

# League Links 2.0

A quarterly newsletter from the  
League for Animal Welfare



## THE OTHER SIDE OF FEAR

*When adopting an "unadoptable" animal pays off*

When Billy Bob first arrived at the League, in April of 2021, it was clear that new people (or maybe just all people!) were not his cup of tea. If you were on one side of his kennel, he quickly made to the other side. If he couldn't get distance from you, he would tuck his head downward, and wedge himself in a corner. We don't know if Billy Bob had ever lived in a home - it sure didn't seem like he had ever lived in one that made him feel safe. This shy boy was terrified of new people.

So introducing this trembling blockhead to new adopters was a challenge. And being a bully breed, long-maligned and seldom sought out by fearful adopters? A double whammy for the poor guy. Billy Bob sat in his kennel, with seemingly no happy ending coming his way, for 3 long years.

But then, the nearly unimaginable happened: someone took a chance on Billy Bob. In March, Billy went home with his person. "Once Billy realized he finally found a forever loving home he started opening up, giving me his trust," said Toby, Billy Bob's adopter. "Patience and love are the key factors."

Billy Bob found a hero adopter: someone willing to see through the fear that comes with adopting an animal with medical or behavioral quirks, and recognize that they can make a world of difference for that pet. These adopters are the type that ask: "which animal needs help the most?" They are lifesavers for cats and dogs that may otherwise never leave a shelter.

"I was drawn to [dogs Liberty and Cleo] because they just seemed like they needed help, and a home where they could learn to be safe ... and know they were loved," explained adopter Dawn Fite (a hero adopter for not one, but two quirky girls). "They both had pretty difficult starts to their lives and were very fearful and shy. It has been a pure joy to watch their transformations. It is a privilege to be able to help any creature start to recover from their past and begin to thrive."



# Community Spay/Neuter Event

## HELPING FAMILIES KEEP PETS HEALTHY - AND OUT OF SHELTERS



*Dog Ella helps get her paperwork in order for her spay surgery.*

In its third year, the League's Community Spay/Neuter Event is a collaboration of area veterinary clinics coming together to help our community's residents with the most critical kind of care for their pet: spay/neuter surgeries, at a cost they can afford (FREE!).

The event, held the first week in December, started in 2022 and has served 495 cats and dogs and their loving families since its inception. It is part of a broader spay/neuter program at the League, which operates year-round to provide low-cost and subsidized surgeries to more than 1,500 Clermont County residents each year. The goal this year: to provide free spay/neuter surgeries to 200 pets of financially-struggling Clermont County neighbors.

"Having pets spayed/neutered is so critical, especially right now," explained League Executive Director, Devon Smith. "Our shelters are in trouble - there are far more unwanted dogs than the shelter system can even come close to accommodating; and the calls for help with cats are overwhelming. Stopping that at its source, by fixing pets so they don't have unwanted litters, is paramount for the humane treatment of animals in shelters." There is no better solution for overwhelmed shelters and pet owners than affordable spay/neuter.

### A "LUXURY" MANY CAN'T AFFORD

But for so many pet owners, the cost of this surgery can be out of reach. The average cost of a dog spay in Clermont County veterinary clinics is now \$408; and for a cat, \$279. The League's clinic offers this surgery at nearly a third of that cost for all Clermont County residents (\$150 for a dog; \$70 for a cat); and an eighth of that cost for residents who have limited or no income (\$50 for a dog; \$25 for a cat).

But for some, even that price is more than they can afford. One resident wrote of the program: "[The Community Spay/Neuter Event meant] a lot ... I wouldn't be able to keep [our cat] if she was to get pregnant. I'm a single mom of 4, and my 5 yr has health issues so I haven't been able to work for the last 3 years so it helped a lot and meant a lot to have the assistance available."

Pet parents tell us of "accidental" puppies born to their female dogs before they find our service; of pets they would have had to relinquish because of rental pet policies, if not for this program; of behavioral issues that abated thanks to having their pets fixed; of health disasters averted because of a spay.

Accessible spay/neuter keeps pet families together.



*Brownie was found as a stray; her mom's rental agreement required she be spayed. The Spay/Neuter Event allowed Brownie to stay with her people, and not be relinquished to a shelter.*



## DWINDLING COMMUNITY RESOURCES

But accessible spay/neuter is getting harder, not easier to find.

The United States has been struggling with a shortage of veterinarians and veterinary technicians for years, the result of an increase in pet ownership, without a concomitant increase in graduating veterinary professionals. This was exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. A study by Mars Veterinary Health predicts that, without intervention, 75 million pets might lack adequate access to veterinary care by 2030. Locally, that has led to staffing shortages at affordable clinics, including Ohio Alleycat Resource; and UCAN - two clinics in Cincinnati whose spay/neuter capacity has dwindled as they struggle to fill empty veterinary positions.

Inflation hasn't helped. "Petflation" has outpaced inflation on other goods and services by 250%. In the last five years, veterinary prices have risen an astounding 38.6% according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Basic veterinary care is, for so many, simply infeasible.



*Bowties not required, but certainly appreciated by staff.*

*"Petflation" has outpaced inflation of other consumer goods and services by 250% - prices at veterinary clinics are 38.6% higher than in 2019.*

## A COMMUNITY THAT CARES

In spite of these new logistical and financial hurdles, the League is more committed than ever to make basic vet care - and especially spay/neuter access - available to our community's families. And luckily, we aren't alone!

The Community Spay/Neuter Event is possible because of the generosity of four foundations - two based right here in the greater Cincinnati area. The Joanie Bernard Foundation and the Dorothy B. Francis Charitable Trust together invest \$65,000 each year into public spay/neuter services at the League for Animal Welfare. In addition to their investment, the Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust (Cleveland) and the Bernice Barbour Foundation (Philadelphia) fund \$16,000 more for our spay/neuter programs. With a price tag of \$40,000 for the Community Spay/Neuter event alone in 2023, those funds are critical to making the League's affordable spay/neuter program possible.

But the League can't fix hundreds of pets in a week all by ourselves - so the other puzzle piece is the private veterinary clinics that open their doors for this event. This year, the League is joined by Bethel Community Pet Hospital; Clermont Animal Hospital; Owensville Animal Hospital; Pet Wow Highland Heights; and Route 50 Veterinary Care. These clinics open their schedules and their hearts for a week to assist their neighbors and their pets.

"This event truly takes a village," said Smith. "And we couldn't be more grateful or more proud for how this village stands up to help its people and its animals with so much love and care."



*Need help with spay/neuter or other affordable wellness care? Call us at 513-735-2299!*

## The Other Side of Fear (Continued)



*Pablo lived at the League for a year-and-a-half before Kate adopted him.*

Adopters like Toby and Dawn are few and far between, though - the length-of-stay (the metric shelters use to quantify how long animals remain in their facility before they are adopted) for cats and dogs who have a behavioral challenge is 16 times longer than their seemingly simple counterparts. “Dogs who have behavioral challenges who were adopted in 2024 spent an average of 501 days in the shelter,” explained the League’s Dog Care Coordinator, Dawn Oberschlake. “That’s compared to a length-of-stay of just 32 days for all dogs.” And that doesn’t include dogs who haven’t been adopted yet. “Dogs like Mable, Zumi, Wishbone, Cheerio, Malawi? 939 days. These dogs have spent nearly 3 years behind kennel doors - so far,” Oberschlake lamented. “It’s hard to think about.”

The selflessness, patience, and compassion of adopters who choose the pets who need them the most - not the ones who seem the easiest to integrate into their home - is extraordinary indeed. But hero adopters know this: “behavioral challenges” that seem off-putting in the shelter melt away under the strength of love and patience.

*“It is a privilege to be able to help any creature start to recover from their past and begin to thrive.”*

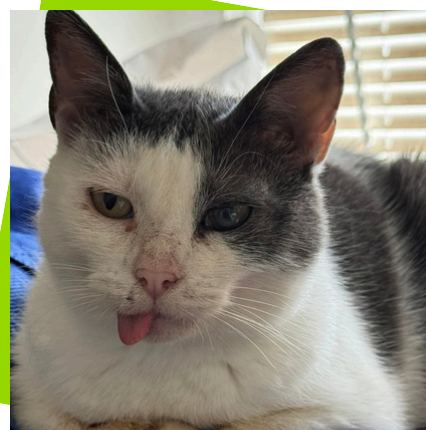
“Abby is the sweetest dog I have ever met,” said hero adopter Gracie of Abby, who spent 504 days at the League simply because she needed to be the only dog in the home. “I will never understand why she was at the shelter for so long, BUT selfishly I’m glad that she was, because she’s home now.”

The “challenges” are typically so manageable, when it comes down to it. And the heroes willing to overcome the fear that these surmountable challenges present are almost always rewarded with a pet who is - well, magic.

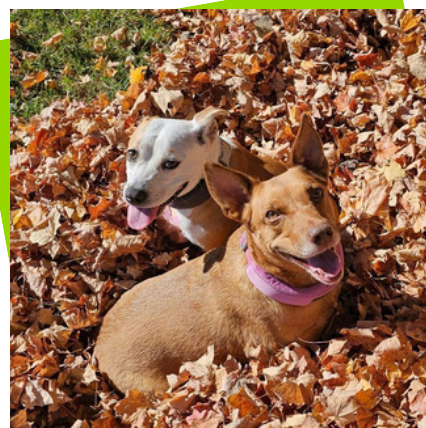
Pablo - whose challenges were both medical (a rare neurologic, and possibly degenerative, condition) and behavioral (he was defensive around other dogs because of his physical vulnerabilities) - found his mom in 2022. Kate’s life was in transition - a young college student living more than 1,000 miles away from her family, it seemed an unlikely fit for a dog who would need a little (or a lot of) extra care. But Pablo has been exactly what Kate needed at a time in her life when so much else was in flux. “Pablo’s life looks very different than I thought it would and than it was when I adopted him ... [but] even though life is unpredictable, he and I have each other, always,” Kate said of her ride-or-die companion. And “Pabs realizes that wherever I go, he’s coming with me.”

These special adoptions are magic for more than just the pet and their hero adopter. “These adoptions are what keep me going,” said Cat Care Coordinator Brookelynn Rowland. “There is nothing better than seeing an adoption update about Blackbelt or Cecilia” (both cats at the League for more than two years because of chronic medical conditions). “It’s why we do what we do, isn’t it,” said Executive Director Devon Smith. “The animals who needed us the most, finally don’t need us at all anymore, because someone else stepped in to give them their whole world. It renews our energy and sense of purpose in this work.”

If you have the patience, love, and compassion to see through their fear - and yours - the League has a few pets who have been waiting an awfully long time to meet you. 🐾



*Blackbelt spent 2 years at the League, perpetually overlooked because of a chronic medical condition.*



*Liberty (white and brown) was terrified of people, but is thriving in her home with her new sister, Cleo.*



# Whiskey & Whiskers

**2024 GALA RAISES \$140,000 FOR LIFE-SAVING**



The number is in, and it's a GREAT one! At the League's 9th annual gala, Whiskey & Whiskers, our incredible supporters helped raise \$143,684.70.

In lifesaving terms? That's the equivalent of 1,430 homeless animals getting medical exams and basic vaccines at intake. Or 950 dogs being spayed. Or 1,500 community cats being neutered. Or 572 sick puppies being treated for parvo virus. Or 4,700 orphaned kittens being bottle fed. Anyway you slice it - that adds up to a lot of lives saved and made better, thanks to the caring folks at the League for Animal Welfare.

The lifesaving gala welcomed more than 250 guests at the Kenwood Country Club for an evening of music, games, dinner, and a silent and live auction. From guests, to auction donors, to sponsors - everyone chipped in for a wonderful evening.



**SAVE THE DATE!**

**JOIN US FOR OUR 10TH ANNUAL LIFE-SAVING GALA  
WHISKEY & WHISKERS 2025  
SEPTEMBER 27, 2025**



# GIVING TUESDAY

## A Day of Generosity To Heal Three Broken Hearts

Giving Tuesday, the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, is a charitable giving day meant to combat the consumerism of Black Friday or Cyber Monday - to focus on good work that gives back and lifts up. And in this case, *heals*.

Because this Giving Tuesday, we have three very special hearts in mind that need lifting up. Meet Yukon Gold, Wolfie, and Peril, three kittens who came to the League this summer, all with life-threatening heart defects.

We can save them. ***But not without your help.***

Wolfie and Yukon Gold both suffer Peritoneopericardial Diaphragmatic Hernias - a (supposedly!) rare defect that allows abdominal organs to pass through a hole in the diaphragm and into the pericardium.

Peril's condition, Patent Ductus Arteriosus, is similarly rare (hah!) and life-threatening - she was showing signs of heart failure when she arrived at the League from a partner shelter.

What does a surgery for a rare (we keep saying that word!), complicated heart condition cost these days? About \$5,000. Per wee baby heart.

But the more important question: what does it cost if their hearts aren't surgically repaired? That one is too steep to consider.

So yes, this Giving Tuesday, we are asking for your help to raise \$15,000 for not one, but *three* "rare" surgeries. Because with your help, we can heal three broken hearts.

Please, make a donation at [lfaw.org/donate](https://lfaw.org/donate), and note it's for the "Broken Hearts Club."



Wolfie



Yukon Gold



Peril

ADOPT ME



### Noir - 9 years old, female

Noir's world turned upside down a year ago, when her person who had loved her since she was a kitten was diagnosed with terminal cancer. His first thought was to get Noir someplace safe. This funny, fluffy girl is full of personality - one minute, sidling up next to you for attention; the next, giving you all kinds of sass because obviously that was way more attention than she meant! But we have a feeling a lot of that sass will melt away, when she gets back to the life she knows best: having a person love her with their whole heart, and feeling safe in her very own home.



### Maisie - 4 years old, female

Maisie was an only dog in her home, absolutely loving the spoiled life. But her person passed away, and no one in the family could keep up the spoiling. Maisie is delicious - a funny, silly, expressive lovebug of a dog who wants to be near her humans at all times (and who, as you can see, pouts when she doesn't get her way!). Maisie isn't into other dogs, so she does need to be the only furball in the home. But trust us, you won't need anyone else in your life if you're Maisie's family - this sweet girl will keep you laughing and loving all on her own!

**View all the cats and dogs available for adoption at [LFAW.org/adoption-center](https://lfaw.org/adoption-center)**