

League Links 2.0

A quarterly newsletter from the
League for Animal Welfare

*League cat Dewey
has FeLV, and is
looking for a family.*



Lifting a Death Sentence

Changing Attitudes about Feline Leukemia

For decades, Feline Leukemia (FeLV) was a death sentence for cats in shelters all over the US. Thought to be incredibly contagious and tragically terminal, shelters euthanized thousands of cats who tested positive for the virus.

But then, something began to happen: shelter staff and volunteers started to question the system. It happened gradually; and it so often happened in response to a single cat who captured hearts. It was Big Sid at Crash's Landing rescue in Michigan in 2004. It was Nala at Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society in Massachusetts in 1999. It was Boba Fett at the League for Animal Welfare in 2019. Sid, Nala, Boba - they all seemed healthy; happy; ready for families. Euthanasia did not seem like the appropriate end for these vibrant, loving cats.

As these shelters began to question the status quo for FeLV cats, they realized: cats who had tested positive for FeLV were not only surviving, but thriving. They weren't sickly. They weren't dying tragic deaths. They were living normal lives, often for a few years, and sometimes for much longer.

A Legacy of Love

League Donations Pour in Through Betty White Challenge

As if we needed one more reason to keep Betty White in our hearts. The beloved actor and comedienne passed in December—just weeks before her 100th birthday.

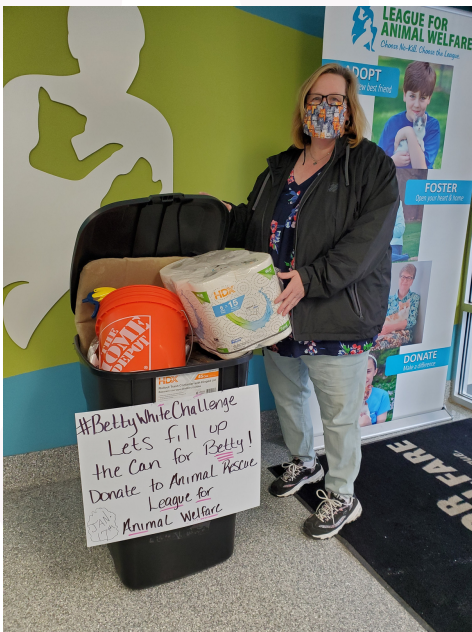
She left behind a legacy of laughter through the characters she played during her decades of acting. But she also left behind another, unexpected legacy of love, through the Betty White Challenge.

The Betty White Challenge (#BettyWhiteChallenge) swept the internet on January 17—White’s birthday. It sprang up when a user posted the challenge on social media, asking people to donate just \$5 to the animal rescue or shelter of their choice in honor of the actress, who was a lifelong animal lover.

The challenge quickly went viral, inspiring an outpouring of financial support for humane societies, animal shelters and organizations nationwide and beyond, drawing in an estimated \$12.7 million on the social platforms Facebook and Instagram alone.



The League brought in \$11,427 from the challenge!



The Milford Home Depot collected donations in honor of White.

The League enjoyed an upswell of support from the challenge, and was “inundated with online gifts— it was extraordinary!” says Executive Director Devon Smith. “We added a single Facebook post on January 17th, without much promotion. We certainly didn’t anticipate this incredible response - it was an unexpectedly beautiful movement to honor a legend, and to unite around her legacy of compassion.”

The League brought in \$11,427 from the challenge, all raised organically through grassroots support of the challenge in the community. “We are so grateful to our supporters for their generous donations during the challenge,” Smith says.

With plans to increase the League’s dog and cat intake this year, and the ongoing need for programs like None Left Behind and the spay/neuter voucher program, the windfall will go to very good causes — helping the League shelter homeless dogs and cats in our community.

Because the global challenge didn't specify a shelter or humane society, animal rights and rescue organizations large and small were the beneficiaries of White's legacy of love. The Los Angeles Zoo received more than \$90,000 in White's honor; the Best Friends Animal Society, which runs the nation's largest homeless animal sanctuary, received almost \$350,000; and across the border, Canada's Calgary Humane Society received \$70,000—and that's just a fraction of the reach.

It's a legacy that would make Betty White proud. White's work with animal safety began in the 1940s, and she had an affiliation with the Los Angeles Zoo as far back as the 1960s. She was also a supporter of the Morris Animal Foundation, the African Wildlife Foundation, and Actors & Others for Animals.

"Animals are near and dear to my heart, and I've devoted my life to trying to improve their lives." - Betty White



Young League volunteers Scout, River, and Sawyer did chores to raise money for the League in honor of White.

She welcomed pets into her world of entertainment, creating a TV show in the 1970s called "The Pet Set," which featured famous actors such as Mary Tyler Moore, Burt Reynolds and Carol Burnett showing off their pets. White reportedly once quipped that she "has to stay in show business to pay for my animal business."

According to Newsweek, White had 26 dogs at one point. The last pup she had—Pontiac, a golden retriever—was a retiree from Guide Dogs for the Blind, an organization White had supported for years.

The SPCA of Los Angeles, with which White had worked since the 1940s, said in a statement: "She was inspired to lend her celebrity to provide a voice for animals, and brought much attention to the cause of animal welfare. We will miss our Friend for Life."



Lifting a Death Sentence: Changing Attitudes about Feline Leukemia (continued)



And so were born some of the first Feline Leukemia adoption programs in shelters around the US - not as a mass movement based on medical research, but as a quiet sea change in response to a few loveable, healthy furballs that would ripple throughout shelters for the next two decades.

In the last few years, that quiet march towards life-saving has turned into a sprint, thanks to larger shelters embracing FeLV adoption programs - a move that has engendered more medical research into the virus, and led to the discovery that some cats who test positive can actually clear the infection altogether.

Austin Pets Alive! (APA), a shelter in Texas, became one of the biggest FeLV adoption programs in 2011, adopting out more than 300 FeLV cats annually. APA now serves as a model program: In 2018, it was highlighted by Maddie's Fund University to teach other shelters how to start their own FeLV programs; and APA's program was the focus of a study in the Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery, concluding "there is a "high national demand for a lifesaving option for cats diagnosed with FeLV."

In 2019, The American Association of Feline Practitioners followed suit with their position statement, noting "Cats infected with FeLV or FIV may live for many years. A decision for euthanasia should never be made solely on the basis of whether or not the cat is infected."

News in the greater Cincinnati area on the FeLV front is positive (pun intended!); in 2022, there are no longer any shelters that euthanize for FeLV (local shelters either have their own FeLV adoption programs, or transfer to partners who do - including the League).

The League is proud to embrace this life-saving momentum. In 2021, the League designated an adoption room for FeLV cats, allowing us to accept FeLV cats from the public and other shelters. The League is one of only two shelters in our area that accepts FeLV cats from other shelter partners. In 2021, 23 FeLV cats found their families through the League. And those, we can all agree, are certainly lives worth saving.



Adopting an FeLV Cat

Want to add an FeLV kitty to your home? Don't let the positive test deter you! Here's what you need to know:

- Cats can "clear" an FeLV infection; or have a "regressive" infection. These infections do not shorten a cat's lifespan. Only time can tell what type of infection your cat has.
- A "progressive" infection usually shortens lifespan to 2-4 years. Cats are generally healthy in these 2-4 years, and do not require any special medical care.
- FeLV cats can transmit the virus to other cats; if you have non-FeLV cats in your home, vaccinate them before introducing an FeLV cat.

The Loss of a Friend

BOARD MEMBER JAMIE LINDEMANN HAS DIED



Friend, animal lover and advocate, and League Board Member Jamie Lindemann has died. She was 36.

Jamie has served on the Board since 2015, lending her time and talents during a period of tremendous growth at the League. She will be remembered by her League family for her incredible smile and her warm energy - Jamie was a friend and a support system to all.

Board President Barb Casciani, who has served with Jamie on the Board since 2015, wrote "Jamie loved animals and supported the League through her participation on the Board of Directors. She also advocated for animals in the Cincinnati community and in OTR where she called home. She will be sorely missed."

"Once you become her friend, you're her friend for life."

In addition to her work at the League, Jamie also served on the Board at 4 Paws for Ability, in Xenia; and served as a CPA at the accounting firm BDO USA. Her love for and commitment to animals started at home: Jamie adopted her beloved dog, Domino, from the SPCA in 2008 (though grieving mom, Domino is safe with family and friends).

Along with animals, Jamie loved spending her time with her family, her friends, and her UC Bearcats (Jamie was a graduate of the Lindner College of Business). Jamie and her dad attended every home football and basketball game for the team. They were scheduled to attend the last home game on February 26th together.

The warmth we knew from Jamie at the League was how she was with everyone, her parents explained. Her friends stretched from elementary school to business school - "once you become her friend, you're her friend for life," said Jamie's dad. Her mom laughed about how social Jamie was, saying even she, her mom, had to be penciled into her social calendar. "But I got a spot! We had a date next week."



Jamie's family is taking solace in having had a lovely day with her just before she died. "She's been as happy as we've ever seen her," her mom said. "She has been so happy for the last few years. She just got back from Hawaii, and was talking about going back every year." We will all remember and miss that warmth, that happiness, and that smile.

Doggie Boot Camp

BOWSER TRAVELS TO DOGS PLAYING FOR LIFE

Bowser came to the League in October, and it was clear from the start that he is an incredibly smart and very energetic dog. It's a combination that makes shelter life tough - smart, energetic dogs get easily bored and frustrated in a kennel. And bored, frustrated dogs act out in impolite ways!

Adding to his woes: Bowser had the bad fortune to be born a "pit bull" at a time when bully breeds suffer from crippling breed bias in the US. These blockheads routinely get passed over by adopters - on average, bully breeds spend 2-3 times longer waiting for their families than dogs of any other breed, regardless of their personality.

Sure enough: Bowser got bored. Bowser got ignored by adopters. And Bowser started acting out to let us know what he thought of the whole affair!



We knew our talented partners at Dogs Playing for Life could help Bowser shine. DPFL focuses on giving dogs the tools to handle stress, and helps them learn to interact with other dogs and with people in adoption-worthy ways. Bowser traveled down to his DPFL boot camp in February, and is doing great!

We know Bowser will be the very best boy - and hopefully send us back a bit of that Florida sunshine! 🐾🐾

ADOPT ME



Lacey Lou - 2.5 years old, female

Lacey Lou came to the League from a smaller rescue group who was unable to adopt out cats with Feline Leukemia (see cover story!). Lacey Lou can be a bit shy at first, and so she might not grab your attention immediately; but her sweet little smooshy face betrays a big, cuddly heart beneath that shy exterior. Don't overlook her simply because she has FeLV! Lacey Lou is healthy, and has years of love left to give you; and she can be safely integrated into your home as long as your cats are vaccinated!



Corbin - 3 years old, male

Corbin has been at the League for FAR TOO LONG, for a very good boy. He's been exuberantly trying to find his new family for 11 months - stress on the "exuberantly." Corbin seems hyper when you first meet him, and so nobody has given this handsome boy a chance. But beneath that exuberant first impression is a sweet, able-to-be-calm cuddlebug who really needs his own family. Corbin will do well with other dogs who can match his playful style; and he's great with kids!

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