

League Links 2.0

A quarterly newsletter from the
League for Animal Welfare



In June of 2022, the League got a phone call that seemed benign enough - a stray cat had been found in West Chester, and was microchipped to us. A healthy, microchipped cat - a slam dunk! Find the owner, and send this fluff ball home quickly.

Well not so fast.

The microchip was not up-to-date - we didn't know who the cat OR the owner was. We hastily named the cat Chip (because she was micro'chip'ped - and because we thought she was a boy ...).

Our committed staff was undeterred - queue the "sifting-through-stacks-of-paper-files." Eureka! Our Operations Manager found the original adoption paperwork - Chip was Fantastik, one of a litter of kittens who were named after cleaning products (!). Adopted in 2019, we had the adopter's contact information!

Well ... not so fast.

The phone number no longer belonged to the adopter; the emails went unreturned. The finder, who originally wanted to adopt Chip, was no longer able to.

And then, our "slam dunk" developed fatty liver syndrome, and nearly died.

And so began the tale of the League's most notorious cat, Chip.

A HOME OF HER OWN

Finding the Perfect Family for the League's Most Notorious Cat

Kitten Season

LIVING THROUGH THE EXHAUSTION OF THE CUTEST DELUGE



Just two days old, Smokey was found outside, alone - and will require round-the-clock bottle feeding for 4-5 weeks. .

It sounds cute - “kitten season.” Conjuring up images of frolicking fluffs, meowing plaintively. Who doesn’t love an adorable kitten?

But nothing strikes dread in the heart of animal welfare advocates like those two words - because it’s not one adorable kitten; or even a few. It’s an endless stream of thousands of kittens, flowing into our area’s overcrowded shelters in numbers that feel impossible to keep up with.

Kitten season refers to the spring and summer months, from April to October, when the vast majority of kittens are born. Cats are seasonal breeders, going into heat in temperate months when litters are most likely to survive. Female cats can breed as early as 4 months old; and produce as many as 3 litters each year.

The math is overwhelming - a single cat can produce 12-18 cats a year, at her most fertile. With thousands of un-spayed females in our neighborhoods, kitten season feels more like an onslaught than an animal-lover’s utopia!

Complicating the care of these little ones, most kittens are born outside, to unowned cats. “In 2023, 70% of the kittens who came into the League were born to community (stray) cats - ” shared Sarah Smith, the League’s Cat Care Coordinator. This increases the chance that the kittens are orphaned before they are weaned; or come into the shelter with significant illnesses or injuries. And *that* significantly increases the resources - both human and financial - needed to care for them effectively. “Kitten season is certainly the most taxing time for our foster system,” explained Niki Flanagan, the League’s Foster Care Coordinator. “I go from having a handful of pets in foster homes, to having hundreds - most needing extensive care, like round-the-clock bottle feeding, daily medications, even subcutaneous fluids. It’s incredibly difficult to find enough fosters, with enough time and experience, to meet the need.”



Found in Felicity as strays, these twelve kittens came in with severe eye infections; heart malformations; and pneumonia. They will be in care for several weeks, and cost well over \$2,000 in medical care.

In spite of several accessible options to spay/neuter community cats, the need is unrelenting. “We took in 790 kittens in 2023,” said Smith. “In 2024, we’re on track to nearly double that number - we’re not even through May, and we’ve already had 310 kittens come through our doors. Where do we put them all?” she laughed ruefully.

The League is the only shelter in Clermont County accepting cats, though - the designated shelter for the district handles only dogs. “If we don’t take those kittens, we know there aren’t many, or even any, other outlets,” said Executive Director Devon Smith. “And while we don’t have exact numbers, we know that most kittens born outside do not survive their first year. So the League Team pushes incredibly hard to make space for as many kittens as possible - but it gets tough!” Smith admits.



League fosters Barb Matulionis and Jen Haynes multi-task: teaching a class on how to bottle-feed kittens, while bottle-feeding a kitten!

In 2024, the League is on track to take in more than 1,000 kittens - nearly twice as many as the previous year, and quadruple the number from just five years ago.

The League has been grateful for offsite partners, like Petco stores and Purrfect Day Cat Cafe, which have expanded the number of adopters for the slew of kittens. “We couldn’t do it without them,” said Devon Smith. “They increased our cat adoptions by 30%” But adopters are just one piece of the puzzle to help all these kittens: “Fosters!” remarked Sarah Smith, when asked about the most critical need during kitten season. “And donations ...” added Devon Smith. “They’re so expensive to care for!”

“But those are the downstream solutions,” continued Devon Smith (referring to Desmond Tutu’s quote on finding the source of a problem). “The upstream solution is to stop the overpopulation before it starts. The real solution is accessible spay/neuter for every cat.”

The League has expanded to do that, too. “We offer free spay/neuter for community cats,” said Clinic Coordinator Brookelynn Rowland, “and really affordable spay/neuter for owned cats. We just need more people to take us up on it!”

Because our shelters are drowning, downstream.

“What do you think of when I say kitten season?” Devon Smith asked kitten foster Jen Haynes. “No sleep!” she replied.

HOW YOU CAN HELP



Trap/Neuter/Return

If you feed cats - or even if you see cats - fix cats! The League provides free spay/neuter for community cats twice a week.

Spay/Neuter for Everyone!

Your cats might be fixed - but are your neighbor’s? Your brother’s? Connect pet owners in need with resources to sterilize their cat - for their sake, and ours!

Foster

All kittens under 8 weeks go into foster homes - hundreds at a time! Save a life - be a kitten foster!

Donate

Donate supplies, like Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR) and kitten wet food; donate cash to help offset veterinary expenses!



A Home of Her Own (Continued)



Brave, or ill-advised? League staff regularly dress Chip.

It's not this abortive start that led to Chip's notoriety, of course - it's her spicy personality that has earned Chip her own t-shirt; countless social media posts; her paw print in League cement; and a loyal following among League supporters. As likely to rub up against your leg tenderly as she is to bite you; as likely to seek out affection as she is to run at you aggressively with murder on her mind, Chip has kept League staff, volunteers, and the poor unwitting public on their toes for two years with a singular charisma that is cat-ness at its finest. Did we mention she also hates other cats?

Chip has served loyally as the League's lobby cat since August, 2022 - a curious post for an avowed biter of most hands; but the only post available for a cat who finds the existence of other cats particularly objectionable.

What we're saying, dear reader, is that Chip is perfect - but in two years, not a single family has inquired about adopting her.

When vulnerable, orphaned kittens come in the front door, their first introduction to the League is Chip hissing at them. The last thing that dogs see when they head off to their new families is Chip swatting at their back sides.

What we're saying, dear reader, is that Chip is perfect. And if you have met her, you can't help but agree.

We don't know what Chip's life looked like between her adoption in 2019, and her inelegant return in 2022. We hope she was loved; we hope her spicy attitude is nature, not nurture.

But since her return, life has put Chip through the ringer. After she conquered fatty liver syndrome (which involved a feeding tube for several weeks), Chip was diagnosed with FIP - a usually-fatal virus, whose sole experimental treatment requires 84 days of injections. We celebrated when she recovered from FIP - but just 4 months after getting the all-clear from FIP, in April 2023, Chip was diagnosed with lymphoma.

After several rounds of chemotherapy, as of this writing, Chip is healthy; happy (we think?); and significantly more rotund than when we first met her. She has her own brand, even. But what Chip doesn't have: her own family.

In her two years at the League, not a single family has inquired about adopting Chip. One sweet couple seemed just on the precipice of suggesting it - and then she bit them.

So who is the perfect family for this spirited fluff?



Chip earned her own t-shirt - a first in League history.

Chip will need to be an only cat (if you respect the well-being of other cats - we think she'll do fine with dogs, whom she'll put quickly in their place). And she will need humans who thoroughly and truly appreciate the capriciousness of cats.

In return for your good will? Chip drools when she's happy - in case you weren't already convinced of her perfection.



An Affur To Remember

THE LEAGUE HOSTS ITS FIRST BRIDAL SHOWER



*Wylie wishes the bride and groom lots of joy on their wedding day (and *maybe* a new pup to help celebrate?).*

On May 19th, the League was honored to be a part of a furry-tail: we hosted a bridal shower! League volunteer and adopters Brandy Williams and Eric Wolsefer celebrated their upcoming June nuptials, in a pawty fit for fur-ever. Planned by mother-of-the-bride, Tracy Erdman, and sister-of-the-bride, Emily Wolk, the event featured dog-themed decor, food, gift bags, and games; and special guest appearances by League dogs Moo-Moo, Pippa, and Wylie. “[The concept] was so different,” said Erdman. “When the animals entered - the laughter and smiles were in abundance.”

It made sense for the dog-loving couple, who adopted League alum Lizzie (formerly Kiwi) in March. When asked what inspired the family to choose the League for the celebration, she explained “It was Brandy’s idea! Anyone who knows her, knows her love of animals. She has a college background in veterinary studies, she volunteers at the League. Our whole family is animal-oriented. That’s my girl - that’s her personality.”

And so the bride’s family set out to create a shower fit for ... well, dogs! With gift bags filled with Scooby snacks; hot *dogs* with Skyline; hors d’oeuvres shaped like dog-bones, the crowd celebrated the couple, ready to say “I chews you!” in style. Dog Moo-Moo chose the first winner of the bridal shower games (the party-goer whose hot-dog-filled-Dixie-cup Moo-Moo devoured first was the lucky winner!), but with choruses of “Who Let the Dogs Out!” pulsing through the party, there were no losers here - especially our shelter pets. At the bride’s request, party-goers brought donations for the shelter. And though the couple’s dog, Lizzie, didn’t attend, sweet postcards of the lucky alum were featured in gift bags, thanking the crowd for celebrating with her mom.

The only “bone” of contention? When both Erdman and groom Wolsefer fell for guest pup Wylie. “Thought we might have to duke it out over Wylie!” laughed Erdman. “I lost my dog Lola in 2022. He’s the first dog that made me consider another!”

“I wanted to do something Brandy would remember,” said Erdman lovingly of the party she helped plan. “It was the perfect idea. To see that happy smile on her face ... it was priceless. She was in her element.” It certainly was an affur to remember!

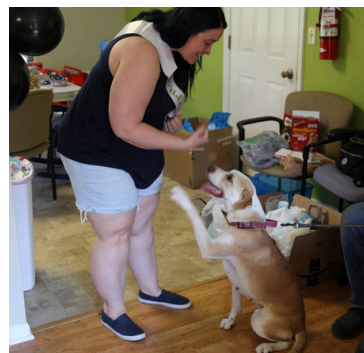
Interested in planning a special celebration at the League? Contact us at info@lfaw.org for more information!



Dog-themed decor, games, and food were a highlight of the day.



The bride and groom open presents.



Pippa, always happy to be included, gets special attention.



Moo Moo can't believe her good fortune - there are COUCHES!

WHISKEY & WHISKERS

9th Annual Gala Hopes to Raise \$100,000 for Life-saving

Whiskey & Whiskers, the League's signature event, celebrates its 9th year on September 28, 2024 at the Kenwood Country Club. The gala is the League's biggest fundraiser of the year, bringing in tens-of-thousands of lifesaving dollars to help shelter nearly 2,000 of greater Cincinnati's homeless pets.

The evening features dinner, games, and a silent and live auction. You can try your hand at a Whiskey Toss to bring home a premier bourbon; outbid your neighbor for a once-in-a-lifetime vacation; and enjoy dinner and cocktails with animal lovers like you!

Tickets for the event will be available on our website starting June 15; or register by phone at 513-735-2299. Early-bird-pricing available through July 15. Register early so you don't miss this life-saving event!



*Register for the event starting June 15 at
www.lfaw.org/events/whiskey-and-whiskers*

ADOPT ME



Shirley - 4 years old, female

When Shirley came to the League in 2022, saved in the nick of time from euthanasia at a crowded shelter in North Carolina, she was shy, and easily overlooked in her adoption room. Fast-forward 2 years, and Shirley is a sweet, loving, outgoing gal who's the first one to greet you when you enter her room! But in spite of coming out of her shell, Shirley still hasn't met her family - no one has even asked about adopting our sweet girl. And after recently celebrating her 2nd anniversary at the League, she's starting to wonder if anyone ever will. This gorgeous gal loves being brushed; is good with other cats; likes to meet new people; and is ready to be in a home.



Sunny - 2 years old, female

Sunny is all personality! This silly girl loves to play with toys; is great with other dogs; and instantly loves all people she meets (probably no cats though - she's a little *too* into cats for their well-being!). She will make you laugh with her antics - from trying to convince her that it's time to put that ball down, to getting a little pushy about sharing that ice cream with you, Sunny will be by your side through it all. Sunny has been at the League for 8 months - and nobody who knows her can figure out why! When the right family gives this sweet, silly, pushy, perfect dog a chance, the only regret they will have is that they didn't bring her into their family sooner.

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