Adopt • Protect • Love

A nonprofit Humane Society serving Greater Cleveland and Cuyahoga County since 1913.

CLEVELAND ANIMAL PROTECTIVE LEAGUE

Pet Patter

December 2026

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Chai and Biskit – Sweet Kittens Get a Sweet Life

In May 2026, three tiny, young stray kittens were surrendered to the APL.

The kittens, two girls and a boy, were just two or three weeks old, and weighed less than a half-pound each when they arrived at the APL. They were given the rather unfortunate names of Tile, Epoxy, and Carpet. Sadly, the boy, Tile, passed away at the shelter shortly after arriving. Epoxy and Carpet stayed together in the same kennel, and very slowly began to grow.

Although they had a very rough start, their luck did begin to change at the APL. Because of their age and size, they were sent to a foster home, where they would get lots of attention and TLC from an experienced cat-carer. And these kitties were fortunate—their foster mom was Shari, an animal lover and experienced cat mom. For the next month, the sisters stayed with Shari. The girls then returned to the APL, still growing, but ready to find their forever homes.

At the same time, Nilay was going through a rough period of his own. He did not have pets growing up and was not really a "cat person." When his partner moved in with Nilay and brought two cats, it was a bit of an adjustment. At first, Nilay admits, he felt like his well-kept house was being destroyed by the cats roughhousing and getting into mischief. Still, when his partner moved out in July 2026 and took the cats, Nilay was surprised by how accustomed he'd become to the company they provided. Opening a cheese wrapper and not being greeted by the thundering of paws? It was too, too quiet.

Nilay began to scan the APL website, hoping to find new companions. When he saw Epoxy and Carpet, he decided that they were the ones. He left work mid-day and went to meet them. It was love at first sight. But he noticed that only one of their kennel cards was present.



Chai and Biskit love snuggling up together

The other, a staff member explained, was probably in the hands of a potential adopter, who had taken the card to the front desk to get more information.

Nilay was heartbroken. The staff member saw his distress and found the person with the second kennel card. When they heard of Nilay's plan to adopt the sisters together, they surrendered the kennel card and chose another cat to adopt.

Continued on page 8

Bennie's Blurb

Letter from the President & CEO

As I sit down to write this final letter as CEO of the Cleveland APL, it's difficult to find words that fully express my gratitude for a career that, quite honestly, found me when I wasn't looking.

There I was, running a department at the Cleveland Clinic and training dogs on the side. Next thing I knew I was teaching a "plain brown dog" named Hugh, who had been elected mayor of Rescue Village, to deliver a "speech" at his inaugural ball. The rest, as they say, is history. I fell in love with this work and with Hugh. I adopted him, and the career that followed has been one of the greatest gifts of my life.

As I prepare to retire, I'm experiencing the full range of emotions that come with saying goodbye to an organization I've grown to love so deeply. The Cleveland APL's mission has given me purpose and the opportunity to make a difference. When you dedicate so much of your life to something you believe in so deeply, it becomes more than a career. It becomes part of who you are. Leading the APL has been a privilege, a source of inspiration, and the honor of a lifetime.

No leader accomplishes anything meaningful alone. The Cleveland APL is where it is today because of the compassionate people who pushed us to challenge the status quo. A talented team of staff members and volunteers who gave their hearts and showed up when it mattered most. A dedicated and supportive Board of Directors that trusted me to lead. Trusted colleagues who shared their wisdom and became cherished friends. Community members who embraced our programs and made a difference for animals. And generous supporters who allowed us to expand our reach and provide a level of life-changing and life-saving care I once could only imagine.

And then there were the hundreds of thousands of deserving animals in need that the Cleveland APL team helped over the past two decades, each with their own story and each deserving love. Being a part of changing their lives for the better has been profoundly meaningful.

And now, as I step aside, I'm at peace knowing the Cleveland APL is in wonderful hands. I have great confidence in my successor, Ayse Dunlap. Her 20 years of leadership at the APL, most recently as our VP of Operations, have been instrumental in shaping our strategic direction and success. I know that she, our talented team, dedicated Board, and compassionate community will take the Cleveland APL's impact to new heights … with your continued and generous support.



Then there's Hugh. As I shared in an earlier issue of Pet Patter this year, his portrait has hung across from my desk throughout my years at the Cleveland APL, reminding me of where we started and why this work matters. As this chapter closes, we'll leave the office together, in spirit, forever connected by the difference we helped make alongside an extraordinary team and compassionate community.

With heartfelt gratitude and tremendous pride in all we have accomplished together, thank you for believing in this mission, for standing with us through the challenges, and for celebrating our successes, and for making these nearly 20 years more meaningful than I could ever have imagined.

And thank you, too, Hugh... ❤.

For one last time, on behalf of the animals,

Sharon



Photos by Amy Sancetta

A Note from Your Incoming CEO

Twenty years ago, I joined the Cleveland APL as Shelter Manager. Since then, I have had the privilege of serving in several roles, most recently as Vice President of Operations. Along the way, I have gained a deep appreciation for the people, animals, and supporters who make this organization so special.



Ayse Dunlap, Incoming President & CEO with Shelby, an APL alum

Over my 28 years in animal welfare, I have learned that meaningful progress happens through steady, compassionate work, one animal and one family at a time. At the APL, that means caring for homeless animals and animals rescued from cruelty and neglect, helping families keep the pets they love, and supporting a dedicated team that makes this work possible every day. I am honored and excited to lead that work into its next chapter.

I am also grateful to succeed Sharon, whose leadership has left the APL strong and well positioned for the future. Because of the foundation she helped build, programs like the Second Chance Program and project CARE are allowing us to help more animals receive lifesaving medical care and more families stay together. These programs reflect our commitment not only to animal welfare, but also to supporting the people who love and care for their pets.

As I look ahead, I see tremendous opportunity. We will continue strengthening our role in the community, expanding our impact, and building on innovative approaches that help animals and families thrive together. I look forward to doing this work with the dedicated staff, volunteers, and board members who carry our mission forward every day. Their expertise, compassion, and commitment are what make the Cleveland APL such a special place, and what enable us to serve animals and families throughout our community.

Thank you for being part of the Cleveland APL. Whether you volunteer, foster, donate, or simply share our story, your support makes this work possible. I look forward to what we will accomplish together.

Visit the APL

Adoption Hours:
Monday-Friday: 11:00 AM–6:00 PM
Saturday: 10:00 AM–5:00 PM
Sunday: 12:00 PM–4 PM

Animal Resource Center Hours:
Monday–Saturday: 10:00 AM–5:30 PM
Sunday–Closed

Community Pet Clinic Hours:
Monday–Friday: 9:00 AM–5:30 PM
Saturday & Sunday: Closed

Project CARE Hours:
Monday–Friday: 10:00 AM–5 PM
Saturday: By appointments

affoGATO Cat Cafe (Cat Lounge)
761 Starkweather Ave, Cleveland, OH 44113
440-941-5130
Visit www.affogatocatcafe.com to make a reservation.

Make sure to check our website at ClevelandAPL.org for the most up-to-date open information. Hours may be subject to change.

Purchase Your 2027 APL Calendar Now!

We are excited to announce the arrival of the Cleveland APL's 2027 Annual Calendar! Again, this year, we let you pick the final "Pet of the Month" in the calendar. After the voting of the top 10 runners-up took place, we were happy to announce that Owen's beautiful photo received the most votes and is featured in the calendar as "Pet of the Month" in July.

The calendar makes a great gift, especially for the holidays! To order your copy, visit our website or visit our animal resource center in Tremont.

Photo caption: Gunner, our cover model for the 2027 APL Pet Calendar!



Another Happy Tale

Jack Finds His Happily Ever After, with a Little Help from a Friend

Most APL pet adoption stories begin with the animal coming to the APL. But it seems that Jack's journey to his Happily Ever After began some time before he ever knew of the APL.

Robin had a soul dog, Bud, a German Shepherd mix who Robin adored. Robin and Bud had a wonderful life, sharing plenty of affection and exercise and fresh air. The two often went hiking and loved spending time outdoors. Bud enjoyed his adventures with Robin until he passed away in March 2023, at the respectable age of 15½ years old.

Robin mourned the loss of Bud. She began to adopt one dog but stopped when it was clear it wouldn't work out. She moved on without a canine companion.

Jack's first interaction with the Cleveland APL was on December 7, 2023. Jack and his canine sibling, a hound mix, were surrendered to the APL when their owner was diagnosed with cancer.

Jack initially was very stressed at the shelter. He resisted medical exams. Staff handled him with care, but his stress level remained high.

In late 2023 and early 2024, at least three potential adopters expressed an interest in Jack. Unfortunately, Jack's stressed and excitable behavior during his meet and greets with them caused all three to decline. Then, near the end of March 2024, Jack was adopted. Success! The joy was short-lived, however. His new owner returned him after just one day, because he pulled the leash out of their hands and went for a tour of the neighborhood.

This was about the time Buddy went to work on Robin's behalf. Bud and Robin were well-known in local dog circles, and everyone in those circles knew that Robin was heartbroken when she lost Bud. Out of the blue, she began to get messages from people telling her that a dog who looked just like Bud was on the APL website. A neighbor left her a message about Bud's body double. Then, another person from the South Euclid dog park told Robin that a dog was waiting to be adopted who "was Bud." It seemed that Bud was enlisting help in nudging Robin toward adopting a new companion. And he sent a dog that looked very much like him, just to ensure that Robin couldn't miss the signs.

Robin went to the APL and met Jack. She could not miss the resemblance.



Jack loves going on adventures!

She adopted Jack one day before his August 26 birthday. You can hear the joy in Robin's voice as she describes Jack's Freedom Ride, and the ear-to-ear smile that lit up his face.

Jack's birthday in 2024 really was his re-birthday.

Since then, his life has been ideal. He has had birthday parties with his dog buddies. He went to Bark in the Park, where he met Supergirl and got his picture taken with her. He goes on Hiking Club adventures with Robin. From a dog who wasn't the "favorite," Jack has become a local celebrity—whenever they are out and about, people who knew him from the APL stop and ask Robin, "is that Jack?" The stress he showed in the shelter has become pure joyful energy. And, apparently, Jack knows how good his life is. Early on he bolted once or twice, raced around the neighborhood chasing rabbits, then came back home, happy and exhausted. Now, he listens to Robin, who can stop him from running after deer with a well-placed "enough."

The road to Jack's forever home had more twists and turns than usual, but he found it, with some help from his friend Bud.



Jack in his favorite spot

Barbara Reitzloff, APL Volunteer, assisted in the writing of Freddie's story.

The APL Pet Food Pantry

Featured Program

The Cleveland APL's Project CARE Pet Food Pantry provides supplemental pet food to families in need throughout Cuyahoga County, with a primary focus on Cleveland and East Cleveland. Through our Anchor Partnership with the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, households can receive pet food once every four weeks at any pantry location. Food is supplied through community donations and private foundation grants. The pantry distributes dog and cat food based on household pet populations and provides food for birds and small mammals when available.

Project CARE has significantly expanded its impact, distributing 6,360 pounds of pet food in 2023, 34,169 pounds in 2024, and 57,475 pounds in 2025. By September 2026, the program had already distributed 54,883 pounds of pet food! September 2026 marked a record-breaking month, with 7,708 pounds of pet food distributed—more than the total for all of 2023. The program supported 958 families and 2,506 pets, including 1,544 cats and 962 dogs. At the Greater Cleveland Food Bank Community Resource Center alone, Project CARE distributed a record 3,008 pounds of pet food, serving 302 families. At an estimated $2 per pound, September's distribution represented approximately $15,416 in food assistance, helping families keep their beloved pets fed and at home.



Bryana Polen, Project Care Manager, at Pet Food Pantry

Locations & Hours:

Cleveland APL (Main)
1729 Willey Avenue
Cleveland OH 44113
Mondays – Fridays: 10am – 5pm
Saturdays by appointment

Community Resource Center
1728 St. Clair Avenue NE
Cleveland OH 44114
Mondays: 10am – 1pm
Fridays: 1-4pm

The Friendly Inn Settlement
2386 Unwin Rd.
Cleveland OH 44104
The second Wednesday of the month from 12-2pm

Midtown Market
4415 Euclid Avenue Unit 100
Cleveland 44103
The last Thursday of the month from 10am – 12pm

Greater Cleveland Food Bank
15500 South Waterloo Rd.
Cleveland OH 44110
Tuesdays: 10am – 1pm

project CARE

Thank You Fox 8 for Hosting the Dick Goddard APL Telethon!



(From left to right): Hannah MacIntyre, Events & Social Media Manager; Judy Hunter, Vice President of Philanthropy and Communications; Sharon Harvey, APL President & CEO; Stefani Schaefer from Fox 8; and Ayse Dunlap, Incoming President & CEO

The 12th annual Dick Goddard APL Telethon aired on Fox 8 on Wednesday, September 16. This fantastic event was hosted by Fox 8 personalities and animal lovers Todd Meany, Kenny Crumpton, and Stefani Schaefer.

Between 6 a.m. and 7:30 p.m., segments showcased the meaningful and life-saving work that takes place at the Cleveland APL every day.

We are happy to report that more than $150,000 was raised to support our mission and life-saving work! A total of 138 people gave their time as volunteers—110 of whom staffed our phone bank and spoke to the animal-loving viewers who called in to donate.

We are so grateful to Fox 8, Todd Meany, Kenny Crumpton, and Stefani Schaefer and the sponsors, Cross Country Mortgage, Kauling Giving, and Hollywood Feed, who made this wonderful event possible. Tune in next fall for the 13th annual Dick Goddard APL Telethon!

Fur Ball 2026: Paws Ahoy!



Monica Robins from WKYC and Sharon Harvey, President & CEO

More than 370 guests helped us to raise more than $$298,000 to benefit the APL's Second Chance Program during the Cleveland Animal Protective League's annual gala, which was held both in-person and virtually on Saturday, November 7!

Our host, Monica Robins from WKYC; our outgoing President & CEO, Sharon Harvey; our incoming President & CEO, Ayse Dunlap; and our auctioneer, Karolyn Isenhart welcomed guests to the InterContinental Hotel for Fur Ball 2026: Paws Ahoy!

In-person attendees had a great time at the many food stations as well as bidding on fabulous items in our live and silent auctions, while virtual guests were able to bid on auction items and enjoy our Fur Ball program from the comfort of their own home. All guests also learned about some very special animals whose lives were saved because of the medical care and expertise the Second Chance Program allows us to provide.



Cheesecurds, our VIP

Cheesecurds, a one-year-old Pit Pull mix, was the night's VIP (Very Important Pooch). He came to the Cleveland APL as a tiny puppy along with his siblings when they were found abandoned in a box. As Cheesecurds grew, it became clear he faced significant mobility challenges due to severe deformities in his front legs. Thanks to donations to the Second Chance Program, Cheesecurds was able to receive the care he needed.

Also featured in the videos were Limp Biscuit, a one-year-old cat with a severely broken leg, and Uma, a three-year-old French Bulldog who suffered from painful, chronic ear infections. Both animals received the specialty surgeries and care they needed to recover and thrive. And, as an added surprise, Uma and her loving mom were in attendance! Finally, Rosalind, a young cat rescued through our Humane Investigations department, faced a life-threatening diaphragmatic hernia that severely impacted her ability to breathe. Her journey required specialty surgery and advanced veterinary care that could not have been possible without the Second Chance Program.



Ayse Dunlap, Incoming President & CEO

A committed group of APL volunteers works on this gala all year long. A special thank you to our Committee Chairs: Auction Procurement Co-Chairs Jen and Moe Maxwell; Auction Presentation Co-Chairs Angela DeMuesy and Katie Zehr; Auction Operations Co-Chairs Barbara Reitzloff and Sabah Bhat; and Decorations Co-Chairs Ginny Russ and Janet Smith. Without their hard work, and the help of many other volunteers who served on committees and helped during the gala, Fur Ball would not be possible! Save the date and join us again next year for Fur Ball 2027 on Saturday, November 6!

Photo Credit: Dan Sandy

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Opportunities to Give

Many generous individuals choose to donate to the Cleveland APL in lieu of giving gifts for birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, Bat Mitzvahs, Bar Mitzvahs, etc. Their thoughtfulness is a wonderful tribute to their love for animals. Call 216-344-1353 if you would like to learn more about how your celebration can help the APL's homeless animals.

In addition, many individuals choose to give through a workplace giving program. Federal employees also can give to the APL through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). The Cleveland APL's Combined Federal Campaign number is 29857. The Cleveland APL's Tax ID number is 34-0714644.

Thank You So Much!

Thanks to the generosity and efforts of everyone involved in these events, over **$11,000** was raised to help the Cleveland APL and our animals.

Aladdin's Eatery for hosting a Dine to Donate event in support of the Cleveland APL.

Barrio for donating a percentage of sales from specialty cocktails celebrating National Dog Day.

Dauch Corporation for supporting the Cleveland APL through an employee fundraiser.

The Checkered Shelf Bookshop for hosting an in-store fundraiser with a portion of the proceeds benefitting the Cleveland APL.

Hahn Loeser & Parks LLP for donating proceeds from their Denim Day Fundraising Event.

Jack Cleveland Casino for donating funds raised through their Charity for Change program.

Northeast Ohio Relocation Roundtable (NEORR) for choosing to support the Cleveland APL at their second quarter meeting.

Pring Roofing for making a donation for every full roof replacement completed during the month of August.

Rowley Inn for hosting an all-day fundraiser with a portion of the proceeds benefitting the Cleveland APL.

Worthington Steel for raising funds for the Cleveland APL at their annual employee golf outing.

We also appreciate the additional in-kind donations we have received from our friends and supporters. To learn about how your business or organization can host your own Community Fundraiser, please call Hannah MacIntyre, Events & Social Media Manager, at (216)377-1628. You can also visit our website, www.ClevelandAPL.org.



Other Ways to Give

The Cleveland Animal Protective League's programs and services are made possible through donations from caring people like you. Here are just a few of the ways you can give to the Cleveland APL, allowing us to continue our life-saving work, while receiving tax benefits as well.

- You can make a stock gift to the Cleveland APL. Here is the information you will need to gift stock:

  Raymond James
  DTC Participant # 725
  for further credit to: Animal Protective League
  a/c #627DV357

- Your investment in a donor-advised fund provides an immediate tax benefit for you, and that means your donations go even further to help the causes closest to your heart.

- If you have an IRA and are over 70½ years old, you can reduce your taxable income by directly transferring your required minimum distribution to a qualified charity such as the Cleveland APL.

For more information about any of these giving options, please call Judy Hunter, Vice President of Philanthropy and Communications, at 216-344-1353.

Pucks And Paws

The Cleveland Monsters invite all four-legged friends and their "people" to the 17th Annual Pucks & Paws event at the Rocket Arena. The Monsters will be playing the Chicago Wolves on Saturday, April 3, at 4pm.

The APL has always been the beneficiary of the dog tickets, and again this year we will also receive a portion of the "human" tickets. For the APL to receive the additional fundraised portion of the human tickets, please use the pass code "APL27" when purchasing your tickets online to this fun event! Visit www.ClevelandAPL.org for more details or call 216-420-2143.

Photo Caption: Fans enjoy Pucks and Paws during the 2026 season.

Happy Tale Cont.

Chai & Biskit Continued...

Nilay was over the moon and completed the adoption that day. He immediately changed the girls' names to Chai and Biskit. Whew.

Chai and Biskit adjusted quickly to their new home. Nilay continues to learn their distinct personalities. Biskit, the smaller cat, answers to her name and runs to greet him when he gets home. He often finds Biskit staring out the window, likely contemplating life's existential issues. Biskit is the cuddler. Chai is more independent, and ambles over at her own pace when Nilay arrives home at the end of the day. She is more "adventurous" and spends her free time tearing threads out of fabric.

Despite their differences, the girls clearly love one another. They wrestle with great enthusiasm. Still, at the end of the day, they curl up together to sleep, tired but content.

Nilay continues to be grateful for the peaceful feeling they bring to his home. He cannot imagine life without them now. And, fortunately, they don't have to imagine a life other than the happy, active, loving one they have. Thank you, Nilay, for giving these two ginger girls their sweet names, and their very sweet life.



Chai and Biskit in their new home!

Become a Cage Sponsor

At the Cleveland Animal Protective League, healthy, friendly animals stay with us as long as it takes to find a forever home, receiving the care they need and deserve. With your one-year, renewable cage sponsorship, you help provide a safe, temporary haven for these animals. Each sponsorship is recognized with a plaque, which can honor a loved one or promote your business.

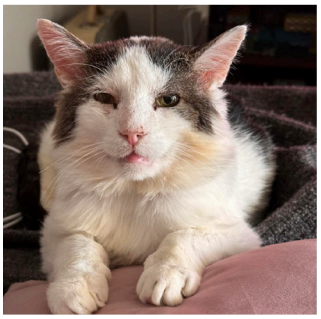
Dog
Cage Sponsorship



Spike was with us
8 months and 19 days.
Adopted!

One Year: $1,800
Monthly (12x a year): $150

Cat
Cage Sponsorship



Kipper was with us
5 months and 22 days.
Adopted!

One Year: $1,500
Monthly (12x a year): $125

Small Mammal
Cage Sponsorship



Checkers was with us
1 month and 15 days.
Adopted!

One Year: $1,300
Monthly (12x a year): $108.33

Interested in becoming a cage sponsor or renewing your current one? Visit clevelandapl.org/sponsor-a-cage or contact Michelle Papachristou, Annual Fund and Database Manager, at 216-255-5024 or mpapachristou@clevelandapl.org for more information.