

League Links 2.0

A quarterly newsletter from the
League for Animal Welfare



When Ohio State conducted a poll to find out how Ohioans felt about free-roaming cats, the numbers revealed a problem: while 43% of respondents reported seeing outdoor cats in their neighborhood (and 26% of respondents said they were feeding those cats), fewer than one in four of those folks were having their neighborhood's cats spayed/neutered.

That's a lot more felines with their buckeyes intact than any animal shelter wants to hear about.

Now, thanks to a generous grant from the Joanie Bernard Foundation, the League for Animal Welfare is on the front lines of "fixing" (!) that imbalance.

The League's new TNR program aims to reduce the free-roaming cat population by offering free spay/neuter to Clermont County residents caring for outdoor cats. This includes feral (wild) cats, as well as stray (tame) cats - any kitties living outdoors in Clermont County qualify for this free program.

And it couldn't come at a better time. "40% of our cat intake requests are for stray cats," reported Executive Director Devon Smith. "We have received calls for more than 250 community cats in the first quarter of 2023 alone."

TRAP/NEUTER/RETURN

A Generous Grant Means Free Spay/Neuter
for Community Cats

NOWHERE TO GO

Dog adoptions down an alarming 30% in first quarter

Doom for homeless dogs has been on the horizon for a few years now, with large dogs lingering in shelters far too long. But the impending doom is no longer just on the horizon - it is here, hitting shelters across the US head-on in 2023.

For the first quarter of 2023, dog adoptions at the League were down an astounding and troubling 30% from the prior year. The League, as a limited-admission shelter, can control how many dogs come in - so though this drop means that dogs are spending more time in the shelter, their lives will never be at risk.

But there is a trickle-down effect that does leave dogs' lives at risk.



Pepe came to the League from Cincinnati CARE, a local open-admission shelter also hit hard by decreasing adoptions.

Space constraints lead to euthanasia

With 30% fewer dogs being adopted from the League, that means fewer dogs that the League can transfer out of overcrowded county shelters - whose adoptions are also down. And that dramatic decrease leaves dogs at urgent risk. There are more dogs sitting in county shelters than the industry has experienced in more than a decade. With no space for them, county shelters face the heartbreaking decision of euthanizing healthy, adoptable dogs solely because they have run out of space.

This crisis has been looming for two years. Data collected by PetHealth, the company that operates shelter databases PetPoint and Chameleon, reported a 16% increase of animals in shelters from 2019 to 2021. The increase in animals was not a result of more animals entering shelters, but the result of slowed adoptions - 38,000 shelter pets found homes each month in 2021 from PetHealth-supported shelters, down from 50,000/month in 2019. The decrease meant that dogs remained in shelters for more than twice as long in 2021 (75 days) than they had in 2019 (35 days).

Confirming our fears that this trend could only end in tragedy for dogs, data from Shelter Animals Count shows that ***twice as many dogs died in shelters*** in the first quarter of 2023 than in the same period in 2021 (either euthanized or died in care).



Senior dog Norman has spent 172 days at the League - more than 5 times the average length-of-stay for a dog just the year before.

How did we get here?

It's not clear what has caused the dramatic decrease in dog adoptions. Fewer dogs are entering homes from shelters - but does that mean fewer families are bringing dogs home at all, or that families are getting dogs from sources other than animal shelters?

Because shelters are in the thick of the crisis right now, data hasn't come out to help us understand the genesis of the problem. Certainly there are theories - has inflation resulted in fewer families adding dogs to their homes? Has lowered access to affordable spay/neuter (due to a veterinary shortage, and clinics closing during the pandemic) meant families are bringing dogs home from accidental litters rather than shelters? Is there a generational gap, with younger generations turning to breeders instead of shelters for their new family members? The answers are critical to shelters being able to pivot for better outcomes, but data hasn't been able to elucidate the source of the problem yet.



Our sweet girl Glamour was one of the lucky ones - 11 months after coming to the League, and after being adopted and returned twice, she finally found her family in January.

Twice as many dogs died in shelters in the first quarter of 2023 than in the same period of 2021 - an unprecedented and tragic increase.

But we do know enough to know that it's fixable.

Studies show that 65-70 million American homes have at least one dog in their family - dogs are the most popular pet in US households. Roughly 3 million dogs enter US shelters each year.

With more than 70 million dog lovers out there, together, we know we can make sure those 3 million homeless dogs find the happy ending they deserve.

So how can you help? Adopt your next dog from an animal shelter. Foster or volunteer at your local animal shelter - dogs are sitting in shelters longer than ever before, and that means they need more people taking them for walks or overnights to minimize their stress. Advocate for shelter dogs - tell everyone about your amazing shelter dog and the incredible shelter that saved her. Advocate for spay/neuter - find affordable spay/neuter resources near you, and spread the word about them.

3 million dogs are counting on us. 🐾🐾



The decrease in adoptions has affected all dogs - even puppies like sweet little Era. Puppies are spending 55% longer at the League in 2023 than in 2022 - 17 days versus just 11 days in 2022.

Trap/Neuter/Return (continued)



One cat turns into 3 cats before you know it ...

But for many cats, an animal shelter isn't the right option. Cats who have been born outside and never socialized to humans; or cats who have been living outside for so long that they're no longer adapted to house-life, aren't candidates for sheltering and adoption. For these cats, TNR is the most humane and responsible option. TNR addresses the overpopulation issue, but allows community cats to exist in the outdoor habitat to which they've adapted (and where they're most comfortable!).

It also keeps cats out of overcrowded shelters. At the League, there is space for only about 30% of the cats that the shelter is contacted about taking in. That means hard choices have to be made. If a cat is healthy and thriving outdoors, and is used to that lifestyle, those limited spots on the League's adoption floor can be used for more vulnerable cats and kittens who can't survive as a community cat. "We want to save those spots for the cats in the greatest need," explained Cat Care Coordinator Sarah Smith.

"The League only has space for 30% of the cats we receive calls about - we want to save those spots for the cats in the greatest need."

The League's TNR program performs spay/neuter surgeries on Tuesday mornings. Cats are brought in humane live traps; spayed or neutered; receive a rabies and FVRCP vaccine; and are eartipped (a slight tip of the cat's left ear, indicating the cat has been fixed - an important step in the process, so everyone knows which community cats are already spayed/neutered!). Cats are also assessed for any medical concerns that can be treated while they're with us.

The medical team, led by Veterinarian Lori Whitacre, is used to treating free-roaming cats, and the unique challenges they sometimes present. "Most cats that come through the TNR program are healthy and just need to be spayed," said Dr. Whitacre. But for those who might need a bit of extra care, quick and minimally invasive treatments are rendered so the cat can return to their outdoor home without added stress.

With the investment from the Bernard Foundation, the League hopes to spay/neuter 500 free-roaming Clermont County cats in 2023. If you are feeding cats, or have seen cats in your neighborhood, please reach out to us for more information on how to TNR them!



If you're feeding them, fix them!

Why TNR?

- Reduce the free-roaming cat population (and reduce the burden on animal shelters!).
- Minimize nuisance behaviors, like spraying and fighting.
- Improve the cats' health.
- Reduce public health concerns through vaccinations.



"Notorious Big Bear"

8TH GRADERS FROM ST. VERONICA'S SCHOOL HELP MARKET LEAGUE PETS



Artwork by student Kaidance McHaffe

The League's lobby has gotten a colorful upgrade, thanks to the artwork of local 8th grade students from St. Veronica's School. As part of a service-learning project for their English and Art classes, the students chose a local charitable endeavor to help their community. The project: write adoption bios for our animals, with accompanying hand-painted depictions of them. The results: nothing short of a masterpiece!

"This year, our school was encouraged to incorporate more service learning projects into our curriculum," explained teacher Kelsey Johnson, whose idea it was to partner with an animal shelter for the project. "The 8th grade has a focus on stewardship and God's creation." The 8th graders are also able to use the project as part of their community service for their Confirmation process, Johnson said.

Each 8th grader chose an adoptable animal from the League's website for their project. And the bios rivaled our official ones: "Some nicknames you could use for Big Bear," wrote student Hudson Schmitt, "The Biggest Bear, Notorious Big Bear, and Biggie Bear."

But it was the vibrant depictions that were the biggest hit at the League - volunteers, staff, and supporters asked how they could purchase the portraits, and have them emblazoned on League t-shirts. And so, the project has been extended - students were asked if their work could be featured on League merchandise, and they were all for it!



Artwork by student Brogan Mountel

The League will be hosting an online poll, coming soon (watch our Facebook page for information and to vote for your favorite artwork to be added to a t-shirt!). And we're hopeful this is the start of a beautiful friendship: "I'm so happy how the project worked out," said Johnson. "I look forward to doing it in years to come."



Student James Finch captured office cat Chip's salty personality perfectly

CHRISTMAS IN JULY!

First Annual Santa's Summer PetShop, July 22

With pandemic-life finally starting to ease, the League is excited to bounce back with a fun summer event - Santa's Summer PetShop, a family-friendly Christmas-in-July spectacular!


The event will be held at the League for Animal Welfare on July 22, from 10am-3pm. Featuring more than 40 local artists and craft vendors, food trucks, activities for kids, adoptable pets, and photos with Santa, it will be a fun way to support the League and local businesses.

Featured vendors include:

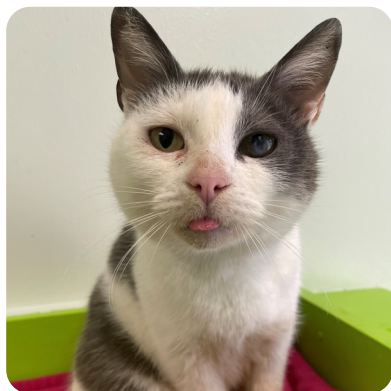
- Wildflower & Sage Photography - photos with Santa
- Green Hook Studio - hand-crocheted, whimsical creatures
- Wood Bottom Quail Farms - eggs, jellies, and supplies
- FurBaby Crafts & Creations - pet-themed apparel
- PaperPie - educational books and toys
- Ohio Woodworks & More - handmade wood items



Enjoy food from local vendor BG's Grill and the Snow Shack, and meet dozens of adoptable cats and dogs!

For more information about Santa's Summer PetShop, visit us at lfaw.org/christmasinjury or email us at info@league.org. 

ADOPT ME



Blackbelt - 5 years old, female

It's the sweet little blep for us. Yes, Blackbelt's tongue is pretty much always sticking out, and it's as adorable as it sounds. This sweet girl has been at the League for more than a year, and has battled chronic health issues during her stint (including a condition that can lead to mouth ulcers - hence, the tongue!). But after she spent time in a foster home, we're more convinced than ever that this sweet girl just needs some love and attention to be her best and healthiest self. Give this girl a chance, we know you will be repaid with so much love (and the best photo ops any cat can give!).



Boltund - 3 years old, male

Boltund loves LOTS of things - shelter life isn't one of them. This handsome boy was transferred to the League from an overcrowded shelter in Kentucky more than 3 months ago - and shelter life is really grinding him down. Even though Bo is stressed in his kennel, as soon as you give him attention, he is the best and smartest boy! Boltund is an amazing walking buddy (calm and polite), knows lots of tricks, and is eager to learn more. He does well with other dogs who are calm and patient, and loves all people with abandon. He just needs somebody to finally love him back.

View all the cats and dogs available for adoption at LFAW.org/adoption-center