Community Support for a Special Kitty

Ronald Weasley was in bad shape. But thanks to the compassion and generosity of this community, his life was about to take a turn for the better.

Ronald’s temperature was dangerously high. He was thin, and according to the shelter he came from, he had stomatitis, a condition that causes excessive mouth inflammation and pain. The only long-term treatment is to remove all of the cat’s teeth. Ronald’s mouth was severely inflamed, and we suspected it had been for a while, likely deterring him from eating and causing him to lose weight.

Despite how badly he clearly felt, Ronald was so sweet. He cooperated with his medical exams, and even purred throughout them. In order for him to find relief, he needed dental surgery to remove his remaining teeth. Our medical staff performed the surgery, but unfortunately, some of his teeth were broken and they were unable to fully complete the surgery. While waiting for his next surgery appointment with a veterinarian specialized in dental procedures, Ronald was placed with an experienced foster who helped coax him to eat and kept up with daily medication and injections for the infection and pain.

Just before Ronald’s second surgery, our county declared a mandatory shelter-in-place order due to COVID-19. With all the changes we were forced to make, it was a difficult time to dedicate resources to an expensive dental surgery. But Ronald Weasley needed the surgery to be pain-free, and we were committed to doing everything possible to help him.

We turned to our community for help, and the outpouring of support was incredible. With the help of a social media fundraiser and a generous donation by an amazing HSSV supporter — who credits his donation to his beloved cats Atlas, Kitten-Boy, Rapale du Bugg, and Tinsie Boo Boo — we reached our goal and were able to fund Ronald Weasley’s surgery.

After the procedure, Ronald Weasley instantly began feeling better. He spent a few more weeks in his foster home to make sure that his recovery went smoothly. His foster mom was delighted to see him acting like a normal cat — playing chase with the other cat in the house, eating normally, and spending as much time in people’s laps as possible. Once Ronald was completely healed, he was placed up for adoption and is enjoying the good life in his new forever home.

We are so grateful that we were able to give Ronald a pain-free life, and incredibly touched that our community was able to come together and transform the future of a very special cat.

TOP STORIES:
Fostering for Bella
Weathering the Storm
Finding the Right Kind of Home
Helping Shelters in Need While Sheltering in Place
Community Support for a Special Kitty
Passion and Purpose

This year, we and so many others have been facing new challenges. With the arrival of the novel coronavirus, our immediate future looked uncertain, and we were forced to make changes to adapt to the new world. But we weren’t alone. You, our supporters, have allowed us to continue our important, lifesaving work, even during a global crisis. You remembered animals who could have easily been forgotten, and you helped us save them. You also enabled us to provide much-needed services to those in need in our community.

Humane Society Silicon Valley has always been an organization dedicated to and immensely supported by an amazing community. We are deeply grateful for compassionate, dedicated people like you who can come together in times of crisis and give to those who need it most. In this issue of All Things Pawsible, learn how your support impacted homeless animals — and how they, in turn, impacted the people who care for them. Thank you for being a friend to HSSV and to the animals who rely on us.

Gratefully,

Kurt Krukenberg
President

Fostering for Bella
By Esti Yeung

Bella was our first pit bull-type dog, but she won’t be the last. We adopted her from Humane Society Silicon Valley in January 2018. It was luck that led her to us, and I loved her with every fiber of my being. We introduced her to all our friends, and she went to oodles of puppy socials and play dates.

We took her to dog parks and on road trips to see the snow and beaches. We diligently trained her with fun tricks and commands. She was showered with toys, treats, and enrichment. She was family, my whole life, and my heart-dog. There are not enough words to describe our bond.

In August 2019, at 22 months old, she passed away due to a complication with a double-TPLO surgery to repair her knees. My husband and I were devastated, and the days following her death were some of our darkest.

After Bella died, we started visiting animal shelters nearly every day. Being around dogs who needed homes helped with our grieving; there are too many wonderful dogs out there, ready and waiting for their homes. A few of our favorites were our label as “the困难s.” We are so grateful that we are able to provide safety and comfort for the animals that need it most. Bella is our inspiration for helping these animals, especially in these uncertain times. Watching our foster dogs gain confidence, trust, and reach new milestones is our inspiration for helping these animals, especially in these uncertain times. Watching our foster dogs gain confidence, trust, and reach new milestones is something we cherish. We can’t imagine not being a part of these “firsts.”
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In August 2019, at 22 months old, she passed away due to a complication with a double-TPLO surgery to repair her knees. My husband and I were devastated, and the days following her death were nearly every day. Being around dogs who needed to heal. We have been overjoyed to watch Benny improve and gain confidence, trust, and reach new milestones in these uncertain times. Watching our foster dogs show up and help other dogs find their people.

We began our fostering journey in late 2019 and have fostered dogs and puppies for HSSV ever since. When COVID-19 hit, we stepped up to foster Penelope, a young single puppy who needed a well-mannered adult dog to model after. And when Penelope found her forever home, we took in Magnolia, who had recently suffered a broken leg and needed a place to heal. We have been overjoyed to watch Benny interact with each foster we take in and teach them the ropes.

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Weathering the Storm

When COVID-19 hit hard in early March, operations at Humane Society Silicon Valley changed by the day. We temporarily closed many of our programs and services, including adoptions and medical services, and were no longer able to have volunteers in the building. We rushed to make new plans and adjustments to ensure we could continue to provide the best care for our animals while also keeping our staff safe.

And though so many things were uncertain about the future, you made sure of one thing—that we knew we had the support of our community behind us.

Foster Families to the Rescue!

One of our first major steps was figuring out how to place as many of our shelter animals as possible into foster homes. We knew there was a good chance that our rescue partners would need help, so we wanted to ensure we had space to take in more animals.

Our current foster families stepped up to help immediately. We knew that moving forward, we would need even more foster support, so we put out a call for new fosters to sign up. We were blown away by the response. Within days, more than 3,000 people signed up to foster. Despite the crisis, our community was more than ready to jump in to help send animals to foster and ensure foster families had the supplies they needed. Because of the generous support from friends like you, our staff have been able to keep their jobs and make the necessary changes to continue providing the highest standard of care that our animals deserve.

Forever Homes Are Just a Video Chat Away!

Almost immediately after receiving the mandate to shelter-in-place, we began brainstorming ways to safely reopen our adoptions program and continue to find forever homes for our animals. Although we were anxious to restart adoptions as soon as possible, we were focused on ensuring we could do so while keeping our staff and adopters safe. We created a virtual adoptions process, in which potential adopters could meet animals through video chat, then pick up their adopted animal through a safe, socially-distanced appointment process.

We were nervous about how the process would go, especially since one of the tenets of our adoptions program is the ability for people to interact with animals they’re interested in meeting. But we shouldn’t have worried. Our amazing adopters were thrilled with the opportunity to safely adopt animals during such a trying time. After just one day of offering virtual adoptions, hundreds of people had signed up to meet our animals. By the end of the week, dozens of animals were in their new homes. We were unbelievably touched by our community’s willingness to adjust to this new process, and by their desire to adopt an animal during an otherwise difficult time.

Providing for Pet Owners

With the people in our community facing financial and other hardships due the ramifications of the pandemic, we knew we needed to do whatever possible to provide more support. We were hearing from pet owners who were struggling to feed their four-legged family members, some were even thinking about surrendering their pets because of financial issues. In response, we expanded our Pet Pantry program—which gives food and other supplies to pet owners who are unable to feed their pets—to meet the new and ever-changing needs of our community. Many of our community members donated food and other supplies to the program, and we are so thankful for their generosity which allowed us to help pet owners when they needed us most.

Thanks to incredible support from friends like you, we can innovate in a time of crisis, provide lifesaving care for animals, find amazing homes for homeless pets, and give people and pets the support they need to stay together. Together, we make a difference for both animals and people. We are so grateful to have you as part of the Humane Society Silicon Valley family.

Recognizing Members of Humane Society Silicon Valley’s Visionaries’ Circle

Our Visionaries’ Circle members inspire our community while deeply investing in the future of HSSV, by giving $25,000 or more cumulatively in a calendar year.

Imagine embedding yourself in our Medical Center for a busy morning of critical surgeries, or helping us triage and provide love and comfort to dogs and cats that have just arrived from a large Regional Rescue run? By directly connecting with our lifesaving work through these unforgettable experiences, our Visionaries’ Circle members fully experience the incredible impact their gifts make toward our mission.

To learn more, please visit hssv.org/visionariescircle.
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These foster families were grateful to their foster animals, too, for giving them purpose during such difficult times. Diane Foxen, one of our sickest kittens, was also a full-time neonatal nurse, caring for the smallest and sickest infants in the hospital. When COVID-19 hit, her already stressful job became overwhelming at times. Diane told us that having foster kittens during an intensely challenging period allowed her to recharge from the stress at work. “My kittens have saved me more times than I’ve saved them,” she said. “Having these kittens crawl on my chest and let me love them, they’re giving me hope that it’s gonna get better, we’re gonna get through this.”

Rearranging Staff to Provide Care

With many of our animals in foster homes, our focus shifted to caring for the animals at our Animal Community Center. Many of our public-facing programs were temporarily suspended, which freed our public-facing staff members up to give the hands-on care our animals needed. The manager of our pet store became the lead cat socializer and helped coordinate socializing shifts to make sure every cat in the building received necessary cuddle and playtime. Our intake and adoptions teams took turns assisting our behavior team with dog playgroups and walks. Our medical receptionists jumped in to help send animals to foster and ensure foster families had the supplies they needed. Because of the generous support from friends like you, our staff have been able to keep their jobs and make the necessary changes to continue providing the high standard of care that our animals deserve.

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Finding the Right Kind of Home

Thanks to our dedicated group of new and seasoned foster volunteers, many of our animals went into foster homes, where they could receive more individualized attention during the temporary closure. But there was a group of animals that weren’t able to go to foster homes: garden cats.

Our garden cat adoption program finds homes for cats that aren’t your typical indoor lap cats — these cats are used to living outdoors, and most prefer little to no interaction with people. As it was early spring, our outdoor garden was full, and with our adoptions program closed, we needed to find an appropriate place for new garden cats that were still arriving at our shelter.

We reached out to adopters who had adopted garden cats in the past and asked if they would consider testing out a virtual adoption process with us to help our garden cats find homes. The first to respond was Sam, one of our veterinary technicians, who lives on a 10,000-acre ranch and is no stranger to adopting garden cats. She had plenty of space to take in a few more and was able to pick them up right away.

Five garden cats went to Sam’s ranch that day. She set up transition cages to help them adjust to their new lives. After a few weeks, they were released. They now roam Sam’s property with her other garden cats, keep the rodents and snakes away, and return to Sam’s home every night for dinner. Sam keeps a close eye on all her garden cats, checking them every night to make sure they’re healthy and happy. By adopting out those five garden cats, she created plenty of space for any incoming garden cats.

The pets in our care count on us to give them what they need to thrive. That’s why we’re so grateful to have incredibly supportive friends like you who help us treat each animal as an individual and provide them what they need. Thanks to you, even in a crisis, we continue to be innovative and find the right homes for our animals. With your help, every animal that enters our building is given what they need to be comfortable, safe, healthy, and happy.

Providing the right kind of care and environment for our animals is essential to our mission. Even during a global pandemic, we are committed to doing everything possible to maintain a high standard of care for every single animal.

It was mid-March, and our county had just received shelter-in-place orders due to the spread of COVID-19. Our team worked quickly to move as many animals into foster homes and to reassign some of our front-line staff to help with animal care.

While Sheltering in Place

Helping Shelters in Need While Sheltering in Place

It was a few weeks into the shelter-in-place mandate due to COVID-19 when we got the call. One of our rescue partners in the Central Valley needed emergency help with two puppies. The littermates had been exposed to parvovirus, and were showing signs that they, too, were infected. Thanks to your support, we were able to take in these sick puppies through our Regional Rescue program, and they arrived the very next day.

Jessa and Marnie were fluffy, affectionate, and adorable. But they were also feeling very ill. They were congested, had major stomach issues, and weren’t eating. Our medical team quickly got to work. Both puppies were cleaned up and given fluids and appetite stimulants to help them stay nourished. They were monitored closely for the next few days while we continued to provide intensive, round-the-clock care.

Slowly, Jessa and Marnie began to improve. They started eating small amounts of food, became more active, and gradually began to gain weight. After a few more days, the puppies were bright, active, and wagged their tails whenever our staff came to check on them. Thanks to you, they had survived the devastating virus. It was now time for them to find their forever homes.

With shelter-in-place still in effect, adoptions were being performed “virtually”, so Jessa and Marnie met their future families through video chats. Both families were completely smitten when they met the happy, wiggly pups. They were both adopted that same day and are now being loved and spoiled by their new families.

Your generosity during this challenging time meant that we could be there for a fellow shelter and Jessa and Marnie when they needed us most. You proved that even during a time of crisis, we can all come together to save lives and give animals like Jessa and Marnie a second chance.
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Our Regional Rescue program, which enables us to save animals like Jessa and Marnie from all over California, is supported by generous donors like Conni Ahart and Clint Severson. In 2019, Conni and Clint generously committed $1,000,000 to HSSV, part of which directly supports our Regional Rescue program. With their partnership, we are able to be there for our rescue partners who depend on our help to save animals in their community. Thanks to Conni and Clint’s gift and the generosity of supporters like you, more than 3,300 animals last year were given a second chance.