



TREE HOUSE
HUMANE SOCIETY

WINTER 2025

THE CATalyst

TREEHOUSEANIMALS.ORG

Reimagine the Future for Cats



THE CATalyst

Tree House Humane Society Magazine
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EDITOR:

Katie Jordan

CONTRIBUTORS:

Annie LeDuc
Lee Clinton
Danielle Gantos
Samantha Alspaugh
Marne Turner
Hana Rafee
Franco La Marca
Caitlin Greener


SPECIAL THANKS:

Ginger Dusek
Dr. Laura Frazier

DESIGN:

Lauren Monaco

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

 7225 N. Western Ave.
Chicago, IL 60645

 773-262-4000

 [TreeHouseAnimals.org](https://www.treehouseanimals.org)

 Info@TreeHouseAnimals.org

   @TreeHouseHumaneSociety

 @TreeHouseCats

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VISION: Every Cat Thrives

MISSION: We empower communities of caregivers to protect, nurture, and support new solutions so no cat suffers.

Notice these little QR codes throughout the issue?

These are links to extra content, videos, pictures, and more that you can explore on your phone! Position the camera over the code and wait for a tapable link to appear. Then, test it out with the subscribe link below!



treehouseanimals.org/sign-up
Get a monthly dose of cat goodness and more when you subscribe.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of Tree House,

2024 has been the kind of year that reminds me why I fell in love with this work in the first place. Every day at Tree House is a mix of strategy, problem-solving, and a little chaos, but what keeps me grounded are the moments of connection—between cats and people, between neighbors, and between all of us who believe in a better future for every feline and the people who love them.

This year, Midnight, one of our longest residents, finally found his perfect home after over 500 days with us. Canary and Cardinal, two senior cats with a rough start, thrived in foster care and reminded us of the power of a second chance. Tree House played a leading role in Super Adoption Saturday as one of its main planners, helping to bring together 18 shelters for this transformative event. We also hosted our first-ever mobile spay/neuter clinic on Chicago's South Side—both powerful examples of what's possible when organizations collaborate to serve the community.

Tree House is built on these moments, but they're only possible because of you. Your generosity fuels programs like foster workshops, which empower volunteers to save lives, and events like the Beatles-themed City Kitty Soirée, which raised resources for our mission. From donors like Ginger, who turned her love for Paddington into a lasting legacy, to volunteers building outdoor shelters, you've proven that when we work together, we can accomplish extraordinary things.



As we look to 2025, I'm focused on making Tree House even more effective—removing barriers to care, extending our reach, and creating more ways for cats and their families to thrive. Together, we can create more corners of love, more moments of calm, harmony, and yes, even a little chaos. Because that's what it means to thrive.

Thank you for walking this journey with us. Your trust and support mean everything. Together, we're not just helping cats survive—we're helping them thrive.

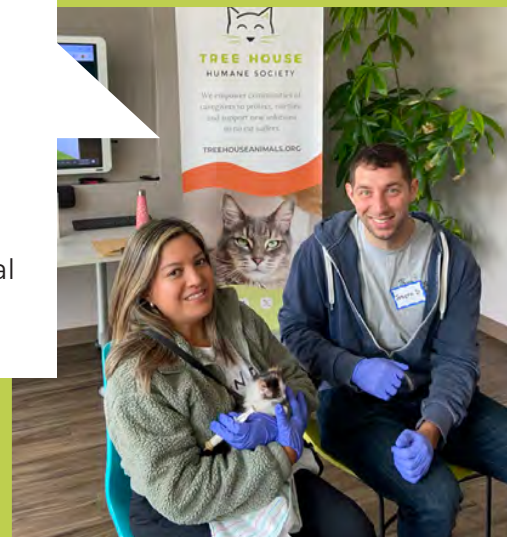
With gratitude and optimism,

Raissa Allaire, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A YEAR IN FRAMES: 2024

Empowering Volunteers through Workshops

This year, we hosted four impactful workshops for our amazing foster volunteers. Training included hands-on neonatal kitten care and a virtual feline behavior training series.



Better Together

We welcomed numerous volunteer groups who supported us with essential tasks like landscaping, building outdoor cat shelters, and decorating our shelter for the holidays. Together, we're creating a brighter future for cats and communities alike.



Tree House Leadership Shines

Our team made their mark at top animal welfare conferences!

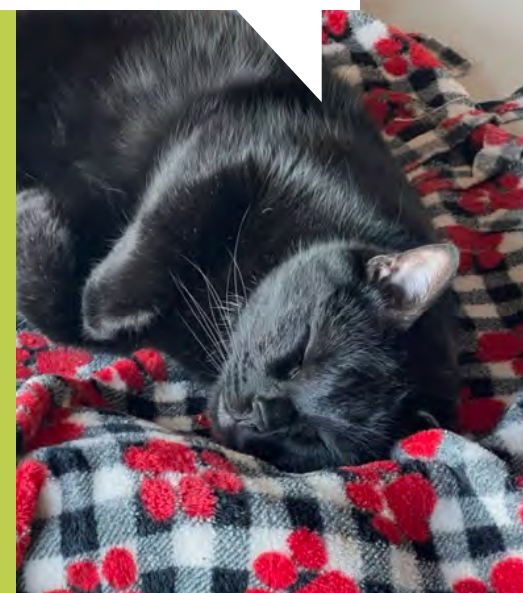
BRIAN RIVERA co-presented on AI in Animal Welfare at the HSUS Animal Care Expo, the largest animal welfare conference.

RAISSA ALLAIRE presented on collaboration and coalition building at the Prairie States Conference and moderated panels on emerging leaders and access to care at the Association for Animal Welfare Advancement's midyear training and annual conference.

CECILIA OCAMPO-SOLIS shared her expertise on community cats at the Prairie States Conference.

Long Stay Success

After more than 500 days in our care, Midnight finally found his Happy Ending Tail! He's now thriving with a family that includes two pawrents and five fellow feline companions.



Super Adoption Saturday Success

What a day! Super Adoption Saturday saw 293 animals adopted into loving homes, thanks to an incredible collaboration among 18 local shelters. We proudly found homes for 21 of our cats and kittens, with adoption fees reduced or waived.



Cute cats, dogs and critters here



City Kitty Soirée

Together, we raised nearly \$60,000 at our Beatles-themed brunch fundraiser, City Kitty Soirée. It was a groovy good time celebrating the human-animal bond at Artifact Events in Ravenswood.



Meet Brooke and Scamper



Here's to more love, milestones, and memories in 2025! ❤️

FOR COMMUNITY, BY COMMUNITY: PARTNERSHIPS BRING MOBILE SPAY/NEUTER CLINIC TO CHICAGO'S SOUTH SIDE

By Annie LeDuc



Since the Veterinary Wellness Center opened in 2021, Tree House has extended its accessible veterinary services initiatives beyond the clinic doors with community pop-ups.

These events are designed to remove barriers to veterinary care in specific, under-resourced communities in Chicago's Humboldt Park, South Shore, and Roger's Park neighborhoods. After several years of community pop-ups and providing free vaccination and microchip services to neighborhoods across the city, the need to bring low-cost spay/neuter procedures to communities lacking established vet clinics became undeniable.

Community programming teams from Tree House and One Tail at a Time, a fellow Chicagoland Humane Coalition member, reached out to pet owners who had previously attended free vaccination pop-ups and had expressed an urgent interest in a low-cost spay/neuter surgery opportunity.

In November 2024, Tree House hosted its first-ever mobile spay/neuter pop-up clinic, made possible through the collaborative efforts of several community organizations. The Gyrls in the H.O.O.D. Foundation, based on Chicago's

South Side, generously provided space, volunteer support, and equipment for the event. Meanwhile, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's College of Veterinary Medicine Community Medicine Program supplied the mobile clinic and skilled veterinary team to perform the surgeries.

In its pilot event, the spay/neuter pop-up served 32 pets, including 8 dogs and 24 cats. The mobile surgery suite, provided by UIUC's College of Veterinary Medicine, included three surgical tables equipped to examine, treat, and operate on cats and dogs of all sizes. In addition to the critical procedure, the mobile clinic provided pets with essential vaccinations, microchips, preventative treatments, and general wellness care at no extra cost to their owners.

The spay/neuter pop-up was supported by a veterinary team from UIUC's College of Veterinary Medicine Community Medicine Program, including six veterinary students and two licensed veterinarians. Among the veterinary team was former Tree House extern Dr. Laura Frazier, DVM, now Director of Pet Population Control and Community Medicine at UIUC.

"I adored working at Tree House. The organization excels at offering each animal that comes through the facility a great quality of life ... and students that receive training at Tree House leave ready to take on the challenges of community medicine," remarks Dr. Frazier on her time as a veterinary extern. Tree House's veterinary externship program aims to service the veterinary professional shortage, an industry-wide crisis that has intensified the strain on an already high demand for animal care brought on by the recent pandemic. "Millions of animals didn't receive spay/neuter during COVID when all 'non-essential' services were halted," explains Cortney Moore, Shelter

Medicine Manager. Veterinary offices continue to play catch up to the demand for essential vet care services while simultaneously fighting a shortage of available veterinary professionals.

Since opening the Veterinary Wellness Center, Tree House has been dedicated to providing affordable, high-quality veterinary care to communities throughout Chicago. With years of experience hosting free vaccination pop-ups—and now a successful pilot of a mobile spay/neuter clinic—Tree House is excited to build on its mission of accessible veterinary care. At the same time, it continues to create opportunities for aspiring veterinary professionals to advance their careers and improve care for pets everywhere.

The externship program at Tree House provides veterinary students with a two-week, hands-on experience with in-house and community veterinary practices. Applications are open on a rolling basis, and interested veterinary students are encouraged to apply at treehouseanimals.org/vet-externships or by scanning the QR code below.



A TRIBUTE TO PADDINGTON: ONE CAT'S LEGACY OF LOVE

By Lee Clinton



Sculpture by Andrea Jablonski



Paddington, affectionately known as “Paddy,” was a cat of a lifetime.

A lovable and mischievous orange tabby, he brought endless joy to his owner, Ginger Dusek. Whether demanding his daily shrimp treat, purring on Ginger’s desk during Zoom calls, or cuddling up after a long day, Paddington was more than a pet—he was family. As Ginger fondly shares, “Everyone deserves a Paddington.”

When Paddington passed away, Ginger channeled her grief into action, ensuring his memory would live on in a way that would bring hope and happiness to others. Her generous gift to Tree House Humane Society has not only honored Paddington but also transformed the lives of cats in need and the people who love them.

Ginger’s donation supported the creation of the **Tribute Sculpture Program**, commissioning a local artist to craft a striking sculpture of

Paddington. This piece, displayed prominently at Tree House, serves as a symbol of the human-animal bond and the unconditional love pets bring into our lives. “I wanted to memorialize his sweet memory while also celebrating the amazing work Tree House does,” Ginger explains. “Visitors will see the sculpture and know that every cat adopted from Tree House is loved just as much as Paddington was.”

Her gift also launched the **Behavior Enrichment Initiative**, a program designed to help cats with unique behavioral needs find their forever homes. “Cats aren’t perfect, nor are owners,” Ginger notes. “But with the right resources, we can ensure more cats have the chance to experience the love of a devoted family.” Over the years, Ginger has sponsored countless adoptions, and this year she focused on orange cats, hoping others could experience the special bond she shared with Paddington.

Ginger’s story is a powerful reminder of how one act of kindness can ripple outward. Her love for Paddington has inspired her to create opportunities for others to experience the profound joy of having a companion like him.

“Helping others experience the love I had with Paddington means the world to me,” she shares.

Thanks to Ginger’s generosity, Tree House is able to give more cats a second chance, foster stronger connections between pets and their owners, and celebrate the remarkable legacy of a beloved orange tabby. Paddington’s memory will live on, not only in Ginger’s heart but also in the lives of countless cats and families touched by her kindness.

Ginger’s story inspires us all to take action, showing that love—whether for a mischievous orange cat or a cause close to your heart—can truly change the world.

Interested in paying tribute to a loved one? You can add a heart near the Paddington sculpture as a lasting symbol of your love. Email development@treehouseanimals.org for more details.



≡ TREE HOUSE: A CATALYST FOR COMMUNITIES AND HEALTH ≡

By Danielle Gantos

At 4:30 a.m., most people are still sound asleep, but for one dedicated pet owner, it's the time she's already up and on her way to Tree House Humane Society's community pop-up vaccine clinic—despite the event not starting until 10 a.m. After a heartbreaking experience at a previous clinic where vaccines ran out before her pet could be seen, she wasn't willing to take any chances. She rose before dawn, driven by the love and commitment she has for her companion, determined to ensure her pet receives the care it deserves. Stories like hers highlight the lengths pet owners will go to protect their animals, from waiting hours for life-saving vaccines to navigating rising private vet care costs. But what about the impact on their own physical and mental well-being? Tree House Humane Society understands the deep bond between people and their pets and

is dedicated to supporting that connection through high-quality, accessible veterinary care, cat behavior resources, educational workshops, and pop-ups that bring essential human resources to a vaccine clinic to help further support the well-being of both pets and their owners.

Tree House sponsored a One Health pop-up vaccine clinic event at Kelly Hall YMCA in Humboldt Park last summer, which united veterinary care providers, human health professionals, and community organizations. Thanks to incredible partners like the Association House of Chicago, Petco Love, and Cook County Government, we provided valuable resources for both pets and their humans! Residents accessed affordable pet care alongside health and wellness resources,

exemplifying the interconnectedness of human and animal health.

Tree House's partnerships with human services providers extend beyond physical health. By working with organizations addressing housing insecurity, food assistance, and mental health, Tree House can help ensure that pet owners receive comprehensive support. For example, during vaccine pop-up clinics, social service providers offer resources such as housing referrals, nutrition programs, and wellness counseling. These collaborative efforts help stabilize families and enable them to continue caring for their pets, keeping more animals in loving homes.

Through education, outreach, and partnerships, Tree House empowers pet owners and fosters long-term well-being for our communities. Events like the One Health pop-up highlight the profound connection between human and animal health, offering hope for a future where both thrive together.



ROOTING FOR REHOMING

By Samantha Alspaugh

At Tree House, our aim is that “Every Cat Thrives.” An unofficial motto you may have heard, though, is, “Once a Tree House cat, always a Tree House cat.” This latter saying is near and dear to many familiar with our journey over these 50-plus years, as the implication is sincere and reassuring: the cats that come through our care will always have a home with Tree House if needed, no matter what.

However, the ultimate goal of our work is to find them a permanent home. While we strive to provide excellent care, enriching interactions, and a comfortable environment while they’re with us, our focus is on rehoming, not indefinite sheltering. “Sheltering” implies a primary focus on the impact on animals while in care, while “rehoming” looks towards improving systems to get the animals into a home efficiently.

Cats, being particularly susceptible to stress, are not well-suited to living in shelters. A stressed cat very easily becomes a sick cat, and a sick cat isn’t going to be ready to find a

home. Given this, Tree House – in line with best practices in animal welfare – works to minimize the length of time they spend with us. For example, rather than shelter cats for days to monitor for illness before making them available to adopt, we focus on thorough physical examinations and broad-spectrum preventatives upon intake, allowing healthy kitties to reach our adoption floor quickly. Additionally, we do our best to provide procedures that may cause special needs cats to be overlooked by prospective adopters, such as an expensive dental or corrective surgery.

Another initiative that many forward-thinking organizations, such as Tree House, have welcomed is an open adoption process. Rather than creating barriers with lengthy applications, home visits, or credit checks, we focus on open and honest communications with potential adopters. The folks who walk through our doors will likely adopt *someplace*, after all – so with considerate counseling, we can find them the right match, building a lifelong relationship of support and trust. We also provide behavior resources to support pet owners and help keep their pets at home or rehome directly when needed, skipping the stress of a shelter altogether and creating more space for cats who need it most.

Many cats also need an unconventional route to thrive. These community cats have

homes exactly where they are, in the neighborhoods that have been feeding and loving them, and they don’t belong in shelters. This is why Tree House has also focused on developing programs to meet the needs of outdoor cats by supporting their communities through efforts such as Trap-Neuter-Return initiatives, pet food pantries, outreach and educational workshops, low-cost vet care, and even transportation support.

Tree House has been here to help our feline friends for over 50 years, and we’ve adapted every step of the way to support the most vulnerable population of cats. Focusing on rehoming doesn’t mean we aren’t here to provide shelter when needed – after all, once a Tree House cat, always a Tree House cat. But innovating, growing, and expanding our approaches has enabled us to find even more ways to ensure that *Every Cat Thrives*.

Princess Bubblegum, a friendly outdoor cat, was found by a Good Samaritan and brought to Tree House.

After being spayed, vaccinated, and microchipped, Princess Bubblegum was adopted in just six days!

Her new adopter renamed her Mouse and couldn’t be happier with her cuddly, loving companion.



Read Mouse's Happy Ending Tail here.

Do you have a Happy Tail of your own? Share it with us at marketing@treehouseanimals.org – we’d love to hear your story!



HELPING EVERY CAT THRIVE: TREE HOUSE HUMANE SOCIETY'S VISION IN ACTION

By Marne Turner



When Maroon first arrived at Tree House, he was fearful, anxious, and terrified of people—much like many feral cats who find themselves indoors for the first time. His response to shelter life was one of extreme stress, but thanks to the Community Cats program, Maroon's story took a positive turn. After being neutered, vaccinated, and placed in a managed colony, Maroon now enjoys a safe, supportive environment where he can thrive on his own terms.

Tree House Humane Society's vision is simple yet profound: to ensure every cat thrives. This vision is realized through a multi-layered approach addressing the needs of cats, their communities, and the people who care for them.

The Veterinary Wellness Center, opened in 2021, delivers high-quality, low-cost spay/neuter surgeries and preventive wellness care. With over 8,900 spay/neuter surgeries and 12,900 animals served from 2022 to 2023, the center has significantly reduced overpopulation and improved community health. Last November, Tree House launched a mobile spay/neuter clinic to extend these essential services even further.

For outdoor cats, the **Community Cats program** offers long-term solutions like managed colonies, reducing the number of stray and feral cats



entering shelters. Cats needing safer outdoor environments are placed through the Cats at Work program, which has rehomed over 1,000 cats since 2012, creating space for more vulnerable cats in need of traditional adoption.

Tree House's **adoption program** provides a fresh start for homeless cats, particularly those with complex needs like feline leukemia, special behavioral requirements, or medical challenges. With the help of fosters and a dedicated feline behaviorist, Tree House has placed 2,790 cats in loving homes between 2022 and 2024. However, adoption alone is not enough. "We can't adopt our way out of this," explains Raissa Allaire, Executive Director. "Long-term solutions require prevention and community-focused programs to truly make an impact."

"Our goal is to meet every cat's unique needs," Danielle Faford, Shelter Manager, adds. "Whether it's through spay/neuter, community

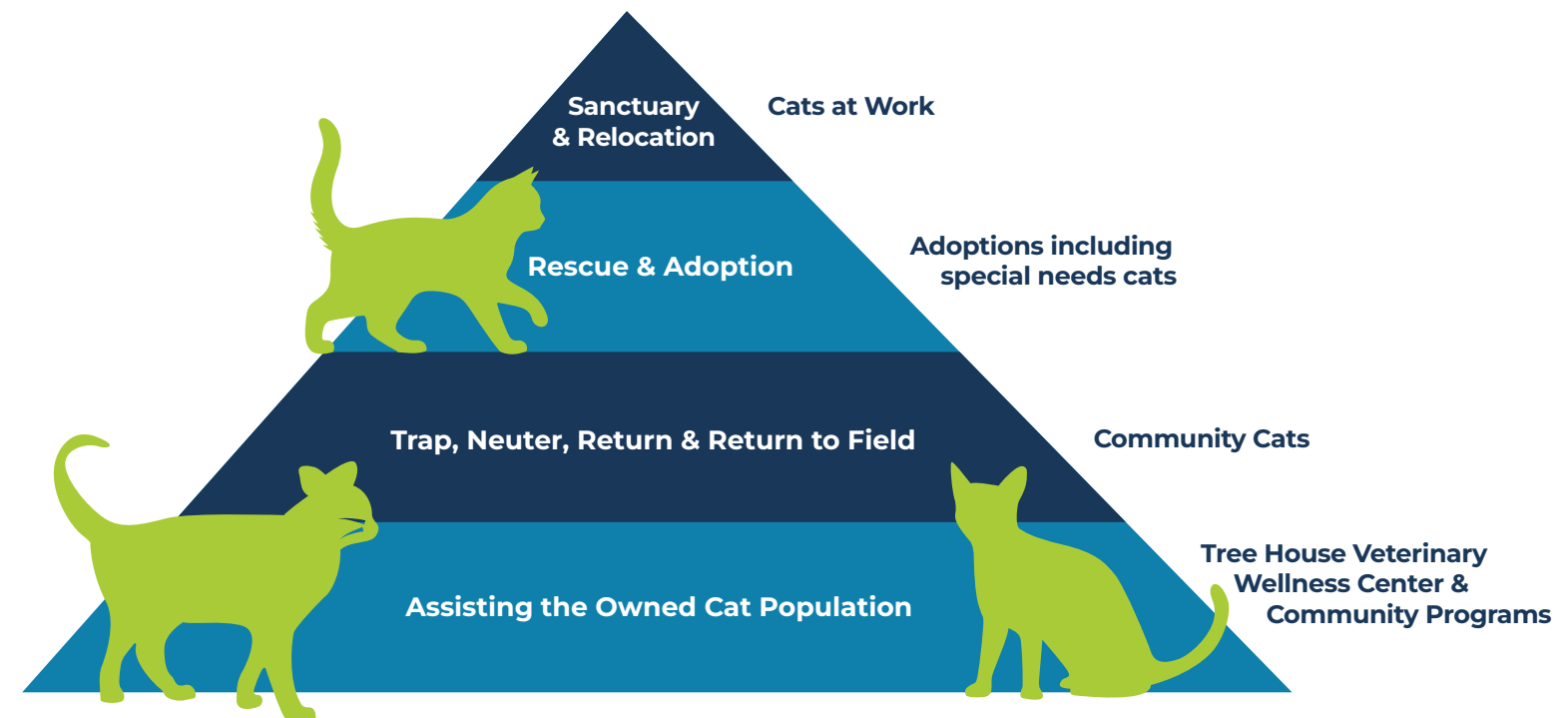
solutions, or adoption, we're here to support cats and the people who love them."

Through these innovative programs, Tree House Humane Society is creating a future where every cat, like Maroon, has the chance to thrive.



Long-term solutions require prevention and community-focused programs to truly make an impact.

RAISSA ALLAIRE
Executive Director



LOVE IS THE BEST MEDICINE: HOW FOSTER VOLUNTEERS SAVE LIVES AT TREE HOUSE

By Hana Rafee

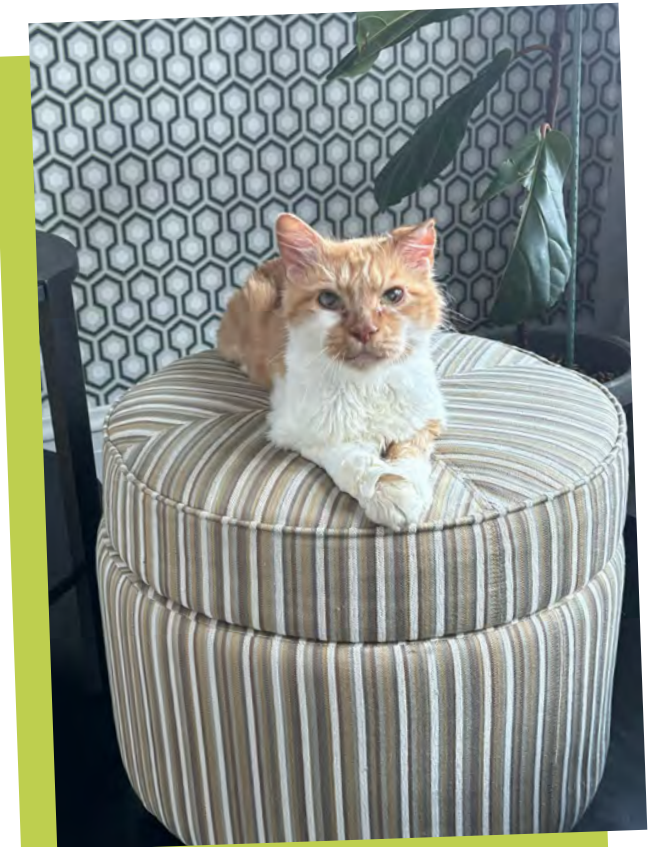


Canary



Cardinal's early days at Tree House, May 2024 – a new chapter begins!

Look at Cardinal thriving in foster care by September 2024 – so much growth and joy!



Every cat at Tree House has a unique story; for many, that story includes a chapter in foster care. Foster volunteers are unsung heroes in animal welfare, helping cats heal and thrive. We're proud to shine a light on their remarkable contributions.

At Tree House, every cat is on a path to find their Happy Ending. Some paths are more winding or take longer to travel, and in making that journey, we have found time and again that love truly is the best medicine—sick cats heal faster, and shy cats gain confidence in the comfort of a loving home. That love benefits the human side, too. According to the Human Animal Bond Research Institute, pet ownership reduces stress, loneliness, and even the risk of cardiovascular disease. While fostering may be temporary, it's like a booster shot of love for both cats and their caretakers.

Take Canary and Cardinal, for example, two 13-year-old orange tabby brothers who were abandoned inside a sealed box. Rescued by Will County Animal Control in May 2024, they arrived at Tree House in critical condition. Sadly, their third brother did not survive. Contending with skin lesions, severe emaciation, dental disease, diabetes, and eye infections, Canary and Cardinal had a long road to recovery ahead of them. Knowing they would need close monitoring and extra care once stable, we placed them in a foster home, where they've been regaining their strength every day.

Fostering doesn't just help the cats currently in the Tree House's care, though—it also frees up space for us to take in more animals, saving even more lives. When Canary and Cardinal moved to their foster home, we were able to take in two more cats from under-resourced shelters. Since we focus on helping sick and injured cats with slim chances of thriving elsewhere, foster care is truly an essential part of our mission.

The work we do here at Tree House is a team effort, and foster volunteers are an integral part of that team. To ensure their success, we provide our fosters with training, supplies, and support throughout the journey. Our fosters, staff, veterinarians, and behavior specialists work together to meet each cat's medical and behavioral needs, helping every foster cat thrive on its path toward adoption.

People often ask foster volunteer Allison Loecke how she handles saying goodbye to her foster cats. Her answer? "It's hard, but that's what makes a good foster parent. These cats need love, and cat lovers are the best people to give it."

Every foster home represents a second chance for a cat in need, opening new chapters of hope, healing, and Happy Endings. To all our foster volunteers, we say thank you—you are making a difference, one love-filled chapter at a time.



Canary and Cardinal say hello from foster care!

Want to join our team of dedicated foster volunteers? Visit treehouseanimals.org/foster for more information on how to get involved.

SUPPORTING TREE HOUSE THROUGH TAX-DEFERRED GIVING

For long-time supporter Frank McCoy, Tree House Humane Society is more than a charity—it's a cause close to his heart. Whether attending one of Tree House's lively fundraising events or finding innovative ways to maximize his impact, Frank's dedication to helping cats in need is unwavering.

Recently, Frank discovered a smart way to amplify his giving: donating directly from his tax-deferred savings accounts. As he explains, "Giving from my IRA isn't just about helping Tree House—it's about making every dollar count. I can support the cats while taking advantage of tax benefits that make sense for me and my family."

WHY FRANK CHOOSES TAX-DEFERRED GIVING

If you're 59½ or older and have accounts like IRAs, SEP IRAs, or 401(k)s, donating directly from these accounts can provide several unique advantages:

1. Meet Annual Withdrawal Requirements:

Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) count toward required minimum distributions (RMDs) without increasing your taxable income.

2. Skip Credit Card Fees: Direct donations bypass the 3% to 5% swipe fee charged by credit card issuers, allowing more of your gift to directly benefit the cats.

3. Avoid Medicare Premium Increases: QCDs don't raise your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), which helps avoid higher Medicare and supplement premiums.

"This way of giving has no downside," Frank shares. "It's a smart strategy for anyone planning to give anyway."

MAKING IT WORK AT EVENTS

Frank also found a way to combine tax-deferred giving with the fun of Tree House's paddle auctions. By arranging a QCD in advance of an event, his paddle is credited with the donation amount, allowing him to bid freely during the auction.

"It's the best of both worlds," Frank says. "I get to enjoy the energy and excitement of the event while knowing my contribution is already helping the cats. And if I go over my balance, I just swipe my card at checkout."

To make a tax-deferred gift, donors must work with their financial institution to have the funds sent directly to Tree House. It's a straightforward process with lasting benefits for both the donor and the kitties.

A LEGACY OF LOVE

Frank's thoughtful approach to giving exemplifies the impact one person can have. "It feels good to know I'm helping cats thrive while being smart about my finances," he reflects.

Inspired by Frank's story? Talk to your financial adviser to explore how tax-deferred giving could work for you. Together, we can create a brighter future for the cats and communities Tree House serves.



AN APPETITE FOR ADVENTURE

By Hana Rafee

Say hello to Honeysauce, a handsome tuxedo who would do anything for a nibble of what you're having.

Honeysauce found his way to Tree House as a friendly stray, so we didn't know much about his background or personality at first. But when we noticed just how desperate he was to eat, we ran several tests to see if a medical condition might be the cause.

And the final diagnosis? He just really likes to eat! Too relatable!

Perhaps the transition from outdoor stray to house kitty showed him just how much food the humans have in store. We're thrilled to share that since "Mr. Sauce" would do ANYTHING for food, he's become quite adept at clicker training. Whoever takes this funny guy home will get to practice "sit," "go home" (to his bed), and more tricks. They may also want to invest in a lock for the pantry door.

Are you a fellow foodie? You'll totally get along with hungry Honeysauce. Learn more about this adoptable kitty at treehouseanimals.org/adoptable-animals





TREE HOUSE

HUMANE SOCIETY

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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

