THERE IS A SAYING, “COMPETITION MAKES US FASTER. COLLABORATION MAKES US BETTER.”

In 2019, Tree House became a founding member of the Chicagoland Humane Coalition at a vital moment in time. With this collaboration, Tree House is thrilled to partner with local animal welfare organizations to further a collective vision: creating a future where pets and people are fully supported, mutually respected, and integrated into the fabric of our community.

Tree House’s Executive Director and Coalition co-chair Raissa Allaire explains,

“Tree House is excited to be part of the Coalition. We’ve been navigating the pandemic together by resource-sharing, putting out public education statements together, and leaning on one another to problem solve. We are a team player, and we are working smarter by collaborating across organizations.”

The Coalition is already racking up gains by eliminating duplication and increasing efficiency. Joining the Coalition extends the reach of each partnering entity; ultimately, it helps Tree House to serve more kittens, cats, and animal caregivers.



The Chicagoland Humane Coalition partnered through the pandemic to maximize resources and earn better results. Members shared COVID-19 best practices, cross-referrals, and panels with housing organizations. Coalition members also collaborated in instances where animals were in emergency situations such as hoarding cases.

Modeling success

Emily Klehm, South Suburban Humane Society CEO, and Stacy Rogers, Best Friends Midwest Regional Director, brought the members together in early 2019 to discuss how to bring a coalition to life. Klehm and Rogers state, “There have been numerous attempts in the past. We have always believed that we are stronger working together. The timing was right. The members were on board. We went to work!”

Leading with humility

Allaire has spent the last year building trust and strengthening relationships with leaders at local partner agencies -- including fellow Coalition co-chair Lydia Krupinski, the Anti-Cruelty Society’s Vice President of Mission Impact. Together, the Coalition partners have found common ground, refined their communication processes, and identified a focused steering committee. Optimistic about her peers, Allaire describes them as “leaders who earn your trust and respect.”

COALITION MISSION:

To ensure the best possible outcomes for pets and people by building upon common ground, focusing on pressing local issues, and supporting our communities.

In 2021, the Coalition further defined its identity by developing a mission statement, a vision, and a logo. The Coalition’s steering committee is currently comprised of 12 animal welfare organizations, with the intention of extending Coalition membership to more organizations.

Engaging in vital work

The Coalition has three committees: Evolution, Innovation, and Collaboration. Together, members have focused on:

-  **Bi-monthly learning sessions** – recent topics include safety net foster programs, socially-conscious sheltering, and community cats management strategies.
-  **Finding solutions to common pressure points**, including the growing shortage of veterinarians and veterinary support professionals like veterinary technicians and assistants.
-  **Ongoing collaborative projects** – recent efforts include coordinating vaccine and microchipping clinics, which support pets and their caregivers in underserved neighborhoods.

Moving forward the Coalition will also continue speaking with a unified voice on issues of policy, legislation, community services, and public education.

Animals, their caregivers, and our community are the beneficiaries of the Coalition’s collective efforts.

MEET TREE HOUSE

Paul Legac

BOARD MEMBER FOR TREE HOUSE
HUMANE SOCIETY

By Chloe Waryan

With a background in aerospace engineering, Paul uses his project management skills when brainstorming on the board. “Engineering is more of a way of thinking,” Paul says, emphasizing out-of-the-box problem solving as one of the skills that he brings to the Tree House board.

Paul currently works for JP Morgan as Executive Director of Energy Investments, and decided to join the Tree House board after participating in BoardLead. BoardLead is a program which recruits, trains, and places talented private sector professionals in non-profit organizations, with an emphasis on good governance and due diligence. After attending short training sessions and reading statements from not-for-profits, Paul knew that he



“wanted to pick something that [he] would want to do,” even if he wasn’t on the organization’s board; “Tree House was my first pick, actually!”

After he was matched with Tree House, Paul took a training course that acted as an extensive introduction to board leadership. “It was really easy to do because the training was self-paced and online,” Paul notes, pointing out that the process was not intimidating to someone like himself who had never served on a board before. He felt very prepared stepping into the role of a new Tree House board member.

Paul started serving on the Tree House board in August 2020. “Up until the Veterinary Wellness Center opening, I hadn’t met anyone in person,” he says.

Though there were challenges, pandemic adaptations also helped in many ways. Paul travels for work, so having a virtual meeting option and collaborative online documents has improved communication by giving more flexibility to members.

When asked about highlights of his work at Tree House, Paul brought up a recent initiative where board members were invited to shadow employees, to get a better idea of day-to-day operations. Paul shadowed the staff working on-site at Tree House. “I went on a day when there were no volunteers. There were only two staff members that day... it really struck me how important volunteers are.”

Of course, Paul is an animal lover, taking in a stray cat over a decade ago. His cat, Chai, was living on his patio back in his hometown in Upstate New York. When it started getting cold, Paul and his wife decided to bring her inside, and the rest is history. Chai has lived with them ever since, and is now about 14 years old.

Eliza Wicher

BOARD MEMBER FOR TREE HOUSE
HUMANE SOCIETY

By Jan Willer

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED IN TREE HOUSE AND THE TREE HOUSE BOARD?

I adopted, then I donated, and I was a big fan. I was attending the Cat’baret, and talked to a friend who was on the board at the time and who said that Tree House was looking for new board members. It really piqued my interest.

WHAT DO YOU DO PROFESSIONALLY?

I’m an industrial organizational psychologist by training. I apply the science of human behavior to help make workplaces more effective. I oversee the talent management and development at Groupon.

CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT YOUR OWN TREE HOUSE CAT?

In 2015, I went into the [former] Bucktown location. I thought my cat, Gracie, needed a friend. The staff members were phenomenal because they knew the cats so well, and they advised me on introducing the cats. One of the staff introduced me to Herman “because he doesn’t have a mean bone in his body.” He was brought in from a feral colony for TNR. During that process, the staff noticed that he was



friendly, but shy. He was shy when I met him, but comfortable with other cats. I thought he’d be a great match, so I brought him home. He loved Gracie right away, and slowly he got more and more confident. He’s still a little on the shy side, and he’s a sweet, wonderful cat.

HOW DID YOU BECOME SUCH A BIG FAN OF TREE HOUSE?

I loved that the staff were so knowledgeable about every cat and the care of each cat. They gave me a ton of support on how to care for my new cat and introduce him to his new home. I loved how they worked with my cat, because a lot of other places wouldn’t have given him a chance. Because of that, he found a great match with my family.

ANYTHING ELSE YOU’D LIKE TO SHARE WITH CATALYST READERS?

I had a baby a few months ago, and the cats are so good with her. They are very patient and understanding and I’m really excited to see her grow up with them as companions and family members!



CAT WALK

SATURDAY, AUGUST 21, 2021
2:00PM - 6:00PM

*Drink & Toast with
Tree House in this
fan-favorite event!*

Support Tree House and local breweries
in a Malt Row bar crawl as you learn
more about beer, cats, and our mission.
Featuring specialty brews from our
Cats at Work partners, the third annual
Cat Walk is not-to-be-missed!

Get tickets at treehouseanimals.org/catwalk

**THANK YOU TO OUR 2021
CAT WALK SPONSORS!**

COOL CAT SPONSOR



KRAFTY KITTEN SPONSORS



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NEWPORTONE



Get tickets at treehouseanimals.org/catwalk



OCTOBER 14 (EXCLUSIVE IN-PERSON EVENT)
OCTOBER 21 (ONLINE BROADCAST)

**A STELLAR REVUE FOR
50 YEARS OF TREE HOUSE**

For our 50th anniversary, we're pulling out all the stops for
Cat'bare. Join us for a revue of half a century's worth of Tree House,.

VETERINARY WELLNESS CENTER HIGHLIGHTS



We are proud to open our **Veterinary Wellness Center (VWC)** as an expansion to our current clinic and shelter on Western Avenue.

On Saturday, April 10th, members of our community gathered to cut the ribbon and open our brand new affordable veterinary clinic. We're extraordinarily grateful to our donors, partners, staff, and the Roger's Park and West Ridge neighborhoods for celebrating with us and making this possible.

SINCE OPENING, WE'VE HAD MORE THAN...
1,000 spay/neuter surgeries
300 wellness appointments
...AND WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED.

TOGETHER WE THRIVE.

Learn more and make an appointment at www.treehousevet.org



ASK THE EXPERT

Dr. Jesse Navatta, DVM

Why is it important to spay/neuter your pet?

Aside from keeping up to date on vaccinations, spay/neuter is the most effective procedure for prolonging our pets' lives in multiple ways!

First and foremost, early spay/neuter significantly reduces the risk of mammary cancer or prostate issues and completely eliminates the risk of uterine, ovarian, and testicular cancers. As our female pets get older and go through multiple heat cycles, they are at risk of developing a life-threatening infection called pyometra. This can lead to a sharp decline in a pet's health, requiring an emergency spay with a high risk of anesthetic complications.

Pets that are intact (not spayed/neutered) are often driven by hormones that result in roaming (running away) which puts pets at risk in many ways. It can also lead to behavioral issues that can make training and home life difficult.

How is the VWC helping serve outdoor pets?

Our VWC expands our capacity to participate in Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR). Through this program, outdoor pets are spayed/neutered, vaccinated, and examined by a veterinarian. These pets are returned to their habitats and cared for by designated colony caretakers, amazing individuals who volunteer their time and resources to ensure the health and wellbeing of these outdoor pets.

There is another benefit to our work with outdoor pets: through TNR, the population of outdoors pets is managed humanely which in turn benefits human health in the city by keeping transmissible (known as zoonotic) disease levels to a minimum and protects the local wildlife (birds and rabbits) from being over-hunted by food-seeking outdoor pets. By being spayed and neutered with the adequate resources available to them, the outdoor pets will fight less amongst themselves allowing them to live happy and comfortable lives.



Dr. Navatta joined Tree House earlier this year and is the primary veterinarian at our Tree House Veterinary Wellness Center.

What's one thing someone can do to help keep their pet happy and healthy in the summer?

For both dogs and cats, the best thing any pet parent can do for their pet is to keep them up to date on their preventives! Preventives include vaccinations, flea and tick medications, and heartworm preventions. With warm weather comes long walks outside and perhaps time at the dog parks, beaches, or other settings where many other dogs congregate. While these are centers for fun and enjoyment, there is also a strong potential for disease transmission in these areas.

The most common transmissible diseases are generally preventable with yearly vaccinations. Fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes also love the warm weather!

One of the most concerning diseases is heartworm which is spread through mosquitoes. It is important to remember that even indoor cats are at risk of hosting these parasites. Ever seen a mosquito buzzing around inside your home? They are quite sneaky! By ensuring your pets are fully vaccinated and kept up to date on parasite preventives, you can ensure that they will enjoy a happy and healthy summer!

The Tree House Veterinary Wellness Center is here to help with affordable access to vaccinations and parasite preventives. We would love to meet the family!



50 INSPIRING
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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