



# 2020 Year in Review

# 2020 by the Numbers

over  
**4,474**  
animals coming  
through Oakland  
Animal Services



more than  
**1,343**  
animals transferred  
to partner rescue  
groups





more than  
**1,049**  
animals adopted

**900**  
dogs and cats  
spayed and  
neutered for free



over  
**877**  
animals fostered

# In This Together

Dear Friends,

Well . . . we made it. 2020 has certainly not been the year any of us expected. At Friends of Oakland Animal Services, which was founded by shelter volunteers in 2005, plans for a big 15th anniversary celebration quickly fizzled as we grew to understand the scope of COVID-19 and its impacts.

We all braced for the unknown, uncertain at first how this unprecedented crisis would affect our city's homeless animals. Was sheltering our cats, dogs, rabbits, and other OAS arrivals considered an "essential" business? Would FOAS continue to be able to provide free spay/neuter services for Oakland residents as our veterinary partners were forced to reduce capacity or pause operations altogether? Would increased numbers of our most

vulnerable neighbors find themselves in the heartbreaking situation of having to surrender their beloved pets due to lack of resources?

As is so often the case in times of crisis, amidst the tragedy and unrest of 2020, we witnessed something wonderful unfold for Oakland's homeless animals. From the start, our community members, many of whom are now working from home, have come out in force



to become foster moms and dads. In so doing, they laid the groundwork for a permanently expanded foster program—made possible by FOAS donors—that is improving outcomes for shelter animals. Some, like Miss Coco Bun (p. 15), quickly became “foster fails” as their families decided to make it official. For others, like our “big dogs” (p. 7), supportive foster home environments, where they can work on their manners

and gain confidence, are the key to their happy (adoption) endings.

This foster program expansion is just one component of our shelter's FOAS-funded Outcome Team, which, rising to the challenges of 2020, also offers adoption outreach and counseling, provides behavior training support, and works with transfer partner organizations to place homeless animals with appropriate private rescues for adoption.

Meanwhile, our PetFix free spay/neuter program quickly learned how to provide smooth, socially-distanced services. Despite a drastically reduced capacity during the normally busy springtime leading up to "kitten season," more than 900 Oakland dogs and cats will have received free spay/neuter services by year's end, thanks to FOAS donors like you.



Let's face it—for many of us, 2020 was a year we'll be happy to turn the page on. But like the delightfully mediocre pet portraits created this spring by our team of "Bad Art" volunteers (pp. 18–19), there is inspiration, and even beauty, to be found in the imperfections. This year, more than ever, we are grateful for this community of FOAS supporters like you, joining us in creating brighter tomorrows for Oakland's animals in need.

With gratitude,  
Lisa Franzetta  
*Program and  
Fundraising Director*

## COVID-19 Response

Few Bay Area residents will forget March 16, 2020. In response to the growing spread of COVID-19, shelter-in-place orders had just been announced; only “essential businesses” would be allowed to operate, effective 12:01 am the next day. With so much uncertainty, no one knew exactly what this meant for the animals at Oakland Animal Services.

OAS put out a historic call-to-action: could we get all adoptable animals out of the shelter and into foster care before the shelter doors closed that evening? Thanks to an already robust foster program funded by FOAS, we were able to quickly place our animals with families who came forward to help—and come forward they did! After seeing our urgent call for foster families on social media, dozens of animal lovers—including many first-time fosters—lined up at OAS to bring home 16 dogs, 6 cats, and 7 rabbits before close of business at 7pm on the 16th. It was a monumental, eleventh-hour effort that would have been impossible without our incredible Oakland community.

Days of shelter-in-place turned into weeks, and weeks turned into months. Through the end of March alone, the foster program made 49 more placements for cats, dogs, and rabbits. We began to hear more and more stories of animals blossoming in their foster homes as new, virtual adoption processes were established. Thanks to FOAS donors, we were able to fund additional foster program staffing to support the growth of this critical shelter program.

And for our animals, this new focus on foster care often means better, quicker adoption outcomes—a true silver lining in the pandemic crisis.



Coco on a hike with her foster dad

Consider Coco\*, a German Shepherd who was literally the last dog to leave the shelter on March 16 (\*not to be confused with Miss Coco Bun, another foster success story, on page 15). Her foster dad saw the call for help on Twitter and made a beeline for the shelter. With her foster family, Coco learned how much she loved going on hikes and practiced skills like sit and down. When the right adopter came along in May, Coco was ready—and she is now living the good life in Lake Tahoe, with many happy hiking days ahead of her.

## Big Dogs, Big Needs

We're all different, right? The same goes for dogs, and some of them need extra attention; that's where OAS's specialized foster program focused on big dogs makes a crucial difference.

Historically, dogs who showed behavioral issues such as hyperactivity or being shut down would have a hard time getting adopted at the shelter. We know that because the shelter environment can be stressful for animals, we're often not seeing their true colors.

OAS's specialized foster program helps great dogs who require extra TLC to shine.

These dogs going into foster might have high energy, be leash reactive, shy, fearful, anxious, have issues with resource guarding, unusual medical needs, or they might simply be in need of time to recover from surgery or other treatable issues. The foster team supports foster families with supplies and individualized support. The team also oversees dog play groups at the shelter which provides a valuable training opportunity for both fearful and aggressive dogs. This "canine good citizen" approach focuses on improving a dog's behavior, and the support provided to fosters and adopters means they can take a chance on a "dog in progress," knowing they won't be stuck without support if they need it.

The OAS foster program also includes a "fospice" program that provides a comfortable and loving home where dogs with a terminal condition can spend their final days. For example, Bumper arrived at the shelter as a stray, with a number of masses on his body that turned out to be cancerous. FOAS paid to have the masses removed, and veterinarians estimated he probably had about one good year of life to enjoy before his quality of life would likely begin to deteriorate and the masses would return.

Despite his condition, Bumper was an affectionate, beautiful dog who enjoyed life, and the FOAS "fospice" program was able to ensure he could spend the rest of his days as a happy pup in a loving home, feeling adored and appreciated until the end. FOAS makes this possible by funding veterinary costs and providing support to fospice guardians like Bumper's along the way.



Bumper

# From the OAS Director

While 2020 has turned out to be an incredibly challenging year, it has also brought real opportunity to reimagine how we operate. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that OAS needed to radically transform operations. We are now refocusing energy to help people keep their pets, reuniting more lost animals with their families, and are directing our resources to the people and animals who need it most.

One of the biggest changes we've made this year is to greatly expand the Outcome Team, a small but mighty group that works tirelessly to get animals quickly out of the shelter, into foster or adopted homes, or to one of OAS's many wonderful transfer partners.



First, we greatly expanded the foster program by adding additional staff to the kitten foster program and creating a new foster program for the hardest-to-place dogs, focusing primarily on big dogs. To strengthen the adoption process, by focusing on matchmaking and post-adoption support, we

added an Adoption and Outreach Coordinator. A first-ever Community Cat Coordinator focuses on keeping feral cats in their outdoor homes or finding quality “working cat” placements as part of the Oakland Cats on Patrol program (see page 16). Our new Outcome Team Associate supports adoptions, the rabbit foster program, and helps fill in any gaps in the Outcome Team.

Our HASS (Human Animal Support Services) Coordinator focuses on providing services so that animals can stay in their homes and never come into the shelter (see page 10). For those that do come into the shelter, the Outcome Team makes sure their stay is brief as they journey to the right home. We also added a half-time vet to help with in-house medical care and surgeries to provide necessary medical care as quickly as possible.

**All of the positions mentioned above are funded by your donations to FOAS.** Your support means we can continue to do more of our lifesaving work, coming together as a community to make Oakland a better place for people and animals.

—Ann Dunn, Oakland Animal Services director

• FREE KISSES! ♡ •



## Connecting Humans + Animals

In spring 2020, Oakland Animal Services was one of ten shelters across the country invited to participate in a pilot program to reduce shelter intake and get animals out of the shelter more quickly. The Human Animal Support Services (HASS) model is designed to help keep more animals in their homes and communities, therefore reducing the number entering shelters by providing a range of services for animals who don't need to come into the shelter for a medical, behavioral or other urgent reason. Fundamental to the HASS model is the belief that animal and human welfare are linked, and animals are part of family systems and should be addressed inclusively.

FOAS provided funding for a new position to manage this program, and hired Donell Randolph, Jr. (pictured on the cover with a kitten he adopted) as its HASS Coordinator. Donell has introduced the Home to Home Program, which helps people who are looking to surrender their pet to the shelter to instead find an alternative home in the community. He has also worked to expand microchip scanning in the field, so if a pet's owner can be found and can safely take the pet back, the animal never has to come to the shelter at all. Donell works closely with other FOAS-funded Outcome Team staff to expand the lost and found and foster programs at OAS.

Successfully keeping pets with their families and out of the shelter

looks different in every case. For example, there's Boogie, who lived in an RV in Oakland. When his guardian was arrested, Boogie was brought to the shelter. OAS was able to place Boogie in a foster home until his guardian was released, and when OAS staff went back to check on him, they found Boogie healthy, happy, and thriving. However, Boogie's journey with OAS was not over; unfortunately, his guardian passed away not long after they were reunited. Boogie went back to a foster home, but it was clear that after living his whole life outside, a traditional home placement wouldn't be the right fit for him. OAS staff



Boogie with OAS Assistant Director Ben Winkleblack

who were familiar with Boogie's situation were able to contact one of his former caretaker's friends who was able to adopt him.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created additional pressures on families struggling to keep their pets. In one case, a 14-year-old cat was found wandering the streets. OAS Animal Control Officer Soggie scanned the cat for a microchip and immediately contacted the owners. The owners were elderly and had significant medical conditions, so they were unable to leave their home during

the COVID-19 lockdown to reclaim their beloved cat. Officer Soggie also learned that they were struggling to get cat food because of the lockdown. She and fellow Officer Tierney returned the cat and some cat food directly to the owners' door to help them through this difficult time.



Officer Tierney delivering cat food



Roxy at the shelter

Roxy is another success story that has resulted from the HASS program. Someone found Roxy tied to a tree at Lake Merritt and brought her to the shelter. OAS staff matched her photo with a post on Pawboost (an online service that helps people find their lost pets) and called her owner, who said her "heart was racing" when she got the call. Roxy had gone to a foster home but was returned to OAS the next day. She was spayed at the shelter and then returned to her owner who couldn't have been happier or more relieved.

Thanks to the HASS program, shelters like OAS are refocusing energy on keeping pets with their guardians, where they belong.

## Jessie's Wish

Though Jessie is “just” a teenager, she has changed countless lives as a volunteer for OAS. Since May 2019, with support from her family, Jessie has been fostering kittens for the shelter. As a young shelter volunteer, she started out doing non-animal handling chores like laundry while working around her school schedule. When our volunteer team saw her level of commitment, Jessie became a rabbit volunteer, providing care for the bunnies—cuddling, but also cleaning cages and feeding greens. When shelter-in-place was announced, Jessie was one of the first in line, bringing home both a foster rabbit and a foster cat. All of this on its own is heartwarming, but there is more to know about this amazing young woman.

Jessie has a lung disease that made her eligible for a wish from Make-A-Wish Greater Bay Area. Many Make-A-Wish children, who are all facing life-threatening medical conditions, make wishes like taking a trip to Disneyland or meeting one of their sports idols. Instead, Jessie's one wish was to help kittens at OAS by hosting a “virtual kitten shower.”

The typical kitten arriving at OAS requires specialized supplies like formula, bottles, kitten food, litter, a scale, and a carrier. Kittens also need routine medical care including vaccines, flea prevention, medication for diarrhea and upper respiratory infections, and spay/neuter surgery. All told, each kitten in foster costs the shelter over \$200, assuming they have no additional medical expenses.

Jessie's generous wish provided OAS with much-needed items for the kittens who flood the shelter each spring and summer. In addition



Jessie with one of her foster kittens

to the funds from Jessie's “kitten shower,” Friends of Oakland Animal Services also received a \$5,000 donation in Jessie's honor from Make-A-Wish Greater Bay Area.

From Friends of Oakland Animal Services and the many kittens who have benefited from your kind heart, thank you, Jessie! You are an inspiration to all of us, and your gesture not only benefited the kittens at OAS but our community as well, through the heartwarming example of your compassion and generosity.

## Rey of Sunshine



Rey, resting in his foster home

The email from the shelter's animal behavior specialist read: "We currently have a dog at OAS, Rey, who needs surgery for a partially torn CCL in his knee. He is currently in pain and limping. We have tried to find Rey a placement through transfer but have been unsuccessful; his being a middle-aged pittie definitely doesn't help. Behaviorally, he is adoptable and

has been in foster with two other dogs for a couple of weeks now. We can do the surgery on Saturday if approved. The estimate for surgery is \$1,800. Would FOAS be able to fund Rey's surgery?"

Oakland Animal Services, as you may already know, is a city agency, funded through the city of Oakland's budget. Unfortunately, this bare bones budget is not sufficient to provide veterinary care for homeless animals with serious medical conditions. The options would be bleak for a good boy like Rey—found abandoned and running around the OAS parking lot, friendly but lame on his hind leg—if OAS relied on city funding alone.

And that's where FOAS comes in. Donations from donors like you make it possible for us to pay for surgeries and other medical care for animals with treatable, albeit pricey, diagnoses. Funding veterinary care for animals like Rey goes right to the heart of our mission "to provide homes, health, and happiness to Oakland's homeless animals." Finding a home for an older pitbull can be challenging; finding a home for one who requires an expensive surgery would be downright impossible. Our medical fund is the difference for animals like Rey, who, post-surgery, can now look forward to a pain-free life with a family of his very own.

Rey's foster mom reports that he is in good spirits, though his recovery has plateaued and his OAS team is working on a plan to help his continued healing moving forward. Although Rey has not been a simple medical case, she reports that "Rey is a happy guy who loves to hang out with his furry foster sibling and meet new people. He spends most of his days snoozing on the dog bed and just loves love! During these crazy times in the world he has been a true comfort to me and my family." Thanks to our FOAS donors, there's a lot of sunshine ahead for this very special Rey.



## OAS PROGRAM SUPPORT: FOSTERING

# The Life and Times of Miss Coco Bun



Coco and one of her favorite snacks, basil. See more of her antics on Instagram at @miss\_coco\_bun

Coco had already spent much of her young life at Oakland Animal Services when the urgent call for foster families went out in March 2020 as shelter-in-place orders were declared. Winter had turned to spring, and this baby bunny, now a lady bunny, was none too fond of humans. In fact, she was terrified of them. Fortunately, OAS rabbit volunteer Maria answered the call, and because of her rabbit experience, she was asked to take on this more challenging case. The rest, as they say, is history.

Like so many adoptable animals, Coco blossomed in foster care. FOAS funds the foster program with this in mind, knowing it can help secure the best possible outcomes for shy animals like Coco. Within days of arriving at Maria's home, Coco had already started to open up. When Maria began getting inquiries from interested adopters, she realized she could not bear to part with the rambunctious bun, who was now keeping her company 24/7 while she worked from home. Coco, now officially a "foster failure," just as quickly made Maria's home her own.

A true independent woman, Coco decided that she would be free roaming—"she hates being in a cage," explains Maria. She has access to the entire house and uses a litter box, just like a cat (she is, incidentally, very intrigued by the resident cats, who pay her no mind.) She loves munching on herbs like basil, cilantro, and mint, and whenever anyone is in the kitchen, Coco swings by to see if there's any greenery for her. And like any well-adapted Californian, when the heat waves struck this summer, Coco learned to park her bum directly in front of the fan.

Although Maria had two rabbits growing up, most of her knowledge about how to care for these special animals came from volunteering at OAS. Rabbit adopters get lots of support at the shelter to learn best practices for caring for their new buddies. And in return, adopters like Maria get the love and companionship of a very clever creature indeed. Coco knows her name, quickly figured out treat dispensers made for cats, and responds to a special click—"when she wants to."

## Wild Thing, I Think I Love You!



Benny and Bruce in their new backyard home. Follow them on Instagram at @bruce.beignets

What happens to free-roaming, unowned cats at the shelter who are deemed too antisocial to be pets? These cats, usually labeled “feral,” aren’t often put up for adoption. But really, all they want is to be loved—from a distance. Fortunately, a number of shelters now have programs that give these cats a new lease on life.

The Oakland Cats on Patrol (OCoP) is one such program. It was established in late 2016 by the FOAS-funded animal care coordinator, with support from volunteers. Since then,

220 cats have found homes in barns, breweries, wineries, farms, and backyards. These cats earn their keep by providing rodent control in exchange for food, outdoor shelter, and proper vet care. Sometimes, these cats become fond of their guardians, and may even grow social with them. As the program has grown, it was clear that OCoP needed a dedicated staff person. This summer, FOAS hired Samantha Sullivan to do just this, in addition to her role as half-time cat foster coordinator.

One of Samantha’s favorite placements is Bruce and Benny with Adrienne Sancho, whose West Oakland backyard was becoming overrun with rats. Adrienne, a lifelong dog owner who had cat allergies, was at first uneasy about adopting cats. But Samantha’s support and guidance helped resolve Adrienne’s anxieties. Bruce and Benny initially spent two weeks in acclimatization enclosures before being released into their new backyard home. Adrienne reports that since their arrival, her yard has had no evidence of rats. Not only that, she’s also received “presents” from them, definitive proof of them doing their jobs.

“As I’ve been the one feeding them, I’m now able to pet *both* cats,” Adrienne says. “Benny will rub his body around my legs when it’s time to eat, and Bruce will come up to me when I sit down outside. He rubs his body all around me and loves when I scratch his neck and pet his back. As long as I take an allergy medication and promptly wash my hands, I have no problem with any of this!”

Adrienne’s neighbors have even asked if they could “borrow” Bruce and Benny for their yards. For more information about OCoP, go to [www.oaklandanimalservices.org/adopt/oakland-feral-cats-program](http://www.oaklandanimalservices.org/adopt/oakland-feral-cats-program).

## A Big Fix for Oakland's Community Cats

Despite the wintery conditions on a November morning, more than a dozen volunteers gathered outdoors at sunrise for one of the city's biggest spay/neuter events of the year for 58 free-roaming community cats. It was the biggest single day event to date for PetFix, FOAS' free spay/neuter program for Oakland residents.



Some of the 58 cats in traps awaiting surgery

This special community cat spay/neuter day was made possible by FOAS donors and a collaboration of partners including the East Bay SPCA, Island Cat Resources and Adoption, and Feral Change. Dedicated volunteer trappers across Oakland went out the previous day to trap unowned feral cats in preparation for spay/neuter surgery. The cats were sterilized by an OAS veterinary team working out of the EBSPCA's clinic. After recovering from surgery, the cats were released back to their outdoor homes. Such "trap-neuter-return" (TNR) operations help prevent unwanted litters while improving the quality of life of these cats who also receive vaccines and flea treatment.

December 2020 marked the three-year anniversary of PetFix, the only 100% free spay/neuter program for Oakland residents. In those three years, thanks to the support of FOAS donors, we have spayed and neutered more than 2,300 pet dogs and cats, as well as community cats. Despite the challenges posed to veterinary operations by COVID-19, PetFix stayed on track to fix more than 900 animals in 2020. By working closely with organizations like Fix Our Ferals in Richmond, in addition to our community cat partners, International Veterinary Outreach, and others, PetFix is able to offer high quality veterinary care to Oakland residents who might not be able to afford spay/neuter surgery for their beloved animals.

And we're excited about what the year ahead holds. In October 2020, FOAS began expanding our capacity by offering PetFix surgeries throughout the week at Oakland Animal Services, made possible by FOAS funding for more OAS veterinary staff. Visit [oaklandsanimals.org/petfix](http://oaklandsanimals.org/petfix) for information about upcoming events and how to help.

## That Time We Asked for the Worst...

... to raise money for Oakland's animals, and we were floored by the response!

And it couldn't have come at a better time: it was mid-March, just when COVID-19 shelter-in-place was first mandated by Alameda County and we held a fundraiser for "unique" pet portraits. Perhaps it was our lucky timing, or maybe folks needed something light-hearted to occupy what we all thought would be a temporary adjustment to our lives. When we announced our bad pet art fundraiser ("talent not guaranteed!"), we didn't expect the overwhelming support we received!

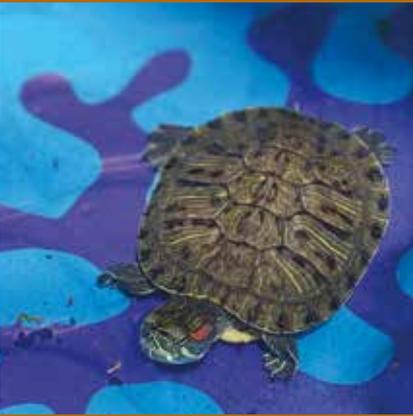
Turns out, there are a lot of really good bad artists out there and a lot of folks wanted some really good bad art of their pets! With submissions open for only one week, we had over 350 requests for pet portraits, and raised over \$13,000! Over 40 volunteers\* participated (a number of them OAS volunteers), most of whom were not artists (which was definitely encouraged). Requests came from as far away as Florida, with a number of donors asking specifically "for the worst."

To view the full gallery, visit [www.oaklandanimalservices.org/2020/04/unique-pet-portraits-fundraiser-a-success](http://www.oaklandanimalservices.org/2020/04/unique-pet-portraits-fundraiser-a-success)





\*Special thanks to our volunteer artists: Bobby Babcock, Ann Barnett, Maggie Bradshaw, Julianne Chai, Mel Chang, Krisanne Combs, Jen Cowitz, Wendy Edelstein, Audra Farrell, Laine Fast, Delphina Han, Clare Hart-Slattery, Sylvia Hurtado Fajen, Hannah Karpilow, Karen Keith, Erin Kripke, Julia LaChica, Arielle Lehmer, Ana McCormick, Morgan McGuire, Tom McGuire, Megan Mclean, Chiu Men, Catie Nagel, Melissa Nelson, Wes Nelson, Celena Peet, Justin Pelkowski, Nora Potts, Trish Roque, Tucker Russell, Johanna Schorn, Judith Smith, Shane Smith, Megan Sullivan, Jack Vu + Friends, Suzanne Yee, Rachel Zak + Family



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Cover photograph of Donell Randolph, Jr., FOAS-funded Human Animal Support Services (HASS) Coordinator. Photo by Delphina Han.