



LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Blue Bell celebrates an important milestone this year, our 35th anniversary! We have much to be proud of and grateful for as we look back on the last 35 years and pivot towards the future.



We have several significant initiatives planned for 2024. Earlier this year, with the help of volunteer Lydea Swit, we launched a 35th anniversary campaign to raise money for flooring renovations in both cottages. The campaign goal was \$50,000 and we are thrilled that we raised over \$80,000 in just one month! The project is scheduled to take place this summer, and we can't wait to share the new look. Exceeding the fundraising goal means we can also begin planning for our next big improvement, new cat trees. We've been investing in digital assets as well, and are currently in the process of redesigning our website. There were also important changes to our veterinary care relationships. In January, we began a new care partnership with Dr. Cohen and Dr. Kruger of Laguna Beach Veterinary Medical Center. We are fortunate to have such experienced, compassionate veterinarians, and their kind staff, as part of our extended team. A final area of focus is growing our endowment.

Establishing financial stability is a key piece of ensuring a sustainable future for Blue Bell. This year, we took an important step towards that goal by formalizing an investment policy with the guidance of our investment advisors at Knightsbridge Wealth Management. We also took a hard look at our annual operational budget needs. Costs have increased steadily while the majority of Blue Bell's donation revenue remains serendipitous. This is because the substantial donations we rely on to fund most of our operations come through bequests in wills, trusts and estates. The timing of when we will receive those donations is difficult to predict. We believe focusing on building our endowment principal to a level that can generate sufficient income to fund operations is the solution. We need to grow the endowment by \$10 million over the next five years. A challenging target, but one we know is achievable with your support.

And now, gratitude. There are so many people who have contributed their time, talents, and financial support. A few deserve special recognition for their exceptional dedication:

- Susan and Dr. John Hamil for keeping Bertha's dream alive
- Jeff and Barb Zakaryan for envisioning the future
- Our late financial benefactors and friends Dorothy Palmer, Richard Anderson and Alex Wentzel
- Christine O'Hare-Pomponi for 31 years of volunteer service and being the driving force behind our bi-annual newsletter
- Cat Care Coordinator Joyce Buettner for almost 20 years of devotion to the Blue Bell cats
- Terri Karman for her fantastic cat photographs, social media posts, and too many other things for me to list!
- Sue Brown for her meticulous, loving care of our gardens
- Marcie Hague for managing our website
- Pamela Knudsen for public relations with the Laguna Beach community
- John Prichard, Teresa Wagner, and the team at Knightsbridge for their fantastic financial management
- Retired staff Santiago Holguin and Maria Llamas whom we miss dearly
- Dr. Brower, Dr. G, Dr. Lisek and all of the staff from Canyon Animal Hospital

Thank you to those who have entrusted us with their beloved feline companions. Thank you to my wonderful husband and family, who carry me through those tough days when the cats cross Rainbow Bridge. Thank you to ALL our donors, staff, and volunteers. Each and every one of you is important to fulfilling Blue Bell's mission. Especially our staff, who tirelessly care for the cats 365 days a year. And finally, thank you Bertha Yergat for making it all possible by founding this unique sanctuary.

To the next 35 years!

Jenna Genovese-Mikula, Director

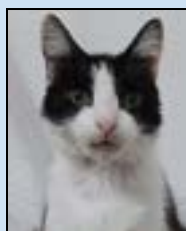
MEMORIALS

RUSTY, 18, came to us in 2015 after his owner passed away. He had the most mesmerizing aquamarine eyes and a beautiful old soul behind them. He loved to reach out a paw and hold your arm or hand. He gave headbutts to anyone willing to indulge him. He enjoyed catnip parties and snoozing in a sunny spot on the patios. Late in his life, we discovered he loved walks in the gardens. On one walk he got adventurous and sneaked under the storage shed patio, but we quickly got him back out. He even went trick-or-treating dressed up as a lion last Halloween. In November 2018, Rusty had his first visit with the cardiologist and was diagnosed with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM), a disease that can lead to congestive heart failure. In December 2022, he started losing weight. Unfortunately, the veterinarian found a mass in his pancreas that she suspected was pancreatic cancer. The prognosis was grim, but he stabilized for more than a year with treatment. On the morning of his passing, caregivers noticed his walk was wobbly, so Jenna took him to the vet. The exam showed nothing urgent, and he returned to Blue Bell. Just a few hours later, he was breathing very slowly. Jenna took him back to the vet for further diagnostics. His temperature, blood pressure, and heart rate were all low. Heart failure was suspected, but chest x-rays showed no evidence of fluid in his chest. Given his underlying health issues, and with his vitals in decline, we decided it was the best thing for Rusty to let him go. He was purring until the end on Monday, March 4th and passed peacefully with Jenna by his side.



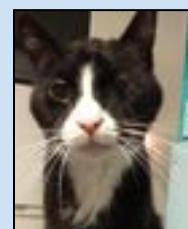
We said goodbye to **COZY, 16**, on Wednesday, March 20th. Cozy and her real sister Bella (who passed in 2023) came to Blue Bell in the last days of 2016. She was an affectionate cat and could often be found cuddling with volunteers and other cats. She purred constantly. She loved snacks and was one of the first to figure out how to paw treats out of the treat puzzle toy and how to get them out of the rolling treat ball. Cozy was diagnosed with pancreatitis in 2017. Her strange hiccup-like breathing was first noted at that time too. In 2019, she was diagnosed with chronic kidney disease. She was diagnosed with arthritis in 2021, her elbows were particularly affected. She was such a great patient that the vet was able to do acupuncture on her! In June 2023, a visit to the ophthalmologist revealed that she was completely blind due to acute retinal detachment. Despite this diagnosis, she learned to navigate the house. Cozy started losing weight towards the end of 2023 and an ultrasound in January 2024 showed a mass in her intestines. In March, her symptoms worsened and another ultrasound revealed that there were now three masses in her intestines, indicating aggressive lymphoma. She was also showing signs of heart failure. We scheduled euthanasia for later that afternoon, and she came back to Blue Bell so we could make her last day special. We had a catnip party on the patio and showered her with love and treats. Off-duty staff and many volunteers came to say goodbye before Joyce and Jenna took her to the vet to cross Rainbow Bridge.

We were devastated by the sudden and unexpected loss of our lovely **LILY, 13**, on Monday, March 11th. She was a stunning brown Snowshoe mix. With us since 2022, she quickly adapted and became friends with other cats. She loved brushing and chin scratches. Lily's eyes were unusual. According to the ophthalmologist, the cloudy appearance of her eyes was likely due to feline herpes infection as a kitten. But this did not affect her vision and no treatment was needed besides daily cleaning and monitoring. The week before her passing, she was hospitalized with what appeared to be a kidney infection. She was stable enough to come back to Blue Bell for the weekend, but was quiet with no appetite by Monday evening. We planned to bring her back to the vet for a recheck the next morning, but unfortunately that night her health declined quickly. At 7:30 PM she was up and walking, but just an hour later, she had collapsed. Susan rushed her to the emergency vet and Joyce met them there. Lily was in critical condition. She needed to be on oxygen and the vets thought she may have formed a blood clot. The emergency staff wheeled her into the room on a table so Joyce could spend some time with her. Lily looked up when she heard Joyce's voice. She started purring loudly, but within a few minutes she was struggling to breathe. She was put to sleep quickly so she wouldn't suffer. Joyce was by her side as she joined her owner at Rainbow Bridge.



KIKI, 14, arrived in April 2023 with housemates Irish and Haggis. Although she could be feisty at times, this toothless kitty often enjoyed lap time with volunteers and always appreciated pets on her head. She loved catnip, snoozing on a sunny patio, and playing with wand toys. Shortly after her arrival, Kiki began vomiting regularly. She was treated for IBD/possible GI lymphoma. A few months later, she was diagnosed with diabetes. She did not tolerate insulin injections, so we decided to try an oral diabetes medication. She initially responded well, but we became concerned when her weight and appetite decreased significantly a few weeks later. She was hospitalized for a few days in November, stabilized, and returned to us, but then developed an upper respiratory infection. Joyce and Jenna spent the next ten days nursing Kiki back to health. She was cooperative with oral medications, subcutaneous fluids, syringe feeding, and (finally!) insulin injections. We think she knew we were trying to help her. The treatments worked, and she improved for a few weeks. Then in December, her health declined again. Labs showed elevated liver values, anemia, and pancreatitis. Kiki was tough; we wanted to give her a chance to once again pull through with supportive care. Unfortunately, the combined health issues were just too much strain on her body and she did not improve. On December 21st, we made the decision to put her to sleep the next day. However, later that night her condition deteriorated rapidly. Joyce and Susan decided it was best to keep her at Blue Bell for the night and see what the morning brought. Joyce stayed with her until the end, and Kiki passed at Blue Bell at 1:14 AM on Friday, December 22nd. Her time with us was short, but her last months were filled with love and comfort.

ALEX, 16, arrived in September 2019. Before coming to Blue Bell, he was an indoor/outdoor cat, and even escaped from the house after his owner, whom he was extremely bonded to, passed. Fortunately, he was quickly found, but he began his life with us very scared. Although he remained in his carrier for several hours after arrival, he let Joyce brush him and pet him just a little. It was the start of a special friendship. Alex came to us with a history of diarrhea. In February 2022, he was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism and anemia. In August 2022, a special blood test indicated he likely had GI lymphoma. We treated him for these conditions as best we could, but he refused to be pill. Putting medications in his food was the only way to treat him. In April 2023, Joyce and Jenna began giving Alex fluids, as frequent diarrhea left him chronically dehydrated. Despite a good appetite, he continued losing weight, and his anemia worsened. He became weaker, and often soiled himself, so Joyce and Jenna gave him baths as needed. He didn't love it, but he tolerated it. We think in his own way he appreciated all we did for him. His health was fragile but stable until the morning of December 30th. Early that morning, Alex vomited and then had trouble breathing. He still had an incredible appetite, but was very weak and could not stand or move well on his own. We had exhausted all palliative care options, and knew that the vomiting episode signaled the end was near. Joyce took him to the emergency vet to be put to sleep. She was with him in the beginning and in the end. We know he is at peace now with his beloved owner.



NEW RESIDENTS

SPARROW, 17, and RILEY, 19, arrived together on October 22nd. Their loving owner's living situation changed and she could no longer care for them. They were initially isolated in a large room in our main house, each settling into their own beds.



Sparrow was shy at first, but quickly blossomed. Upon hearing her name, she comes out of her cozy bed for brushing and chin scratches. She enjoys when volunteers read to her, so we made a library for her. Sparrow's unique markings on her sweet face make her even more adorable. She has a pleasant disposition and an endearing chirpy meow. Sparrow is a mellow gal and gets along well with the other kitties. Shortly after she arrived, we learned that Sparrow had a cancerous growth on her back. It was removed and healed well.

Sadly, less than two months after he arrived, we lost **RILEY** on Thursday, December 7th. A handsome flame-point Himalayan, he was very outgoing and settled in right away. He had just begun venturing outside to the patios. During his final days, he was hospitalized for heart failure, kidney failure, pancreatitis, and a very severe upper respiratory infection. He fought through and was stable enough to come back to Blue Bell after a few days of intensive care. But then he stopped eating and his breathing worsened. We decided the kindest thing would be to let him go. He and Sparrow were bonded, and we initially worried about how the loss would affect her. She is doing well on her own and has many new friends. We wish we had more time with this loving boy!



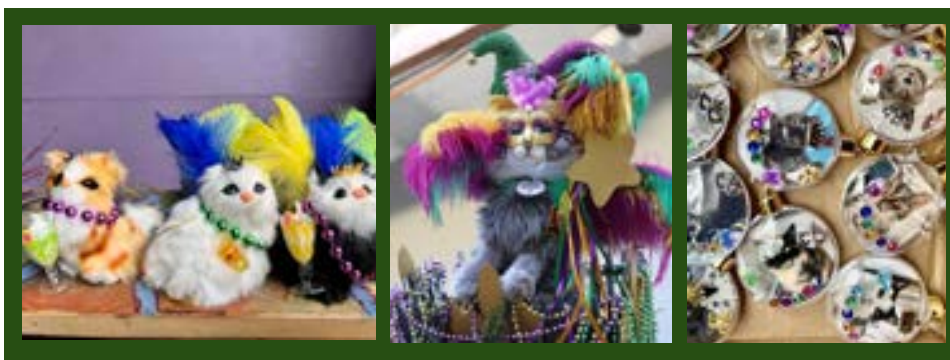
DOTTIE, 13, joined us on January 10th.

Dottie's story began in Florida. Her owners loved her dearly and when they relocated to California, they hired a pet transportation service to bring her with them. She moved with her owner to a memory care facility. When her owner passed, the owner's daughter placed Dottie with us. This pretty Maine Coon mix has long, soft, fluffy fur. She settled in well her first night, eating and exploring her suite. She is an affectionate cat and loves to be brushed and petted. We recently moved her to our main house. Within a few weeks she was out exploring the rest of the cottage and sunning herself on the patio, where she enjoyed her first catnip party! She already has a circle of new friends in Happe, Sparrow, Billy, Jaxie Grace, and Clarence, and is getting to know the other residents.



CELEBRATING COMMUNITY SPIRIT

For the third year in a row, we participated in the tree decorating contest at **Sawdust Festival Winter Fantasy**. Our tree won "Most Creative" for its "Meowdi Gras" theme! Pictured are the darling ornaments that staff members Jenna Mikula and Lisa Salcedo-Singh and volunteers Terri Karman and Pamela Knudsen created. Lisa made the tree topper, a kitty resembling our departed Adam dressed as the Meowdi Gras marshal (pictured in the middle).



Blue Bell was included in the **Laguna Beach Charm House Tour** on Sunday, May 19th. The tour was conducted by **Village Laguna**, a local nonprofit organization that fosters community engagement while preserving, promoting, and protecting Laguna's unique village atmosphere. The annual tour features novel properties in Laguna Beach, with this year's focus on Laguna Canyon. Tour participants were able to view our cats from the gardens as they wound their way through beautiful pathways filled with flowers, fountains, artwork, and birdhouses. Susan Hamil gave a talk about the property's history, and Sue Brown educated attendees about the gardens.

Many thanks to **Nancy Wagner** for making dozens of new fleece blankets and bed liners for the Blue Bell kitties! (pictured right)



Wednesday evening, May 22nd, staff, volunteers, and friends gathered at **Asian Kitchen in Laguna Niguel** for our **Chow & Meow Fundraiser**. We enjoyed delicious food and camaraderie while raising money for Blue Bell. The restaurant generously donated 10% of all food and alcohol sales, including takeout orders. Thank you to their wonderful and attentive staff. We are thrilled that this event raised over \$2,100 and look forward to the next one.



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Registered Non-Profit 501(c)(3)
Tax ID #33-0246182

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.



Scan the QR code above to donate online!

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK

Cats are sponsored to help offset the cost of lifetime care. However, our operating costs continue to increase and your donations help fund expenses. These expenses include veterinary bills, medications, staffing, food, litter, utilities, 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 more information 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.*

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
☐ Other _____

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!