

League Links 2.0

A quarterly newsletter from the
League for Animal Welfare

*Kittens from Pulaski County,
Kentucky land at the League.*



Cats Across Communities

*Regional Partnership saves
hundreds of at-risk cats*

As with many things in life, the world of animal sheltering is one of the haves and have nots - and the “haves,” predictably, are able to help more animals. From larger staffs, to deeper pockets, to plusher facilities, well-resourced shelters are in a position to do more with - well, more.

This disparity has never gone unnoticed; and an informal program of shuffling animals from under-resourced and overpopulated shelters, to their wealthier and more spacious counterparts, has existed as long as shelters themselves. This loose network took a more formal shape in the 2010s, with animal welfare juggernauts like the ASPCA connecting overwhelmed shelters in the south with well-resourced ones in the northeast. Relocation programs grew at a fast clip - nearly 1.4 million animals were moved from one shelter to another at its height in 2019, with almost 1 in 5 animals being relocated during their shelter tenure.

As relocation became a regular tool in the lifesaving kit, there were cracks. “Receiving” shelters (the advantaged ones with the space and money) tended to choose highly adoptable animals, leaving behind large dogs, hounds, pittie-types, and adult cats. The “sending” shelters were charged with coordinating expensive and logistically burdensome drives across the country. Receiving shelters worried that reliance on transferring animals might hobble the advancement of key programs in sending shelters, like more expansive adoption and return-to-owner programs. Still, the programs were helping: over a decade, more than 11 million animals moved across the country. Euthanasia declined to under 10% in years when relocation programs increased.

The League has always been part of the network of “receiving” shelters. In 2025, 1,319 cats and dogs (about half of our total intake) were transferred to the League from other shelters and rescues. Our network includes everything from large municipal shelters whose populations max out their kennel space; to small rescue groups who may not have the resources to care for medically-complicated cases.

In spite of a rich history of transferring animals in need into the League’s system, one thing was lacking: a strategic plan. Our transferred animals came from Florida, South Carolina, Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio. They came from big shelters and small; from far away and from down the street. We were taking in lots of pets from other shelters; but in the diffused

Hints of Lifesaving

WHISKEY & WHISKERS RAISES \$236,000 FOR SHELTER ANIMALS

When Thane Maynard, Director Emeritus of the Cincinnati Zoo, walked into Whiskey & Whiskers with a baby alligator, it was clear the night was going to be exciting!

Whiskey & Whiskers celebrated its 11th year at the Oasis Conference Center in Loveland, and was the most successful gala yet. The evening brought together more than 300 animal lovers, who helped raise more than \$230,000 for the cats and dogs at the League.

The evening was kicked off by a moving speech by Maynard, whose message about conservation - if we care enough, we can make big things happen for animals and our planet - landed with an audience primed to make big things happen.

And so they did. Guests donated \$42,000 to our shelter medical fund. With matches from two generous donors, the evening raised \$96,150 to provide critical veterinary care for our sickest animals.

Exciting live auction packages, donated by area businesses and individuals including Dock Holiday, Chef Eric Leach, 8 Cats Cincinnati, artist Susie Mahan, Board Member Miki and Dean Johns, and Donna Lunik of Cat Adoption Team, brought in an additional \$8,625 of lifesaving funds.

And the people and companies who made it all possible - our incredible sponsors - put us over the top, with close to \$80,000 donated to bring the event to life.

Don't miss Whiskey & Whiskers 2027! We've got beer pong. A whiskey toss. Wine plinko. A baby alligator? You would hate to miss the fun - mark your calendars for September 25, 2027!



Thane Maynard, Director Emeritus of the Cincinnati Zoo, joined us for our VIP Bourbon tasting - and brought along a friend!



Sponsor and friends from Twin Power Heating & Air.



League staff turned up and turned out!



Board Chair Jake Stanton (center), volunteer Courtney Stanton, and TQL sponsor Grant Crawford enjoy the bourbon tasting.

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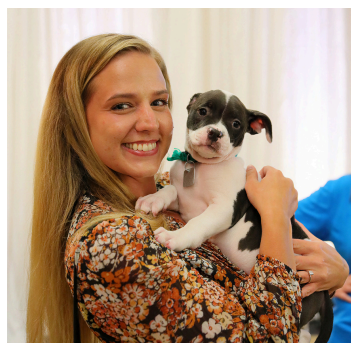
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There were PUPPIES!



The first table to hit 100% giving to our medical fund!



Board member Carl Fite and adopter Dawn Fite



Rob and Lindsey Ayers, Presenting Sponsor MWI Animal Health



Board Member Miki Johns enjoying our Bourbon Tasting



The Pattons, Silver Sponsors Purrfect Day Cafe



The selfie booth is a hit! MEOW!



Volunteers Cindy Ross and Amy Reich

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

12TH ANNUAL WHISKEY & WHISKERS: SEPTEMBER 25, 2027

“Cats Across Communities” (Continued)

way we did it, were we helping any individual shelters in a sustainable way? Our transfer partners were shelters that had identified us as a resource; and the transfers happened whenever a sending shelter got desperate and called us to see if we had space. Was this making a measurable impact for these partners, or their region?

We decided to change that reactive, scattershot system in early 2026. League Executive Director Devon Smith reached out to Monica Tarant, Chief Innovation Officer at Give Them Ten (GTT) - which oversees a regional network of local shelters. “[The GTT shelters] take in a LOT of cats. But we’re all doing it separately, without a strategy. WHAT IF we combined forces?” the conversation began.

And so was born Cats Across Communities Initiative: a coalition of Cincinnati-based receiving shelters (the League, SPCA Cincinnati, Ohio Alleycat Resource) working with southern-Kentucky-based sending shelters (Pulaski County Animal Shelter, Marion County Animal Shelter) to create a strategic, efficient relocation program for cats. Every two weeks, these five shelters work together, and move 45-75 cats across Kentucky into shelters with more capacity, on a single transport.



Cats get unloaded at the League after their 3-hour adventure north!

“This program has been a game-changer for us. Being able to transport these animals has saved so many lives that otherwise wouldn’t have had a chance.”

The goals of the program are three-fold: 1) make transfers easier on the overburdened, sending shelters; 2) make transfers reliable, to free up capacity for sustainable improvement in other sheltering programs; 3) allow the improvements in partner shelters help elevate lifesaving programs in the region. “The best part of Cats Across Communities is that it solves two problems at once. We’re creating a reliable way to move cats out of shelters that are under a lot of intake pressure; but we’re also building relationships and helping those sending shelters strengthen their own programs. So the goal isn’t just to move cats forever, it’s to save lives now while helping communities become more sustainable over time,” explains Tarant.

And just 3 months after the first transport, the initiative has hints of its future success. Reports from Pulaski County Animal Shelter indicate an immediate improvement in upper respiratory symptoms in cats (overcrowded shelters lead to disease spread, and reducing the overall population is the only cure). Both Marion and Pulaski County shelters report that euthanasia of cats for space has ceased altogether.

Why has this simple change - creating a predictable, efficient transport - made such a difference so quickly? “Transports are tricky given our limited staff, on-call duties, and the fact that we serve as both shelter staff and animal control officers,” explained Candi Taylor, Director of Marion County Animal Shelter. Her shelter operates with just 2 full-time and 1 part-time staff member, making any “extra” programs (like arranging and driving a transport) out of reach. “This program has been a game-changer for us.”

The first transport took place in July. By September, 368 cats and kittens had already moved into the three participating Ohio shelters. The sending shelters were chosen for the program based on their lifesaving rate (the number of cats who died or were euthanized in their system, divided by their total cat intake); and their interest in investing in long-term improvement in their sheltering program. The program has already approached more shelters - sending and receiving - to participate.

“It’s always been an honor to help any overburdened shelters,” explains Executive Director Devon Smith. “This is an industry that can only succeed on collaboration. But this is especially gratifying - it’s not a one-off transport that helps this week, but whose value is erased the next when 100 more cats overwhelm our partner. It’s a sustained program that will make a measurable difference in a region for years to come. Animal welfare works best when shelters work together.”



A days-old kitten arrived at Pulaski dyed green



Pulaski handles 3,000 animals with just 6 staff members



Marion County Director Candi Taylor

FOREVER IN OUR HEARTS

HONOR WALL TO BE INSTALLED IN THE NEWLY-EXPANDED CLINIC

The finishing touches on our 2,100 sq ft expansion to our public veterinary clinic are nearly complete - but there is just one thing missing. YOU!

The beautiful new clinic - made possible by the incredible generosity of animal lovers like you - will feature an Honor Wall in the expanded lobby. The wall will feature glass plaques, with your dedication to the pets and people who have helped make you an animal lover and advocate. "It's a visually stunning and emotionally captivating way to honor the people and pets who have had a profound effect in this world and in our lives," explained Development Coordinator Autumn Lees.

Plaques will be available in a variety of sizes, starting at a 6x3 plaque (allowing 2-3 lines of your dedication message) for a \$1,000 donation. Opportunities to include a photo of your honoree(s) will also be available, with varying sizes offered to make the Honor Wall accessible to many families.

"One of my favorite fundraising programs is our kennel and room sponsorships," said Executive Director Devon Smith. "Three years ago, we began including photos of pets and family members for whom the annual sponsorship was in honor - I love seeing the pictures of the people and pets who have shaped our supporters! Our new Honor Wall will be an even more stunning, and permanent, representation of that love."

Plaques are available now, with installation slated to begin in November. The wall will continue to grow as new honorariums are added - until we take up the whole wall! The wall is visible to all staff and the members of the public who utilize our services.

Our supporters are what make our work possible. And your family, friends, and pets, are what turned you into compassionate, generous, community-minded people. What an honor it is for us, to be able to honor you and your loved ones.

Email us at autumn@lfaw.org for information on how to donate!



LEAD AT THE LEAGUE

JOIN THE LEAGUE'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN 2027

The League's Board of Directors is seeking enthusiastic, creative, inspired new members to help the League move into the future!

The League's Board of Directors is foundational in creating a progressive, sustainable, effective plan to do the most good for the most pets and families in our region. The Board is involved in strategic planning; fundraising; and consulting. Members help connect the League to a network of individuals, businesses, clients and community partners to make our lifesaving vision expand and improve.

In just the last 5 years, the League's Board of Directors has led the opening of our affordable public clinic (serving more than 6,000 pets annually); the growth of our sheltering program (sheltering 200% more animals than just 5 years ago); and the expansion of our event fundraising program.

**INTERESTED IN TAKING THE LEAGUE TO
THE NEXT LEVEL?**

Email devon@lfaw.org to apply!



We know the class of 2027 will bring even more innovation and progress to the League! Prospective members should be passionate about animal welfare; engaged in making a difference in our community; and enthusiastic about advocating for the League.

Board applications open October 1; interested candidates are invited to reach out to us at devon@lfaw.org.

ADOPT ME



Aegon - 6 years old, male

Aegon has been adopted twice. And with each return, Aegon's weight crept up. From 13lbs when he went home to his first family to 15lbs when he came back; now to 20lbs on his second return to the shelter. All we can presume is that poor Aegon is stress-eating from all the upheaval. Aegon's most recent parents got divorced; and then his primary parent got deployed - so now he's on the hunt for his third family. This poor chonk can be spicy at first - who can blame him? But we know, when he finds a family that means to keep him forever, this solid mass of kitty cat will turn into a blubbery pile of pure snuggles.



Chad - 6 years old, male

Poor Chad had a home. He had a mom who adored him. But he didn't have a mom who could keep herself out of jail, so Chad kept getting returned to us. After the third time, as hard as it was to separate Chad from a mom who loved him dearly, we knew that the risks of Chad continuing to get loose when his mom was away were too great. Chad knows what it is to be loved; he just doesn't know what it looks like for that love to stay present. This big dope of a dog is 75lbs and all joy - so he needs a family who is ready for all that love to come barreling at them with sloppy kisses. Chad is good with other dogs, but is a bit much for kitties. He loves zoomies, he loves walks, he loves people - and we know he'll love you as his new family.

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