

# CATNIPS



## Smelling Flowers

What a start to 2024 we've had!

I can't remember the last time we had this much rain – our little shelter got SOAKED! At least the flowers are starting to bloom again, and the ceiling tiles are no longer collapsing. Thankfully we've got a brand-new roof over our heads and some repairs being done, just in time for kitten season. Those little goofballs are comin' soon, I can feel it!

Speaking of kitten season, have you heard of our **Tiny Lions program**? Though they be but little, they are FIERCE! Thankfully our Tiny Lion Tamers know exactly how to handle them (and the good kind of baby food they like: chicken!)

**Turn the page** for all the details on these little critters.

With all the repairs going on and what-not, a lot of my friends have been on Spring Break from the shelter. One of them even wrote a story about her **adventures in foster**! Her name is Jinx, and she is hilarious. Take a look at her story on **page 6** for her perspective on the foster process.

For all you number crunchers, my marketing guy FINALLY put out our **Annual Report for 2023**! It's got a lot of numbers and fast facts about ASAP, so you should take a look at it on **page 8**.

You'll see it at the back of the newsletter, but I also wanted to mention that my **BIG BASH** is coming back! Make sure you save May 31<sup>st</sup> in your calendars, because it's the 10<sup>th</sup> Bash anniversary and we are going to party like it's 2014! I heard dinner is gonna be extra good this year, too...

Okay I think that's just about everything, so why don't you pop open this newsletter while I go start practicing my speech.

Until then,

*Basil, OUT*



## Spring 2024

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is a publication offered free of charge  
three times a year from ASAP Cats  
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Goleta, CA 93116-0357

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www.asapcats.org

# Tiny Lions and Giant Hearts

If you've ever explored the main area of our shelter, you may have noticed a closed off row of cages facing the main windows. This is Tiny Lion row, a sort of dormitory where our Tiny Lion kittens live and learn to be well-behaved, social creatures. As unsocialized kittens that are often born outside to unhouseed mothers, Tiny Lions are unaccustomed to indoor living and positive human contact. They are typically afraid of humans and require extra attention, so we close off their row to the public. Working with our team of Tiny Lion tamers, these feisty kitties have a lot of training to get through before they're ready to find their forever homes.

Back in 2015, a huge colony of nearly 30 unsocialized kittens was discovered by one of our volunteers. ASAP previously had a process for socializing kittens, but never 30 all at once! To accommodate all these cats and get them straight into behavior training, our team created an in-depth program known as Tiny Lions. Between spay/neutering, intake checkups, and behavior training, our program helps socialize around 80 cats a year.

Whether they're brought in from the public or retrieved by one of our master trappers, as soon as these kittens start exhibiting fearful behavior (e.g. hissing, spitting, airplane ears, shutting down and hiding), we transfer them to



*Cadillac's inner lion still comes out whenever there's a tunnel around! He and brother Lincoln were adopted together in January 2024.*

the Tiny Lion program. The bottom line of our training program is that we are trying to earn the cat's trust. We want these kittens to know that we're here to help them, so we start slowly by offering them some baby food on our finger. It smells great to them, it allows them to see that we're friendly, and every time we pop into Tiny Lion row we make sure to offer them some.

By giving these kittens the choice to have a sweet snack and ensuring we won't push their boundaries, it allows them to gradually trust us. Head Tiny Lion tamer Kim Natzel says, *"When they trust you, it's the best feeling."*

## TINY LIONS & CAT THERAPY

A huge portion of our Tiny Lion success comes from our partner organization, Cat Therapy. Located downtown at **1213 State St Suite L, Santa Barbara, CA 93101**, Cat Therapy provides our recently graduated Tiny Lions a chance to shine and meet all sorts of new people in a stimulating space.

Cat Therapy is especially beneficial for our bonded pairs, allowing our shy kitties to join their outgoing companions in an area full of space and human attention. So far we've had 18 Tiny Lions adopted from Cat Therapy, and we hope to keep sending our Tiny Lion graduates there!

If you're interested in learning more about Cat Therapy or scheduling a visit with one of our kitties currently there, go to [catherapysb.com](http://catherapysb.com) or give them a call at **(805) 560-1996**.

## HISSING HERMEY



Sometimes Tiny Lions take a long time to open up, and this was especially true for Hermey.

Tiny Lion Tamer Laurie Hummer took Hermey home for foster in early December. Constantly hissing and hiding behind her litter box, Hermey was due for a vacation from the shelter.

After coming home late from a Christmas party one evening, Laurie decided to check on Hermey before going to bed, and for the first time during her stay she was sitting on her carrier, open and ready for pets! "I sat down on the floor with her," Laurie says. "She let me pet her and she didn't retreat. She even started purring! It was a breakthrough!"

Just a few weeks later, the tiny hissing cat turned into a little cuddle bug, even napping on Laurie's lap while she did her crosswords. Adopted early in January, Hermey now confidently struts about her home with a family who loves her. "When it comes to Tiny Lions, they're putting in just as much work as you are," Laurie says. "They're wondering 'How do I react to this? Do I let them pet me?' and it's just as much their decision as it is yours!"



*You work and work and work and one day they just turn, and it's so rewarding. You feel so good, because this scared, tiny little creature suddenly wants to cuddle with you."*

Adopting a Tiny Lion is similar to your typical adoption process, but their introduction into a home may need a little more patience. Because these kittens have never lived in a home before,



*Brownie and Cookie, two bonded Tiny Lion graduates currently available for adoption at Cat Therapy.*

they need initially to be confined to a small space. They will tell you when they're ready to move forward, and Tiny Lions will reward you with love once they're comfortable enough. They just take a bit of time and attention to get there!

Want to work with Tiny Lions at our shelter? ASAP will be holding Tiny Lion training sessions starting in April. Keep an eye on our social media for updates! We ask that you have a general understanding of cat behavior or some experience dealing with cats. To sign up to volunteer with our Tiny Lions, simply fill out a form on our website at [asapcats.org](https://asapcats.org). Be sure to select "Tiny Lions" on the form!

Want to help but not ready to work with the lions? Consider donating their favorite food to our program: Gerber Chicken Baby Food! Delicious, nutritious, and guaranteed to tame a Tiny Lion in no time! For more information about Tiny Lion taming and training, reach out to [info@asapcats.org](mailto:info@asapcats.org).

# Cats From the Community: Axel & Ariel

If you've been in the shelter recently, you've likely met siblings Axel and Ariel. Besides having beautiful markings, these two tabbies exude a special charm that makes everyone want to hold and snuggle them. Even without eyes, Axel is unafraid of anything — especially with Ariel around.

In early November of last year, ASAP received a call about a mother cat and her litter of kittens found downtown near the caller's property. The caller said people were feeding Momma but the babies were still nursing. She also noted that one of the babies appeared blind.

When master trapper Gina Sunseri got on scene, she found the babies on the other side of a chain-link fence, huddled together in a ball, lying in sticker bushes. The space was really tight, and there was no sign of Momma.

Gina watched the babies for a while, contemplating leaving them with Momma since they weren't eating on their own yet. She estimated them to be about 4 weeks old. After determining that one was likely blind and that a few others' eyes didn't look right, Gina decided she would take them in. The caller handed Gina a pair of bolt cutters and she got to work.

"I brought a carrier and a trap, so I was prepared for whatever was needed," Gina says. "I used the bolt cutters to cut open the fence, climbed in between the fence and the containers, and started handing the little spitting kittens out to the woman who put them in the carrier. There were six beautiful, fat, healthy brown tabby babies."

"A huge priority of mine is always to catch Mom if possible," she continues, "and a good way to catch a Momma is to use her babies as 'bait.' Since the babies were somewhat mobile, I secured them in a carrier and put the closed end of the trap against the door of the carrier. I baited the trap with wet food and within an hour Momma was trapped."

Once at the shelter, we determined that the babies were so close to being weaned that we did



*Six beautiful, fat, healthy, brown tabby babies, all born outdoors and currently adopted to loving homes. Pictured on the left is Ariel.*

not put them back with their mother. The benefit of separating Momma and babies at this stage is that the babies socialized very quickly and did not take on any of their mom's unsocial behaviors.

The kitty who we initially thought to be blind, Little Axel, had eyes that were not salvageable, so they were removed. Axel is bonded with his sister Ariel, so we kept them together and the others all got adopted.

Now named Matty (after Matthew Murdock, alter ego to blind superhero Daredevil) and Maisel (after Mrs. Maisel), they are constantly showered with love and affection as the two get to explore their new home. After being trapped, their mother was spayed and returned to her neighborhood where she is being fed and living her chosen life as a community cat.



*Though they came from a litter of six, these two shared an extra special connection, making them a bonded pair.*

# Stuey's Foster Win *by Judy Savage*

While saving for a home of their own, my daughter and her husband moved in with us for a time. We had lost our cat two years ago, and my daughter decided that in addition to two humans, a new cat should be introduced into our once very quiet household. She wrote, "I should know better than to look at the ASAP page... but what is Stuey like?" So I told her that I would check on him during my Tuesday morning shift.

In our Cat Chat binder at the shelter, I wrote: "Checked on Stuey...A note on his cage says 'get me out of here.' He doesn't like the shelter; it is hard to know what his personality is really like because he doesn't like the shelter, so we can foster him." I decided to give Stuey a break from the shelter.



*In addition to being a ball of energy, Stuey loves getting comfortable in a warm lap.*

I came back Tuesday afternoon, found Stacey Matson, and told her we would like to take Stuey home to foster. Although Stuey did not like being caged at ASAP, he paradoxically did not want to leave his cage! He would not let himself be put in a cat carrier on Tuesday or Wednesday, but finally on Thursday afternoon I received a message from Stacey: miraculously, Stuey was ready, in his carrier, and available for me to pick up.

For several weeks after his arrival, Stuey hid in a bunk bed amongst a bunch of stuffed animals, hissing if anyone approached him, only leaving the bed to eat and use his litter box when no one was in the room. Gradually my daughter got him to



*Stuey loves to curl into a ball whenever there's a comfy blanket around. He loves to lounge!*

trust her, and they began to build a relationship. From that moment on, things started to improve and our bond with Stuey grew even more.

Today, after adopting Stuey, he is lord of the manor! He bounds around the house like a ping pong ball, checking out all his favorite windows, playing with his favorite toys, or just enjoying his catnip. He has a favorite window seat for his daytime catnaps, and cuddles with my daughter and her husband at night.

His inner clock tells him when my daughter should return from work at night, and he sits by the front window waiting for her arrival, only to dissolve in a puddle of fur and purrs around her legs when she finally opens the door.

He is also our self-proclaimed guard dog! Last night I heard him howling and found him defending us from the night critters on the other side of the window. What a brave boy, defending the house that has become his home. We're lucky to have him!

# Adventures in Foster: Jinx's Tale *by Lou Dantanner*

I thought I had it made, then suddenly it was as if a tornado came through!

I lost my family, my home, and found myself out on the streets — literally. At my age, I should be in a nice warm bed by the fireplace. After a few tough weeks on my own, I found myself at the ASAP shelter. At least I had room service twice a day, but I wasn't thrilled about the food at first, so they offered me some Friskies Salmon. Now *that's* more like it! One day I was scooped up and put in a carrier and taken somewhere else.

When I got out of the carrier, I thought I had landed in Wonderland. My own room with all the necessities and a lady who talked nice to me! I was so happy I gave her my best song and dance. With all the excitement, I wasn't hungry — not even the next day. She made me a little hidey-hole under the bed and I could come out when she called me and get some nice chin rubs. That evening she came with dinner: a gruel made of my favorite salmon with warm water added. Yum! That night I slept on her nice warm bed.

The next day I felt better and took a nice long bath on her bed after breakfast. I like to explore the different rooms she lets me in and I'm starting to play. The best thing she got was a two-tier step box so I could get on her bed without clawing up the covers. I like to spend time on the footrest of her recliner in the evening, and she put a little box by it so I can climb aboard.

Someone named me Jinx, but it just isn't me. So, the lady started calling me "Jinxie" and I love it! I like to follow her around the house when she does chores, but I also like to take nice long naps on the bed. She got me a kitty warming pad and made me a nest to put it under and I love it! She offered me some toys, and my favorite is a bunch of feathers on a string. When I catch it, I'll walk off with it, talking to it all the way.

Another one is a grey mousy that reminds me of my hunts. I have a special voice for my prey toys. I think my family tree has some Siamese in it, because I can really belt out that meow when I want to!



*Jinx benefitted heavily from getting a chance to stay at foster before being adopted. Most cats do!*

A couple of months later, I was no longer "Jinxed" and I found my forever home! I was so excited, and when I met my family in my new home, she was very loving and made me feel like a queen!

Alice was right! There is a Wonderland after all, and I found it through ASAP and my foster mom!

# Rescuing Clarence

Found abandoned in an apartment, Clarence was rescued by a construction worker three weeks after his owners had moved out of their house. It was truly amazing that he survived living in those conditions — scared, hungry, and alone.

He was traumatized by his experience, so he spent six weeks with members of the Behavior Team when he was brought to ASAP, but with little success. He would spend his days with his head hung low and mostly immobile, completely shut down with occasional bursts to the other side of the cage. Clarence was truly shaken up by his previous living situation, and it didn't look like he was responding to any attempts at socialization.



*Clarence was shut down for many weeks, but after working with Emilda he finally started to open up.*

Resolved to support this poor cat, knowing Clarence had a gentle heart, volunteer Emilda Jaccard began to visit and work with him daily. “He began to trust me,” Emilda says, “rewarding me first with a soft purr, and then a much louder one.” As she gained Clarence’s trust, he would permit her to pet him – and he even started enjoying it! Little by little he allowed her to pet his ears and head, and eventually even his tummy. “He would drool, lick my hand, and roll over, awaiting more pets, which of course I gave him!” Emilda says.

Clarence loves treats and being brushed, and he makes a point of eating while you are keeping him company – a sign of being a social eater. With time, he began to trust other volunteers who approached

him slowly and gave him the space to respond on his own terms. But despite appearing more comfortable as time went on, noises at the shelter still scared him, and he would hide under his blanket or behind his litter box. We knew it was time for Clarence to get a change of scenery.

After spending eight weeks at ASAP, Clarence moved into a foster home with one of our all-star fosters, Lou Dartanner. It took him a few days to gather his bearings, but he’s adapting well to this new environment. He no longer hides, and he even sleeps on Lou’s bed! He enjoys playing and chasing toys, so long as they don’t have bells, and he loves a treat.

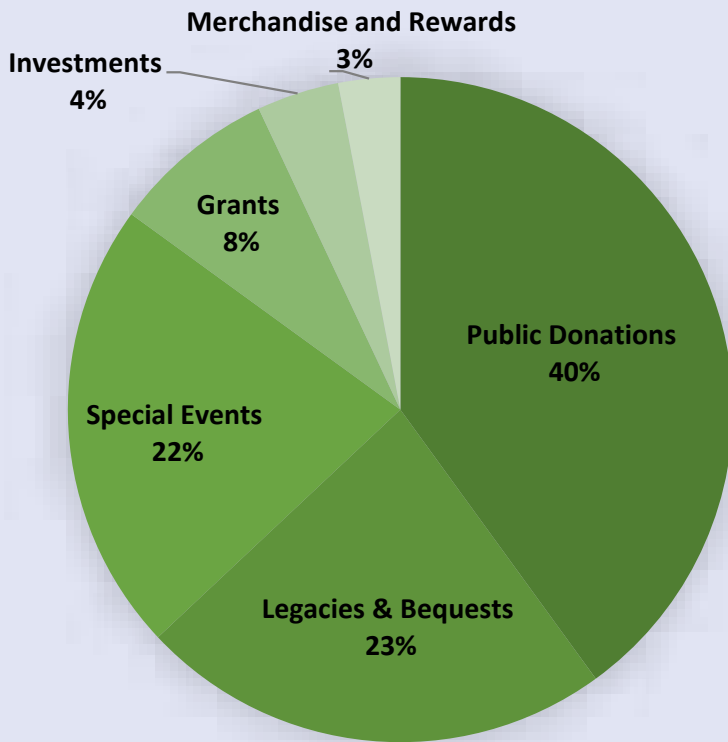


*A youthful cat with a long past, Clarence has been enjoying the opportunity to lounge in a new space.*

For a 12-year-old orange tabby, Clarence is still so youthful in many ways, he just never had a chance to show that part of himself. A survivor, a gentle giant, and a lover, Clarence is still looking for his forever home.

If you’d like to make a connection with the charming man himself, send us a message at [info@asapcats.org](mailto:info@asapcats.org) and we’ll be in touch!

# Annual Report

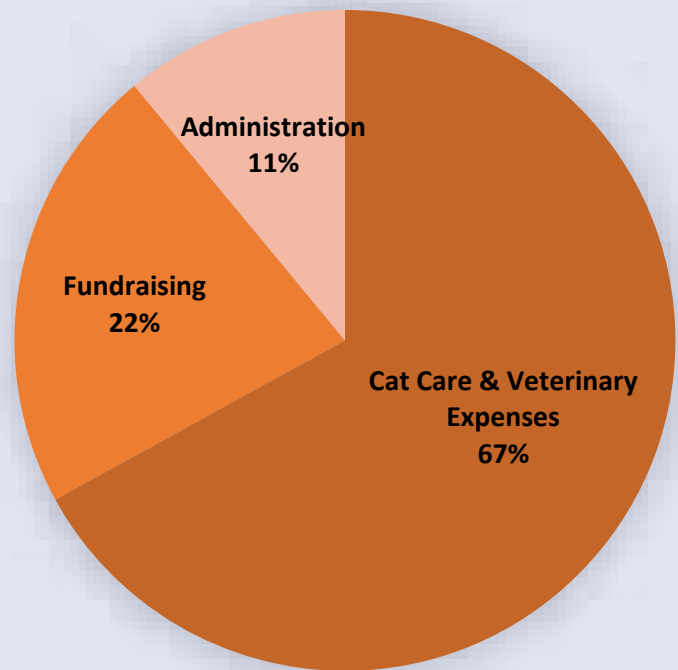


## INCOME

Public Donations	\$425,155
Legacies & Bequests	\$236,653
Special Events	\$227,434
Grants	\$82,480
Investment Income	\$43,771
Merchandise & Credit Card Rewards	\$38,114

## EXPENSES

Cat Care/Veterinary	\$835,808
Fundraising	\$271,820
Administration	\$142,434



## Did You Know?

For over 30 years, we have been operating out of a shelter that was donated to the County of Santa Barbara by ASAP. In return for that donation, ASAP was granted the opportunity to provide cat care to Santa Barbara County, and receives key services and supplies free of charge, including rent, a contract veterinarian, and basic supplies. However, ASAP does not receive any portion of fees paid by the public to Santa Barbara County Animal Services for the services that ASAP provides, including adoptions, relinquishments, redemptions, daily boarding fees, and veterinary expenses.

## THANK YOU

to the following for their generous support:

- The Animal Charitable Foundation of Santa Barbara County, Inc.
- The Ronald & Phyllis M. Bruce Trust for the Protection of Animals
- The Wood-Claeyssens Foundation
- May and Bill Allison Foundation
- Maddie's Fund Open Arms Challenge
- Santa Barbara Foundation
- Goleta City Grant Program
- California For All



# 2023 In Review

*Saving the Lives of 100% of Adoptable Cats and Kittens*

1,158

cats & kittens sheltered

748

cats adopted

56

lost cats & families reunited

246

cats TNR'd (Trap-Neuter-Release)

71

working cats placed on ranches, nurseries, greenhouses, and other alternate placements

792

spay/neuter surgeries

39

hospice cats sleeping in homes

87

Tiny Lions™ tamed

49

lifesaving surgeries performed

## Beyond the Numbers

Our most significant achievement from 2023 revolved around our concerted efforts in spay-neuter initiatives, both within our shelter and across our community. We proudly expanded our veterinary program, bolstering our team with additional veterinarians throughout the week, enabling us to provide enhanced medical care, lifesaving surgeries, and dental services on site. Through innovative methods such as mobile clinics operating in parking lots, we delivered vital medical attention to the community and owned cats, empowering them to thrive within the homes they cherish.

We strive to raise awareness that outdoor cats, when healthy and thriving, belong in their familiar surroundings. Despite fluctuations in our intake numbers due to well-meaning community members, we emphasize that our doors are always open to any cat or kitten in need. We encourage everyone to reach out to us without hesitation when it comes to the welfare of feline companions! At ASAP Cats, every cat matters, and every effort to support them is valued and appreciated.

made possible by

24,386

volunteer hours

**Layla**

adoptable

# A Letter From Director Jessica Wiebe



Dear Friends  
of ASAP,

Reflecting on the past year at ASAP Cats fills me with profound gratitude and optimism.

As we journeyed through 2023, the collective efforts of our

dedicated team and compassionate community members enabled us to achieve remarkable milestones and overcome significant challenges with resilience and determination.

Amidst the trials we faced, including operational improvements and expanding veterinary services, our team remained steadfast in our commitment to excellence. Even in the darkest of days, when our building was deteriorating and challenges seemed insurmountable, our team persevered, demonstrating resilience beyond measure.

I am proud not only to lead but to stand shoulder to shoulder with the heroes of ASAP Cats. Together we weathered storms, overcame obstacles, and continued to provide sanctuary and hope to cats in need. Each member of our team embodies the spirit of compassion and dedication, and it is an honor to stand beside them.

In 2023, our efforts resulted in 748 adoptions — a 46% increase compared to the previous year, and a true testament to the dedication of our team and the support of our community. These adoptions signify not just a statistic of animals moved, but 748 warm beds, loving homes, and futures brightened for cats, kittens, and pet families.

We have a responsibility at ASAP Cats to ensure that every donation contributes to meaningful change. We understand that your resources are finite, and like you, we want to make a difference with every cent we have. Together we recognize the inherent value of every cat and kitten's life, understanding that each one deserves love, care, and a chance for a brighter future.

The choices we make, and the care we provide these precious souls today, will shape the future — both for them and for us.

On another note, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to everyone who opened their hearts and homes to foster a cat during our recent shelter clearing event. Your kindness and willingness to provide temporary care for these feline friends truly embodies the spirit of our ASAP family.

With the successful completion of our roofing project following the tremendous damage we sustained from the storm, this project not only marks the end of persistent leaks, but also signifies a renewed sense of security and comfort for our furry residents, volunteers, staff, and visitors. However, our journey towards improvement doesn't end here.

As we move forward, it's important to address the next steps. While the roofing project addressed crucial structural issues, we still have work to do with insulation repair and replacement, as well as patching up several holes in our main area. Little by little, our broken shelter is getting the TLC it so desperately needed, and we want to express our genuine thanks for the love and support we've received throughout this journey!

I cannot express enough how incredibly proud I am of our community and the unwavering dedication of our ASAP family. Time and time again, you have demonstrated your willingness to step up in times of need, offering your hard work, patience, and support. Your contributions, big and small, make a significant difference in the lives of our shelter animals and the success of our organization.

Thank you for joining us in our mission to make the world a better place for cats and kittens, and thank you for making everything possible at ASAP Cats!

With gratitude and thanks,

Jessica Wiebe

Executive Director

# Basil's Legacy Program & Basil's Big Bash

Over the last 33 years, ASAP Cats has had the generous support of forward-thinking donors who have passed on and have included ASAP Cats in their estate planning. We wouldn't be the organization we are today without their careful planning and love of our mission. The goal of Basil's Legacy Society is to honor, during their lifetime, the supporters who are ensuring a bright future for the cats of the greater Santa Barbara community. By including ASAP Cats in your legacy planning, we want to give you the peace of mind that you are providing for the most vulnerable felines far into the future.



For more information on Basil's Legacy Society, please send an email to [legacy@asapcats.org](mailto:legacy@asapcats.org)

Below are a few simple ways\* that you can help ASAP Cats with a planned gift:

**Bequest:** Designating ASAP Cats in your will or living trust allows you to support our work without parting with your assets during your lifetime.

**Beneficiary Designation:** Simply name ASAP Cats as a beneficiary of a retirement account, 401K plan, life insurance policy, or insurance annuity.

**Charitable Lead Trust:** Set up an irrevocable trust designed to provide financial support to ASAP Cats for a period of time, with the remaining assets going to other beneficiaries.

**Charitable Remainder Trust:** Set up an irrevocable trust that generates a potential income stream for you (or other beneficiaries) with the remaining donated assets going to ASAP Cats.

Our bequest allows ASAP leadership to use a significant portion of our gift whenever there is a major initiative to advance ASAP...We wanted our money to go where it's best treated, and the longer an organization has been successful at achieving its mission, when its mission really resonates with the giver, is what motivates people – and what surely motivates us.

— Roger Davis, ASAP donor and member of Basil's Legacy Society

## Save the Date

**Basil's  
Big  
Bash**



Friday, May 31, 2024 at 5:30 PM  
The Carousel House at Chase Palm Park  
223 E. Cabrillo Blvd. Santa Barbara, CA 93101

**Cat-tastic  
Carnival!**

Formal invitation to follow



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805 683-3368  
info@asapcats.org  
www.asapcats.org

 Facebook.com/asapcats

 Instagram.com/asapcats

## Want to Join the ASAP Team?

ASAP Cats is always looking for new volunteers to join the team. Are you ready and willing to work with cats of all shapes and sizes? Do you have a soft spot for kittens in need? Consider joining the ASAP team and working alongside a crew of fellow feline lovers. You'll get plenty of time to make some new furry friends and will be supporting a great cause. Stop by the shelter and ask about applying today.



*Donna Peterson (left) and Kathi Backus (right) have both been with ASAP Cats for over a decade. You'll usually find Kathi with the newest kitties in New Arrivals, while Donna floats all around the shelter leading her team!*

### **ASAP - Animal Shelter Assistance Program**

Shelter location: 5473 Overpass Road, Santa Barbara, CA 93111  
ASAP is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization ■ Federal Tax ID: 77-0283500