

SUMMER 2024



TREE HOUSE
HUMANE SOCIETY

THE CATalyst

TREEHOUSEANIMALS.ORG

A vibrant, textured painting on a light blue background. In the center, a black cat is captured mid-jump, its body arched and paws extended. Below it, a white cat with a pink nose sits on a thick, brown tree branch, looking up. The scene is framed by green foliage on the left and right, and a bright yellow sun is in the upper right. The bottom of the painting shows a green grassy field.

Future Forward

Meet the artist and cat mom on page 9

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Future
Forward



THE CATalyst

Tree House Humane Society Magazine
Summer 2024

EDITOR:
Katie Jordan

CONTRIBUTORS:
Lee Clinton
Annie LeDuc
Viviana Foran
Thomas Gumbel
Hana Rafee
Sarah Vetrano

SPECIAL THANKS:
Sarah Sutphin
Amy Johnson

DESIGN:
Lauren Monaco



@TreeHouseHumaneSociety



@TreeHouseCats

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



SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2024
FROM 11 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

HOSTED AT ARTIFACT EVENTS
4325 North Ravenswood Avenue, Chicago, IL

TICKETS

\$250
General admission ticket

\$500 VIC
Ticket includes VIC swag and an honorable mention in our post-event communication

RSVP by October 6, 2024 at
treehouseanimals.org/citykittysoiree

City Kitty Soirée is a can't-miss event for cat lovers! Our new annual celebration will honor our community's lifesaving efforts and generous support. With this year's theme, "All You Need Is Love," we are inspired by the timeless message of the Beatles and the power of love and compassion in ensuring every cat thrives.

For information on accessibility and transportation, and our program visit
treehouseanimals.org/events/citykittysoiree

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Tree House Friends,

Reflecting on this past year at Tree House Humane Society, it's clear that our success is due to the unwavering support from our community. This edition of our magazine celebrates the people who fuel our mission every day.

We are thrilled to introduce our new board officers, whose passion and expertise will guide Tree House into a future brimming with hope and compassion. We are fortunate to have a board composed of leaders who combine mission-driven dedication with sharp business acumen and an innovative spirit. Their leadership is essential as we innovate and expand, ensuring every cat in our care thrives.

Community-Driven Success

Thanks to your generosity, we've celebrated remarkable milestones, from successful adoption events to groundbreaking initiatives. The tireless efforts of our volunteers, like the fospice caregiver who comforted Linda, a senior cat, exemplify the compassion that defines Tree House.

Spotlight on Midnight

In this issue, we highlight Midnight, a resilient cat who's been with us far too long. His story is a poignant reminder of the impact we can make together. Spread the word and help find Midnight the loving home he deserves.

Our Dedicated Staff

Our staff members are the heart of Tree House. This year, we honor those who have set new standards in animal care and community outreach. Their creativity and commitment ensure we lead the way in humane solutions.



A Fresh Look

We're excited to unveil the new look of our store, a vibrant space that reflects our dedication to excellence and our love for the cats we serve. It's more than a store; it's a place where stories begin and lives change.

Celebrating Our Adopters

We also celebrate adopters like the painter who found inspiration in the companionship of a Tree House cat. Their stories remind us of the endless joy and creativity the human-animal bond brings.

Thank you for being an integral part of our community. Your support enables us to dream big, work tirelessly, and make a lasting impact. Together, we are Tree House, and together, we will continue to make a difference, one life at a time.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Raissa Allaire, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2022-23 IMPACT

HEALTHY PETS, HEALTHY FAMILIES,
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

REHOMING

1,925

cat adoptions +
placements

Resulting in...

**\$1.7M returned to
local economy**

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



Boosts in mental health

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

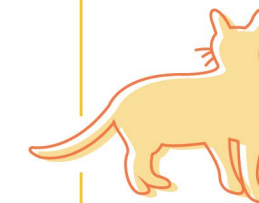


98%

Live Release Rate

35 days

Average Length of Stay



PREVENTION & RETENTION



TREE HOUSE
VETERINARY WELLNESS CENTER

12,900+

animals served

70% cats
36% first-time vet visit



8,900+
spays/neuters

4,480+
wellness services

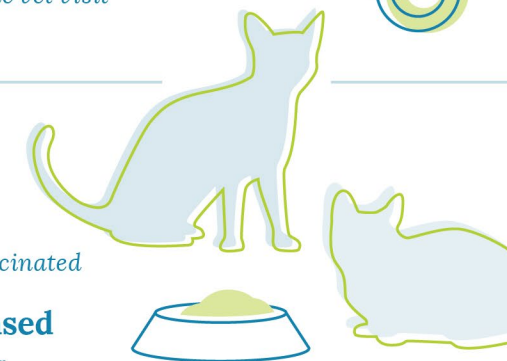
6,500+
families helped

2,900+

community cats
cared for

And 1,300+ community cats spayed/neutered and vaccinated

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



13,400+

pounds of pet food
distributed
(value: \$21,300+)

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 \$208,000 in discounted vet services
were provided to families and communities in need.**

40,000+
volunteer &
foster hours

5,100+
donors

11,200+
customers

93%
Customer
Happiness Score

54,700+
customer conversations
(36% increase over 2021)

RECOGNIZING EXCEPTIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS

By Lee Clinton

Rookie of the Year: Katie Jordan and Hana Raffee

Katie Jordan and Hana Raffee, with support from intern Annie LeDuc, revitalized Tree House's marketing efforts, making a remarkable impact as the Rookie Marketing Team of the Year. Katie's leadership brought a fresh perspective to our marketing strategies. Her blend of artistic vision and data-driven decisions has optimized our outreach efforts. Hana's engaging content creation showcases our programs and adoptable cats brilliantly. Together, their innovative mindset and proactive contributions have significantly enhanced Tree House's visibility and community engagement.



At Tree House, dedication to animal welfare and community engagement shines through the exemplary efforts of its team members.

This year, we proudly highlight the winners of our distinguished Tree House Spirit Award: Erin Mayes, Katie Jordan, Hana Raffee, Bailey Cassidy, and MJ Jones. Their innovative contributions have not only enhanced our programs but also strengthened our mission to provide loving homes for cats.

Ripple Effect: Bailey Cassidy

Bailey Cassidy's dedication to continuous improvement has created a ripple effect throughout Tree House. Her cross-training initiatives have empowered colleagues, fostering a well-rounded and reliable team. Her flexibility in assisting various departments and her long-term commitment have yielded tangible, organization-wide results. Bailey's positive influence is reflected in glowing feedback from volunteers and customers. Her organized and reliable presence as a lead trainer has been invaluable to our volunteer program.



Dare to Try: Erin Mayes

Erin Mayes embodies innovation through her transformative work in enhancing Tree House's behavior program. Her deep expertise in feline behavior led to the creation of a robust infrastructure to train staff and volunteers in socializing cats and preparing them for adoption. Erin's creativity and dedication have significantly improved adoption matching and post-adoption support. Her comprehensive behavior resources have been invaluable, guiding our community of caregivers and empowering them to overcome obstacles. Erin's commitment to exploring new approaches has driven positive changes, benefiting cats, adopters, and staff alike.

Service Leader: Erin Mayes

Erin Mayes' exceptional service and dedication have earned her the Service Leader award. Her comprehensive behavior support resources, including population notes and enrichment cards, have equipped our teams to provide consistent, high-quality care for cats. Erin's guidance has been crucial in successful matchmaking, reducing returns, and providing post-adoption counseling. Her involvement in educational and public initiatives has extended Tree House's impact within the community. Erin's unwavering commitment to serving caregivers across all touchpoints exemplifies the qualities of a true Service Leader.



Big Bang: MJ Jones

MJ Jones' innovative approach has revolutionized Tree House's adoption program, making them a deserving recipient of the Big Bang award. MJ's creativity shines through in the adorable kennel cards and stunning photographs that capture each cat's personality. Their empathy, organization, and volunteer coaching have facilitated successful placements and a positive adoption experience. MJ's hard work and dedication have led to numerous loving homes for our cats, elevating the entire adoption program.



These remarkable individuals have made significant contributions to Tree House, each bringing their unique strengths to enhance our mission. We celebrate their achievements and look forward to their continued impact on our community and the cats we serve.

COMMUNITY CATS ON THE BIG SCREEN

By Viviana Foran



Cat City, directed by Ben Kolak, is a multidimensional documentary with intimate testimonials from animal welfare and conservationist communities.

The film highlights the discussion surrounding outdoor cat populations in Chicago and the efforts in place by organizations, like Tree House Humane Society, to manage and maintain them. In April, Tree House co-hosted the sold-out premiere of Cat City with Truth & Documentary with donors, volunteers, and friends of the shelter in attendance. Cat City was also featured on PBS and played in theaters and festivals across Chicago.

Cat City introduces community cats in Chicago as both a problem and a solution. Still, for many community members, they are so much more than neighborhood fixtures. Efforts to care for these animals go above and beyond simply setting out food and water daily; they provide purpose and fulfillment for many members of the community.

Cats and cat people share an understanding, a sort of unspoken bond. Boundaries are important to cats, and those who care for the thousands of community cats in Chicago know that patience and persistence are key. For local animal welfare organizations with the resources to help, gaining the trust of existing community caretakers through intentional outreach efforts in key neighborhoods like Humboldt Park and Rogers Park is crucial for effective Trap, Neuter, Return (TNR) programs.

Trap, Neuter, Return is a fairly self-explanatory system – outdoor cats are trapped by community members and brought to clinics like the Tree House Veterinary Wellness Center, where they are spayed or neutered, vaccinated, microchipped, and given a signature ear tip to signify their status as a “community cat.” The cats are then returned to the exact location

where they were trapped. These strategic placements allow cats to continue thriving in an area they call home while having a licensed caretaker in their corner should illness, injury, or severe weather threaten the cats’ safety. TNR programs are important in helping to reduce overpopulation in outdoor cat communities, keeping the animals safe and healthy.

As Chicago’s community cat population continues to grow, Tree House is actively discussing the sustainability of outdoor cat populations with wildlife experts at Chicago’s Lincoln Park Zoo. Caring for outdoor cats is a community effort, and Tree House is dedicated to the future sustainability of its TNR program. Through collaboration and open dialogue, all parties can create a safe environment where every cat can thrive.



PAINTING THE PERFECT CAT DUO

By Hana Rafee



Meet Sarah Sutphin, a local Chicago artist and devoted cat mom. Sarah, an ardent supporter of local animal rescues, discovered Tree House Humane Society through Instagram. Living in Edgewater for eight years, she was thrilled to find a shelter so close to her home.

When it was time for Sarah and her partner to expand their family, the choice was clear—they would adopt from Tree House. Last year, they welcomed sweet and playful Daisy into their home. Daisy instantly bonded with their 17-year-old resident cat, Salvador, becoming his playmate and hairdresser. Daisy loves to chase and wrestle with her big brother, yet she also has a nurturing side, often cuddling and grooming Salvador.

Daisy is a cat worth getting to know. Though initially timid around new people, she becomes affectionate once she warms up. We can only imagine her confidence as she scampers around with Salvador while Sarah pulls out a new canvas and squeezes paint out of the tube onto the palette.



MEET LOCAL ARTIST: SARAH SUTPHIN

By Hana Rafee

Sarah Sutphin is renowned for her impasto technique, drawing endless inspiration from the world around her, especially her beloved cats, Salvador and Tree House alumna, Daisy. This connection is not unique to Sarah; icons like Pablo Picasso, Andy Warhol, and Frida Kahlo also shared a profound affection for their feline companions, proving that the bond between artists and cats transcends time.

With over fifteen years of painting experience, Sarah Sutphin embarked on her full-time artistic endeavors in 2021. When reflecting on her artwork, Sarah describes it as “somewhat abstract, exploring texture and color,” reflecting her deep appreciation for natural beauty. Typically crafted with oil and acrylic paints, her pieces are imbued with earthy and floral hues, creating a serene and captivating visual experience.



Although Sarah primarily sells her pieces online on Etsy, you can also find her showcasing her vibrant artwork at various Chicago festivals during the summertime. Her presence at these events adds a personal touch to her artistic journey, allowing her to connect directly with her audience.

To keep up with Sarah Sutphin’s latest creations and artistic endeavors, follow her on Instagram @_meltingflower.

Note to Artists: If you would like to collaborate with Tree House for future projects, please send an email to marketing@treehouseanimals.org

— A DIFFERENT KIND OF HAPPY ENDING TAIL —

By Hana Rafee

Linda, a beloved senior Tree House cat, was patiently waiting for an adopter when we discovered the heartbreaking news of cancerous masses in her ear canals.



What happened to Linda after her diagnosis? She remained with Tree House, but her situation had changed drastically. Linda went to live out her days with foster volunteer, Amy Johnson, alongside fellow Tree House alumna, Teeny Tina. Though Linda was no longer available for adoption, the commitment of volunteers like Amy ensured she experienced comfort and care, even in such challenging times.

At Tree House, the term “adoptable cat” implies some cats are not up for adoption. This status is usually temporary, as most cats become adoptable after medical or behavioral treatments. However, cats like Linda, with a poor prognosis requiring palliative care, spend their twilight days in a foster hospice home—also known as “fospice.”

Most perceive foster care as a temporary place for cats to crash until they are ready for adoption. Our fospice cats disprove this notion. Fostering a hospice cat means playing a crucial role in their end-of-life care, which can be unpredictable. The process, however, is rewarding, according to fospice volunteer, Amy.

Amy is a boutique gym manager by day, a classical singer by night, and a Tree House foster volunteer every moment in between. When their beloved Tree House

cat, Miso, passed away in late 2022 from heart complications, a friend recommended fostering as a short-term commitment to bridge the gap between pet loss and grief. Living alone, Amy welcomed the company of their first foster cats, Jack and Bullhorn, in early 2023. Jack passed away several months later from feline leukemia complications, held in Amy’s comforting arms.

When asked to foster Linda as a hospice cat, Amy knew they were up for the task. Fospice care requires a heightened awareness of changes in the cat’s health to ensure they are comfortable and happy until their time comes. Our fospice volunteers hold a very special place in our hearts: giving peace to these kitties, helping us provide the best quality of life, and—at the end of their days—sending them on with dignity and love as they pass over the Rainbow Bridge. Linda joined Amy and resident cat Teeny Tina in March, and lived comfortably and happily, receiving all the snuggles and playtime she could hope for.

A few months later, in early July, Linda peacefully crossed the Rainbow Bridge. We are grateful to the dedication of our team, including our volunteers, who ensured that Linda’s Happy Ending, although bittersweet, was serene and full of love.

Are you feeling inspired by this story? Join our team of dedicated foster volunteers today and open your heart and home to a cat in need. Email foster@treehouseanimals.org to get started.



AI AND ITS POTENTIAL TO REVOLUTIONIZE ANIMAL WELFARE

By Thomas Gumbel

According to Brian Rivera, Director of Technology and Administration at Tree House Humane Society, “Artificial Intelligence (AI) is really a companion for you as you do your job... an interactive assistant that always wants to give you the best information it can possibly provide at any given moment in time.” By integrating AI-powered productivity tools, Tree House Humane Society is streamlining operations and empowering staff to focus on what truly matters – hands-on animal and people care.

Rivera presented on AI's potential in animal welfare at the industry's largest conference, The Humane Society of the United States' 2024 Animal Care Expo in San Antonio, Texas. At the seminar, he showcased a practical application to streamline voicemails and return calls. In the past, staff spent two to three minutes per call, leading to a backlog of voicemails and endless rounds of phone tag. Now, OpenAI's Whisper transcribes each voicemail, so ChatGPT can create



summaries, sentiment analysis, and suggested responses. The generated reports are then sent to staff inboxes. To protect our staff and customers, Tree House ensures the data is restricted, preventing OpenAI from using voicemails and replies for training models. This system has significantly reduced the cost associated with staff time, allowing for better customer care.

Rivera hopes to use AI to develop dynamic training modules for staff, simulating real-life scenarios such as difficult conversations or emergencies. These adaptive and interactive scenarios will ensure that staff are well-prepared, avoid the inauthentic voice of a scripted scenario, and reduce taking up valuable time.

At Tree House, AI is revolutionizing our operations across various departments. Our staff utilizes AI to efficiently prepare invoices and bills for payments, streamlining our financial processes. In the development sector,

Thoughtful AI integration can streamline operations and reduce administrative busywork, freeing more time for hands-on animal and people care.

predictive fundraising powered by AI helps us identify potential donors and optimize our fundraising strategies. Additionally, AI assists in content generation for our social media marketing, ensuring that our outreach remains engaging and relevant. By creating templates for storytelling, AI enhances our ability to share impactful stories about our mission and the animals we care for, fostering a deeper connection with our community.

Thoughtful AI integration can streamline operations and reduce administrative busywork, freeing more time for hands-on animal and people care. We hope that Tree House's approach to AI, guided by principles of transparency and human supervision, serves as a model for other shelters.



Artificial Intelligence (AI) is really a companion for you as you do your job... an interactive assistant that always wants to give you the best information it can possibly provide at any given moment in time.”

BRIAN RIVERA

*Director of Technology and Administration
at Tree House Humane Society*

NEW BOARD LEADERSHIP TEAM AT TREE HOUSE

By Annie LeDuc



JILLIANN SMITH steps up as President after serving as a board member for three years. A self-described “Jill-of-all-trades,” she is a marketing communications leader with over 20 years of experience working with top companies, including Merrick Pet Care. Her work in the pet food industry connected Jillian with Tree House, igniting an eagerness to get involved. “I strongly believe every pet should have access to quality veterinary care, and it is exciting to see the amazing work our team is doing to serve this long-term need in Chicago,” she says, having led the board committee focused on this goal. With such a bright future ahead, Jillian acknowledges the importance of sustainability in the continued growth of Tree House, “for our team, our resources, and the animals we serve.”

Last year, Jillian and her family welcomed a sweet rescue pup, Rose, into their home. While their home does not (yet) include cats, Jillian’s family gets their “feline fix from the neighbor’s cat, Nori, or the Tree House community cat in Lakeview East.”



PAUL LEGAC takes on the board officer role of Vice President and Secretary. Paul is an Executive Director in the Tax Oriented Investment group at JP Morgan, evaluating new clean energy projects for financing while supporting an existing portfolio of energy assets. “I hope my ability to listen to all sides of a conversation and come up with a mutually agreeable path forward will help Tree House fulfill its strategic plan,” says Paul of his decade-long career in renewable energy and four years of serving as a Tree House board member. Paul’s relationship with Tree House extends beyond his work on the board. He and his wife, Alison, adopted Cardamom and Clove a year ago, naming the brother-sister duo after the couple’s late cat, Chai. Paul believes supporters can look forward to more innovative ways to support cats, “such as the recently implemented walk-in adoptions and continued pop-up vaccine clinics around Chicagoland.”



CODY ENGLAND renews his term as Treasurer. Currently working for Baird as a member of the Technology and Service Group, Cody has spent his career providing analytics and strategic support on various financial advisory services. “I have spent the lionshare of my career helping to steward businesses through their most pivotal moments,” says Cody. “When I joined Tree House over four years ago, they were amid their own pivotal journey to open the Veterinary Wellness Center, and it’s been great to serve as a resource to staff and leadership throughout the process.”

Strengthening access to quality veterinary care for pets across Chicagoland continues to be a top-of-mind goal for Cody and the board. “We realize that unique approaches must be taken to ensure every cat thrives.” Cody has his Persian cat, Augustus, to thank for keeping his home full of spirit. “You never know what to expect from cats, and that is what makes them more like friends than pets.”

Three dedicated members have stepped into new leadership roles at Tree House, ready to steer the organization toward new heights.



From left to right: Cody and his wife Morgan, his son Warren, and their family cat Augustus, Jillian and her husband Sean, her daughter Maggie, and their dog Rose, Paul and his wife Alison and their cats Clove and Cardamom



WHAT'S IN STORE

By Viviana Foran

The Tree House Store is now online!

Whether you're looking for gifts for your cat or yourself, we've got you covered! From cat toys, beds, and bowls to enrichment items and Tree House merchandise, everything is just a click away. Explore our handpicked selection of Tree House merchandise under the Shop tab on our website.

Don't miss our best sellers collection, featuring top picks loved by fellow cat enthusiasts!

Every purchase you make is a step towards making a difference in the lives of sick, injured, and stray felines.

Shop now at store.treehouseanimals.org



500 DAYS OF MIDNIGHT

By Midnight (and Sarah Vetrano)

Greetings to all my current and future subscribers! Are you new to the Midnight Fan Club? Allow me to fill you in on my story. At six years old, I have spent roughly 500 days at Tree House. As a staff and volunteer favorite, it's time the world got to know me, and no human can evade my charisma, uniqueness, nerve, and talent.

I was first adopted from Tree House as a kitten. I returned a few years later due to my owners' lifestyle changes, and that was hard on me. I showed my nerve a few times, but after a lot of patience and love, my personality began to shine. My "rizz" really came out when I started involving volunteers in my grooming sessions. My soft and silky fur needs a good brushing, which also happens to be one of my favorite pastimes. And this isn't one-sided. I've been known to style hair at no cost... or request. I'm just a generous guy.

The team at Tree House learned that I thrive on routine and affection. During warm, sunny days, I can be found on my catio communing with local wildlife. During the chillier months, I have a unique interest in blankie forts and the softest fleece. They also learned I have a talent for catching bubbles and a Nerf Disc Blaster!

If you have a steady schedule, an infinite supply of treats, a little patience, and a whole lot of love to give, take a chance on me! I might even wear my sunflower hat for you.





TREE HOUSE

HUMANE SOCIETY

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

