



# the Blue Bell

## FOUNDATION FOR CATS

ENSURING YOUR CAT'S FUTURE

# Blue Bell

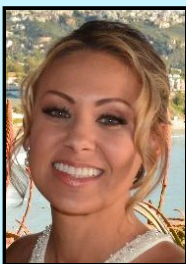
# MEWS

WINTER 2023

## Congratulations to Jenna Genovese-Mikula on Promotion to Director!

Dear Friends,

I am honored to accept a new title and to lead Blue Bell into the future. Our mission to offer loving and compassionate lifetime care for senior cats whose owners can no longer care for them is truly unique. Serving this organization and the cats and people who rely on it is one of the great joys in my life, and I am grateful for this opportunity. Susan Hamil will continue to serve as our Board Chairwoman. She has been the backbone of Blue Bell for nearly 35 years, since our founder Bertha Yergat passed away in 1989. We are fortunate to have Susan's experience, knowledge, and ongoing support.



In my last letter, I highlighted investments we've made at Blue Bell in facilities, staffing and community engagement. As the holidays approach, I ask for your support in funding a critical area of daily operations, the Veterinary Expense Fund. With continued inflation, Blue Bell's overall operating costs are rising. Prices for cat food, litter, utilities, and other expenses have climbed steeply in recent years. One of our biggest challenges, however, is the rising cost of veterinary care. Our senior kitties need regular exams, lab work, and special diagnostics. In addition to inflation affecting the general economy, the veterinary industry is further impacted by the buy-out of family veterinary practices by venture capitalist organizations. Furthermore, about 10% of the cats in our care will require emergency or specialty veterinary services at some point in their life at Blue Bell, and these services are extremely expensive. Often just stabilizing a cat and obtaining a diagnosis costs several thousand dollars over a two-or three-day hospital stay. To help offset these additional costs, we have established the Veterinary Expense Fund. All resident cats come to us with funding, but for most of them the cost of their lifetime care exceeds this funding. The Veterinary Expense Fund helps us cover the costs over and above routine care. I'd like to share recent stories about three Blue Bell cats who have needed critical emergency or specialist care.

Boots was one of seven cats that came to us when our longtime benefactor and friend of Bertha's, Dorothy Palmer, passed away in 2016. He was a large, swaggering brown tabby that loved hunting, catnip, lounging in the sunshine on the patios, and food. Read about the medial challenges Boots faced in the Memorials section. The cost of his intensive care was nearly \$4,200.

Tiger was a gentle giant who loved hugs, burrowing under blankets, and hanging out in the office with staff. He became a Blue Bell resident in

November 2017, and had relatively few medical issues until August 2023. The Memorials section has details on Tiger's multiple emergency hospital visits during the last weeks of his life, which cost over \$5,000.

We first introduced you to Claude, a beneficiary of our Community Cat Fund, in the Winter 2022 edition of Blue Bell Mews. We are happy to report that he is doing exceptionally well! He came to us with suspected vision impairment. His first visit with an ophthalmologist confirmed that he was nearly blind due to elevated eye pressure, corneal degeneration, and dislocation of the lenses in both eyes. There was nothing that could be done to reverse these conditions and regain his vision, so our treatment goals were to halt disease progression and keep him comfortable. Achieving those goals required frequent trips to the ophthalmologist for monitoring and administration of four different eye medications multiple times a day, which Claude handled well. He is an affectionate, talkative cat with an adventurous streak. Despite the diligent treatment he received, his condition continued to deteriorate, and his eyes became painful. In June 2023, he underwent a difficult and delicate surgery to remove both eyes. The surgery was successful and once healed, he was even more affectionate and adventurous than before. Despite having no vision, he navigates around the house and loves to climb and play. He knows our voices and follows us, never missing a meal or an opportunity to say hello. Healing Claude's eyes cost over \$2,500, and there will be more specialty veterinary expenses soon. We just learned that he has stomatitis, a painful inflammation of tissues in the mouth, and will need his remaining teeth removed. We know our boy will make it through this challenging surgery, which is estimated to cost \$4,000.

Thank you for supporting our Veterinary Expense Fund so that all Blue Bell cats have a high standard of care and enjoy the best possible quality of life! Wishing you and your families all the best this holiday season and always,

**Jenna Genovese-Mikula**  
**Director**



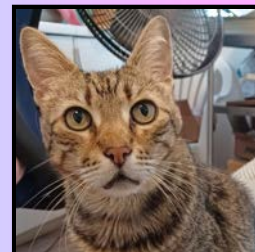
**Claude before (above) and after (left) his eye surgery.**

## MEMORIALS

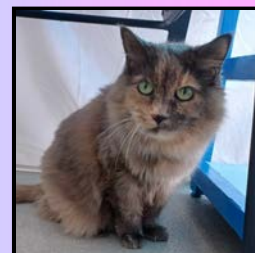
**MARY JANE, 14.** We said goodbye to adorable kitten-faced Mary Jane on Monday, June 19th. She and her brother Joey arrived at Blue Bell in 2018 through our Community Cat Fund. Their owner had gone into assisted living and they had been at the Laguna Beach Animal Shelter for several months with little chance for adoption, so we took them in. Mary Jane was shyer than her outgoing brother, but Joey was protective of her. Eventually she came out of her shell, welcomed more attention, and thrived. This endeared her to us even more. She felt secure in her own cubby space in her tree. She enjoyed the sunny catios, especially when catnip was spread on blankets for all to enjoy. Two and a half years ago, she was diagnosed with intestinal lymphoma. It was managed well, but a month before her passing she started eating less and losing weight. Then for two days she stopped eating completely, a sign the end was near. On her final day, she was given her last catnip party. It was a gloomy day. The cats started coming outside for the party and all of a sudden the sun came out. Mary Jane was inside and Cat Care Coordinator Joyce said to her "Look, Mary Jane! The sun came out just for you. I told you it would!" She enjoyed the sunshine and catnip with all of her friends, including Joey. Jenna and Joyce took her to our veterinarian. Soft music played while they kissed, petted, and told her they loved her and they would take care of Joey. It was a gentle passing. *Read more about Mary Jane in the Next Avenue article link. See next page.*



**TIGER, 13,** came in 2017. His loss was deeply felt as his demise happened within a month. It was easy to be drawn to him as he was an affectionate, gentle giant with a soft meow, soulful eyes, classic stripes and big paws. Tiger loved playing, catnip, and meat tubes. He was a part-time office cat and full fledged member of the "Bunk Bed Crew." One afternoon in August of 2023 he developed a sudden and severe limp, could not put any weight on the leg, and began breathing rapidly. Our veterinarian is closed on Sundays, so we took him to an emergency hospital for an assessment. The emergency veterinarian suspected a soft tissue injury as they did not find any broken or dislocated bones during the exam. Two weeks later, again on a Sunday, he had another episode of rapid breathing. Breathing issues are always an emergency, so Tiger made a second trip to the emergency hospital. His exam revealed fluid in his chest and low blood oxygen levels. He needed to be hospitalized overnight in a special oxygen chamber to stabilize his condition so that a full cardiac assessment could be performed. The diagnosis was severe hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a condition which causes abnormal thickening of the heart muscle and leads to heart failure. Tiger was able to come back to Blue Bell with new heart medications and a guarded prognosis. He rested comfortably for a few days, but then late at night on Friday, September 1st, his condition rapidly deteriorated and he made one final trip to the emergency hospital to cross Rainbow Bridge.



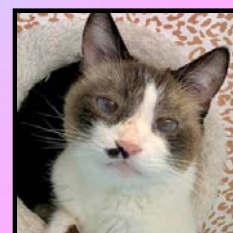
**KIWI, 13.** We lost our lovely Kiwi unexpectedly on Friday, July 15th. It was a shock, she left us too soon! She arrived in January after her owner passed away. They were extremely bonded. She had adopted Kiwi just two years before and they cuddled together every night. Kiwi had a pleasant demeanor and accepted us and the other cats quickly. She rolled in catnip and played in the drinking fountain. We thought it had a leak, but the little paw prints leading back to her enclosure and up the steps to her cat tree, were a dead giveaway that she was the cause. She loved chin scratches so much she drooled in contentment. Kiwi came to us with arthritis and advanced kidney disease. Two months prior to her passing, she began losing weight and became picky with food. One day she had trouble walking. Jenna immediately took her to the vet. In addition to her poor kidney values, labs showed she had acute pancreatitis, peritonitis, high blood glucose, anemia, and a urinary tract infection. She was hospitalized overnight in critical condition. An abdominal ultrasound gave a poor prognosis, but she was still perky and was eating. Although critical, she was fighting and stable. The next day, about an hour after eating, she crashed. She was open-mouth breathing, so the veterinarian put her on oxygen and took chest x-rays. Her heart was severely enlarged adding to her already grave condition, so the kindest thing was to let her go. Susan was there and Joyce rushed down to be with her. Kiwi lifted her head to acknowledge them. With kisses and head scratches, she passed and was reunited with her beloved owner.



**DIAMOND, 16,** came to us in 2017 and was so affable he was out in the general population soon after arriving. His whimsical antics amused us all. He was especially funny with meat tubes. He would get so excited, stand on his hind legs, grab the meat tube with his paws and lick it with such enthusiasm that it ended up all over his mouth. If another cat got a meat tube, Diamond also got one to keep him from stealing theirs. Caregiver Karen had a special morning ritual with him. Every day when she filled the fountain on the first patio, Diamond would follow. She let the hose drip just a little bit so he could enjoy a drink and some water playtime. Diamond had arthritis, high blood pressure, and cystitis. In 2020 he was diagnosed with kidney disease. An ultrasound in January 2023 confirmed his kidney disease was very advanced. The prognosis was a few weeks to live, but sweet Diamond surprised us all and lived eight more months. By June his disease progressed, but he rebounded from a few setbacks. By October his weight loss continued, despite a ravenous appetite. A few days before he passed, volunteers and staff noticed him drooling. Video footage revealed he was having seizures. With the seizures, anemia, weight loss, and severely advanced kidney disease we knew that we could no longer maintain his quality of life, and we decided to let him go on a good day. Jenna took him out into the gardens so he could better enjoy the fresh air and sunshine. She brought a bed and blanket for him to sit on, but Diamond wanted to explore. He made the rounds of the gardens and walked around the perimeter of the upper house. He was out for a few hours and finally settled down near the front of the lower house. There he enjoyed chicken and love from volunteers before returning to the upper house for one last catnip party and meat tube. Later, Joyce took him to the vet and he was sent lovingly to his final rest on Friday, October 6th.



**GIDEON, 12,** was a striking Snowshoe mix. He had piercing clear blue eyes and unique markings, including his "half mustache." Charming Gideon came to us in April 2022. His magnetic personality won him friends with humans and felines alike. He had a quirky habit of pawing at and chewing on hair. Quite entertaining, he would jump on the mantle above the bench, waiting for a customer, then start his grooming session. The area was dubbed "Salon Gideon." Gideon had a myriad of health issues. He came to us underweight with hyperthyroidism and shortly after was diagnosed with high blood pressure and a heart murmur. With medications, he stabilized. An exam in February 2023 revealed additional heart issues and blood in his urine. In April he was diagnosed with asthma and started on a twice-daily inhaler. He was stable until August when he stopped eating and lost weight. He rallied for a few weeks with additional treatments, but in October his appetite waned again. The vet heard abnormal wheezing in his lungs. We hoped he could recover, but his decline continued and we decided it was time to let Gideon go. Jenna took him for a garden walk. He seemed excited and spent about a half hour exploring before leading her back to the front door. When he entered the house, he went into the rainbow tunnel toy, as if he was trying to tell us that he was ready. Joyce and Jenna took him to the vet to accompany him on his final journey. He passed quickly on October 16th.





## NEW RESIDENTS

### STEVIE, 13

came to us on June 28th. His devoted owner placed him due to circumstances that necessitated a move out of state. A stunner with deep blue eyes and a gorgeous fluffy seal-point coat, this spry gentleman welcomed us with chatty meows and loves to play with the laser pointer. Although sociable with people, he is still getting adjusted to the other cats, so for now visits to the community are supervised by staff. He enjoys lounging on his patio viewing the garden flora and fauna. Stevie is a joy. He is pictured above enjoying a stroll through our gorgeous gardens.



### PETE & LUCY, both 12,

(just a few weeks apart) arrived July 31st. They have been together since they were adopted as kittens. Their owner loved them but was worried he could no longer care for them and wanted the very best for them. Handsome Pete is a big twenty-pound brown tabby who dwarfs Lucy, an eight-pound sleek black kitty. Upon admittance, curious and friendly Lucy squeezed right out of her carrier before it was completely open and made herself at home. She was in Joyce's lap within fifteen minutes. She ate within thirty! She loves pets, brushing, wand toys, and catnip.



Pete came out of his carrier, walked around for a few minutes and then tried to hide in the square cube bed, but only his front half fit! We draped a sheet over a chair for his privacy instead. He is now comfortable



out in the open on his cat tree, sometimes with Lucy on the shelf below. Lucy is a lap cat, Pete loves pets and cuddles. They are mingling well with the other cats and quickly became full time members of the community. This pleasant duo is very bonded. Lucy grooms Pete, a sure sign of their closeness.

## CELEBRATING PARTNERSHIPS



On Saturday, June 24th, **The Laguna Real Estate Charitable Assistance Fund (LRE-CAF)** hosted its popular **Pet Parade & Chili Cook-Off** fundraiser.

Not only was Blue Bell a beneficiary of the proceeds, but our darling ginger cat **Honey, 17**, won 1st place as "Most Gorgeous Senior Pet."

Thanks to LRE-CAF and everyone who attended to make this fun event such a success!



We are proud to announce our partnership with **Club Cat**, a luxury cat hotel in Irvine. Our Chairwoman, Susan Hamil, and Jenna visited this unique hotel which boasts comfy suites, not cages. In addition, resort amenities and treatments include paw-icures, fur therapy, salon playtime, and toys. A live web cam allows viewing of one's kitty 24/7.

Club Cat founder and owner **Shana Martin** toured Blue Bell and interviewed Jenna. Shana wrote a wonderful piece for her fun and educational blog.

Shana loves our mission and has offered to donate a portion of sales to Blue Bell. We are extremely honored by this generosity. Thank you, Shana!

For more information, visit the Club Cat website [www.clubcatusa.com](http://www.clubcatusa.com)

In January, we were featured in the national online publication **Next Avenue**, which focuses on informative topics for older adults. **JoBeth McDaniel** visited and interviewed Susan. The article includes pictures and stories of several kitties while emphasizing the fate of older cats who outlive their owners.

This excellent and enlightening article on the importance of making a plan for pets was widely read, and we received many inquiries. One 92-year-old was comforted to know she could provide for her three cats' futures.

Check it out at:  
[www.nextavenue.org/how-to-make-plans-for-the-care-of-your-pets/](http://www.nextavenue.org/how-to-make-plans-for-the-care-of-your-pets/)

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## MEMORIALS (continued)

**BOOTS, 12**, arrived at Blue Bell in 2016 with six other kitties. He loved sunning on the patio, catnip, boxes, swatting at wand toys, and fresh chicken. He hunted bugs, lizards, and small snakes who had the misfortune of entering a patio full of cats! In March of 2023, at only 12 ½ years old, Boots was diagnosed with a rare condition called chylothorax. This disease causes fatty fluid from the body's lymphatic system to drain abnormally into the chest cavity, causing damage to the outer layer of the heart and lung tissue. It leads to decreased function in these organs and eventually death. Treatment options are limited. Despite the poor prognosis, we decided to give Boots the best chance at maintaining his quality of life. This required trips to a cardiologist every one to two weeks to drain the fluid, a special diet and supplements, and close monitoring by staff. Thanks to treatment, Boots survived almost two months beyond his diagnosis, and we did everything possible to ensure those were comfortable and happy months for him. He even took a few walks in the garden where he delighted in sampling the greenery! While on his last walk with Caregiver Sarah, he began open-mouth breathing within five minutes, a dire sign. Jenna rushed him to the veterinarian where she met Joyce. He was immediately put on oxygen, but there was no possibility of stabilizing him long term, so we decided to let him go. Our cherished Boots passed peacefully and quickly on Tuesday, May 23rd.





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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.

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Enclosed is a "Gift of Love" in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

to be given in the name of \_\_\_\_\_

For: (Please Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Anniversary ☐ Birthday ☐ Holiday ☐ In Memory Of  
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Send a card announcing the donation to:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Name and address:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: **The Blue Bell Foundation for Cats**  
Donations are tax-deductible THANK YOU!

**YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK**

Cats are sponsored to ensure their continuing lifetime care. However, with costs rising dramatically, cash donations help fund our budget toward expenses.

These expenses include 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.

Registered Non-Profit 501(c)(3)

**OR DONATE ONLINE!**

<http://www.bluebellcats.org/donate/index.php>