

Oakland Animal Services



Friends of  
OAKLAND ANIMAL SERVICES

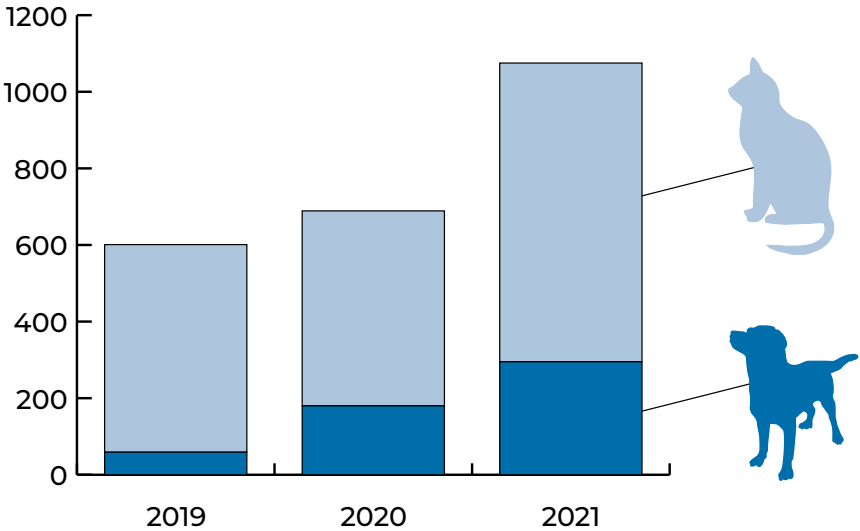


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**2021**  
Year in Review

# 2021 by the Numbers

over  
**5,127**  
animals coming  
through Oakland  
Animal Services



Foster Program Growth

\* all numbers as of 10/31/21



more than  
**1,700**  
adoptions

“The FOAS-funded adoption staff made it possible for the adoptions at OAS to increase **150%** in 2021 compared to 2019.”  
—OAS Director Ann Dunn

**1,716**  
cats and dogs  
spayed and neutered  
for free in 2021



# In Their Own Words

Dear Friends,

We know that so many of our Friends of Oakland Animal Services supporters choose to include us in your charitable giving because of special connections you may have to OAS. As the Town's only open door shelter, OAS is not only a hub of hope for Oakland's neediest animals—it is also a lifeline for pet owners and animal lovers throughout the city. Whether you have adopted a best friend from OAS, opened your home to a litter of foster kittens, or sought help for an animal in need, OAS is a vital community resource that deserves your support.



**What you might not know is that many staff positions for some of the most critical programs at OAS—including intake, adoption, foster, and behavior support—are fully funded by FOAS and the generosity of our donors.** And because of FOAS donors, these programs—and the animals they serve—have thrived this past year, despite the challenges of COVID. With FOAS team members at the helm, our foster program has nearly

doubled in the past two years, and our PetFix spay/neuter program is on track to fix more than 1,700 Oakland dogs and cats for free in 2021.

This year, our FOAS team members are sharing their stories with you in their own words as we reflect on all that you have helped us accomplish this past year. From an update on our cover dog Astro the wonder pup (page 6), who will be home for the holidays this year thanks to FOAS donors, to a spotlight on how we are keeping beloved pets with their families by providing support to Oakland's most underserved pet owners (page 10), I hope the experiences of our FOAS staff make it clear to you what a huge difference you are making, for animals and the people who love them, here in our little corner of the world. We are so grateful for this opportunity to share these happy tales from 2021 that your support of FOAS has made possible.

With gratitude,  
Lisa Franzetta  
*Program and Fundraising Director*

“I love knowing that I’m working not just for the animals of Oakland, but also the many, many lives they touch.”

—Transfer/Foster Coordinator  
Leanne Rinne



“There is nothing better than seeing dogs thriving outside of the shelter in their foster home, and their time in a home makes them much more attractive to adopters.”

—Dog Foster Coordinator  
Kay Martin



“My favorite part of my job is when I am successful in keeping animals in their homes.”

—HASS coordinator  
Donell Randolph



## Astro's New Beginning



Astro in the cardboard box in which he was abandoned

One of the most important functions of the FOAS-funded foster program at Oakland Animal Services is helping dogs who need extra support before they are ready for adoption. Our foster community makes it possible for us to find happy endings for even the most desperate cases, like Astro's.

This past August, when Astro was left outside the shelter in a tiny cardboard box, with no information, we quickly realized that he was in tremendous pain as the result of two broken legs and a severe skin infection over most of his body. Thanks to FOAS donors, who quickly raised the \$8,000 necessary for his surgery, we knew

the biggest obstacle to saving this little sweetheart had been cleared. After a specialist surgically plated his legs, one of our dedicated foster families stepped up to nurse him through his weeks-long recovery. His foster family gave him loads of TLC while he healed, including carrying him to his favorite sunny spots in their house when he was too weak to move around on his own. They also spent many sleepless nights distracting him from scratching his relentlessly itchy skin as it healed.

By the time Astro regained full function in both legs, a friend of the foster family had fallen in love with him—and Astro had found his forever home. (Follow him on the Instagram page his adoptive mom started at @astroinoakland.)

I am continually amazed by our fosters' genuine willingness to go out of their way to help dogs like Astro. There is nothing better than seeing these dogs overcoming seemingly insurmountable obstacles and finding their own loving families.

—Kay Martin, Dog Foster Coordinator



Astro resting after surgery

## Helping the Most Vulnerable

One July day, I received a call from one of our regular fosters who told me that someone had just handed her four one-week-old kittens. The person who found the kittens thought they were in an unsafe area with dogs close by. I arranged for her to bring the kittens to the shelter. She did not have experience or training to care for kittens this young, so I reached out to another one of our regular fosters who had experience bottle-feeding kittens. She dropped everything she was doing to come pick them up and take care of them.



Stevie nursing with her kittens

Meanwhile, the person who found the kittens went back out into the community to gather information about where these kittens came from and if anyone knew who the mom was. Luckily, she was able to zero in on the area and identified the mother of the kittens, although this cat wouldn't allow anyone to touch her. Unfazed, she set up a cat trap with food, and within an hour the mother went inside.

While the mom cat (soon to be named Stevie) was on her way to the shelter after hours, I asked the other foster with the kittens to bring them in to see if the mom cat would accept them despite their separation. They were all reunited, and Stevie immediately started nursing her kittens. After giving mom and babies a night to rest in a comfortable area at the shelter, I found a foster home for them the next day where they were all cared for and had a safe space together.

I am thankful that, because of FOAS, I can work with such amazing people that care deeply about the cats in the community and will stop everything they are doing to help. It is important to me to give vulnerable kittens a safe place to grow and our amazing foster team helps make it happen.

—*Jianna Fertado, Cat Program Associate*

more than

**858**

cats fostered in 2021  
(169% increase  
from 2020)

# From the OAS Director

This year has been so challenging across the globe, for so many different reasons. Yet, at Oakland Animal Services, so much good is happening. Thanks to the generous support of donors to Friends of Oakland Animal Services, many of the success stories included in this Year in Review come from the Outcome Team—the FOAS-funded staff who oversee adoptions, fostering, and transfers. Much of this support is relatively new to OAS, including the foster program for hard-to-place dogs, which has been a game changer.

One of my overarching goals when I became director in February 2020 was to strengthen the functions of OAS that are funded by the city of Oakland, and to be sure that we are using those resources as effectively and efficiently as possible. I have restructured our city budget from a shelter-based to a community-based model that provides access to veterinary care and other supports to keep pets with their families and out of the shelter. Animal Control Officers now work under a case management model, with a primary goal of keeping animals with loving guardians. Between city and FOAS-funded staff, we have a team that is working with a shared sense of purpose, to keep animals with their families whenever possible, and to get animals out of the shelter with positive outcomes as quickly we can.

While this transformation is still very much a work in progress, we are now starting to see what's possible when OAS and FOAS work together in close partnership in this new model. **FOAS donors are making it possible for OAS to move from functioning primarily as a shelter that rehomes animals to a truly community-serving animal services organization that supports people and animals in our community who need it most.**



With much gratitude,  
Ann Dunn  
*Oakland Animal Services Director*



## Augusta: Against All Odds



Augusta meeting her adopter

Augusta was picked up by one of our animal control officers after a member of the public called to report a very sick cat sitting in their driveway. She was obviously an older cat, quite thin and dehydrated, but even so she worked her charms on the officer who described her as a lovely, sweet girl. At the shelter, our vet team examined her and discovered that our 5½ lb. sweetheart had stage 2 kidney disease. Despite her medical issues, Augusta would reach out of her cage to any and all

for petting or a conversation (after all, she is a Siamese).

Our adoption crew—a dedicated on-site team funded by FOAS—decided that she deserved the chance to win over an adopter who would fall in love with a 12-year-old medical needs cat. And so she waited for that special someone who would see her for who she really is—not a medical case, but simply a loving feline in need of a loving home. Just three weeks later, at a drop-in adoption event in October, that special person met her, fell in love, and took her home.

over

**934**cats adopted  
in 2021

Augusta is a poster

child for so many special-needs pets who only need someone to see them for who they are and to give them the chance to find their forever home. Her story is one of teamwork and the success of a little cat that could.

—Martha Cline, *Adoption and Outreach Coordinator*



## Keeping Pets with Families

*In spring 2020, Oakland Animal Services was one of ten shelters across the country invited to participate in the Human Animal Support Services (HASS) pilot program. The program is designed to help keep more animals in their homes and communities, therefore reducing the number entering shelters. This is done 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 funds the budget for the HASS program coordinator here in our Oakland community.*



A dog gets a vaccine at a community clinic

Being the Human Animal Support Services (HASS) Coordinator at OAS, a position funded by FOAS, has been a truly great experience. HASS is a national pilot program designed to reimagine animal sheltering and to focus on providing community programs that help people keep their pets.

Through HASS, I spend much of my time on programs designed to help keep pets out of the shelter by coordinating access to veterinary care for pet guardians who can't afford it and by helping lost animals return home.

Having the ability to help people keep their animals by coordinating outreach clinics with the OAS veterinary team improves the lives of both people and animals. We are helping unsheltered families and people who cannot afford to get treatment for their animals. I love seeing families' faces light up when I tell them that OAS can help their animals with medical services or pet food at no cost to them.

Since we know the best tool for getting a lost animal reunited with their family is to have a microchip, OAS has been giving out free

microchips at our outreach clinics and registering them with current contact information.

I was excited to learn of a recent situation where a simple microchip from a HASS clinic was able to keep a family together. Two animal control officers found a stray female pit bull in West Oakland. Luckily, just the week before, her guardian had brought Chica to one of our veterinary clinics in East Oakland, where she had received a microchip. After scanning her for a chip and contacting the microchip company, the officers



Animal Control Officer Melinda, reuniting Chica with her guardian

drove Chica back to her grateful caretaker to be reunited. If we hadn't provided these services, this dog would have been brought to the shelter and might have never been reunited with her family. This is why I love my job: I can make a difference for animals and the people who love them.

—Donell Randolph, HASS Coordinator



An outreach clinic held at a temporary housing site for those experiencing homelessness

## Working It Out for Outdoor Cats



Pearl and Mr. Pepper, Liz's working cats, in her garden

You may have heard of TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) to control populations of stray and feral cats, but what happens when the “return” part of the process isn't possible? In a constantly changing city like Oakland, outdoor cats (also referred to as community cats) often lose habitats due to urban development or new laws meant to protect wildlife. For unsocialized, feral-acting cats,

a shelter might not have many good options. Luckily, at Oakland Animal Services, this is not the case. Thanks to our Working Cat program, many felines have found suitable outdoor homes that accommodate their unique behavioral needs.

For example, Liz K. recently adopted two cats from OAS for her West Oakland garden. Liz built a beautiful garden during the pandemic, but began struggling with rodents that came for the chicken feed and vegetables. She did not want to use poison and knew that most rodent traps were inhumane. After considering all the options, the only one that resolved all her issues while still upholding her values was to adopt two “working cats.”

Liz and her family love the cats, now named Pearl and Mr. Pepper, and can't imagine a life without them. She enjoys watching the cats sunbathe, and the cats love to watch her senior pit bull from the roof of the chicken coop. Liz recently shared with me her worry about an impending rainstorm. She didn't know how the cats would fare and wanted to provide additional shelter for them. To her surprise, the cats found shelter on their own quite easily within an old barrel. The rich quality of life for these wild-at-heart cats is beyond what a traditional home could provide for them.

Not all cats want to be adopted into an indoor home with people. For these special felines, I love that FOAS makes it possible for me to find them safe outdoor homes where they have regular food and shelter, and where they are loved for exactly who they are.

**Did you know?**  
No adoption fees for Working Cats!

—Faith Levit, Foster & Working Cat Coordinator

## Finding Mentors on the Job

When I applied for my job with FOAS, I was excited about joining the team as an adoption coordinator. There's nothing more gratifying than meeting with adopters and finding homes for animals. My previous experience was in dog rescue, and I've had pet cats, so I felt confident I could apply my skills to other animals as well. Though I had no prior experience with rabbits, I was asked to run our rabbit program and was eager to learn.

Months later, I can now say that I know far more about rabbits than I imagined possible, and I still have so much to learn. My favorite teacher was a sweet bun named Panda, who came to us when her guardian passed away. Panda weighed in at a hefty 8.7 lbs. I was informed that she was extremely overweight and that her guardian probably lovingly fed her human food, not knowing the health risks of doing so.

I picked up Panda from her spay appointment after a long day at work, so I decided to take her home and bring her to the shelter in the morning. Once I got her set up at home, I couldn't think of a good reason not to let her stay as a foster. Unbeknownst to both of us, the mentoring was about to begin. We learned a lot from each other: Panda learned to enjoy salads; I learned that rabbits sometimes nibble on fancy antique rugs.

While Panda was with me, she lost an impressive 4.2 lbs. She became active and playful, and even expanded her play area by figuring out how to open doors. She enjoyed our company and we hers.

A potential adopter reached out to inquire about Panda as a companion for her rabbit. Panda was not done teaching me yet—I was about to witness my first “bonding.” Rabbits have strong opinions about other rabbits. It can either go really well or really badly. Panda and her new companion took an instant liking to each other, and she went home with her new family.



Panda and her new companion, Udon

I will always be grateful to Panda for being such an enthusiastic and willing mentor. I am also grateful for the opportunity to be constantly learning on the job.

—Meg McAdam, Adoption & Rabbit Program Coordinator

## PetFix in the Community

*Since FOAS launched PetFix in December 2017, our free spay/neuter program for Oakland residents in need has fixed almost 4,000 dogs and cats. Beyond these free services, PetFix also provides the infrastructure that supports community members who come together to help each other out.*

Sometimes, the best way to make a difference is in your own backyard—or maybe the one next door. Many of us have stayed closer to home during the pandemic and perhaps gotten to know our neighbors a little better. The FOAS PetFix program is part of the fabric of the Oakland community and supports neighbors helping neighbors who are in need. One good Samaritan, Cassie, was part of a group of people who assisted a family struggling with unaltered dogs. Here's Cassie telling her story:

“Priya was rescued from an Oakland home where the family had become overwhelmed with more than 20 Chihuahua-type dogs who lived mainly outdoors and who had never had veterinary care. After the family decided to accept help, they surrendered the dogs to rescue groups and neighbors who agreed to help foster and rehome them. Priya stood out because she was very pregnant so she



Priya and her three puppies

was one of the first of the dogs to be removed from the home. I was asked to help out and foster her, but the second I saw this little round belly of a dog I burst into tears of joy because I knew this girl had already found her forever home with me. A few weeks later she gave birth to 3 healthy



Priya after her spay surgery

puppies and nursed them. Thanks to the FOAS PetFix program, Priya was spayed, and when the puppies were of age, I received help getting them into foster homes. Now Priya’s puppies are all with loving families, and Priya is living her best life with me, my husband, and her brother Lucas.”

The most rewarding part of my job with FOAS as the PetFix spay/neuter coordinator is that I have the opportunity to chat with people that are in all different stages of their lives trying to do the best thing for their beloved pets. They love their animal friends, and they know that the best thing for them is to be fixed. Sometimes it’s a family getting a puppy to grow up with their small children or an elderly couple living on a fixed income. I also hear from people who do not have permanent addresses—getting their pets fixed gives them a sense of security and is one less thing they have to worry about. Or, as in Cassie’s situation, she stepped up to help an overwhelmed friend, then suddenly found herself taking care of four extra dogs.

What stands out to me the most in talking to our clients is that, regardless of their situations, they all talk about their pets in the most loving ways, and I get to hear the sense of relief in their voices when they know that this program is here for them. Getting the help to spay/neuter their pet relieves them of the stress of affording a very important surgery for their beloved four-legged companion.

—Victoria Guzman, PetFix Coordinator



Oakland mayor Libby Schaaf with Chico, Pet Mayor for the Day. Chico's guardian was the winning bidder for our "Pet Mayor for the Day" auction prize from our 2019 Raise the Woof! gala. Chico's main duty was to pass the Proclamation declaring October 15, 2021, as Doggie Day in Oakland. Photos by Soulful Pet Photography.

Friends of Oakland Animal Services

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Cover photograph of Astro and his adopter. Photo by Kay Martin, FOAS dog foster coordinator.