



TREE HOUSE
HUMANE SOCIETY

SPRING 2023

THE CATalyst

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Above & Beyond



THE CATalyst

Tree House Humane Society Magazine
Spring 2023

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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 19, 2023

Catbaret
Thursday, October 12, 2023

Lights Of Love
Saturday, December 9, 2023

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands. You need to be able to throw something back."

- MAYA ANGELOU

The last year has been full of unknowns, but there is one thing we can always count on: the selflessness and compassion from our Tree House community.

We have seen so many kind hearts truly go the extra mile for our animals, especially during such difficult times of uncertainty. This support which has come from all 50 states is a true testament of how much we really care about helping out those who need us most - whether that may be humans or pets alike. It's truly remarkable how far each person will go - sometimes even beyond their own expectations - to ensure both animals and people are comfortable, seen, heard and safe.

At Tree House, we are fortunate to have a front-row seat to everyday gestures of generosity and understanding - examples like:

- Our volunteer Olympia who took time out of her week to drive our kitty Geraldine Vener to Madison, Wisconsin for a critical operation; and the 31 donors who gave what they could to make a difference in Geraldine's life.



- Our online community of supporters who share stories of our long-stay cats like Teeny Tina who requires extra love and affection and a very special match.
- Robert, whose community we have helped with improving access to care, started an online fundraiser for Tree House to pay it forward to help more families in his neighborhood.

In this issue, you'll meet more of our everyday advocates. Their dedication is an inspiration and continues to fuel hope.

Compassion fatigue and stress in animal welfare work are real. And it's these acts of compassion which prove how powerful humanity can be...how we can work together to make this world just a little bit brighter each day. And what better way than with kitty love (one of the best loves in my book).

Raissa Allaire, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

@TreeHouseHumaneSociety @TreeHouseCats @TreeHouseHumaneSociety @TreeHouseCats

2023 TREE HOUSE SPIRIT AWARDS

By Audry Cichosz

The Tree House team is made up of passionate animal lovers whose dedication pushes the organization to be the best it can be.

In 2022, Tree House's Associate Director of Technology & Administration Brian Rivera worked alongside Executive Director Raissa Allaire to bring the Spirit Awards to life. The awards recognize employees who embody Tree House's core values through their work, going above and beyond their required duties to create a world where every cat thrives, even if that means not getting it right the first time.

Sometimes, to succeed, we must fail and learn from our mistakes in order to grow from them. Shelter Manager Danielle Faford sought to

develop a new rental process after receiving brand new feral cat traps, charging a deposit in the event a trap wasn't returned, or was returned late. She worked diligently to complete the project before realizing the software didn't accept deposits while allowing them to be refunded easily. Through trial and error, she simplified the process. She demonstrated that with perseverance one is able to accomplish their goals, and it is more than okay if it takes a few tries, taking home the Dare To Try award for her "smart failure."

She wasn't the only one improving processes. Community Programs Manager Cecilia Ocampo-Solis started with Tree House in 2021 and has since led the Community Cats Team to new heights! She took home the Big Bang award for her amazing contributions to "increasing access to care through pop-up events, organizing

transport for animals receiving services at the Veterinary Wellness Center, setting up depopulation assistance, and her collaborative work with our pet food pantry partners," as her nomination stated.

The Spirit Awards strive to recognize outstanding efforts, no matter an employee's tenure. Rookie of the Year winner and Foster Program Assistant Autumn Evans joined Tree House in 2022 and quickly rose to her current position. Her peers noticed, writing that "Autumn is an individual who cares so deeply for the animals that it shows in everything she does".

This year's Ripple Effect award winner, Adoption & Support Counselor Tyler Frank, is known for his amazing customer service skills and dedication to Tree House cats and people, working hard to train staff and volunteers. Tyler is committed to helping adopters find their perfect companion and create lasting bonds. Through compassionate counseling, Tyler makes sure both human and fur-baby are confident

in taking on this new journey together – leading to more successful pet adoptions!

Outstanding customer service is embodied in Veterinary Wellness Center Manager Cortney Moore, who took home the Service Leader Award! Cortney was recognized for the deep passion and dedication she shows to each and every animal she serves. Cortney works hard to ensure that all clients receive the best care possible, animals and their caretakers alike. Cortney's never-ending devotion to her work is best displayed by her favorite hobby: ensuring that our TNR patients receive an extra meal at night. Her leadership and resilience is admired by all at Tree House as she tackles every day head on.

Tree House's Spirit Awards will continue to occur annually to recognize and honor the countless amazing members of the Tree House team who play a major role in ensuring that every cat that's a part of our community thrives!

THE WINNERS:



Rookie of The Year

Autumn Evans



Big Bang

Cecilia Ocampo-Solis



Service Leader

Cortney Moore



Dare To Try

Danielle Faford



Ripple Effect

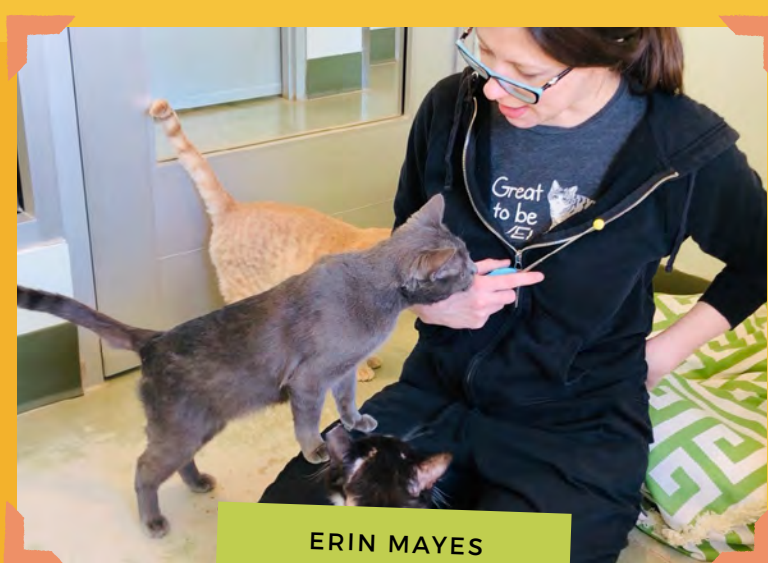
Tyler Frank

ONCE A TREE HOUSE CAT, ALWAYS A TREE HOUSE CAT

By Camden Jones



ANGELINA
BALLERINA



ERIN MAYES
Feline Behavior Specialist



GERTRUDE



GUNTER



MELISANDE

With a heavy heart, the decision to return a cat to a shelter can be one of life's most difficult choices. But returns are a reality of animal shelter operations; sometimes, surrendering a cat back into our care is ultimately what's best for both the cat and the adopter.

That's why our policy is, "Once a Tree House cat, always a Tree House cat." It means cats we adopt out will always have a home at our shelter, regardless of circumstances.

Recently, four senior cats – Gunter, Gertrude, Melisande, and Angelina Ballerina, each with unique medical considerations – were returned to Tree House by their adopter. She'd taken good care of them for more than a decade but eventually became unable to continue doing so. Tree House took them back in without hesitation, providing them a place to get the care they needed, and all four soon reached positive outcomes: Gunter and Gertrude were adopted together, and Melisande and Angelina Ballerina were each adopted into a loving home of their own.

Still, the majority of issues that lead to returns can be solved, saving our cats from the stress of upending their lives once again for another rehoming. A three-year survey published in the scientific journal *Animals* found that the most common reason cats were returned was behavior. As an adopter, it can sometimes be overwhelming to find yourself with a new feline friend who hasn't quite mastered the art of using their litter box. Or maybe your kitty is full of energy and love but just doesn't know how best to express themselves? According to Tree House's Feline Behavior Specialist, Erin Mayes, these at-first overwhelming issues often have fixes the adopter just hasn't thought of.

"I've worked with many adopters who thought they had exhausted all options in terms of coming up with effective solutions for behavior issues," Erin said. "In most instances, we can offer alternatives they haven't considered."

Erin brings 16 years of animal care experience and cat behavior education to the team. Since October 2022, she's worked to assess and improve the behavioral health of Tree House's cats, and her presence means the shelter has a dedicated resource for managing behavioral issues both before and after adoption.

Part of Erin's role is to help adopters understand why behavioral problems develop and how to prevent or manage them. She's seen many new cat owners make mistakes like inadequate enrichment, poor litter box maintenance, and unsuccessful cat-to-cat or cat-to-dog introductions, which can lead to issues like inappropriate attention-seeking, house soiling, and aggression between animals in the home.

"My biggest piece of advice is for adopters to reach out to us if they're struggling," Erin said. "We want both the cat and the adopter to succeed, and while we understand that sometimes returning is the best option, we will always strive to help anyone who asks."

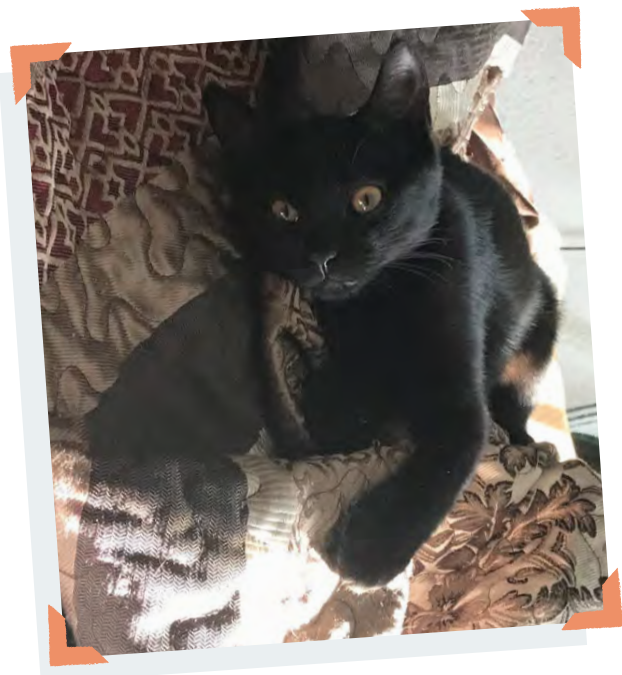
Though she is a great resource for helping adopters solve issues they encounter at home, as Erin said, "The responsibility starts with us" at Tree House. Prior to adoption, staff observe and document each cat's behavior, and Erin sends out weekly behavior reports to staff and volunteers that detail the personality and needs of every adoptable cat. Tree House adoption counselors are passionate about creating strong, long-lasting relationships between adopters and their furry friends. With open communication from both parties surrounding the desired pet's behavioral needs, our team is dedicated to helping everyone involved find that special connection!

— SOMETHING TO HOLLER ABOUT —

by Alina Dain

It was a cold day in early January when Holler first came through Tree House's doors. A typical Thursday, it was busy in the clinic with public intake appointments and exams for our resident cats.

In the middle of our usual hubbub, someone walked in holding a small black kitten in his hand. This Good Samaritan had found the kitten a few days ago outside, in the freezing temperatures, on her own. In the couple days that she had spent in his home, she had not eaten anything – a very concerning sign in kittens.



As a managed admissions shelter, new intakes are by appointment only, but in this case, it was a no-brainer. This kitten needed our immediate help! We made the decision to take her into our care, and a skinny, crying black kitten (aptly named Holler) was quickly admitted.

We all had one major concern on our minds when we heard that Holler wasn't eating and saw how skinny she was: panleukopenia. This disease is caused by feline parvovirus and is easily spread, hard to get rid of, and often deadly if left untreated. Kittens with panleukopenia can present with gastrointestinal symptoms, decreased appetite, and lethargy. It's a disease that hits very quickly, and can be especially hard on young, unvaccinated, and immunocompromised cats. When tested for the disease, sure enough, Holler was positive.

Panleukopenia in a shelter is serious. Because of its highly contagious nature, the affected individual needs to be isolated and strict PPE and disinfection protocols must be followed. When panleuk enters the shelter, it is always "all hands on deck," and this case was no different. Our clinic staff mobilized and immediately put Holler into an isolation room and started her on several medications to help combat the effects of the virus, stimulate her appetite, and get her some much-needed calories.

Our marketing team jumped in to spread the word about Holler's story on our social media channels, and support flowed in! This little two-pound baby didn't know it, but she had a

whole team of people going above and beyond to aid in her recovery.

Not all panleukopenia cases have happy endings. In fact, for kittens that don't receive immediate treatment the mortality rate can be as high as 90%. Even with aggressive treatment, sometimes their little bodies just can't handle the virus's effects. Thankfully, in Holler's case it was a very happy ending. After several days of treatment, syringe feeding, and plenty of TLC, we could see she was turning a corner! Her weight began to increase, and her energy (and voice) remained as big as ever. About one week later, she tested negative for the virus and her bloodwork came back normal. She began to eat more consistently on her own.

Thanks to our amazing foster team, Holler was placed in a foster home where she could continue to gain weight while getting focused social and play time – an important need for all cats, but especially for young single kittens.

After her quarantine period ended, Holler was adoption ready and able to make her triumphant return back to Tree House. Within days she went off to her new home and her voice has remained as big as ever.

“

This little two-pound baby didn't know it, but she had a whole team of people going above and beyond to aid in her recovery.



≡ **TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER:** ≡

Together We Are Stronger: Volunteerism as a Pathway for Care

by Anna Marketti

One of Tree House's core values is that **together we are stronger**. We work hand in hand with a team of over 300 volunteers across shelter operations. Volunteering is an easy way for everyone to make a difference - no prior experience required!

Whether someone is simply a cat lover or seeking new skills, volunteers allow us to go above and beyond our goals. Their support has cultivated a culture that fosters joy and encourages people to keep coming back, time and again -- as adopters, guests at our events, and sometimes, as staff members. Take for example, Foster Program Assistant Autumn Evans, who first volunteered for Tree House 10 years ago and recently returned as an employee.

"[Volunteering] sparked an interest in animal care and was my introduction to shelter work," Autumn said. "I have since learned a lot and even enrolled in school thanks to those positive experiences."

Many volunteers come for the cats, but stay because they find undiscovered passions in the work they do.

Cat Care Technician Lesley Miranda also started as a volunteer, administering medications to our resident cats – something she'd never done before.

"I wanted to be a part of a team that was determined to find solutions when it came to the medical and behavioral needs of the cats," Lesley said. The patient training, trust, and support she received from clinic staff encouraged her to apply for a job when one became available. "Volunteering is a great way to encourage the community to engage in their surrounding shelters wherever they can, whenever they can."

One of the most common reasons people volunteer is to find a sense of purpose and community. Cat Care Technician Bailey Cassidy initially joined Tree House as a barista volunteer as a means of uniting her love of cats and coffee. After witnessing first-hand how positively it affected animals around her, getting hired as a Cat Care Technician helped to deepen her relationship with a strong community that truly cares about its furry friends!

"It is so rewarding to be here almost every day rather than just a couple short shifts a week. It's definitely the most rewarding job I've ever had," Bailey said.

A robust team of volunteers expands Tree House's capacity for care, increasing our bandwidth to focus on offering individualized care for the cats, including dedicated volunteer roles for this purpose.

"I think it's beneficial for the cats to interact with others who simply want to spend time with them," Autumn said. "It gives the cats a chance to have purely positive interactions before they head to their new home."

Tree House wouldn't be able to find solutions for over a thousand cats each year without the support of volunteers.

And no role is too small. Bailey said, "From washing litter scoopers, to facilitating adoption appointments, to socializing with cats, our volunteers do so much to free up more time for staff to spend making sure the cats have the best possible quality of life in our care and find the best homes! Volunteer support is so essential to getting to a place where every cat can thrive and we all appreciate our awesome volunteers!"

Lesley put it best: "In order to succeed in a workplace, you have to have a team behind you that you know you can trust and who works best together."



≡ DONOR SPOTLIGHT: ≡

Renee MacDonald: A true partner to Chicago's Community Cats

By Cecilia Ocampo-Solis

Chicago is a city fortunate to have so many caring colony caretakers and cheerleaders for community cats.

With thousands of community cats roaming Chicago, it takes a team of dedicated caretakers to ensure that they are sterilized, vaccinated, and provided with food, water, and shelter to sustain their health..

Sharing information and tools with one person can make a huge impact. As a team, we can keep the outdoor cat population manageable and ensure every cat thrives. Renee MacDonald's partnership with Tree House and with the community has gone above and beyond, making a huge impact on the lives of so many cats and their caretakers.

I met Renee when she called looking for advice and resources for a community cat she trapped in her area. After working with Renee on a canvassing session in Humboldt Park, to spread the word about an upcoming vaccine pop-up clinic, I quickly learned that Renee is a true advocate of her local community and beyond! Renee is dedicated to helping cats, determinedly taking her mission to the streets and beyond! She shares valuable TNR tips with residents in her backyards and local businesses—even working with an auto repair shop that welcomed a special community cat in need of medical attention. Plus she provides invaluable guidance for Tree House volunteers on best practices when it comes to caring for their feline friends.

Community cats across Chicago are fortunate to have Renee's support. At the beginning of this year, Renee led one of our team's biggest workshops where she led a team of 20 volunteers from Gay for Good who built 90 shelters for outdoor cats in four hours! The shelters are distributed by our team to community cats in need or are purchased by colony caretakers at our front desk. These insulated shelters are an essential resource we have available to colony caretakers to keep cats warm during harsh Chicago winters.

Renee's dedication and passion has directly benefited hundreds of cats. From the humane traps she has donated that allow us to rent them to community members for TNR, to starting a fund that has covered the cost of surgeries and vaccines for over 75 cats, Renee continues to be a huge cheerleader for the very vulnerable population of Chicago's community cats. We are beyond honored to call her a partner and friend!

Renee led one of our team's biggest workshops where she led a team of 20 volunteers from Gay for Good build 90 shelters for outdoor cats in four hours!



MEET TREE HOUSE: ALEXANDRA TURCIOS

Tree House Board Member

CAN YOU TELL ME ABOUT WHAT YOU DO OUTSIDE OF YOUR WORK ON TREE HOUSE'S BOARD?

In my professional world, I wear a lot of hats. I'm a senior consultant for Adobe and I'm involved heavily in my community; I'm the chairwoman for the Chicago chapter of the Hispanic Alliance for Career Advancement. How I identify is integral to how I show up in places and informs the professional endeavors I pursue: I'm a first-generation Latina daughter of two Honduran immigrants, born and raised in Chicago.

HOW DID YOU COME TO BE INVOLVED WITH TREE HOUSE?

I've been a cat lover my whole life. Animals can have such a profound effect on people and their mental health and on our community. It felt like a natural next step to get involved at this organization with other like-minded individuals who value working as a community to provide the best quality of life to our furry friends.

WHAT ARE WAYS IN WHICH YOU FEEL TREE HOUSE GOES ABOVE AND BEYOND?

The cadence of different fundraising events, the recognition that happened at the last board meeting from staff, seeing Raissa's commitment to the mission – all of those facets combined create this culture of excellence, a culture of people who really care. It makes it really natural and easy for people to go above and beyond.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO WANT TO GET INVOLVED BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START?

Start with your "why." What are you passionate about? How does it make you feel being a part of a specific cause?

Start to be intentional about the spaces you're interacting with. There are so many great networking opportunities within Tree House – dip your toes into those events, there are plenty that are free or low cost. Then start to create a system of accountability for yourself. Start with small goals: once a quarter I want to volunteer, or I want to join an auxiliary board, I want to network with three people every quarter. No matter how you're getting involved, it's always a net win because you get exposed to new perspectives and feel good about the work you're doing.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST EXCITED ABOUT SEEING TREE HOUSE ACCOMPLISH?

Diversifying access to care. The pop-up clinics that are happening on the west side in traditionally underrepresented areas, that's what really excites me. The strategic work that goes behind it, building the infrastructure, building the tools and systems to future-proof Tree House and be prepared for tomorrow – all of that energizes me. I'm learning a lot and I look forward to being a part of something bigger.

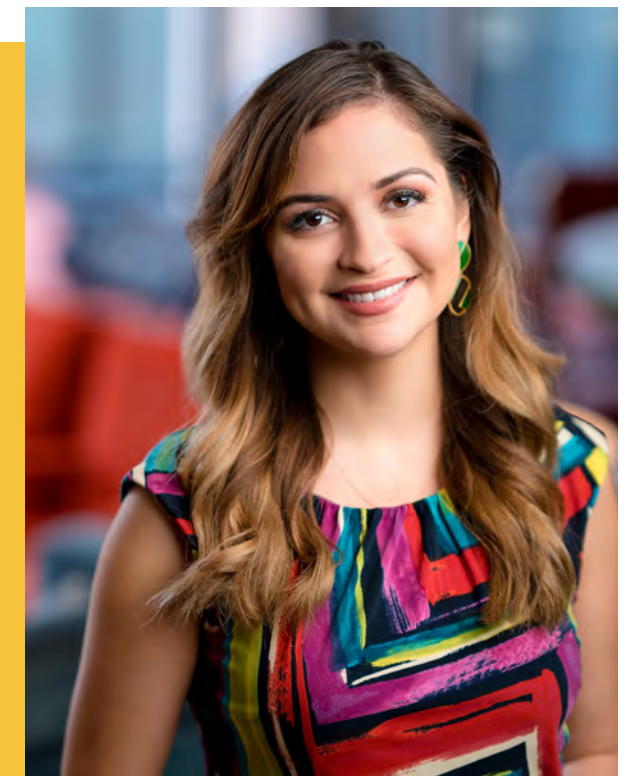
WHAT NEW PERSPECTIVES DO YOU HOPE YOU CAN OFFER TO TREE HOUSE'S BOARD?

We want to engage and ensure we have business continuity with younger generations threaded into the bigger picture we're working towards. Digital engagement and social media presence are huge areas for that and one that

stakeholders are thinking about. That's the next strategic frontier we should be tackling.

WHAT DOES TREE HOUSE DO REALLY WELL?

Caring. We're all threaded by this concept of care and being passionate about the mission and cause of Tree House. When you start with care as a foundation, you can build great things out of that, and it doesn't come from a transactional perspective. This is what the community needs and is asking for and we're going to deliver it because we know that it matters.



2022 IMPACT

HEALTHY PETS, HEALTHY FAMILIES, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

REHOMING

1,110+

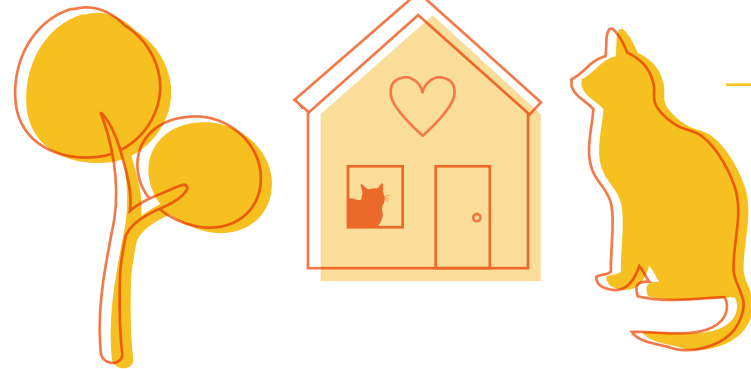
cat adoptions + placements

Resulting in...

Nearly \$1M returned to local economy

Based on average cat parent spending of \$902 per year

98%
Live Release Rate



Boosts in mental health

74% of pet owners reported mental health improvements from pet ownership

33 days
Length of Stay

PREVENTION & RETENTION

7,000+

animals served

70% cats

36% first-time vet visit



TREE HOUSE
VETERINARY WELLNESS CENTER



Nearly 5,400
spays/neuters

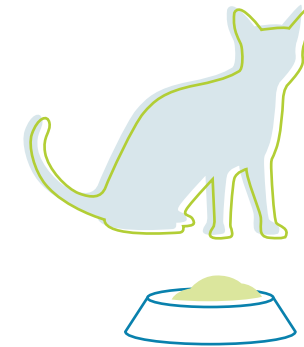
2,280+
wellness services

2,800+

community cats
cared for

And 800+ community cats spayed/neutered and vaccinated

Resulting in...Healthier animals, increased public health, reduced unwanted litters.



Nearly 4,000
families helped

5,100+
pounds of pet food
distributed

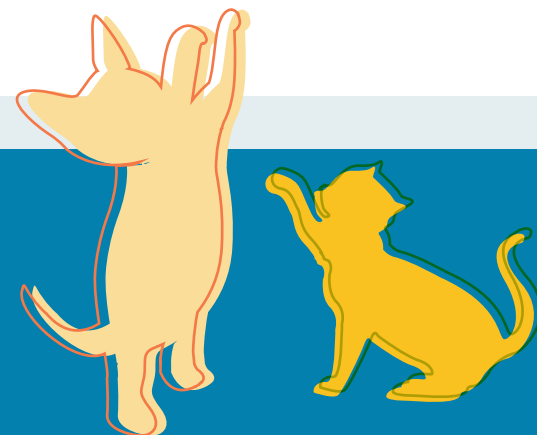
Your donor dollar goes **2X** as far



Average cost of care per animal:

\$620
in shelter

\$320
in community



Thanks to donors like you, more than \$98,000 in discounted vet services were provided to families and communities in need.

33,600+

volunteer & foster hours



5,100+

donors

10,400+

customers



93%

Customer
Happiness Score

30,700+

customer conversations
(36% increase over 2021)



DID YOU KNOW?

Did you know the term “tabby” is not a breed of cat but a coat type in a range of colors (black, gray, orange) across four basic fur patterns (mackerel, classic, ticked and spotted)? All have the distinctive “M”-shaped marking on the forehead and stripes by the eyes and along the cheeks. It is not surprising that tabbies are one of the most prevalent and popular cats!

THE BENEFITS OF FOSTERING

By Marne Turner

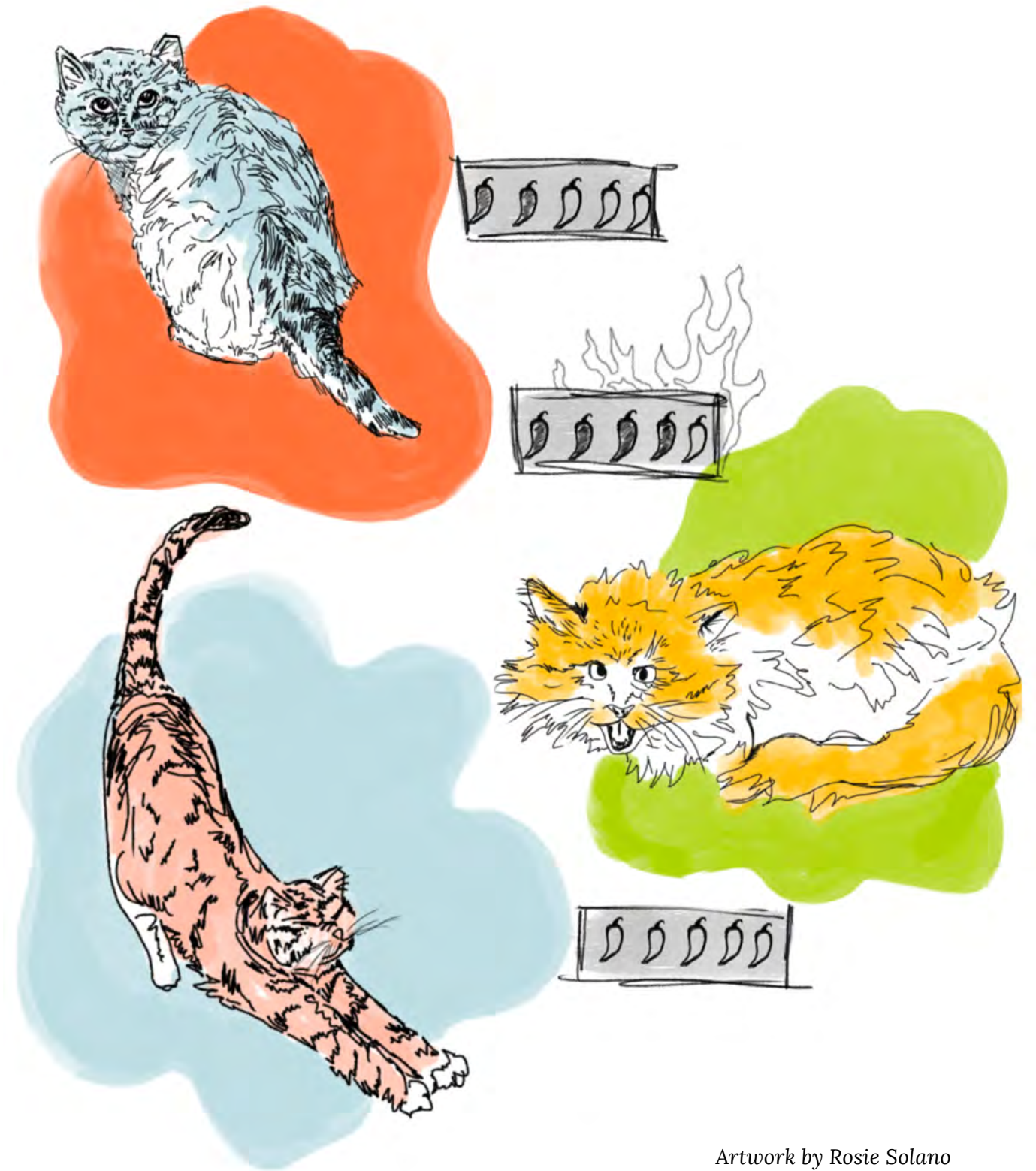
Meet Taki, our favorite gray tabby! This little lady spent a whole year in our foster program before being adopted. Shelters are not an ideal place for cats like Taki who can be fearful of other cats so living in a foster home with a predictable environment helped her be her best cat self until she found her happy ending.

Our spicy tabby girl Taki loves to play with wand toys and this enrichment is important for her wellbeing. As with many cats, Taki can get overstimulated during play or petting sessions and she will usually let you know with a nip in the air that she is overwhelmed and needs a break.

We all have boundaries and so do cats! Understanding common cat body language and overstimulation signals (flattening of ears, tail swishing, tenseness or staring, etc.) will help nurture a happy and healthy relationship.

Fosters are an essential part of Tree House’s lifesaving work. Join the Foster team to help a cat like Taki today! Visit: treehouseanimals.org/foster

Many of our cats in foster have been waiting for their happy endings for a long time. Adopt them: treehouseanimals.org/adopt



Artwork by Rosie Solano

Cats are just as full of personality, quirks and surprises like us humans! Every feline has their own unique approach to life - from those who love all the attention they can get, to cats who need some gentle coaxing before showing affection. Those on the more “spicy”

side tend to be shy or tightly wound due to lack of socialization aptly called a “cat-titude”; characterized by hissing, growling or swatting. But don’t let that intimidate you: every cat’s spiciness exists along its very own spectrum!



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CAT WRITERS' ASSOCIATION
A global, cat-centric professional organization dedicated to excellence in written, visual, and audio media.

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CHICAGO, IL 60645**

Want to be remembered?

**WHERE THERE'S A WILL,
THERE'S A WAY.**

You can make a gift today that will support our mission far into the future.

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

Visit:
treehouseanimals.planmylegacy.org

