

SUMMER 2022



TREE HOUSE  
HUMANE SOCIETY

# THE CATalyst

TREEHOUSEANIMALS.ORG

## It Takes A Village





# THE CATalyst

Tree House Humane Society Magazine  
Summer 2022

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Let us know what you think!  
Email your comments to  
marketing@treehouseanimals.org

## CALENDAR

### SAVE THE DATE

#### Cat Walk

Saturday, August 13, 2022

#### Cat'bare

Thursday, October 27, 2022

#### Lights of Love Holiday Open House

Saturday, December 10, 2022

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."*

This is an often cited African proverb that was brought to life in June, when more than 300 animal welfare professionals from across the country descended upon Chicago for our annual sector conference. A group of Tree House staff attended and bravely welcomed peers to our city with a serenade of *The Golden Girls* theme song (there's a video floating around out there)!

It was inspiring to reflect and reaffirm where Tree House is headed. These learning opportunities also serve as catalysts to think about bigger solutions to common, complicated pain points. Key insights include:

- Pets are often considered family, and a person's bond to their companion animal is more pronounced than it's ever been. This human-animal bond crosses all demographic lines.
- Pets help build social cohesion. There are opportunities for animal welfare to go beyond its shelter walls to reach new communities. And any meaningful work in embedding Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and animal welfare needs to be authentic, aligned with our mission, and go beyond the performative.
- Home is being redefined. We have seen this over the years in our open adoptions approach and in our Community Cats and Cats at Work programs where cats thrive in non-traditional environments. Many of our peers who work with unhoused people have a unique view of how pets provide companionship, protection, and unconditional love for vulnerable populations.



Though pet ownership crosses all geographic, racial and socioeconomic boundaries, access to care does not. Humane societies like Tree House are working to provide access to information and services, such as vet care. A national veterinary staffing shortage complicates this, and is expected to continue to 2030.

At Tree House and through our regional coalition, we've taken short-term steps such as job sharing, candidate referrals, and distributing info on benefits like student loan repayment. At the conference, it was exciting to learn about macro, long-term solutions to increase the pipeline and minimize the negative impact on access to care.

In this edition, you'll read more about initiatives we are embarking on, and the common thread through each of these stories is simple: it takes a village to make life better for the kitties we love and the people who care for them. Let's get to work!

A handwritten signature in black ink, belonging to Raissa Allaire.

Raissa Allaire, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

@TreeHouseHumaneSociety @TreeHouseCats @TreeHouseHumaneSociety @TreeHouseCats



## ENGAGING OUR COMMUNITIES THROUGH DEI

*For the past fifty years, Tree House has been a household name for feline care. We haven't done it alone.*

In the rest of these pages you'll find stories of people: the people who come together to make life better for animals in our communities. From supporters like you to partners like Chicago Animal Care & Control and The Friendship Center, humans are just as important to our work as the cats themselves!



## PRIORITY:

### Engage our Communities

To set the stage for continued growth and innovation, we will use the lens of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) to guide how we work, interact, and engage. We will embed DEI principles into our organization through education and training, more transparent and equitable policies, and inclusive behaviors. We will develop stronger connections in the communities we serve, expanding our community base, and engaging with more diverse partners.

That's why one of our strategic priorities for the next three years is to **Engage Our Communities**. Whether that's someone coming in to adopt their forever friend or coming to us for accessible spay/neuter surgery, whether they're taking care of cats in their yard, or just in need of an extra bag of kibble; we want to be there to help. To us, the beginning of that priority lies with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work.

In May 2022, Tree House received an operating grant from Maddie's Fund to help jumpstart this work. Maddie's Fund invests its resources in a commitment to keeping pets and people together, creating a safety net of care for animals in need, and operating within a culture of inclusiveness and humility.

## DEFINITIONS:

We defined what these words mean for us at Tree House.

### Diversity:

We value human difference. A society and its organizations that represent the diversity of the people that constitute that society is stronger, healthier, and more creative.

### Equity:

An understanding that everyone in society loses when some groups of people are denied full access to opportunity.

### Inclusion:

Having a culture that values, leverages, and welcomes differences to advocate and support our mission in a way that empowers all.

Research by McKinsey, Forbes, and Deloitte all demonstrate that companies that value diversity are up to 35% more likely to exceed their financial targets. Companies with inclusive and diverse teams make better decisions **up to 87% of the time**, resulting in cultures that are twice as likely to meet or exceed financial targets.

Beyond the financial data, we know that everyone in society loses when any group is denied access to opportunity. Access to care means equitable care. By representing the communities we serve, we are stronger, healthier, and better caregivers.

As a modern animal welfare organization, we are committed to welcoming every voice to



participate in our mission. This work is just the beginning of what we hope will be a lifelong journey for Tree House towards our vision of a world where we can all thrive together.

Learn more about our efforts at [treehouseanimals.org/strategicplan](https://treehouseanimals.org/strategicplan).



# THE COMPLEXITIES OF HOARDING

By Anna Marketti

“The air was heavy and difficult to breath in.”

THAT’S HOW DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS JAMIE GAY DESCRIBED HER VISIT TO A HOME HOARDING 28 CATS LAST SPRING.

“At first it’s hard to not see these animals in less than ideal conditions and be frustrated that people didn’t do better by them. But as you remove those emotions, you see that these are truly people just doing the best they can with the hand they’ve been dealt.”

Animal welfare intersects with many different facets of public health, often in ways we may not immediately recognize. Last spring, Tree House worked with Chicago Animal Care and Control (CACC) and another shelter to remove the cats from a tough situation.

The house was occupied by a mother and daughter who were faced with the difficult decision of prioritizing healthcare for a sick loved one or relinquishing their cats. Ultimately, they willingly parted ways with the cats. “This is not always the case,” Gay said.

Ideally, she added, an agent of social or mental health services would have a presence at these efforts to continue aiding the individual(s) beyond the animal component.

The National Institute of Health (NIH) defines animal hoarding as an individual who fails to meet minimal standards of health in their animals and a lack of awareness of the impacts on the well-being of them and those around them. The NIH also states that “animal hoarding is a symptom of a larger maladaptive situation and it is often too complicated to be adequately addressed.”

Frederica Malone, Director of Clinical Operations at the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) office in Chicago, said that hoarding is often seen as an expression of compulsive disorders. It’s also something that exists on a spectrum, much like a cat’s socialization level. “A huge misconception is that people equate hoarding with laziness,” Malone said. “But what we’re actually seeing is a psychological response and the impacts of their environment, not a whole reflection of who they are as an individual.”

Individuals who hoard often crave a sense of comfort and connection. While we may see an overwhelming collection of objects or animals, Malone states it’s important to listen to the importance these objects have to them. “They don’t like feeling like [this] either,” she said. “But those objects...honor a memory or an attachment,” and suggesting they simply throw everything away can feel incredibly disruptive.

Keeping an open ear and mind to meet each individual’s needs is essential in the healing journey. “Mental health is not linear,” Malone said. “[Relapsing] is normal, and part of our growth and development. What’s important is knowing how to bring yourself back on track.” Complex issues need complex solutions, and Tree House is proud to partner with organizations in our community to meet the challenge.

Cats rescued from hoarding can face a variety of health issues, from communicable disease to skin and fur problems—it can be too much work for one shelter to take on alone. With partners like CACC and organizations like NAMI, we can continue to make a difference in the lives of struggling pets and humans alike.



Tatsu & Miyamoto were just two cats rescued from a hoarding home.

“A huge misconception is that people equate hoarding with laziness. But what we’re actually seeing is a psychological response and the impacts of their environment, not a whole reflection of who they are as an individual.”

FREDERICA MALONE, DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL OPERATIONS AT THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS



## MARDIS GRAS: AN ADOPTION JOURNEY

by Marne Turner

*Mardi Gras began her journey in January 2020 when she entered the Tree House family with her fellow kitten buddy Nola. They were trapped as a part of a TNR (trap-neuter-return) project and were assessed to be able to be socialized for adoption.*



Socialization is invaluable work and can vary in time and intensity based on how sociable the mom cat is as well as the age of the kitten. These cats can often be shy and fearful at first, so a quiet environment is optimal to allow them to adapt and thrive as they learn to trust people and their new family.

Mardi Gras had a few bumps in the road. She was returned twice through no fault of her own for being quiet and unsocial in her adoptive homes. Tree House knew that such turbulence in her young life was a challenge and to support her development, they added play therapy to her socialization plan. This grew her confidence and helped build a positive association with people so that she felt safe. Her placement into our Shelter Skippers program was a tremendous enhancement to her progress as she could remain in a home environment rather than be placed in the stressful shelter environment.

Mardi Gras (now Clara) found her forever home in May 2021 and is thriving! Her adopter, Jeanne, continues to work with Clara and sees slow but steady progress, aided in part by big brother (and fellow TH alum) Joe. Some cats like Mardi Gras need extra support in their path to adoption and it is the work done by our socialization team, caretakers, fosters, vet staff and other staff and volunteers that make a significant and enduring impact in the lives of the cats we support.

## MEET TREE HOUSE

*Susan Morisato*

*Member of Tree House's Board of Directors*

### TELL ME A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF. WHAT'S YOUR BACKGROUND?

I retired late in 2019 primarily to travel, but obviously, the world had different plans for me. Even as much as I love to travel, cats are never far from my mind. I take pictures of cats wherever I go!

I spent most of my career in healthcare serving Medicare recipients through my work with Bankers Life & Casualty and UnitedHealthcare. It was an incredibly rewarding and fulfilling career.

I have experience serving on boards including the Minnesota Zoo's Foundation Board of Trustees and was a founding member of the University of Illinois' Mathematics Development Advisory Board.

I currently serve on a corporate public board for LiveVox and on the Actuarial Science Advisory Board and College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Alumni Council at U of I, my alma mater.

### HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED WITH TREE HOUSE?

My husband and I have been long time supporters of Tree House. I was very impressed that Tree House could create a cageless shelter when that kind of vision was not common, and that they were able to do so in a home that was clearly not intended for that purpose.

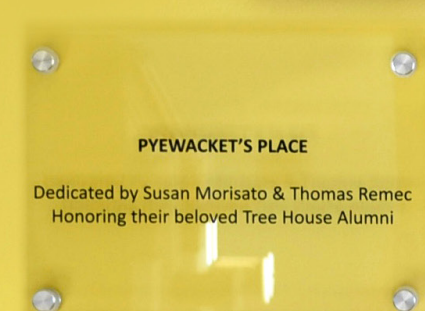
We adopted our second cat, Pyewacket, from Tree House in 1988. If you visit the facility today, you will see one of the colony rooms is Pyewacket's

Place. It makes me feel great that Pyewacket continues to look over "her kingdom" to see that cats like herself can find their forever homes.

### WHAT'S EXCITING TO YOU ABOUT WHERE TREE HOUSE IS NOW OR IS HEADED?

It is so exciting to see Tree House go from its humble beginnings on Carmen Avenue to the facility we have today. I love that Tree House continues to invest in and support programs that may not be available at other shelters, like Cats At Work. Tree House is continuing to strive to fulfill their mission that every cat, either indoor or outdoor, deserves to thrive.

When I look ahead, I am really excited about the strong ties Tree House is making around the greater Chicago area to provide services and support to underserved communities. The partnerships and alliances with other organizations Tree House has built will only strengthen our collective ability to provide the best possible care and support to our feline friends.





— GOING BEYOND OUR SHELTER WALLS —

# Partnerships at Tree House

by Chloe Waryan



Bear and his human utilize the Pet Food Pantry.

“

We see teaching and growing hand in hand. Our view is that we belong to this larger ecosystem.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RAISSA ALLAIRE



Arya & Sienna benefit from Pet Food Pantry supplies.

*In 2021, Tree House joined as a founding member of the Chicagoland Humane Coalition.*

Partnership is a pillar of this coalition of organizations, where Executive Director Raissa Allaire serves as co-chair. As Tree House continues to innovate with our partners in animal welfare, it's important to look beyond our silo.

This year, Tree House partnered with The Friendship Center's pet food pantry to bring the best possible care to Chicagoland pets. Over 300 cats and over 125 dogs are getting the food and necessities they need each month through this new partnership, which began in early 2022.

“We're super appreciative of our partnership with Tree House,” Karen Nevotti, Strategic Programs Manager at The Friendship Center said. The Friendship Center gives out food

items and hot meals for humans throughout the week; but every third Saturday, the pantry opens its doors to pets and their families.

Some of the clients are inspired to help out by knitting blankets or beds. “Maybe they can't afford the food but they also want to help, so they're donating their time and talents,” explained Nevotti. The Friendship Center volunteers

point clients towards additional resources, like the Veterinary Wellness Center (VWC). “Sometimes people have questions about pets or where to get help for their pets,” Nevotti said. “The volunteers are so helpful. We can only push more people toward the VWC and Tree House.”

Tree House doesn't just serve the north side of Chicago; their work extends into the west and south sides. Tree House volunteers support One Tail At A Time's pet food pantry in Humboldt Park and Tree House has established partnerships in the South Shore neighborhood as well. By partnering with organizations like South Shore Works, Tree House is able to share its veterinary services with even more of Chicago through free vaccine clinics. Eventually, Allaire hopes to host free spay/neuter clinics.

“[During the pandemic] I think it's become a necessity to partner and collaborate, certainly for me as a leader,” Allaire said, reflecting on the past few years, “If it wasn't a necessity before, it is now.” It's inevitable that Tree House's large network of partners will continue to grow.



## LEAVING A LEGACY: DALE IRENE DUNN

By Jesi Peters, Director of Development

*Though Dale Irene Dunn never stepped foot into Tree House, she was a faithful supporter of our mission. When she passed away, she left a major bequest to Tree House and her legacy of compassion and care for cats lives on. Her family and friends shared with us her story.*



### TELL US ABOUT DALE AND THE ANIMALS IN HER LIFE.

Dale lived in San Francisco and had dogs throughout her childhood. As an adult, she fell in love with cats, always having at least one in life. Dale admired their independent nature and modeled that in her own life. After she retired, Dale decided to put her love of cats and other animals into practical, hands-on volunteer work at the San Francisco SPCA. She volunteered for nearly 30 years as an adoption specialist, working the mobile adoption van in neighborhoods throughout San Francisco. One of her favorite assignments was adopting kittens on display at the famous Gump's department store windows during the Christmas holidays.



### WHAT INSPIRED DALE'S GENEROSITY?

Dale received a surprise inheritance from a neighbor. She wanted to leave a substantial gift to the organizations she valued. Dale was a living example of selflessness. She had a love of animals that she put into action with her many years of volunteering to enrich their lives. What was important to Dale was advocating for animals and people who, for any reason, were not able to do for themselves.

### WHAT WAS DALE'S JOURNEY WITH TREE HOUSE?

Dale began donating monthly to Tree House in the late 1980s. She respected the work of Tree House, especially at a time when most shelters were simply euthanasia waiting rooms. Dale could tell that not only did the staff care profoundly but that they made that apparent to donors and adopters. She felt a personal connection to Tree House by following the progress of cats she sponsored.



— **EAR TIPS & EARMARKS** —

# The Managed Care of Feral Cats ordinance

**WE KNOW TODAY THAT TNR (TRAP/NEUTER/RETURN) SAVES LIVES.**

But less than 20 years ago, things were different in Chicago. Before 2007, free-roaming and outdoor cats in the city and Cook County at large were routinely trapped and euthanized in response to complaints from residents.

It became clear to the Chicago animal welfare community that change was necessary to protect the lives and safety of thousands of outdoor cats.



**ENTER THE MANAGED CARE OF FERAL CATS ORDINANCE.**

In 2007, Cook County passed the Managed Care of Feral Cats Ordinance to allow for the creation of feral cat colonies. Tree House, along with our colleagues at PAWS, Triple R Pets, Feral Feline Project, and CatVando, joined as colony sponsors. This new era of TNR in Chicago would ensure the safety of thousands of adult cats, prevent overpopulation, and save countless lives.

**WHAT DOES THE ORDINANCE DO?**

The ordinance is one of more than 330 similar laws across the country that empowers organizations like Tree House and community caretakers to provide legally protected care and support for outdoor cats.

It outlines expectations for feral cat colonies and their caretakers, as well as for sponsoring organizations like us. It also allows us to work closely with our county partners to provide data on cats throughout the city so we can all better focus our efforts. It's estimated that, since the ordinance was put into place, more than 60,000 feral cats have been spayed/neutered, vaccinated, ear tipped, and returned to their outdoor homes.

Not only is it saving the lives of cats, it's just good business sense. The late Dr. Donna Alexander, longtime head of Cook County Animal and Rabies Control, claimed that in just 5 years the ordinance had saved the County over \$1.5 million dollars.

**WHAT'S NEXT?**

As the industry continues to evolve, Tree House is looking towards the future of cat care—indoor and outdoor alike. We're excited to continue working closely with our partners in the TNR community, the animal welfare community, and Cook County to evaluate our policies and practices and ensure that every cat and caretaker has their best chance to thrive.



Learn more at [treehouseanimals.org/community](https://treehouseanimals.org/community).

2007

Cook County passes the Managed Care of Feral Cats ordinance.

2012

Tree House founds its Cats at Work program to care for displaced outdoor cats by pairing them with caretakers.

2013

A progress report shows 41% reduction in size of feral cat colonies.

2017

Animal Control Act amended to allow counties to help fund TNR.

2021

Tree House opens our Veterinary Wellness Center to serve the TNR community.

2022

Tree House and our partners are hard at work finding the best ways to serve outdoor cats and their caretakers.



## — TAILS OF A SHELTER PET —

by Molly Beth Fisher, Clinic Assistant

### A MEMBER OF OUR TRANSFER TEAM SNAPPED A PICTURE OF GRIMACE

on one of our weekly visits to Chicago Animal Care and Control (CACC) and sent it over to our resident clinic, with the caption, “Can we take him? He has an upper respiratory infection.”

Grimace was a disheveled and bedraggled brown & white tabby tomcat. He was partially shaved from the top of his head, down to his neck, shoulder and chest. A rough life on the streets was revealed from the scars and wounds on his face and body. His intense green eyes were weary, and under a pale pink runny nose, his white muzzle appeared crooked and swollen.

It was unanimously decided: “That’s a Tree House cat!”

As it turned out, Grimace had already undergone treatment to clean & drain his wounds. Of more urgent concern was his swollen and painful mouth—he had several fractured teeth and severe dental disease, and retroviral testing confirmed him to be FIV+.

Now, FIV is NBD (No Big Deal) at Tree House. However, oral health is of the utmost importance for immune-compromised cats. Chronic inflammation and bacteria from dental disease can be more taxing on the bodies of FIV+ cats. If not regularly monitored and treated, it may lead to the early-onset of common geriatric feline diseases.

Grimace was in need of a full dental scaling and multiple tooth extractions. Removing all that tartar and calculus build up was challenging.

Grimace was in need of a full dental scaling and multiple tooth extractions. Removing all that tartar and calculus build up was challenging. Full mouth x-rays were taken and to our surprise, the majority of his teeth were in fair condition. Still, those fractured teeth showed some nasty pulp exposure and needed to come out. Our vet removed five teeth, including three canines!

After an overnight sleepover in our clinic treatment room, Grimace was moved up to his very own condo on the adoption floor. At first, he was timid and scared in his new surroundings, but after a few days he let his one of a kind goofy, vocal, and HANGRY personality shine! It wasn’t long before this scrappy, streetwise stray was scooped up by a lucky pair of adopters.

HIS ADOPTERS, MARNIE & TAMMY  
SENT THIS NOTE:

Dear Treehouse [sic] People,

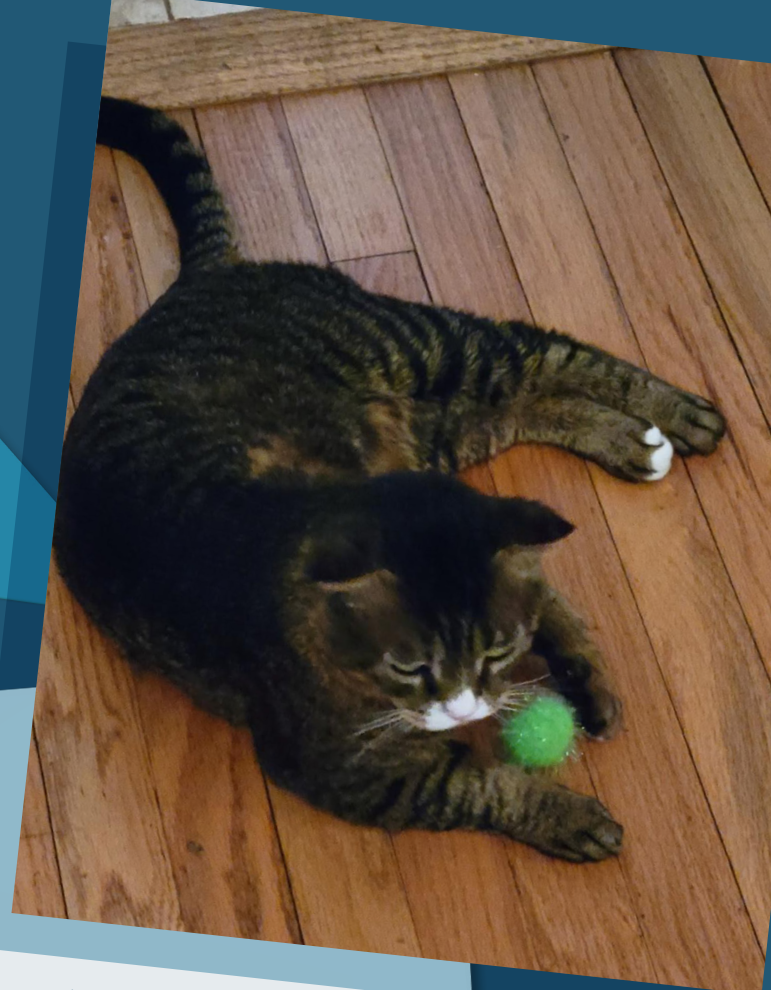
This is Grimace - better known as G-Man. I am writing this to let you know I have found my place. I have quickly adjusted to the new life. And I quite enjoy it - it is a life of leisure. My new people are not so bad - they balance cuddles and giving me my space. They feed me just enough. I follow them around wherever they go. The toys are fun to play with. And they don't even mind when I chase the toys in the middle of the night. I get lots of exercise running up and down the stairs. And a cozy bed seems to be in every room.

Thanks for taking such good care of me.

Love,  
Grimace

(although my grumpy face will never show you how happy I am).

PS - Marnie and Tammy wanted to let you know that I am a great cat. They were ready to work hard to make me feel at home. But I came with great manners and no issues. And they have lots more pictures if you want them.





Volunteers are essential to every aspect of Tree House and the donation of your time can make just as large of an impact as a tangible donation. We are always seeking excited, dedicated individuals who are looking to join our community to support our mission to see every cat thrive!



Our volunteer roles reflect the most crucial needs of the organization and it's through your support that we're able to accomplish our dreams and goals.

Are you a **people person** who thrives on making the **perfect match** between cat and human? You could be our next **Adoption Counselor!** Love finding cats homes but can't make it in every week? We need you at our **Offsite Adoption Events!**

Perhaps you're more of a **hands-on, needs elbow grease** kind of person who isn't afraid to roll up their sleeves to keep the cats **clean and stress free?** You sound like a perfect **Caregiver.**

Can you most likely be found attending various **events in and around the city?** Is your schedule **too hectic to help out every week,** but you still want to contribute and **love talking about Tree House?** We'd love to grow our **Street Team** to include you.

Want to spend plenty of **one on one time with cats,** providing crucial **behavioral and medical support?** You'd make a wonderful **Foster!**

**Do you love driving? Speak Spanish? Like working with kids? Have a skill we haven't mentioned yet? We'd love to meet you.**

**Apply today at [treehouseanimals.org/volunteer](https://treehouseanimals.org/volunteer).**

# CAT WALK

**CAT WALK'S  
BIGGEST  
YEAR YET!**

**Saturday, August 13, 2022  
12:30pm - 6:00pm**

## **A Neighborhood Festival & Bar Crawl**

Cat Walk returns and is bigger than ever! Our annual bar crawl in support of our resident cats is expanding with six bars. Join us for a community celebration and fundraiser at partner bars throughout Ravenswood and Andersonville! Featuring music, drink specials, and cat-themed games, our summer celebration is not-to-be-missed.

*Tickets on sale now!*

**Get Your Tickets at  
[treehouseanimals.org  
/catwalk](https://treehouseanimals.org/catwalk)**







**50** INSPIRING  
CONNECTING  
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WHERE THERE'S A WILL,  
THERE'S A WAY.

You can make a gift today that will  
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You decide how to give. Uncover the  
giving option that works best for  
your goals.

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