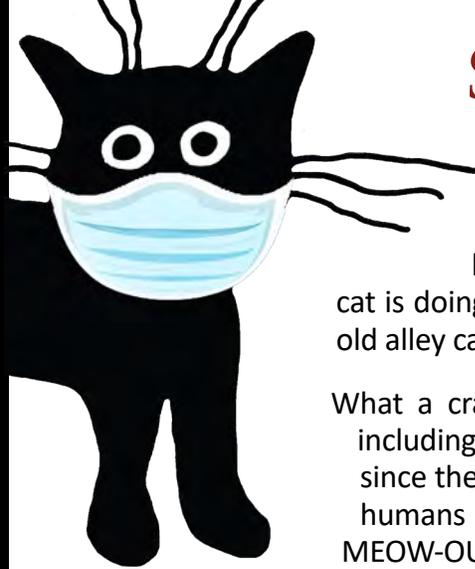


# CAT NIPS



## Social distancing is better with a cat!

Hey peeps! Basil here, sounding a little muffled behind this mask. Yep, that's right, even this old tom cat is doing his part to keep humans safe. But you'd know this old alley cat anywhere, mask or no mask, right?!

What a crazy few months this has been—our whole world, including the ASAP shelter, has been turned upside down since the stay-at-home order on March 20. Props to my ASAP humans who have not missed a beat since then, and a huge MEOW-OUT to the hundreds of community members who have come forward to foster or adopt a cat! Seems the mere prospect of spending time at home made the whole world crave the company of a cat. Ha! There's nothing like cuddling with one of my feline friends to take the pandemic blues away!

Thanks to the nonstop efforts of ASAP throughout this marathon crisis, people and cats found each other. In fact, this whole newsletter is filled with photos of giddy, happy humans, snuggling with some pretty darn contented cats. Check out the numbers below to get an idea of just how busy ASAP has been—makes me tired just countin' the cats!

So get cozy, prop your human paws up and get ready to share some joy in the pages that follow. We hope this newsletter is a bright spot in your day! Every single story and photo has been made possible through your support—and THAT gets my purr motor goin'!



Oreo (aka Steve) and local news celebrity, John Palminteri, take a much needed break together.

### *Basil, OUT*

### Our numbers since March 20th...

- 311 total new intakes—including 160 transfers from other shelters!!
- 195 current number of cats ASAP is managing in shelter and foster homes
- 173 adoptions
- 47 working cats placed
- 18 lost cats reunited with their worried families
- 131 kittens & queens fostered
- 273 individual foster placements



## Summer 2020

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# Empty cages, full houses, open hearts

## PLANNING FOR THE WORST BROUGHT OUT THE BEST, AS HUNDREDS SIGNED UP TO FOSTER A SHELTER CAT DURING COVID-19

It may seem like the worst of times, but the COVID-19 pandemic brought out the best in our animal sheltering community. In early March, as concerns about the new coronavirus were quickly spreading, ASAP began to develop contingency plans for “what if?” What if we could no longer have 25+ volunteers and staff at our shelter each day to care for the cats? What if potential adopters could not visit our cats? What if our veterinary staff couldn’t actually see the cats they needed to care for? What if our donations and grant funding declined?

While we planned for the worst, we hoped for the best. Arguably, the impacts of the coronavirus are worse than any of us could have imagined, but there have also been shining moments of connection and hope. Over the past four months, ASAP has not only continued to fulfill our mission, but we have expanded our support to cats and kittens in need AND to the people who love them. The cats have taught us a few new lessons along the way and we are inspired to reimagine the way that we take care of them.

In our 31 year history, ASAP has responded to many disaster situations like fires and mudslides, but we had no idea that March 20 would mark the beginning of one of the longest tragedies in our collective histories. On the heels of Governor Newsom’s stay-at-home order, we quickly rolled out an emergency foster plan, and emptied our shelter of almost 50 cats in just a few hours. At the end of a long and exhausting day, as we looked down the

*“On your worst day, fostering a cat reminds you that there is a living creature, even in your quarantine space, that matters and needs your help. Like so many of us, I can’t imagine going through this crisis without the companionship of a cat.”*

–ASAP Foster



Row after row of empty cages on March 20th after all our cats were moved to foster homes.

rows of empty cage after empty cage, our emotions were mixed. We felt gratitude and a huge sense of accomplishment, but there was also a haunting uncertainty about the future, and fears around not being able to directly care for our cats and kittens.

But ASAP being ASAP, we put our fears and exhaustion aside and looked for ways to help even more. Bolstered by the sheer volume of people interested in fostering a cat (apparently the prospect of being ordered to stay home made everyone want a cat!), we started reaching out to shelters near and far to offer support. During the first few weeks, we organized seven large transports of cats and kittens, effectively emptying every shelter in Santa Barbara County, and then broadened our reach by

helping cats from shelters in Ventura and Kern Counties. In addition to the large transports, cats and kittens have continued to arrive at ASAP each week, including strays and owner relinquishments, as well as more transfers from other shelters.

Placing all of these cats and kittens into emergency foster homes was just the beginning. We had no idea how we were going to handle veterinary care, behavior questions, virtual adoption matchmaking, reuniting lost cats with their owners, kitten season(!) and all of our other programs in the face of social distancing while keeping our human community safe. The simple, honest answer is that we are still figuring it out, day by day! But if there's one thing that we do know, it's placing cats in homes during this crisis was the BEST thing we could do for the cats in need AND for the people who needed them. You already know this to be true: there's nothing like the comfort, warmth and companionship of your cat to get you through hard times.

*"It's really kinda hard to be stressed out when there's a cute kitty sleeping next to you and purring their little heart out. So yeah, foster a cat."*

*—Chris Crotteau, Foster Dad*



Phoenix and Rebecca Phillips give each other comfort.



Babe and Billy Morris enjoy some not-so-socially-distanced cuddle time.



Petunia and Lauren Wideman fit purrfectly together.



Lloyd and Doyle are cozy in their new home with their adopter Sarah Carr.

# Celebrating our fosters & adopters

OPENING THEIR HEARTS AND HOMES, EMERGENCY FOSTERS CREATED A NEW WAY OF SHELTERING—AND MORE THEN A FEW ENDED UP KEEPING THEIR FOSTER CAT!

Quite simply, ASAP could not have survived the impacts of COVID-19 over the past few months without the extraordinary generosity of our new emergency fosters and adopters. The willingness of individuals and families to open their hearts and homes to a shelter cat has made all the difference. There's no doubt that our shelter cats have flourished in their foster homes, but on the pages that follow, the comfort and joy these cats have brought to their human caretakers is also undeniable. We sorted through hundreds of photos sent to us over the past few months—each picture is truly worth a thousand words as there are so many more stories than there are pages in this newsletter! We are so grateful to our community for caring about these cats, even in the midst of the hardships this pandemic has brought into our lives. Together, we have made sure that no cat or kitten goes without shelter, veterinary care, food, and now, loving foster and forever homes.



Dear ASAP,

*I decided to share a little something about my Bookybear.*

*Booker was a shy cat at the start. After the first week, he was following me around, curling up next to me on my bed while I worked, and crying if I left the house for too long. I knew it was love. How could I not fall for a black furball who looked up at me with two different colored eyes and stole my space on the bed? How could I not adore the bundle of love who made me feel guilty for spending time away from him?*

*Booker, not to be confused with Booger, is a curious black, domestic shorthaired fellow. Within the first couple of days, he had scoped out the house for his hiding places and had long conversations with us early in the morning. My loving little kittybear has made my quarantine happier.*

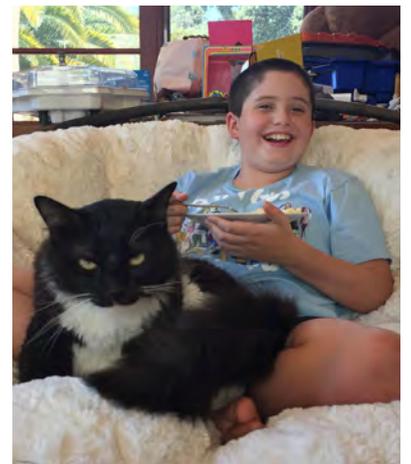
—Isabella Bowman Andreatta



Jamie and her new sister, Jessica Ford-Helzer's daughter.



Ephraim fell in love with his foster dog, Pamela Walsh's Rhodesian Ridgeback.



Max takes over his favorite lap at the Amezaga foster home.

**Batman and Robin** arrived at ASAP seemingly feral and very much terrified. These two unneutered cats had been living in an abusive household and definitely had some obstacles to overcome. But we knew that there were loving cats inside these wild boys, we just had to find the right adopters who would take the time to build their trust.



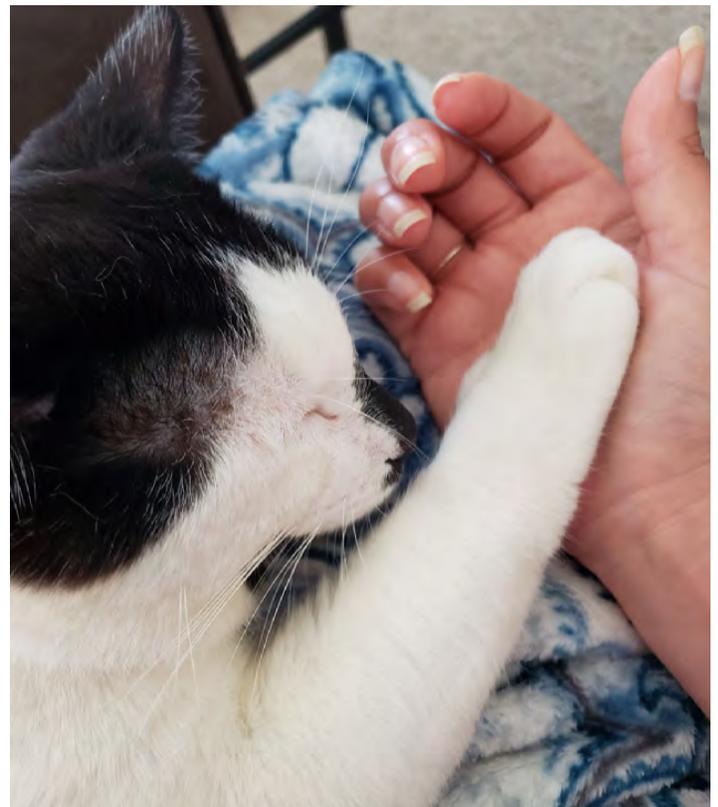
*Robin has been doing so well the past few days. He had a rough first 24 hours but still was super affectionate. He just needed some extra love and attention to know he was in a safe spot.*

*I already love him with my whole heart.*

*—Shelby Barnard*

*“Batman is just the best ever, haha. He loves to be pet, brushed, and lay in my lap while I’m working. He sleeps by my legs, and in the morning, cuddles into my hands first thing. Thank you all so much for your support! I’m so in love with him and can’t imagine life without him in it. My heart is so very full.*

*—Danae Cardenas*



Kiona Gross’ story with **Cali** is a shared experience as time, and time again, individuals signed up to be Emergency fosters but when faced with the prospect of their foster cat getting adopted by someone else, decided to keep their cat forever.

*Cali is amazing, she is the sweetest cat and it did not take much for her to be sleeping on top of me at night. I was working from home and loving the company of the cat all day. She would just purr and purr. A couple of weeks into fostering, ASAP called to say they had found a forever home for her. Apparently I was not ready for her to go and now she is in her forever home with us!”*

*—Kiona Gross*



We are so lucky to have fostered Gomer, and so thankful he's a part of our family! He loves to be near us at all times, and will carry his favorite toy, the rainbow string, around the house to bring to me as a present. He is an expert at playing fetch with toy mice! I greatly appreciated the support and advice from your behavior team. They helped me understand Gomer's very chatty personality and gave me some tips on training an active, young cat. Thank you ASAP for bringing Gomer from the Lompoc shelter into our forever home. We love him!

—Anne Pigeon



Cleo is a very sweet kitty and we have loved getting to know her. She has been sleeping at the foot of our 4 year old's bed at night, much to his delight! She is very sweet and our boys love her very much.

My oldest told me yesterday that while he loves me, he loves Cleo even more.

—Alexandra Hamill



Admiral Horatio Nelson ("Nelson") and Sir Ernest Shackleton ("Ernie") came to us well-socialized, gentle, polite, and so much fun. They were not littermates but get along with each other just beautifully.

They spend their days alternating between wild wrestling and hide-and-seek, and then collapsing for long naps. They climb willingly into laps to be cuddled, which we love.

—Erin Patterson

# Unexpected boon for working cats

AN ASTOUNDING 47 WORKING CATS HAVE BEEN PLACED SINCE MARCH 20!

*"I love seeing the happy and productive lives the working cats we place are given through this program. The Working Cats Program gives these less social felines a second chance at following their true nature, and being well-cared for at the same time."*

*—ASAP's Mary Scott,  
Working Cats Coordinator*

The coronavirus pandemic didn't just provide opportunities for social cats to get adopted, it's proven to be an unexpected boon for ASAP's working cats, too! Perhaps we shouldn't have been surprised that with everyone staying at home working on house and garden projects, they would suddenly realize they had a rodent issue. And with people being house-bound, the past few months have truly been the very best time to transition a working cat into their new life.

The demand for working cats has been so high that ASAP has been able to extend our help, not only to feral cats in the Santa Maria and Lompoc county shelters, but also to cats in Ventura and Los Angeles who were critically at risk for euthanasia.

By doing their job of hunting mice, rats, gophers and other rodents, working cats serve a vital function in our modern day ecosystems, and can allow us to avoid the use of pesticides. While the majority of working cats placed are believed to be truly feral, a few have surprised us by becoming increasingly social and friendly once they are in a stable and loving environment.



Mary Scott (right), pictured with Belinda Burns, also an ASAP Volunteer with over 20 years of experience placing feral cats, have a carload of working cats ready to go to their new placement.

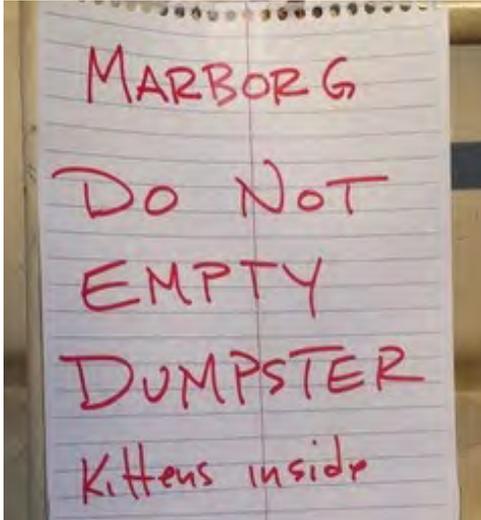


Mika's presence alone has seemed to be deterring rodent activity. She's been friendly with the kids and they (and parents!) are in love! We transitioned her out of her cage and fully into her cathouse all last week. Success!  
—Andrew Checketts

# The Art of Socially Distanced Kitten Rescue

## NOT EVEN A PANDEMIC CAN STOP KITTEN SEASON FROM COMING

Imagine a world where COVID-19 doesn't exist and every day is a playful adventure! Now guess who's living in that world right now? Kittens! They have no idea what's happening in our human experience, and pandemic or not, nothing is going to stop kitten season! ASAP's challenge over the past few months was figuring out how to trap and rescue kittens born in all sorts of circumstances, while simultaneously social distancing and keeping humans safe.



An emergency plea to Marborg!

In late-March, ASAP received a report of a queen and newborn kittens in a backyard. Sadly, when our Kitten Program Director and trapping expert, Gina Sunseri, arrived to help, it appeared that at least three kittens had perished from exposure to the cooler nighttime temperatures. But when Gina picked them up, one of the kittens moved! Named Ice Cube because his tiny body was as cold as ice, this kitten was a miracle survivor and began to thrive under the care of one of our very experienced fosters, Lisa Mathiasen.

While Ice Cube was recovering and gaining strength in foster care, the family rescue wasn't over yet! While our ASAP team was focused on saving Ice Cube, his mother moved the two other kittens out of sight. A true "kitten detective", it took Gina weeks of investigating, following, waiting and watching to finally find the new kitten nest—inside a Marborg roll-off bin filled with construction debris!



Tiny Ice Cube, all warmed up in his momma's palm, still has his umbilical cord attached!



Dumpster and Diver, finally safe from the dangers of the roll-off bin, keep each other cozy and warm.

Gina sprung to action again and was able to quickly trap one of the kittens and the queen. But the remaining kitten proved elusive and would climb deep down into the trash inside the dumpster. Everyone was horrified at what could happen if the kitten could not be caught, and signs were placed asking that the dumpster not be hauled away. A trap was set and everyone held their breath...and finally, SUCCESS!



It's horrible to imagine what could've happened to the kittens living in this dumpster without ASAP's help.

As only kittens can do, Dumpster and Diver, quickly forgot their wild ways and became social almost overnight! Turns out their mama, Yardi, is a pretty sweet kitty too. The entire family, including Ice Cube (now named Moose, aka Moostacha), have since found forever homes, thanks to the efforts of a village of caring people (who all wore masks and socially distanced through the whole ordeal).

Over the past few months, the story of Yardi and her kittens has played out over and over as we receive weekly calls about kittens being found in crazy places. Another family of kittens was spotted in a yard via an outdoor camera, when the owner wasn't even living there at the time! And yet another queen, Isabella, and her four kittens were found living in a pile of cinder blocks at a nursery in Carpinteria. Each time, our dedicated ASAP team leaps into action, determined to save each and every kitten and queen we can.

This kitten season has been a careful balance of saving kitten lives while keeping our humans safe. We've invented new ways of working together and providing support. We are proud of the fact that all of the rescued kittens and queens went immediately to foster without spending a day at the shelter, reducing the risk to our committed team of staff and volunteers who have not missed a beat since COVID-19 arrived. Keeping our team safe means that we can continue to be there for the most vulnerable tiny felines, no matter what obstacles come our way.

*"It's already hard to imagine life before Moose (aka Moostacha aka Ice Cube) was in our house. Moose came into our life like a tornado, tearing around and playing with everything he could find before falling immediately asleep, often in the crooks of our arms or wedged in between us.*

*He is dozing on my shoulder as I type this, in fact. Perhaps our favorite thing about him, besides everything, is his purr reflex. The instant you pick him up he begins these hearty, resonant, soul-humming purrs and gazes up at you with eyes utterly infused with love.*

*Because of the dedicated people at ASAP, he'll see the same looking back at him forever."*

*— John & Shannon Soboslai*



# Blind cats show US the way!

## CATS PROVE THEY ARE THE MASTERS OF THE WORLD THEY CAN'T SEE

The past several months have been a time of great adjustment for us all—navigating our world with social distancing and isolated from most human contact. Through it all, our shelter cats have been our heroes, as time and again, they prove flexible, resourceful and resilient!

Leading the way for us humans is a special blind cat named Moonbeam, who taught us to look past what was simply in front of our eyes. We sincerely hope that sharing Moonbeam's story might lead the way to a forever home for another blind kitty named Jack Jack.

Moonbeam was transferred to ASAP from another shelter who did

not have the capacity to cope with a blind cat. As with all of our cats, we hoped that Moonbeam would find his forever home—one that could accommodate his special needs.

Through one of our social media posts, Robyn and Rob Walton reached out to ASAP and told us about their home and prior experience with cats with special needs, and how much they wanted to help a special cat to live on its own terms. We had a feeling Robyn might be a perfect match for Moonbeam. Of course, because of his perceived disability, we all wanted to “protect” him and keep him safe, but it soon became clear that Moonbeam himself had completely different plans. Turns out that Moonbeam's happy place is out in the fresh air and sunshine, hanging with the family's dog pack, and going on daily walks!

Rob and Robyn have gone out of their way to provide Moonbeam with a unique home just for him. They mow special pathways through their fields so he can accompany them on their daily walks, and one of their cattle dogs has become a special friend to Moonbeam. Clearly, Moonbeam saw through some of our assumptions about what we thought he needed and made his own choices!

Jack Jack, highlighted below, is hoping for the same opportunity—a forever family that will see through his blindness and simply let him be a cat. For info about adopting Jack Jack, contact [adoptions@asapcats.org](mailto:adoptions@asapcats.org).



*“All of us—three cattle dogs, one blind cat, and my husband and me—spend about an hour every day walking the fields and creek, perfectly happy!”*

*—Rob & Robyn Walton*



*“Jack Jack the cuddle cat. This bright eyed, blind gentleman has perfected his purr and just needs a little direction where and whom to bestow it upon. As long as your furniture stays put, this sleek sturdy 13 year old cat will find his way to the litterbox and meal times, every time. He also will find his way into your heart with his refusal to let his disability stop him from living his best life. If you are looking for a companion who steps with intention, who never jumps or scratches furniture, and who always requests permission for pets, this is your fella! He cuddles like a boss, chatters cheerfully and carefully cruises the crib.”*

*—Amy De Witt, Jack Jack's Foster Mom*

# What does the future hold for ASAP?

## FOSTER CARE MOVED TO CENTER STAGE IN THE AGE OF COVID-19, MAKING A POSSIBLE WATERSHED MOMENT IN HOW ASAP SHELTERS CATS

As the coronavirus spread across the country, not only ASAP, but animal shelters from coast to coast embraced fostering as a response to the crisis. Staff and volunteers thought ahead, coming up with creative solutions and quickly adopted processes and foster support services as the situation changed daily, with incredible results. Throughout it all, the message is crystal clear: most cats do better in homes, even temporary ones! Time and time again, a cat that had been struggling in the shelter has shown a completely different side of their personality once they are in a loving foster or adoptive home.

We have learned many lessons over the past few months, but probably the most important one is that a large-scale, short term fostering model is more viable than we had assumed. With the right messaging and marketing to engage our community, we could conceivably line up foster homes for the majority of incoming cats, thus creating a sustainable “virtual sheltering” model. Even though this breakthrough is coming out of a terrible crisis, it has the possibility of forever changing the way that we house the vast majority of homeless cats and dogs in our country.



Alpha fully embraced the comfort of his foster home with Jessica Richmond.

To keep going now and in the future, we have HUGE hurdles to overcome! We reshaped many of our programs

“on the fly” and now must figure out how to make them efficient and sustainable as virtual and online programs in the future. The heart and soul of ASAP has always been our dedicated volunteers, and we are in the midst of redefining and inventing new volunteer roles now that the number of people allowed onsite at our physical shelter is severely restricted. Interestingly, placing the majority of cats in foster homes hasn’t made less work. The coordination and communication required to place and manage several hundred cats and kittens in foster care, provide veterinary services, behavior counseling, adoption matchmaking, and so on, is a relentless Herculean effort!

In addition, with so much uncertainty right now, we understand how important it is to support our new adopters. Taking on the additional responsibility of adopting a cat can be daunting under the current economic circumstances, but knowing that ASAP is there to provide a little extra support, whether it’s food or a vet check-up, makes all the difference for some of our cats finding their forever homes. This shift toward community programming, providing resources and services to the public, with fewer cats inside the shelter, is a nationwide trend that can ultimately decrease the number of cats who become homeless and need sheltering.

Our recent cat food drive in partnership with C.A.R.E.4Paws raised almost \$11,000, in addition to donations of food and supplies. Each cat that receives food from this effort remains with their family who loves them, rather than facing the heartbreak of ending up in a shelter. Maybe the future of ASAP is working to ensure that the majority of cats never wind up in our shelter at all? Wouldn’t THAT be a wondrous thing?

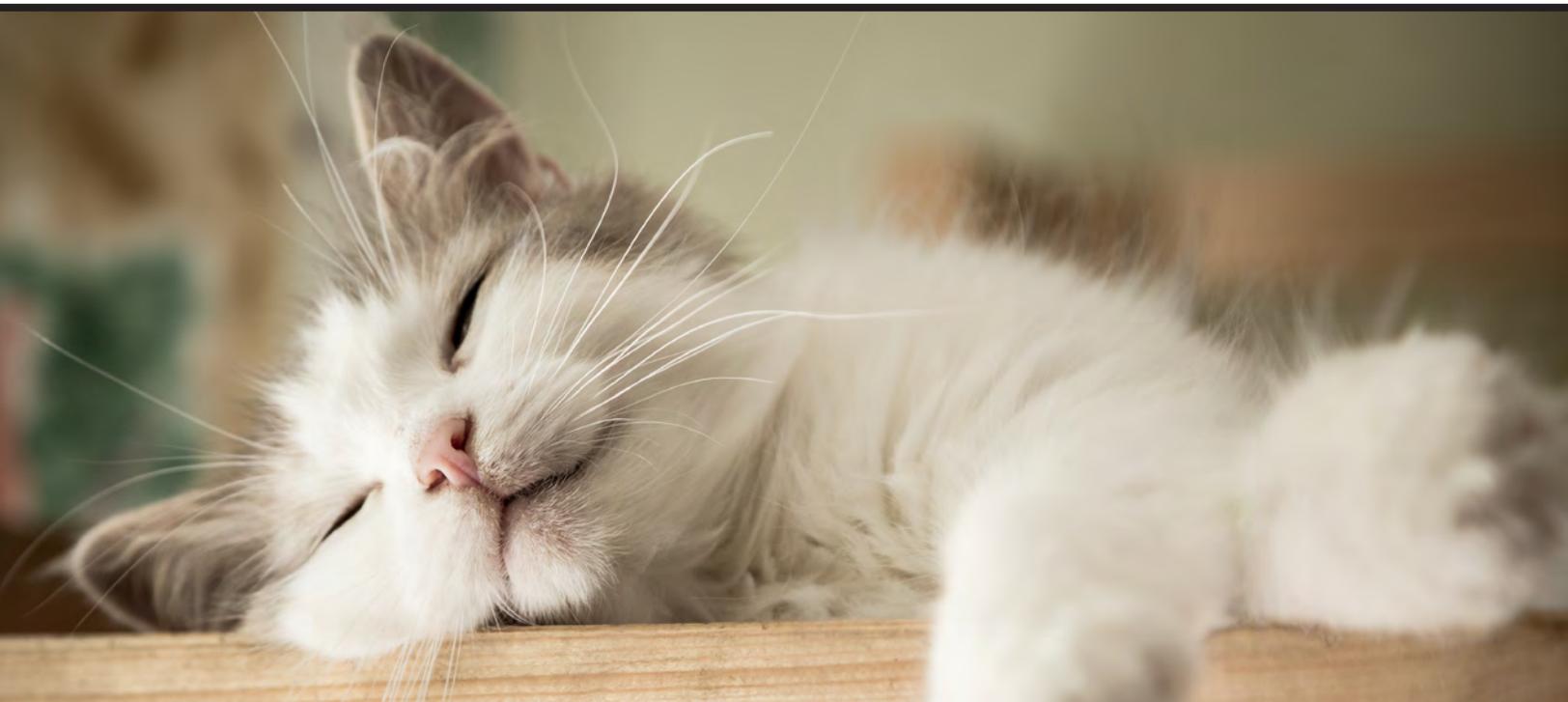


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Typically the annual Clear the Shelters promotion is a one-day, on-site adoption event but due to an abundance of caution during the COVID pandemic we are shifting Clear the Shelters 2020 to be a **month-long virtual event for all of August**. Through this process, ASAP is maintaining our policy of contact-less virtual adoptions.

Though nearly all of ASAP's adoptable cats are in temporary foster homes, they are still looking for their forever home! Bring home some happiness and peace by giving a deserving feline their forever home. View some of our adoptable cats online, and fill out an application at [asapcats.org](http://asapcats.org) or email us at [adoptions@asapcats.org](mailto:adoptions@asapcats.org) for more details!



**ASAP - Animal Shelter Assistance Program**

5473 Overpass Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93111

ASAP is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization ▪ Federal Tax ID: 77-0283500