



**cat haven**

GREATER BATON ROUGE



*Annual Report 2022*



# Our Story

**Cat Haven**, one of the premier cat-only rescue groups in the nation, has been giving cats and kittens a new lease on life since 1999. From humble beginnings as a foster-based organization to now having its beloved Cat Haven Adoption Center, the organization has grown to become a beacon of hope for feline friends in need.

For the first nine years, Cat Haven operated as a foster-based organization, relying on the dedication of volunteers to transport adoptable cats and kittens to adoption events held on weekends at places such as PetSmart and Petco. In 2008, after raising enough funds, Cat Haven purchased a building to use as a shelter and adoption center. The facility, located on Harrells Ferry Road near Sherwood Forest Boulevard, comfortably houses 75 adoptable cats and kittens.

Since 1999, Cat Haven has saved the lives of nearly 18,000 cats and kittens. With its Adoption Center open seven days a week, the organization typically averages 80-100 adoptions per month. In addition to rescuing cats and kittens from the community at large, Cat Haven also pulls cats and kittens from area public shelters, helping Baton Rouge become a No Kill community.

Cat Haven's dedication to giving cats and kittens a 10th life is evident in its tireless efforts to provide a safe haven for these animals. With its committed volunteers, the organization continues to make a positive impact in the lives of cats and kittens in need.



# From Our Director

Through the decades, Cat Haven's mission to save as many cats and kittens as possible has never wavered. Year 2022 was no exception. We have remained committed not only to helping the community at large, but also to being a valuable rescue partner for area public shelters, so that they can lower their euthanasia rate. In fact, during 2022, we saved close to 900 cats, bringing our overall running total to nearly 18,000.

Statistics published by Baton Rouge's public shelter, Companion Animal Alliance, indicated that in 2022, Baton Rouge had come very close to being a No-Kill community. This enabled us to increase our activity helping other surrounding public shelters and area non-profit rescue groups. Our achievements would not have been possible without your generous support.

2022 brought on many challenges, including rising cost of veterinary services, inflation of medication and products necessary to run a shelter, and limited space in our adoption center. Despite the hurdles on our path, we are proud of our lifesaving efforts, and that we have grown to become one of the largest no-kill cat-only rescue nonprofits in the nation.

We continue to uphold the highest standard of care for cats in our charge, and to be their proponents in finding loving forever homes. With every gift you have given to Cat Haven, you have not only supported our shelter, but also enabled us to help other public and private shelters throughout south Louisiana.

Thank you for being a continued partner of our nonprofit rescue and for helping to make a difference in the lives of so many homeless cats and kittens. We look forward to the many opportunities that 2023 will bring and will continue to strive to increase our region's save rate.

You have received this report because of your generous financial support of Cat Haven during 2022. I invite you to share your enthusiasm for Cat Haven with your friends, neighbors, and family. Come by the Cat Haven Adoption Center, meet our friendly staff, and visit with our adoptable kitties. And as always, on behalf of our staff, volunteers, and board of directors, I humbly thank you for making Greater Baton Rouge a kinder place.



  
*Holly Carey*  
Executive Director





# Vet Heroes:

## HELPING US HELP CATS

WHEN MEENA BRADEN, DVM, or Dr. Meena as she is known to clients, graduated from college with degrees in journalism and political science, she envisioned a career as an international journalist traveling, researching, and writing about varied topics of current interest across the globe. After all, she had been around the globe, having been born in Nepal, attended college in Hawaii, and traveled to Thailand and Vietnam, among other places. Then she got her first dog, Nikko, and thought, "this is cool." She fostered cats to broaden her experience with animals and entered vet school at the LSU School of Veterinary Medicine two years later in 2000. After graduating, Dr. Meena stayed in Baton Rouge to raise her family and practice veterinary medicine.

Dr. Meena developed a deep knowledge of felines in particular and has channeled her passion for investigative journalism to staying on top of feline veterinary advances to enhance her evaluation and treatment of patients. When you are great at what you do, word gets around. So, it was no surprise that others involved in Cat Haven would eventually recruit her to join the Board of Directors. As a member of the Board, Dr. Meena wasted no time learning more about shelter medicine and became instrumental in planning and preparing for the installation of the new in-house surgical suite made possible by a generous gift from a donor.

"I did not realize the amount of resources being used to transport cats all over town for spay/neuter services," Dr. Meena said. This causes unnecessary stress on the cats, directs volunteer and staff time away from other vital tasks such as caretaking at the Adoption Center, and lengthens the time it

takes for cats and kittens to be readied for adoption, she explained. Dr. Meena also has been working with Executive Director, Holly Carey, to enlist the support of other veterinarians to volunteer their time to spay and neuter Cat Haven's cats and kittens so they can be readied for adoption more quickly. Seven other area veterinarians have generously stepped up to join Dr. Meena in this effort. Our vet heroes include Dr. Rechelle Brooks, Dr. Megan Chouinard, Dr. Marge Gill, Dr. Martha Littlefield, Dr. Layne Shelton, Dr. Joe Stark, and Dr. Gary Sullivan. Cat Haven also is recruiting volunteers to serve as vet assistants for surgeries. "No experience is required, just curiosity and willingness to receive training," she added.

In addition to her children, Maile and Elliott, Dr. Meena has an assortment of pets in her home, including fish, a turtle, a guest rabbit on extended bunny-sitting stay, and 19-year-old cat Bebe. We don't know about you, but this sounds far more intriguing and exciting than a career as an international journalist. The irony that it was a dog named Nikko who sparked her interest in going to vet school is not lost on Cat Haven—we are indebted to Nikko and to Dr. Meena.



*Dr. Meena Braden with son Elliott, daughter Maile, and 19 year-old cat Bebe.*





# Love is Blind

**BILL AND LINDA MYERS** fell in love with a tiny kitten named Waffle the moment they spotted her at the Cat Haven adoption center. Waffle and her siblings were in a colony room, and were undergoing treatment for ringworm. Little Waffle came running up to the inside-facing window in the room, and reached up with her paws to try and touch Bill as he was walking through the halls. It was literally love at first sight!

At that very moment, Bill (who was strictly a dog person) decided that Waffle would be their next family member, and Linda was quick to agree. As soon as possible, they would adopt her and bring her home to join their other cat Trixi. With treatment, kittens usually completely recover from ringworm in a month. Next, Waffle and her siblings would go to the vet to get fixed, and then on to their forever homes.

But luck was not on Waffle's side, as it took double the normal amount of time for her and her littermates to become free of disease. Bill and Linda patiently waited and regularly came visit Waffle, though only across the window due to the risk of ringworm transmission to Trixi and humans. Finally, the litter of kittens was cleared, and they were able to get the rest of their routine medical care, including spay/neuter.

Yet again, luck was not on Waffle's side. Something happened during her spay surgery and she came out of anesthesia abnormally slowly. She had no appetite for a few weeks, and had abnormal neurologic signs, including blindness. Waffle stayed in intensive care for a few weeks, further prolonging the Myers' wait for their new kitten.

While many folks would have just chosen another kitten, their love for Waffle was unwavering. Linda began reading articles on how to best introduce a blind kitty to a new home. She called in

frequently to check up on Waffle and was delighted to learn that Waffle was gradually improving, although her visual impairment persisted.



Finally the happy day came when the Myerses could adopt Waffle and bring her home. Linda reports, "Waffle took us and our home by storm. She has a huge personality. She sleeps in our bed every night, quickly learned how to climb the stairs and onto the sofa, as well as her own cat furniture. Her blindness has definitely not broken her. She is very playful, affectionate, and super smart. When we come home, she bounces up to greet us with her loud hellos. Waffle keeps us on our toes, and we wouldn't trade her for anything!"







# Three Cheers FOR TWO All-Star Volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of any nonprofit organization, and at Cat Haven, they come to our rescue in many ways. Caring for cats and kittens is a 24/7 endeavor that depends on committed volunteer feline caregivers—they keep the motors purring at the Adoption Center, so to speak! Two volunteer all-stars, Jackie Carnes and Mary Travasos, set the bar high for volunteer dedication, so we want to share their stories.



**Jackie Carnes** began volunteering for Cat Haven in 2001, when the organization was in its infancy and run entirely by volunteers. In her more than 20 years as a volunteer, she has bottle-fed kittens and tended to Cat Haven's cats when housed at offsite adoption locations like PetSmart. When Cat Haven opened its Adoption Center, Jackie began volunteering as a caretaker—providing fresh food and water, cleaning litter boxes, tidying condos and colony rooms, and noting any special needs for the staff. At some point, she observed that the restroom dedicated for non-felines also needed attention and decided to tidy that space as well. Weekly, without fail, she has continued to volunteer now into her third decade with Cat Haven.

Jackie was not inexperienced with cats or tidying. She has her own janitorial business, raised and educated (and tidied up after) four children, and currently shares her home with four “cranky kitties”—Tripod Sissy Cat, age 16, Dansig the Round, age 12 and diabetic, Charismatic Enigma Cat, age 11, and Linker the Stinker, age 10. For Jackie, “the volunteering in and of itself is a reward.” There is no way any one person can rescue every homeless cat in The world, but by volunteering at Cat Haven one can make a “big impact in the lives of cats in our community,” Jackie says.



**Mary Travasos** began volunteering at Cat Haven about five years ago as a caretaker. In fact, Jackie showed her the ropes during her volunteer training. Mary was a longtime early learning teacher but wondered if her passion for animals might point her in a different direction, perhaps as a veterinary assistant. She had shared her home with dogs for more than 35 years, but never any cats. Mary thought that volunteering at Cat Haven would help her learn about felines while she contemplated her career path. She confesses she was a bit timid around cats at first, so she focused on tidying up after

them (they love that, by the way!) until she grew accustomed to their behaviors and personalities. Then, she began visiting them and enjoying the new experience as a feline caretaker.



Mary eventually added a feline to her own family, 13-year-old Sadie, who needed to be rehomed when a relative relocated and could not keep her. She also has a guinea pig and a dog, so this animal lover has certainly diversified her furry tribe at home! About her weekly routine at Cat Haven, Mary says, "It's the highlight of my week, I totally enjoy it."

Cat Haven is immensely grateful to Jackie and Mary, who have made a big impact on the cats and people in our community and who highlight our week with their service and smiles!

*Zoey*





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*Sweet Pea*

On behalf of 905 felines and their new families,

# We thank you.



**Thanks to our community veterinary clinics who helped keep our cats and kittens healthy in 2022:**

All Pets Animal Hospital  
Associated Veterinary Services  
Azalea Lakes Veterinary Clinic  
Baton Rouge Veterinary Specialists  
Capital Area Veterinary Specialists

Dr. Keith Strickland  
Perkins Road Animal Hospital  
Sherwood South Animal Hospital  
White Oak Animal Hospital

**Special thanks to Dr. Lacie Lee at Cat Care Center for building and providing a beautiful adoption room in the front part of their clinic!**



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GREATER BATON ROUGE

11130 N. Harrells Ferry Rd  
Baton Rouge, LA 70816

cathaven.org  
225-636-2680