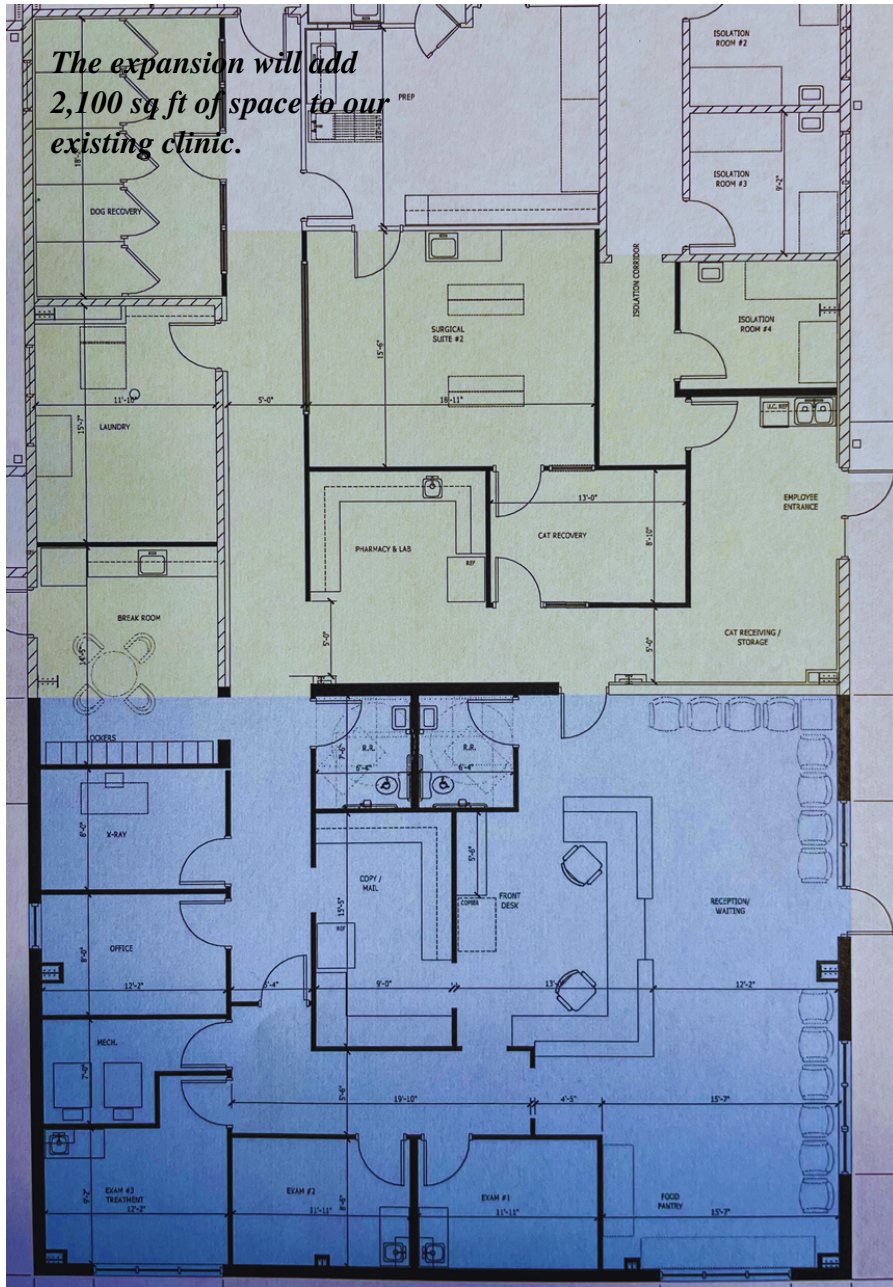


# League Links 2.0

A quarterly newsletter from the  
League for Animal Welfare

*The expansion will add 2,100 sq ft of space to our existing clinic.*



In 2023, the League served 3,524 cats and dogs through our sheltering and public veterinary programs.

In 2025, the League will serve more than twice that number of pets, with 7,700 cats and dogs coming through our doors by the end of this year.

The growth has been staggering - but also, critical for a community that has needed the League to step up to help its animals. From bridging the gap left when our county shelter stopped all cat intake in 2021; to opening a full-service, affordable veterinary clinic to respond to rampant inflation in veterinary medicine in 2025, the League has been at the forefront of responding to Clermont's need for its pets.

And we have done it all in a physical space built to help a third of the animals we're now serving.

All that will change in 2026, as the League gets set to expand the Sis & Dick Miller Wellness Clinic. A construction project slated to be completed in September, 2026 will add 2,100 sq ft of space.

The expanded clinic will double the size and capacity of the spay/neuter surgical suite; add a second surgical suite for public pets' non-spay/neuter surgeries like mass removals, amputations, blockages, and enucleations; add an exam room to serve our wellness clinic clients more promptly; add post-surgical recovery space for safer post-operative care; and add a shelter cat intake area, increasing our kennel space for incoming cats by 25%.

It's an expansion that can't come too soon. "If you visit our clinic on a Monday - when our spay/neuter team is fixing 40 cats for the public, our PAW Clinic team is seeing 15 urgent care cases, our Shelter Cat Intake team is doing basic medical on 30 new shelter cats ... it's a cooperative and gentle, but *mad* rush for the microscope and the blood machine, all while trying to maneuver around cages of animals waiting to be seen. This team has performed absolute miracles in

## Good Things Grow

*Construction Slated for Spring 2026 to Expand the Sis & Dick Miller Wellness Clinic at the League*



# A Decade of Dedication

LEAH DOPF CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF MAKING LIFE BETTER FOR DOGS

A decade. Ten years. 3,653 days. That's how long Leah Dopf has been a part of the League for Animal Welfare - making a lasting impact on every life she meets, both human and animal. And it's how long everyone at the League has been counting our blessings for knowing her!

## A Dream Deferred

Leah always knew she would end up working with animals. As a little girl, like many kids, she dreamed of becoming a veterinarian. But the seemingly endless years of vet school gave her pause. Still determined to work in a field that let her care for animals, Leah enrolled at Live Oaks Vocational School, studying to become a vet technician in her junior and senior years of high school. Her dedication to the animals that would be so striking to Leah's coworkers at the League years later, impressed her mentors in school as well. By her senior year, she was offered a position at a private veterinary clinic.

But Leah was looking for a role that gave her more direct and sustained interactions with the animals in her charge. With her veterinary credentials in her pocket, Leah took jobs at Camp Bow Wow, Wags, and Unleashed, dog daycares and training facilities where she honed her skills as a savvy dog caregiver. Eventually, she brought her talent and heart to the League in 2015, starting part-time on weekends as a kennel technician. That was just the beginning of something great for us at the League. The beginning of *someone* great.



*The only staff member who has been at the League longer than Leah is Silke Thomasson - so naturally, they are "work wives," posing with dog Della in 2023.*



*Leah with long-term dog Wishbone, whom she took care of for the 3 years he spent with us before being adopted this year!*

## Moving On Up

Leah was quickly promoted at the League, moving from kennel technician to veterinary assistant – but then, always back again, thanks to her undying passion and commitment to hands-on care. It's the one-on-one work with dogs on a daily basis that Leah loves, and she keeps returning to the position that affords her that (no matter how many times the League tries to convince her to take on big roles!).

It's not just her own position at the League that has changed over the years – in Leah's 10-year tenure, the organization itself has grown tremendously.

When she first arrived, the League had no clinic, limited space for puppies, and animals had to be sent elsewhere for spaying and neutering. "It was a nightmare!" Leah recalls. Yet she stayed, weathering every challenge with dedication and grace - and she wouldn't change a thing. The League has become family to her.

Today, Leah thrives in a role that lets her pursue her love of animals while maintaining a healthy work-life balance as a mother of two small kids.



Her favorite part of the job: watching animals, especially dogs, grow, gain confidence, and form bonds, despite challenging pasts. It's her "why" - the reason Leah has stayed for a decade.

And Leah is integral in giving those dogs the space and the love to do just that - heal from their pasts, and get ready for their futures. Dog Care Coordinator Dawn Oberschlake says, "She spends so much time building strong relationships with the dogs and provides detailed feedback, making evaluations much easier. If Leah's on a task, I know it will get done and done well. She gives 110% every single day."

Canine Enrichment Leader Ronni Valle adds, "Leah has a natural talent for reading dogs and communicating clearly with the team. Her intuition and care make all the difference."

"My favorite part about Leah?" laughs Executive Director Devon Smith. "We tease each other about it, but she always tells me like it is, no punches pulled -



*Leah's job is physically demanding, but she shows up every day, rain or shine.*

*"It's important to roll with the punches, walk with your heart, and truly love what you're doing."*

it's invaluable. She is not just an advocate for the dogs she works with - she's an advocate for the people she works with, too. The staff trust her - she's their work mom."

### **The Future Looks Bright**

Leah has seen the League's best and worst days, but her passion and love for the organization never wavers. She dreams of getting a mobile medical clinic up and going again (the League briefly had a mobile clinic in 2016-18 that Leah assisted on); and she loves supporting programs like our Pet Food Pantry and low-cost spay and neuter clinic. As much as she loves the dogs she cares for at the League, Leah's ultimate commitment is to help keep pets healthy and in their homes.

What's her secret to loving her job for 10 years? Leah says, "It's important to roll with the punches, walk with your heart, and truly love what you're doing." And, of course, occasionally take the work home with you! Leah has adopted a sweet Beagle named Levi, a kitten named Mossy, and a beautiful German Shepherd named Sage from the League over the years. As she was being interviewed for this story, Leah was in a battle with herself *not* to adopt a shy beagle named Ella. Spoiler alert: she adopted shy beagle Ella. When you love dogs the way Leah does, sometimes you have to give into temptation!

"It doesn't feel like 10 years," Leah says. But after a decade of hard work, care, and love, it's clear she has found her place, and the League is better for it. When asked if she would do it all again, her answer is simple: "Absolutely." The League would choose Leah over and over again, too. 🐾



*Leah's coworkers made her an appreciation wall on her anniversary date. "Fierce," "gives 1000%," "hardworking," "strong," "intuitive," "mentor/mom."*



*Leah held out for about 10 days before adopting Ella the beagle! We knew she couldn't last!*

## “Good Things Grow” (Continued)

this space - but it's not fair, or up to our rigorous standards of care, to keep doing all this in a space equipped to be doing far less,” explained Executive Director Devon Smith.

“We had two choices,” continued Clinic Director Sarah Smith: “do less; or create more space! But this isn't a team that ever chooses ‘do less.’ So really, there was only one option.” But that option came with a hefty price tag - \$1.35 million for the expansion, the reconstruction, and the medical and kennel equipment needed to outfit the new facility. The project was necessary; the funding was intimidating.

Fortunately for the League, the one group even less prone to choosing “less” are our incredible donors. As we introduced them to the need, and the solution, there was no hesitation - they wanted to make this dream a reality.



*Our vaccine clinic serves an average of 80 pets in just 2 hours - and does it all with only 2 exam rooms! The clinic expansion will increase the size of the lobby, and add a 3<sup>rd</sup> exam room.*

*“This isn't a team that ever chooses 'do less' - so there was only one option.”*

Board Member Barb Casciani, who has served as a volunteer and leader at the League since 2014, didn't hesitate. “I wanted to make a meaningful contribution to give that incredible staff the resources they need to do the work they're doing. I have watched this clinic grow, and do such critical work - reducing the homeless animal population through spay/neuter, keeping pets healthy and in their loving homes through affordable vet care. This work matters - they deserve the right resources to do it to the best of their ability, and to continue to grow to meet our community's need.”

Volunteers Keith and Karen Gossage pledged the largest gift the clinic expansion received. The Gossages have volunteered at the League since 1999, and been witness to so many new programs at the League. This one is especially close to their hearts. “It matters that people can take great care of their pets. Pets are family - no one should have to choose between giving their family the best care, or giving them up. This clinic keeps families together; it keeps pets from suffering. We are honored to make sure that legacy continues.”

With major gifts contributed by the Joanie Bernard Foundation, long-time Cincinnati animal welfare advocate Francie Pavey, and local cat-lover and League adopter Kathy Backherms, the clinic expansion had the backing it needed to finally say yes. Construction is slated to begin in March.

Donations for the expansion are still warmly welcomed. “We have raised just over \$1 million for the clinic expansion, and that will get the facility built,” said Executive Director Smith. “In 2026, we need to raise the funds for the kennels and the medical equipment to outfit it. I have no doubt this incredible community will help us make it happen - we have been so fortunate to work with this generous, animal-loving group to turn this vision into a reality.”

“We had gotten acclimated to doing so much with so little,” said Paw Clinic Veterinarian Erin Luker. “It's really heartwarming and encouraging to know that our work is seen, and supported.”

If you are interested in supporting the Clinic Expansion Project, please reach out to Devon Smith at [devon@lfaw.org](mailto:devon@lfaw.org) for opportunities to change the world for animals in our community.



*We converted shelter isolation space to surgical recovery for the spay/neuter clinic - leaving no space to quarantine shelter dogs with infectious illness.*



*Our dental table doubles as the spay/neuter recovery table - so we can't perform both surgeries at once. We fell 6 months' behind on dentals as a result.*



*Feral cats recover in the hallway, across from barking dogs.*



# A Night to Remember

WHISKEY & WHISKERS RAISES MORE THAN \$200,000 FOR THE ANIMALS



The 10<sup>th</sup> annual Whiskey & Whiskers was our most successful yet, raising \$203,000! A special thank you to:

- Presenting Sponsors, Water Tower Fine Wines, Total Quality Logistics, and MWI Animal Health
- Generous donors, Keith Gossage who matched every donation made at the \$1,000 level; and an anonymous donor who matched all gifts made during the Shelter Medical Fund-A-Need Auction!
- Our wonderful guests who made the evening incredibly special and fun!

**SAVE THE DATE: SEPTEMBER 19<sup>TH</sup> WHISKEY & WHISKERS 2026!**





# And To All a Good Night

**Home for the Holidays aims to place 75 Dogs, Cats & Chip (!) in Foster Homes for Christmas**

Not a creature was stirring, not even a ...

CHIP!

The League for Animal Welfare will be celebrating the holiday season by NOT celebrating with our shelter pets! Because, with any luck, they will be nestled, all snug in their foster beds, for Home for the Holidays.

Foster homes are needed to give 36 shelter dogs and 40 shelter cats the holiday treatment from December 23-26 - a cozy bed, a bite or two of the Christmas ham, maybe even their own stocking. Because shelter pets deserve Christmas magic, too.

Fosters will be picked up on Tuesday, December 23 from 4-6pm; and return to the shelter on Friday, December 26 at 10am.

“This break from shelter stress is so important for our animals,” explained Dog Care Coordinator Dawn Oberschlake. “On Christmas, pets should be cozied up with a loving family, not by themselves in a cold kennel.”



*Chip has never been Home for the Holidays - but she's been practicing her holiday cheer.*

To sign up, email [dawn@lfaw.org](mailto:dawn@lfaw.org) (dog fosters) or [brookelynn@lfaw.org](mailto:brookelynn@lfaw.org) (cat) fosters. Include in your email if there are other pets or small kids (under 10) in the household so you get just the right houseguest for Christmas. The League provides food, litter, and a dog crate - you just provide love!

And yes, Chip is eligible for foster, too. 

**SIGN UP FOR HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS!**

To foster a dog, email [dawn@lfaw.org](mailto:dawn@lfaw.org).

To foster a cat, email [brookelynn@lfaw.org](mailto:brookelynn@lfaw.org)

ADOPT ME



## Ditch- 2.5 years old, male

Ditch, as you may surmise, came to us after being found in a ditch in Goshen. The poor bedraggled thing was in such poor shape he wasn't even able to move - but the universe looked out for him, and a Good Samaritan not only found him, but rushed him to a veterinarian for care. He came to the League when that veterinary office didn't have the heart to ask the finder to put him back outside after treatment. Ditch suffers from allergies and a predilection to itch his ears, so he sports a trendy pineapple collar. But we think the love and peace of his own home will help him finally reach total health, sans pineapple and ditches.



## Megan - 2.5 years old, female

Megan came to the League in August, after several harrowing months of being out on her own as a stray traipsing around Lewis County, Kentucky. This sweet, shy girl had to be trapped by their dog warden. She was malnourished, suffering from mange, and very wary of humans who, it would appear, hadn't done much good in her life up until that point. Megan struggles in the shelter environment - the stress of shelter living really wears her down. But this shy girl blossoms in a home, with people she can learn to trust. Megan is fine with other dogs (but can get overwhelmed by the hyper ones!), and cats - but would also be content being your only best friend.

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