



the Blue Bell FOUNDATION FOR CATS

ENSURING YOUR CAT'S FUTURE

Blue Bell MEWS

WINTER 2022

Letter from the Assistant Director

Dear Friends,

Every day is a miracle at Blue Bell! If there were one phrase to sum up all the incredible things that happen at Blue Bell, this is it. There is a special sort of magic here that makes the improbable possible, the same magic that fills the holiday season, the magic of love. In our last newsletter, I shared with you Jambo's story. While it is an extraordinary story, it is just one of so many examples of the miracles I see with Blue Bell cats. I would like to share some of these other miracles with you.



When I met Mittens in April 2019, she was already an extremely frail 21 years old and had been at Blue Bell most of her life. She had a spot claimed on the lower bunk in the Bertha Yergat cottage and only moved for the essentials: eating, drinking, using the litter box and to snuggle into the lap of anyone who sat near her. In December, she developed a very serious upper respiratory infection and we were all getting ready to say goodbye. The volunteers showered her with love and she miraculously recovered. She lived another four months, enough time to celebrate her 22nd birthday and see the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, before passing in April 2020. This tiny old cat had been loved to life.

Cody's Blue Bell miracle began when his owner passed away. Cody was an incredibly sweet and loving cat so the executor of his owner's estate placed him at a local shelter hoping that someone would adopt him. However, he was also severely overweight and no one was interested in giving him a new home. Fortunately, his guardian knew about Blue Bell and Cody got a new home here in October 2013. Our Cat Caregiver Rima met Cody while she was volunteering at the shelter. She decided to remain part of his life by joining our Blue Bell team in 2014. In July 2018, Cody was diagnosed with gastrointestinal lymphoma, the most common cancer in cats. He was put on our cancer medication protocol, but Cody also had a large dose of one of the best medicines of all, love. Cody was beloved by both volunteers and cats. He formed very close bonds with several of his housemates and could often be seen cuddling with one of his back legs draped over his pals. In late 2020, his health started to decline and we decided to do another abdominal ultrasound to see how his disease was progressing. The prognosis was very grim. I was in the room with our internist during the procedure and she told me that we should be prepared for his quality of life to decline rapidly. Once again, our staff and volunteers showered him with love (and chicken, which was his absolute favorite thing to eat). Cody lived one year and two months beyond the date of that second ultrasound until we finally had to make a decision for euthanasia in March 2022. The average survival time with treatment for cats diagnosed with low grade lymphoma is about 1.5 years. Cody lived nearly 3.75 years beyond diagnosis with his extra dosing of love.

Sammy was left at a high kill shelter. At approximately 20 years old, and with a large abscess on the right side of his face and neck, he didn't have a lot of time for his miracle. Fortunately, MeowzResQ pulled him from the shelter and

contacted Blue Bell to place him with us through our Community Cat Fund, a fund which underwrites the cost of our Lifetime Care Program for senior, un-adoptable cats from local animal shelters that are accepted for residence. Sammy arrived at Blue Bell in September 2020 and instantly captured our hearts. He bonded with staff, volunteers and other cats; no one could resist his insistent meows and kitten-like charm. Although treated aggressively, thorough diagnostics revealed that the abscess affecting the right side of his head turned out to be an incurable, chronic condition. It returned 3 times between his arrival and his passing in February 2021. Some people would have been repulsed by the abscess and given up on a cat in Sammy's condition. But our staff and volunteers loved him fiercely. Despite all that he endured, he was always happy and playful, and greeted everyone with a cheerful hello. We don't know what his life was like before he came to us, but at Blue Bell Sammy had the loving home that he deserved.

In this newsletter you will also read about the passing of Adam, another incredible miracle cat, and be introduced to Claude, one of our newer residents. Despite his own laundry list of chronic illnesses, Adam comforted many other Blue Bell residents during their final days. Another beneficiary of our Community Cat Fund, Claude was rescued from the streets of Fountain Valley by a combination of resources from OC Community Cats, our Cat Care Coordinator Joyce, and one of our volunteers. We hope you will consider making a holiday donation to help us continue the daily miracle of the Blue Bell Foundation.

Wishing you and your families all the best this holiday season and always,

Jenna Genovese-Mikula
Assistant Director



We hope you enjoyed this poignant "Holiday Miracle" story. All 3 came to us as hardship cases—their 1st miracles were finding us as described in Jenna's account. (Mitten's 1st miracle was that she had ended up as a stray in a volunteer's yard). Their 2nd miracles— all 3 lived beyond the usual life expectancies for their diagnoses.



Sammy pictured above.

Cody (L) "cradles" Mittens with his back leg.

NEW RESIDENTS

HANAKO, 12, came to us on June 3. She is a pretty tuxedo kitty with the classic white bib. Her owner passed away several years ago so Hanako moved in with her owner's son's family. They loved her dearly, but she developed some behavioral issues in their home. Hanako is a Japanese girl's name meaning "flower child". She was a bit shy at first so she was sequestered, but came out of her shell. Her suite door is open and she now receives visitors. She loves her fresh-air patio. She is a sweet and quiet girl who enjoys brushing and dehydrated chicken as a snack.



LILY, 12 This beautiful Snowshoe girl came August 13 after her owner passed away. Her owner's sister and caregiver brought Lily to us. It was an emotional parting but they know Lily will have a wonderful home with us. They have since been to visit with her. Lily is a friendly girl and began bonding with staff and volunteers right away. She wasn't too comfortable with her new kitty housemates at first, but after supervised introductions, she has warmed up to them. She is now out and about in the main community of the lower house and patio.



CLAUDE, 12-13, came July 23. We were contacted by someone about a stray cat who appeared to be old, thin, and blind. As our main mission is pre-planned placement, other resources were given. A few days later, the person said no rescues were able to help. So our Cat Care Coordinator, Joyce, who also works with feral cats, stepped in to assess the situation and at least get him off the street, and if necessary, humanely euthanized. His tipped ear indicated he had been neutered. Joyce took him to the vet who confirmed he was at least partially blind and needed to see a specialist. Both eyes are cloudy—he has no vision in his right eye, and partial vision in his left. Other than that, there are no other health problems. Director Susan approved him to come to us as a **Community Cat Fund*** case. At first, only staff was allowed with him. Though not aggressive, he was scared and would hiss if approached. His appetite was good, and he has gained weight. With staff's patience, they are able to administer his 3 different eye medications with no resistance. He has follow-up care with the specialist to check his progress. His sweet personality has appeared. Volunteers are now allowed to sit with him, and he loves pets and chin scratches. He purrs and kneads his blanket in response to this hands-on compassion and love.



ISABELLA, 16, arrived on August 27. She has some age-related health issues that require diligent medical management which was too much for her owners. Wanting her to live her remaining years in comfort with the proper therapeutic care, they turned to us. Isabella is a sweet, talkative and resilient girl. Mostly white, she has the cutest black markings on the top of her head that looks like she's wearing Minnie Mouse Ears! She quickly made friends with staff and volunteers. She likes to burrow under her beds and make a little cave to sleep in. She quickly adapted and is out of her suite and now enjoys mingling in the lower house community and prancing around the patio. This precious girl is adjusting well to the Blue Bell life!



***Our "Community Cat Fund" is a special program that allows us to rescue senior cats from hardship situations or from local animal shelters. You can designate donations to go specifically to this fund by noting it on your donation slip or via our donations page's drop-down menu.**

Blue Bell Sponsors Art Contest Winner

Part of Blue Bell's mission is being immersed in the Laguna Beach and South County Communities—including our affiliation with local artists and the Laguna College of Art and Design. Blue Bell has a mural painted by **Bill Atkins**, Art Director of **Gallery Q**, in our main house, and a sculptor of our "Greeter Cat" created by **LCAD's Rebecca Kruger**. As such, Blue Bell sponsored a \$100 prize to the Gallery Q "Susi Q's Animals Wild & Not So Wild" art show over the summer. Over 200 visitors voted on artwork. First prize for Best in Show was **Joan Schully's** "Dog Wash" for which she received our \$100 donation. Runner-up was **Ellen Zimet's** "Tres Amigos" piece for which she won \$50, donated by the **Catmosphere Laguna Foundation**.

Notes Bill Atkins "We appreciate our wonderful partners, the two cat non-profits, for their support of Gallery Q's show and our artists. Jenna Mikula, assistant director at Blue Bell and **Gail Landau**, founder of Catmosphere, weren't in the least fazed that a dog and three donkeys were the featured winners, not cats – it's all about loving art, and celebrating the important roles that animals play in our lives."

Blue Bell Volunteer **Alex Larsen** also participated with her beautiful portrait of our gorgeous kitty **Blue Eyes**. Though it didn't win, we are honored to have it showcased in our lower cottage where our precious Blue Eyes resides.



Jenna, (R) presents Joan with her \$100 prize.



Alex Larsen's portrait of Blue Eyes

MEMORIALS

ADAM, 16, came to us in November 2012 with his housemate Katie after their owner passed away. Katie passed in 2021. Extremely good-natured and affectionate (to humans and other cats) Adam spent his entire 9 1/2 years with us living in the Lower House. This is because he had an incredible ability to bond with other felines, and the ones he chose were often the shyer, older or sicker cats. He was a true comfort cat to many of his feline friends at the time of their passings. Over time, Adam had slowly accumulated many of the ailments common to older cats: stomatitis, kidney disease, pancreatitis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and GI lymphoma. The stress of these multiple chronic conditions led to him slowly declining until he needed to be hospitalized on May 4 with severe anemia and an enlarged heart. We thought we would have to say goodbye to him then, but he rallied after one night in the hospital. He was able to spend one more week at Blue Bell saying goodbye to all his human and feline friends before his body finally gave out. On May 13, Volunteer **Kat**, with whom he had a special bond, and Jenna kissed him one last time and Joyce took him to our vet and held him as he peacefully passed. Just as Adam had done, another sweet kitty, **D.J.** groomed and gave Adam love during his demise. Within weeks, D.J. too would pass. Read on.



D.J., 12 Our sweet DJ passed suddenly on May 24—heartbreaking as he had just joined us in January after his owner died. A week before he passed, he started vomiting and not eating. He was hospitalized at our vet. Unfortunately, he did not improve during his time there and they recommended we transfer him to a 24-hour care facility for more diagnostics and continuous care. An ultrasound revealed his GI tract was free of obstruction, but an examination of his throat revealed some lesions that were restricting airflow. The emergency doctors treated his condition with antibiotics and steroids while we waited for additional results, but he did not improve. Despite receiving 24-hour supportive care, Jenna received a call that DJ had very bad gagging episode which he did not recover from. We will miss your high pitched, bird-like purr and silly snoring. We wish you were part of our family longer, but know that you are at peace now in the arms of your beloved owner.



(L) D.J. grooming and comforting Adam



JULIAN, 13 We lost Julian too soon on June 1. He had just arrived from Arizona in early March 2022 with his biological brother Bleys. They were placed here after their owner went into assisted living. When he first arrived, Julian spent most of his time hiding behind sheets and in his cave beds. He was a gentle and timid cat with a soft purr and very soulful eyes. However, in the weeks prior to his passing, he began seeking attention and affection. Then his appetite waned, he became quiet, his weight dropped significantly, and he was dehydrated. Lab work showed he was severely anemic, and x-rays revealed substantial changes in his lungs. He had a history of asthma but had been doing well. He was calm during an ultrasound, but immediately after went into respiratory distress and needed to be kept in an incubator on oxygen. Jenna went to see him at *Canyon that afternoon. He perked up and responded when she called his name. He purred when she opened the incubator to pet him, but it was clear the efforts made to stabilize his condition were having little effect. We decided not to let him suffer and he passed quickly while Jenna held him. RIP sweet Julian. We will take good care of Bleys until it's time for you to be together again.



BIG BOY, 22 We lost our quiet giant, and the patriarch of the "Grey Cat Club" on July 1. He belonged to long-time friend and benefactor **Dorothy Palmer**, who passed in 2016. Dorothy took in many strays over the years and at the time of her death had 7. Of course she had planned that they all retire with us. Big Boy joins Baby (2021), Sammy (2019) and Dorothy at the Rainbow Bridge, and is now watching over the remaining 4—his BFF Little Guy, Suzy, Sally, and Boots. He had several chronic health issues, but had been doing well. Recently he started coughing and he had major weight loss in a short time, despite being an excellent eater. We took him to Canyon and x-rays showed defects in his heart. It also revealed a BB pellet near his kidney, evidence of his hard life as a stray before Dorothy rescued him. The day he was to return for a re-check, his breathing worsened, and he started to decline. X-rays showed fluid around his lungs and heart, and he was most likely going into congestive heart failure. We did not want him to suffer so we decided to let him go. Jenna and Joyce were with him and promised him we would take good care of Little Guy for him.



*Canyon refers to our primary veterinary practice, **Canyon Animal Hospital** just down the road from us.

KITTY, 19, died on August 8. He came to us in December, 2020. He was driven here all the way from San Jose by his owners, who could no longer care for him due to his twice daily medical needs and their work and travel schedules. He was used to being inside/outside so they knew he would love it here with access to our fresh-air catios and patio. Kitty quickly let us know that he was not going to be a lap cat, but he did enjoy being talked to and sometimes playing. He integrated into the lower house community quickly and let us give him his meds. Joyce and Jacob could pick him up and sometimes he let Joyce brush him just a bit. In addition to being hyperthyroid and in kidney failure, he was recently diagnosed with tumors on his liver, thyroid and mediastinum (the area between the lungs). Despite all of that, he continued to eat, drink, and be mobile. The Caregivers joked that handling Kitty was like handling an alligator, you had to be prepared for him to turn around and bite at any moment! A volunteer noticed he was having trouble walking. Jenna took him to Canyon right away and the tumor on his liver had grown to be softball size. He could not stand or walk and there was nothing that could be done. Jenna held Kitty and he passed quickly. We will miss our spicy boy. We were happy to have him for 2 1/2 yrs.



"Taking Flight" by Artist Velvet Cook is the latest original artwork to be installed in the Blue Bell Gardens. The trio of totem poles celebrates the pollinators that are so critical to sustaining our environment.





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Our Mission:
The Blue Bell Foundation for Cats offers loving and compassionate lifetime care for senior cats whose owners can no longer care for them.

Remember: Use www.goodsearch.com as your search engine, and www.goodshop.com for your online shopping. Simply name us as your charity

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YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK
Cats are sponsored to ensure their continuing lifetime care. However, costs are rising dramatically and cash donations help augment our budget toward expenses immensely. These includes veterinary medicine, staffing, food, equipment, supplies, medications, fluid treatments, dental care, facility maintenance and improvements.
Donations received from the newsletter (including Gifts of Love) go specifically to the "Community Cat Fund". Please refer to our website for information on the "Campaign for Blue Bell" and a detailed description of all giving opportunities. You may arrange for your donation to be applied toward one of them.
A huge **thank you** to all our compassionate supporters who understand our mission and the need for our existence.

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