



Blue Bell volunteer Lee is celebrated: Has cuddled up to 50 cats on Mondays for nearly 20 years

Story by LYNETTE BRASFIELD

Long-time Blue Bell volunteer Lee Bradford, who has been cuddling cats at the Blue Bell Senior Cat Sanctuary for nearly 20 years, walked into the cottage complex on May 22 expecting only the usual pleasures provided by petting purring pussycats.

But something, well, quite clawsome awaited her: her fellow volunteers had organized a surprise purrthday party to ring in her 83rd year on the planet.

Lee and one of her favorite cats, Bella, were kitted out in pink boas for the occasion. (Mittens is another favorite, though Lee loves all 50 of Blue Bell's cats.)

2017 has been a tough year for Lee. Several of her own cats had reached old age and passed away.



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Photo by Lindsey Arnette

Lee Bradford and her beloved Bella are kitted out in pink boas

So her fellow "Monday Funday" volunteers, Lindsey Arnette, Pam Arduino, and Pam Somers decided a party was necessary to help cheer her up. Of course, the cake was topped with a Hello Kitty decoration.

"Lee is very independent, but still, those of us that are close to her have always tried to keep an eye out for her, since she lives alone. I have personally been volunteering on the same day as Lee since I started at Blue Bell in 2013 and have worked with her at Pet Expos and other events beyond our normal volunteer shifts," Lindsey says. "She worries if we are not there for a normal shift, just as we worry about her if we don't hear from her."



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Photo by Lindsey Arnette

Monday Funday volunteers, L-R: Kaila Jacobs, Hope Fawl, Joanne Jacobs, Lee Bradford, Pam Somers, Lindsey Arnette, Pam Arduino, Annie Pastorkovich (not pictured, but part of the group are Judy Clark and Christine O'Hare-Pomponi)

The clowder of cat lovers become close during their afternoon shifts, sharing stories, laughing at their antics and commiserating when one falls ill or needs comfort – and I'm talking about volunteers as well as the cats.

At this year's Cats Meow fundraiser, Lee received a Blue Bell Blue Cat award for her service (and excellent petting skills, no doubt).

Approximately 50 much-loved, mostly senior cats – who are there because their loving owners can no longer care for them – are housed in an airy, bright cottage on Laguna Canyon Rd at the nonprofit Blue Bell Senior Cat Sanctuary and receive dedicated medical attention as needed.

Volunteers visit regularly to pet the cats and, along with staff, provide the love and attention the happy felines have been used to receiving from their past owners.

Would-be volunteers are invited to contact volunteer coordinator Lindsey Arnette at bluebellvolunteers@gmail.com or bluebellvolunteers@gmail.com. More information can be found by visiting www.bluebellcats.org.