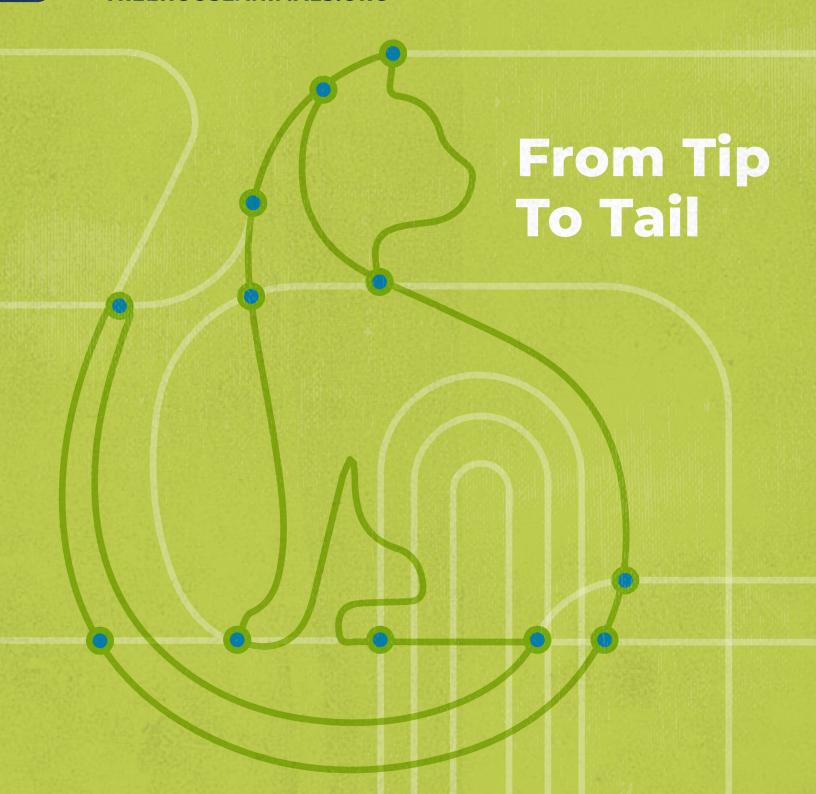


# CATA NST

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# **CATalyst**

#### **Tree House Humane Society Magazine** Spring 2022

#### **EDITOR:**

**Chris Thoren** 

#### **CONTRIBUTORS:**

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- Our Impact
- Ask the Expert with Dr. Emma Klein
- This Year's Events

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

### **CALENDAR**

#### **SAVE THE DATE**

#### **Cat Walk**

Saturday, August 13, 2022

#### Cat'baret

Thursday, October 27, 2022

#### **Lights of Love Holiday Open House**

Saturday, December 10, 2022















### **LETTER FROM** THE EXECUTIVE **DIRECTOR**

## What if we approached every challenge as an opportunity for growth and as a way to catapult us forward?

With the pandemic and the Great Resignation, many organizations are working to recover from being in intensive care the past two years. While we were not immune to these larger trends, 2021 marked one of our most impactful years in ensuring every cat-and every human-is given their best chance to thrive. (See our results on page 15.)

How did this happen? Simply put, culture matters. While we were not always in control of our circumstances, and we had unexpected resets, we were always in control of our attitude and how we approached each challenge. It was a powerful combination of teamwork, having a growth mindset, and our shared values and beliefs.

At Tree House, our culture is a work in progress and we are always learning. And beyond our mission, vision and values, we recognized during this unprecedented time that we have a set of operating beliefs that we hold dear in our house.

- **We** are open to pivots.
- We don't scar on the first cut.
- **We love blank pages.**
- We want to work with great people.
- We aim to know the soul behind the role.
- We help and we hustle.



In this issue, you will meet a few of our staff, winners of our inaugural Tree House awards, who bring to life many of these beliefs.

What's ahead for us? We are excited about where our new strategic plan will take us. Community + excellence are our key pillars. Read more: treehouseanimals.org/strategicplan.

We are Tree House. Behind the name and 50 years of expertise are people with heart, experience, and so much care. Our Tree House community spans 47 states!

Thank you for believing in us.

Raissa Allaire, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

#### THE TREE HOUSE SPIRIT AWARDS

By Anna Marketti

2021 held plenty to celebrate at Tree House, none of which could have been possible without the contributions of the individuals who make up Tree House's inimitable staff. Thus, 2021 marked the inaugural Tree House Spirit Awards.

Associate Director of Technology & Administration Brian Rivera worked alongside Executive Director Raissa Allaire to bring the Awards to life.

This began with innovation exercises in all staff meetings and eventually evolved into a vision for a formal awards ceremony. "These exercises were designed to have staff getting used to thinking of innovation as something that could happen in their everyday work," Rivera said. It seemed to do the trick—once the peer nomination form opened up, he and Allaire were heartened by the volume of submissions they were seeing and the sincerity in each of them.

Thanks to guidance from volunteer Sara Stigberg and board member Cody England, the awards sought to reward not only daring new ideas and successes but "smart failures" as well. This bore the Dare To Try award, along with four other categories, each tied to a core value of Tree House.

Failure is a necessary component of success-we learn from our mistakes and are able to grow from them. Dare to Try winners Rivera and Associate Director of Veterinary Operations Dani Robinson learned this lesson at Tree House's first pop-up pet vaccine clinic. The event was well attended by over 100 pet parents and instead of handwriting each rabies certificate, Rivera created an electronic version. Unfortunately, internet connectivity and typing issues slowed this process down unexpectedly.

As noted in their nomination statement, "Brian took it in stride and provided an on the spot solution so our day did not get backed up!" He and Robinson dared to try a new idea, and while it wasn't the most successful of the day, they learned what can be done better the next time—the true reward.

Robinson took home two awards that night, claiming

the Big Bang award as well. Her spearheading of the pet vaccine pop-ups in Chicago's South Shore are an example of the "Expanding Access to Care" pillar of Tree House's strategic plan. She fully managed the initiative from idea phase to execution and in doing so, brought essential veterinary services to a community in need. Tree House is continuing these clinics in 2022!

The other awards celebrate excellent displays of service, like Rookie of the Year winner Maddie Jones, Client Services Coordinator at the VWC, and Shelter Shift Lead Laura Poupart receiving the Service Leader award.

Jones showed commitment to continuous learning and improvement, as her nomination statement says. She's always eager to learn new ways to help, including learning the role of surgical assistant so she can jump into the role when needed.

With nearly 10 years of tenure under her belt, Poupart is far from a rookie, and has grown to be a role model for Tree House's shelter staff. "I would not be the employee I am today if it weren't for her guidance," read her nomination statement. "She is such a team player and is a great leader." She gives unparalleled service to customers, coworkers, volunteers, and anyone else who engages with Tree House.

Tree House is lucky to be filled with so many people who not only reflect but embrace and embody the organization's values. Like "good isn't great enough," a value personified in Operations Technician and winner of the Ripple Effect award, Joe Brown. Brown puts in countless hours making sure every surgical pack for the next day's appointments is prepared to perfection, leaves no surface unscrubbed on any instrument, and still finds the time among all his other duties to train new volunteers on tasks. He does it all for the cats and for the vet team—he can't stand the idea of letting the animals in our care down, and does it all while greeting you with a smile.

The Spirit Awards will occur annually and continue to honor the exemplary individuals at Tree House who work tirelessly to get us every step closer to seeing every cat thrive.



#### THE WINNERS:





Associate Directors Brian Rivera & Dani Robinson



Operations Technician
Joe Brown



Dani Robinson



Client Services Coordinator Maddie Jones



Shelter Shift Lead Laura Poupart

# PAWS ON THE GROUND: TREE HOUSE IN THE COMMUNITY

By Cecila Ocampo-Solis

# ONE OF OUR MAJOR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS IS TO EXPAND ACCESS TO CARE. What

can this look like? To our team, it looks like going beyond our shelter walls to offer low-cost veterinary care for community cats and owned pets (dogs too!) in under-resourced areas (areas with little access to pet resources).

We carefully assessed Chicago's North Side communities to determine where we can make the most impact, and chose Humboldt Park as our first target area. A lot goes into a decision like this!

Humboldt Park is a diverse community on Chicago's West Side. A Spanish-speaking neighborhood with



strong Puerto Rican heritage, it is one of many areas in the city with limited access to vet clinic or pet resources. Looking at Chicago's vet clinic map, we can see the disparities between the northeast and northwest sides of the city; the northeast side is home to the large majority of the ENTIRE city's clinics. Traveling with your furry companions on the CTA can be out of the question. The long commute to a clinic and high vet bills are just a few barriers in place that prevent accessibility to vet care. We also considered intake data from our partners at Chicago Animal Care and Control (CACC). We learned that they are seeing a higher number of cats coming from the Humboldt area. Our Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) work can have a great impact on easing pressure on the community and CACC, as well as battling overpopulation.

An essential component of our efforts is collaborating with Humboldt Park residents to make care more accessible. We hope to bridge the gap between wellness resources and pets by building strong relationships with Humboldt Park's residents. Through consistent outreach and information sharing, we hope to empower colony caretakers so they make the most well-informed decisions for cats in their community.

What does this look like in our everyday efforts?

Getting on the ground in Humboldt Park and meeting people where they are to work together to address the barriers they face.

- Door-to-door outreach and connecting with residents through active listening.
- Prioritizing TNR requests from 60651 and providing on-site trapping and transportation to and from our Veterinary Wellness Center (VWC).
- Working with mutual aid partners to bring food and supplies to the community.



# PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT: One Tail At a Time

We also find that many of our colony caretakers face challenges with providing food and other supplies for their pets or community cats. Some of our colony caretakers feed up to 20 cats a day. That's a lot of food! We understand it can be incredibly expensive to maintain a colony. By partnering with One Tail at a Time's Pet Mutual Aid Program, we collaborate to bring food and supplies to the community! They host a monthly pantry at a community center where they distribute food and supplies.

A lack of means does not equate to a lack of love. Veterinary care should be accessible to all. We understand that community engagement is a continuum, and our efforts will work to increase the level of community involvement, impact, trust, and communication.





#### =ADOPTION HIGHLIGHT =

#### Lily and Zuko

by Jan Willer

For some cats, second time's a charm. Meet Zuko, whose journey to his forever home was not the easiest. Zuko came to Tree House in February 2020 from a local animal shelter because we accept FIV\* positive cats for adoption. He clearly had a hard life on the street—and sports some scars to show for it. But our staff recognized his sweet nature and knew that there was someone out there who could truly appreciate him.



\*Zuko lives with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), an autoimmune condition that makes him more susceptible to disease. Cats with FIV can live long and happy lives, but are often overlooked in shelter care.

Zuko's seen it all! He was with Tree House when the pandemic started, quickly went to a foster family, was adopted and then returned back to our care. While back at Tree House, he had to have an eye removed due to the risk of future glaucoma.

In July 2021, his luck changed! Lily, who is an undergraduate English major at University of Illinois at Chicago, came to Tree House looking for a cat. She said, "When I first met him, I sat on the ground and he immediately sat in my lap, he purred and let me pet him." She said that she came back to meet him again and was initially concerned about the potential cost of his teeth issues, "but no other cat caught my eye." She brought him home and "he seemed like he was at home right away. Lily said, "The hardest thing was to get him not to scratch on the couch, but I just got him a scratching post and I doused it in catnip spray," and that solved the problem.

Lily has a deep appreciation for Zuko's quirky and affectionate nature. "He loves to cuddle . . . he mainly lays on my bed . . . when I first got him, he would sleep by my feet, then he slept on his own side of the bed, and now he's sleeping on my pillow. Sometimes he purrs, and he snores and sometimes drools while he sleeps." She also said, "He wakes me up for his food in the morning, by meowing or combing my hair with his claws, or gently biting my face to get up and feed him. If it's too early, I will put my arm around him," and they go back to sleep. "Over time," she says, "He's become really talkative, but he likes to play with his toys by himself." She also said, "He once stole a piece of pizza and we didn't find it for a while!"

Lily appreciates having an older cat. "I think he's just a great cat, all he wants to do is cuddle. I think that some people think that older cats have less energy, but he gets the zoomies and runs around the house. Older cats are very affectionate."



#### = FROM TIP TO TAIL =

# A CAT'S JOURNEY

By Chris Thoren

There's so much care and work that goes into ensuring every cat you meet on our adoption floor has the chance and help they need to thrive.

Booker, f.k.a. Taquito, was one of our first success stories of 2022! Follow along with his journey through Tree House.

Panleukopenia is a serious and contagious feline parovirus. Cats can begin presenting symptoms anywhere from 1-14 days, and containment requires a lengthy and robust cleaning process. It is often fatal without major intervention. Preventing panleukopenia takes a village, and we're working closely with all our transfer partners on education, vaccination, and more!

# INTAKE

Taquito was transferred to Tree House in December 2021 from our downstate Illinois transfer partners along with 2 other cats. These partnerships connect us to under-resourced shelters in southern Illinois like Taquito's home shelter!

He was neutered shortly after his arrival with a clean bill

He was neutered shortly after his arrival with a clean bill

He was neutered shortly after his arrival with a clean bill

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# THRIVING AT HOME

Taquito was with us over the holidays, where our staff kept a close eye on him. On January 3, he was officially declared cured of panleukopenia. Three days later, fresh on the adoption floor, he found a home with Gabrielle where he is thriving with a new family and a new name!

Blue Pearl Specialty & Emergency
Animal Hospital is a 24/7 animal
hospital that specializes in critical
care and emergency medicine. We're
grateful to work with their expert vets
as a resource in the care of our cats
and beyond! And thanks to our donors
who make this possible!

Taquito's adopter has a lot to say about her

"Booker (formerly Taquito) is a snuggly, lovable

cat. He's in perfect health, has been eating a

lot, and is growing like a weed! He is playful

chairs in the front sunroom, the couch with

stuffed animal dog Lucy, and anywhere big

Booker is my fourth Tree House cat, so I knew

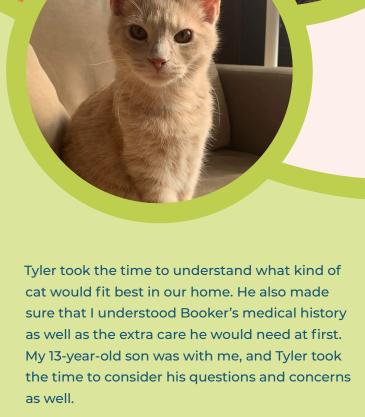
counselor, and he was wonderful!

what to expect coming in. Tyler was my adoption

and curious with a wonderfully rumbly purr. He integrated smoothly and very quickly with our three resident cats. His favorite spots are the

new addition!

brother Jupiter is.



I love Tree House and am so proud to support the work you do!"

Special thanks to all the people who made Booker's story possible: from donors like you, Tree House medical and shelter staff, to our transfer partners, to our friends at BluePearl, and to adopters like Gabrielle!

#### THE VWC: ONE YEAR LATER

By Alina Dain, Clinic Assistant

On July 21, 2021, Enedelia Ocampo's dog Kay was diagnosed with pyometra, a dangerous and life-threatening infection that was prohibitively expensive to treat at every clinic they found. The next day, they found Tree House. "Tree House got in contact and scheduled our little one that same day. Our family is thankful and we will forever be grateful. Thank You, Tree House, for saving our furry baby."

For many in our community, lack of access and the prohibitive costs of veterinary care can be a major factor in rehoming or relinquishing pets. There is a need for organizations that support people and their animals, and providing affordable access to services such as spay/neuter, vaccinations and preventative care can be a key way of keeping pets in their loving homes. At Tree House, we dreamed of being that organization.

On April 10, 2021, staff, donors, community members, and press gathered in the Tree House parking lot to

bring that dream to life and open the Tree House Veterinary Wellness Center (VWC). Nearly a year later, the VWC has helped more than 4,000 animals with life-saving surgeries, wellness services, and vaccinations. Our clinic has become an invaluable resource for so many pets and their families to get the wellness and preventative care they need.

What started as a dream to provide more community-centered veterinary care has taken several years to make a reality- and is now an essential part of Tree House's identity and mission. The VWC provides important wellness care at reduced cost compared to private veterinary clinics. Together, we have lowered the barrier to access for many pet owners and caretakers, allowing them to provide their fur babies the necessary care to keep them happy, healthy, and thriving.

Outside of the impact on pets and their owners, opening the VWC has allowed Tree House to greatly increase its TNR (Trap, Neuter, Return) services to the community. Over 15% of the VWC's spay/ neuter surgeries in 2021 were community cats brought in by the public. VWC manager Cortney Moore takes great pride in helping community cats.

"Personally, TNR is one of my favorite things about this line of work, especially when we see an entire





colony come in together!" she shared. "Through sterilization and vaccination, we are promoting colony health, decreasing aggression and disease among them, while also preventing new outdoor births during harsh climates." She encourages anyone that has outdoor cats living around them to give the VWC a call – the team is always happy to answer questions and provide resources to help community cats live their best lives.

In the past year, the VWC team has also been able to organize two pop-up vaccine clinics in the South Shore neighborhood. Hundreds of folks and their cats and dogs showed up for free vaccinations and microchips, allowing people to access preventative veterinary care that is often difficult to find in their surrounding areas. Dr. Jesse Navatta, the VWC's veterinarian, looks forward to continuing to do this type of outreach, as well as expanding the services they provide and the neighborhoods they serve. "By hosting these pop-ups as a routine/ regular event, we are addressing the main barriers to veterinary care -- transportation and cost. This is the whole idea of accessible care."

Dr. Navatta also looks forward to the VWC being able to continuously evolve to meet the needs of pets and people in our community. This includes expanding its services in ways that will have the greatest impact, but are also sustainable. He hopes to expand the understanding that community impact is not always directly correlated with surgical numbers, but rather with the way in which we serve the pets and humans of our community.

With so much being accomplished just in its first year, we are all eager to see how the VWC continues to grow! In its sophomore year, it will positively impact thousands more lives, reaching cats, dogs, and people not just on the North side, but on the South and West sides as well. It is all thanks to the hard work and dedication of its staff, the support of the clients, leadership and donors, and, of course, the love of animals. Here's to another year where every pet and family thrives!

#### **→MEET TREE HOUSE**

#### Don Souhrada

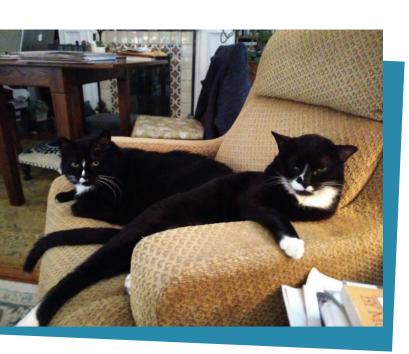
Board Member & Co-Chair of the Financial Resilience Board Committee

# TELL US ABOUT YOUR LIFE AND YOUR CATS!

I grew up in large family—I'm the youngest of six kids—so we had plenty going on in our house. My mom is very allergic to animals and especially cats, so we never had any pets, but I always enjoyed spending time with my friends' pets. It wasn't until I got married to my wife, Jenny Thompson, that I lived with animals. Three beautiful cats, Patty, Basker, and Homer came with the marriage.

Over the years, we've adopted seven more cats, four of which are still with us. We adopted our most recent addition—Chesterton—from Tree House where he was known as Sasquatch.

I have worked as a fundraising professional ever since working at the University of Iowa Foundation as a student. I've served in various fundraising positions in higher education in Indiana and Maryland. What brought me to Chicago in 2001 was an opportunity to run my fraternity's foundation in Evanston. Since then, I returned to high education fundraising and health care fundraising before



joining a fundraising consulting firm, Ter Molen Watkins & Brandt (TW&B). I'm now the owner with a great team of consultants. We provide fundraising and campaign services to a wide variety of non-profit organizations.

### HOW DID YOU FIRST LEARN ABOUT AND GET INVOLVED WITH TREE HOUSE?

Many years ago, Jenny and I began volunteering at Furry Friends in Bucktown. While Furry Friends had cats and dogs, we worked exclusively with cats. We would take a weekly shift to clean the beds, wash out the litter boxes, and socialize the cats. We adopted two of our cats there. It was a rewarding experience, but Furry Friends eventually needed new leadership and Tree House stepped in and acquired the property.

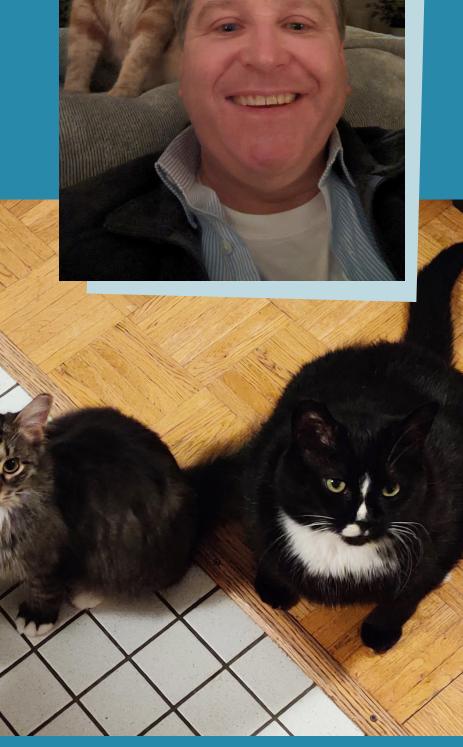
It was through TW&B that I met Tree House Executive Director Raissa Allaire. At the time, she was working for a former client. Raissa and I had the opportunity to get to know each other prior to her accepting the Tree House position. Shortly after she joined Tree House, Raissa invited me to consider joining the board.

Serving on the Tree House board is my first volunteer leadership experience with a non-profit organization. It has given me a better perspective on non-profit management. Serving Tree House as a board member while witnessing Raissa's excellent leadership has had a positive impact on the way I can serve my clients.

Having celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, Tree House has achieved staying power. With that stability and continuity, I appreciate that Tree House has become a humane society that contributes to the animal welfare space for the greater good. When I mention my involvement with Tree House to other professionals in animal welfare, the response is always positive, and I couldn't be more proud of my association with Tree House.

66

Having celebrated its 50th anniversary last year, Tree House has achieved staying power. With that stability and continuity, I appreciate that Tree House has become a humane society that contributes to the animal welfare space for the greater good."



Don's cats Socks, Finnegan, and Panda eagerly await dinner. Above: Don with TH alum Chesterton.

# 2021 OUR IMPACT

3,299

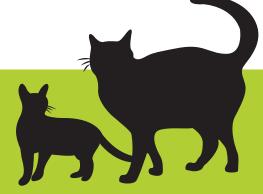
**Community cats** cared for

1,092

Adoptions and placements (a 20% increase over 2020)

**692** 

TNR surgeries performed



851

Community cat colonies

4,373 1,149

Animals helped at our new Veterinary Wellness Center 98%

Live release rate (a 1% increase over 2020)

Pet wellness

appointments

27 days

Length of Stay (improvement of 4 days over 2020) 4,645

Volunteer hours contributed

3,467

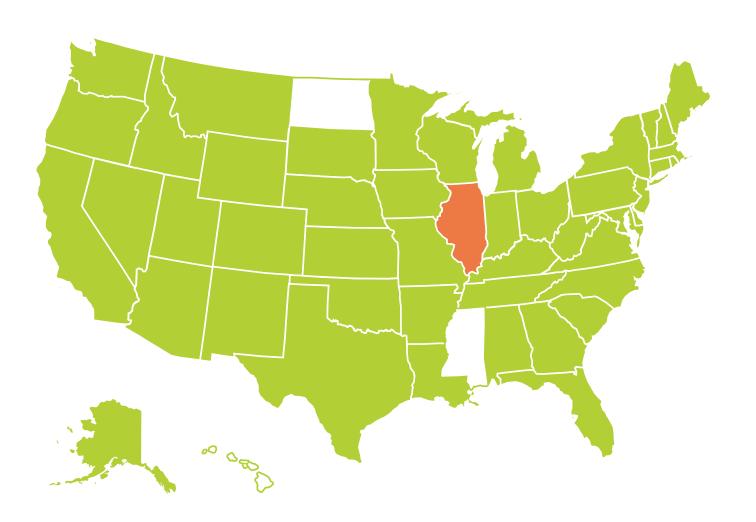
Life-saving surgeries (573% increase over 2020) 362

Cats fostered









#### = ASK THE EXPERT =

### By Dr. Emma Klein, DVM

**DIRECTOR. VETERINARY SERVICES** 



#### What vaccines do my cats and dogs need?

The main vaccines we recommend for cats are FVRCP (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calici, and panleukopenia) and rabies. The American Association of Feline Practitioners also recommends the FeLV (feline leukemia virus) vaccine for owned cats under 1 year of age.

For dogs, the core vaccines are rabies and DA2PP (distemper, adenovirus-2, parvovirus, and parainfluenza). Other "non-core" vaccines are recommended based on lifestyle. These include leptospirosis, bordetella, canine influenza, and Lyme vaccines.



#### What diseases do the vaccines prevent?

The rabies vaccine protects pets and people from this fatal neurologic disease. It is spread via bite wounds and is legally required in most states as a public health eradication effort.

The FVRCP vaccine protects cats from three viruses. It covers common respiratory pathogens; causing cold-like symptoms, oral or ocular ulcerations and sometimes pneumonia. It also prevents panleukopenia, a highly contagious virus that weakens the immune system and causes severe or fatal illness. Symptoms include appetite loss, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, and sudden death.

The canine DA2PP vaccine also provides multi-viral protection. Distemper is an often fatal disease of the nervous system and other organs, including the liver and gut. Adenovirus-2 causes hepatitis, a disease of the liver. It can also affect the eyes and severity ranges from mild to fatal. Parvovirus is a highly contagious and devastating disease, similar to the feline panleukopenia virus. Parainfluenza causes coughing and cold-like symptoms.

Leptospirosis causes liver and kidney failure. It is spread in the urine of wildlife, including rodents. Dogs become infected after drinking contaminated water. This vaccine is increasingly recommended as leptospirosis becomes more widespread.



Bordetella is commonly referred to as "kennel cough" and the canine influenza vaccine prevents flu. Both are recommended with boarding, grooming or visits to dog parks.

The Lyme vaccine, used in conjunction with tick prevention, is a helpful preventative measure against tick-borne Lyme disease. Geographical location may influence its recommendation.



### What can I do to keep my pet healthy other than vaccines?

So much! Provide a balanced diet and constant access to fresh water. Follow feeding guidelines to prevent obesity.

Regular exercise will keep your pets lean, their joints mobile, and their days fulfilled. Physical activity and enrichment, such as routine play times, are needed to keep your pet happy and to prevent boredom or behavioral problems.

Especially for long-haired pets, keep up with grooming needs. This is so important for their comfort. Whether it's regular trips to the groomer or a daily brushing routine, your pet will thank you!

You can and should brush your pet's teeth! Use a pet-safe toothpaste and soft toothbrush to gradually establish a routine before dental disease sets in. Dental disease is painful and costly to treat.

Lastly, keep up with regular veterinary exams, provide parasite prevention and spay/neuter!

#### = THIS YEAR'S EVENTS =



# A summer-festival, cat-inspired pub crawl

Cat Walk grows beyond its beer roots! Our historically sold-out event returns and brings animal lovers of all kinds together for a community celebration at partner bars and restaurants in Ravenswood and Andersonville. Featuring live music, drink specials, and Tree House activations throughout the community, our summer festival is set to break records in 2022.



**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27** 

# An immersive, masquerade night with Insta-meowments

Plunge into the roaring 20s with Tree House! Cat'baret goes vaudeville, bringing the golden age of performance and style to life. Join Team Tree House for a dazzling night out featuring live performances, custom food and drink recipes, and so much more.



# A wonderland for cat lovers of all ages

Come sing a song and stroll along to Tree House for our annual holiday event for all ages! This long-standing tradition gets us all into the spirit as we invite our neighbors and community into our shelter for an evening of joy. Decorate our tree, see the lights, carol with the cats, and build the best hot cocoa as we come together in the spirit of cheer, light, and love.





7225 N. WESTERN AVE. 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