

CATNIPS



Basil, the Baker

I hope your summer had equal parts sun and shade (and maybe even a little rain). I for one enjoyed my many sunspot catnaps with my new friend Romeo in Run 1.

It's been a great few months hanging around the ASAP shelter, taking care of the **dozens and dozens of kittens** who've entered the building. Our Wellness team has been extra busy checking in all the babies, and they've even hit the road a few times in my Mobile Care Unit to spay and neuter cats out in the community.

While I've been in charge of guarding the lobby with Nicole, I've made a whole bunch of new friends. This sweet girl named **Callie Sue** showed me the craziest trick: she can run and jump and leap about despite **her lack of wrist bones!** I didn't even know I had wrist bones, but she sure doesn't. Read all about the incredibly unique Callie Sue on **page 4**.

It took awhile for us to become besties, but **my buddy Romeo** has really come out of his shell lately. He's been loving his space in the runs and getting to know all my humans. I'm really proud to see how many friends he's made! Romeo's story is especially sweet, so make sure to **flip to page 6** to read it.

It feels like just yesterday I was shaking my whiskers with all my friends at **my Big Bash**. I can't believe how much fun we all had, so thank you very much if you made it out there! Have y'all seen the photos yet? **Take a peek at page 8** and share a laugh with me from a fun afternoon.

Well, it's just about time for me to get back to work. I have a lot of biscuits to make before the week is up, so if you don't mind I'm going to get back to it. Enjoy the newsletter and stop by the shelter any time you're in town.



California Girl

Basil, OUT



Summer 2026

CATNIPS
is a publication offered free of charge
three times a year from ASAP Cats
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It Takes a Village: Volunteering With ASAP Cats

ASAP Cats has primarily been a volunteer-driven organization since its inception in 1989, when a small but mighty team of cat lovers sought to end the unnecessary euthanasia of healthy cats in Santa Barbara County. Now, nearly 40 years later, ASAP has hundreds of volunteers helping our cats as well as a small (but still just as mighty!) staff of animal welfare professionals. And one particular staff member acts as the bridge between both forces: our Volunteer Coordinator Nikki Nistal.



Flanked by volunteers Marina and Mary Alice, Nikki Nistal is at her best when surrounded by humans and cats alike.

Working with ASAP since 2024, Nikki acts as the link between the volunteers and the shelter staff, including our front office workers, Wellness specialists, and admin team. She works with the public when they visit the shelter, talking about everything from adoptions to donations, but additionally keeps operations running smoothly and her volunteers encouraged.

"I like problem solving," says Nikki. "When issues at the shelter or between volunteers come up, I feel confident addressing it in an appropriate way until we can find a compromise." Managing a team of over 200 volunteers sounds overwhelming, but Nikki's "people skills" truly shine when she's given the opportunity to solve problems.

Volunteers play a central role in shelter operations, handling everything from cleaning, to feeding, to socializing nervous kitties, but those tasks extend past ASAP's walls.

"We have teams helping with recruitment by putting out fliers, working adoption and outreach events by setting up tables and talking with the public, transporting cats to and from visits to specialists..." Nikki explains. "They help trap community cats, bring them in for TNVR [Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return], talk to the community about TNVR, work with good Samaritans who found cats...doing everything to help ASAP keep its presence in the community."

Nikki's team of volunteers do more than simply care for cats; they care about them, keeping their best interests top of mind. "We empower volunteers to act as ambassadors for ASAP, whether in the community or online, giving the public suggestions on what to do when they find cats or connecting them to the right people for help," she says. Working regularly with the cats in our shelter our volunteers pick up plenty of "cat cues," learning about body language and nonverbal cues such as airplane ears or arched backs to indicate stress. These skills help our volunteers when they come across cats in their



Sometimes crying cats just need to be held, and Selyna is always happy to oblige.



When they're not taking care of the cats at the shelter, Lei'ana and her mom Sarah are always happy to help at outreach events, including Basil's Big Bash!

daily life outside of the shelter, as well as when members of the public are in need of feline assistance, whether it's trapping community cats for spay/neuter, dealing with outdoor litters of kittens, or simply encouraging a scared cat to come to safety.

The need for volunteers in the shelter fluctuates depending on staffing and time of year, but there is always a need for help at ASAP. "We work well when we have the tools we need," Nikki says. "There's so many different people doing each job, so having enough supplies for everyone keeps things running smoothly."

Looking to support ASAP Cats and our team of volunteers? Take a look to the right at some of the ways you can directly make a difference for our team.



Though most kittens are too little for the runs, Ciara still helps them peek through the window.

SUPPORT ASAP VOLUNTEERS

Keeping our shelter up and running is the best way to ensure our volunteers can continue caring for our cats. When our old dishwasher finally died we fundraised for a new one, and thanks to the generosity of our community we were able to resume operations fairly quickly. "When larger things at the shelter break and we need larger improvements, that makes a difference," Nikki says.

If you're looking to gift our team something other than money, we are always looking for Top-loading carriers. Cats often dislike entering carriers when they need to be transported or trapped, and having a single entrance point increases their stress and the risk of injury for the staff responsible for loading them.

"[Top-loading carriers] offer more access points and easier access to keep cats less stressful when netting and assessing. They're also safer for people!" explains Nikki.



Outside of the shelter, ASAP's volunteer team of community cat feeders provide food for dozens of cat colonies, feeding hundreds of cats every single day, and costs for food quickly add up. Support our volunteer colony feeders by donating high-caloric cat food such as Friskies.

Wet or dry cat food donations are always accepted at the shelter and can be left in our grey donation bin outside the main entrance.

For more information relating to physical donations to ASAP, send us an email at info@asapcats.org.

Callie Sue, One of One

We encounter hundreds of cats every year at ASAP, and they come to us in varying degrees of vulnerability with different levels of care required. Whether they're unsocialized kittens waiting for behavior training, seniors in need of hospice fosters, or surrendered cats looking for their forever home, our team has worked with all sorts of cats — yet Callie Sue may very well be the first of her kind.

Sweet as a peach and as energetic and bubbly as a kitten, 3-year-old Callie Sue loves to “jump, leap, and play with toys” according to her previous foster mom. She has a favorite orange mouse she fetches and retrieves, and though she does not like to be picked up she “does not get spicy about it, just wiggly,” says her foster.

But what makes Callie Sue unique? That would be her lack of carpuses, i.e., she has no wrist bones. After taking care of her fleas and remedying her bad case of dermatitis upon intake, our Wellness team quickly picked up on Callie Sue's condition after observing her walk around. Despite having degenerative arthritis, she can still get around easily, stand on her back legs, and sleep comfortably. “She has no difficulty running,” notes her foster, “and she's very social and gives frequent hand kisses.”

Our veterinarians suspect that her condition is congenital and her carpal bones seem to have

deteriorated over time, yet she does not let it get in the way of living her life. Callie Sue plays fetch, chases her tail, and bounces around with gusto, unashamed and ready to make friends. She does well in foster and is loved by all of our volunteers — now she just needs a forever home. Sound like the kind of kitty you want in your life?

Send us an email at info@asapcats.org for more information and to start the adoption process today for this bouncy, sweet girl.



Though she has no trouble getting around, Callie Sue's favorite activity is still napping in laps.



Working Cats In Santa Maria Are On the Job

Earlier this year, the ASAP Working Cats program celebrated another successful placement at the Santa Barbara County Road Yard in Santa Maria. Three non-social cats — Miami Blue, Lantana Purple, and Mantis Green — found a new purpose, following a non-traditional adoption path through their alternate placement.



Safely settled inside the Road Yard's sign room, these three kitties are helping manage rodent activity, while receiving daily care, shelter, and protection. For cats who are not suited for traditional adoption, placements like this are truly lifesaving. Staff were genuinely excited to welcome them as part of the team, and the cats seemed thrilled to manage the rodent population around the yard. A win-win for cats and humans alike!

This transition was carefully managed by Volunteer Belinda Burns, whose dedication to each cat's comfort and well-being during placement setup ensures a smooth and humane acclimation process. From secure caging during the adjustment period to ongoing monitoring, these thoughtful details make all the difference.

Want to help us place more working cats like these? Your contribution supports veterinary care, transport, supplies, and the hands-on placement work that makes programs like this possible. By donating to the Working Cats program, you can give our cats safety, purpose, and stability outside the shelter, while providing an effective, humane solution for our community partners. Thank you for being part of these lifesaving solutions for cats and for our community.

Reach out to Program Director Mary Scott to learn more about becoming a Working Cats partner by sending her an email at **workingcats@asapcats.org**, or by simply giving her a call at: **(805) 699-5739**.



One of the cats has two different colored eyes, known as heterochromia — a reminder that every working cat is unique and deserving of care.



Not So Star-Crossed: Getting to Know Romeo

Despite boasting the comfiest shelter in all of Santa Barbara County, all of us at ASAP believe that cats should not grow up in cages. Sometimes they need to be on cage rest following an intense procedure or require a few weeks of behavior training before going off to foster, but our goal will always be the same: helping kitties find their forever homes. One such cat who has made great strides toward being ready for placement is our dear Romeo, who learned to love humans — given enough patience and time!

After being surrendered to a local shelter following the passing of his owner, Romeo was transferred to us in need of some serious behavior training. Scared, defensive, and constantly on edge, he refused to come out of his in-cage kennel for the first few weeks in our care. Our team patiently (and carefully) gave him food and monitored his behavior, and after a month at our shelter we decided to try giving Romeo more space.

“Cats with more options do better,” says Volunteer Coordinator Nikki Nistal, so our team moved him into one of our open-air runs, providing him a snug cat igloo for shelter and several platformed walkways for space to breathe and roam in the sunshine. Over the course of the next few months, Romeo started to improve.



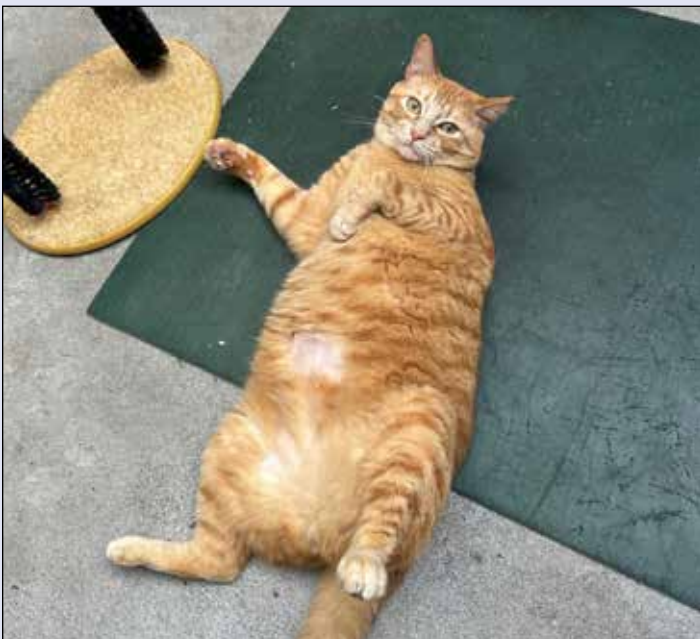
Now that he trusts humans, Romeo loves to bask in praise and verbal affection....much like his namesake!

Noticing he was initially still skittish, our Behavior team gradually entered the run and got him accustomed to being in proximity to people. Next, we tried initiating play, offering treats and slowly gauging his interests. “Once he became interested, his guard came down,” says Nikki. “He would begin to walk around us, but touch was still off the table.”

Following this pattern for a few weeks, Romeo eventually would approach our team for touch on his own terms. “Offering a hand was a great way to start, because nothing was forced. He didn’t feel defensive, and eventually he felt confident in his choices and environment,” says Nikki.

After being with ASAP for over five months, Romeo has become a confident and loving cat. He enjoys looking directly at humans and chattering as if to initiate conversation, and is curious of other cats and likes to be around them. Initially nervous to be near humans, he now walks up to strangers and chirps for attention. “Not every cat has that personality of ‘Where are the people?’,” notes Nikki. “He’s very funny and very interactive.”

All that’s left for Romeo is to leave ASAP’s shelter. We believe he is ready to set down roots in his own home with his own bed and his own family. Stop by ASAP Cats during public hours to come meet Romeo, open **Monday – Thursday 1 – 4pm and Sundays 11am – 3pm**. Other times are available by appointment, simply call our shelter at **(805) 683-3368** to schedule your visit.



Unboxing Abandoned Cats and Kittens



Recently ASAP has noticed a troubling trend around Santa Barbara County: cats are being found abandoned in boxes. Not only is it a misdemeanor to willfully abandon an animal in the state of California, but it greatly risks the health of these poor cats to box them up and leave them stranded. The very reason our shelter exists is to care for and perhaps save the lives of cats when no one else is able or willing to shoulder that responsibility. Thus, we loudly ask our community: bring your cats to ASAP Cats.

Earlier this summer a good Samaritan brought in a diaper box they found on the beach wrapped in painter's tape and aluminum foil, and we were stunned to find six young kittens and their mom inside. The kittens appeared to be about seven weeks old, and all cats were panting and had urinated in the box. While the babies had somewhat elevated temperatures, their mother's temperature read an alarming 106 degrees, indicating she was at risk for heat exhaustion.

Our Wellness team began immediate action to cool her down, placing an IV catheter and starting fluid treatment. Within 20 minutes her temperature dropped to 102 degrees, but our team was still worried about possible organ failure. In need of overnight observation and possible medical intervention, she was driven up to our partners at Pets ER, where she recovered well.

Now available for adoption at Cat Therapy in downtown Santa Barbara, the queen (pictured

top left) was given the name Coppertone, hopefully to give her luck the next time she finds herself out in the sun. We are happy to report that all six of her kittens (including Beach Bod, pictured top right) have been adopted and are healthy in their homes.

Coincidentally, a box of nine other kittens, found along Highway 154, were brought in the same day as Coppertone and her babies. Thankfully those kittens were in good condition and did not need any immediate care.

Just 10 days following Coppertone's arrival, a box containing a shy cat and a note was left by our shelter door. The note indicated that she only eats soft food and likes sitting on laps. When we opened up the box we were introduced to a sweet, older cat who we named Annie. She appeared to have dental disease, so we began treatment for that right away. And now that she's fully healed, little Annie is ready for adoption.



Named after Little Orphan Annie, this sweet 7-year-old girl is overdue to be spoiled in a forever home.

A Hoot and a Holler at Basil's Big Bash

Earlier this summer, our fabulous cat-loving community celebrated together at our annual fundraising gala, Basil's Big Bash, enjoying a relaxing afternoon at the historic Stow House. Offering live music, ranch-themed activities, and even some of ASAP's own kittens in our mobile unit, it was a great opportunity to raise critical funds for vulnerable kittens, bringing in over \$200,000 to support our lifesaving mission. Thank you everyone who attended and celebrated with us, and to our wonderful sponsors!





ASAP'S BASH WINE IS NOW AVAILABLE!

Unable to mosey over to this year's Bash? Well, hold your horses — you're still in luck! Savor a taste of the wonderful afternoon we celebrated by purchasing your very own ASAP Cats vintage. This year we are offering Galloping Gato 2025 Chenin Blanc and Ranch Cat 2024 Rosé, both available in limited supply.

A special thanks to our friends at WINECULT for working with us on this exciting project. Proceeds from bottles sold will be donated to ASAP to help support our cat-saving mission. To purchase your bottle today, visit our website at www.asapcats.org/wine.



A Message from Our Executive Director



As we head into fall, I keep coming back to one word to describe this year at ASAP Cats: **busy!** Behind that word are thousands of individual moments that tell a much bigger story about the work our community makes possible.

This kitten season has been an

especially busy one, with kittens arriving in need of everything from round-the-clock foster care to lifesaving medical treatment. We also have taken on some incredibly challenging medical cases for our cats and kittens this year. Extensive surgeries, prolonged treatment, specialized care — all using significant staff and veterinary resources. But time and time again, our team has stepped up to give these cats a chance.

At the same time, our reach continues to grow. Our **Tiny Lions™** and **Behavior Team** programs are helping cats who may need a little more time, patience, creativity, or specialized support to succeed. Our **Working Cats** program continues to create successful placements for cats who are best suited to non-traditional homes. Our **Community Cats** team continues working throughout Santa Barbara County to provide spay/neuter services and resources for community cats and the people who care for them. Our **mobile unit clinics** have allowed us to take veterinary services beyond the walls of our shelter and directly into these communities where they are needed most.

These programs allow us to look beyond traditional pathways and find solutions for cats with different behavioral needs — whether that means helping them become more comfortable in the shelter, preparing them for adoption, or finding an environment where they can truly thrive.

We are also feeling the impact of a changing animal welfare landscape. As other rescues and agencies face their own capacity limitations, intake restrictions,

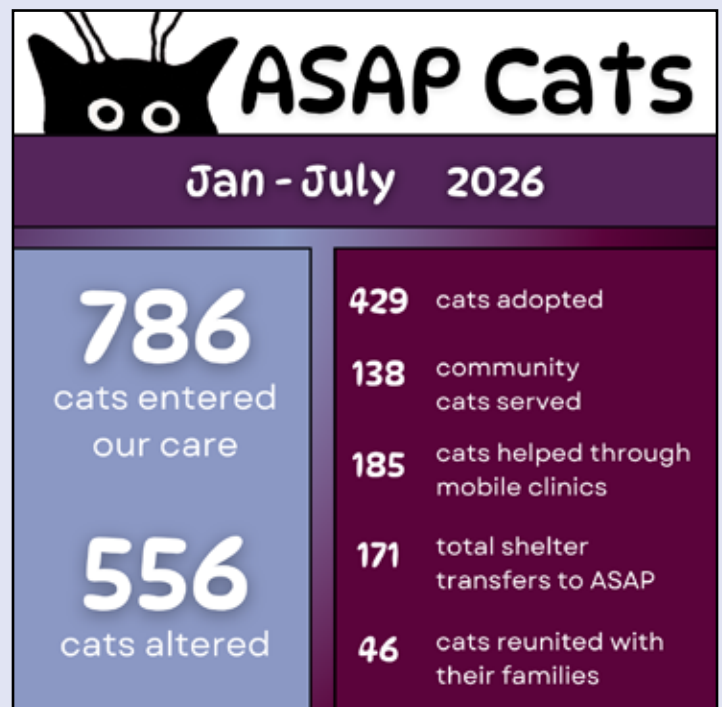
medical constraints, and operational challenges, more cats—and often some of the most complicated cases—are finding their way to ASAP. We are proud to be an organization our community and partners can turn to, while also recognizing the tremendous responsibility that comes with that role.

I am incredibly proud of our tiny but mighty organization. We continue to stretch ourselves, evolve our programs, build new partnerships, and say yes to some very difficult cases — all while remaining focused on what has always been at the heart of ASAP Cats: helping cats and the people who care about them.

There is so much happening behind the scenes and so much more ahead for the future of ASAP. I can't wait to share more with you. Stay tuned!

Thank you for believing in this work and for making it possible.

Jessica Wiebe
Executive Director
ASAP Cats



Additional Ways to Help ASAP

The work we do at ASAP Cats is lifesaving, and Santa Barbara County will need ASAP Cats long after most of us are gone. Your legacy support can ensure that ASAP Cats continues providing lifesaving services far into the future. **Join Basil's Legacy Society to ensure the cats of Santa Barbara County are protected for generations to come.**

By generously including ASAP Cats in your estate planning, you enable us to continue serving as a beacon of hope for Santa Barbara County's most vulnerable cats and kittens well into the next 30 years and beyond.

Enrollment in Basil's Legacy Society is easy. Our legacy members simply let us know that they have generously included ASAP Cats in their wills or trusts, or as a beneficiary in their planned giving.

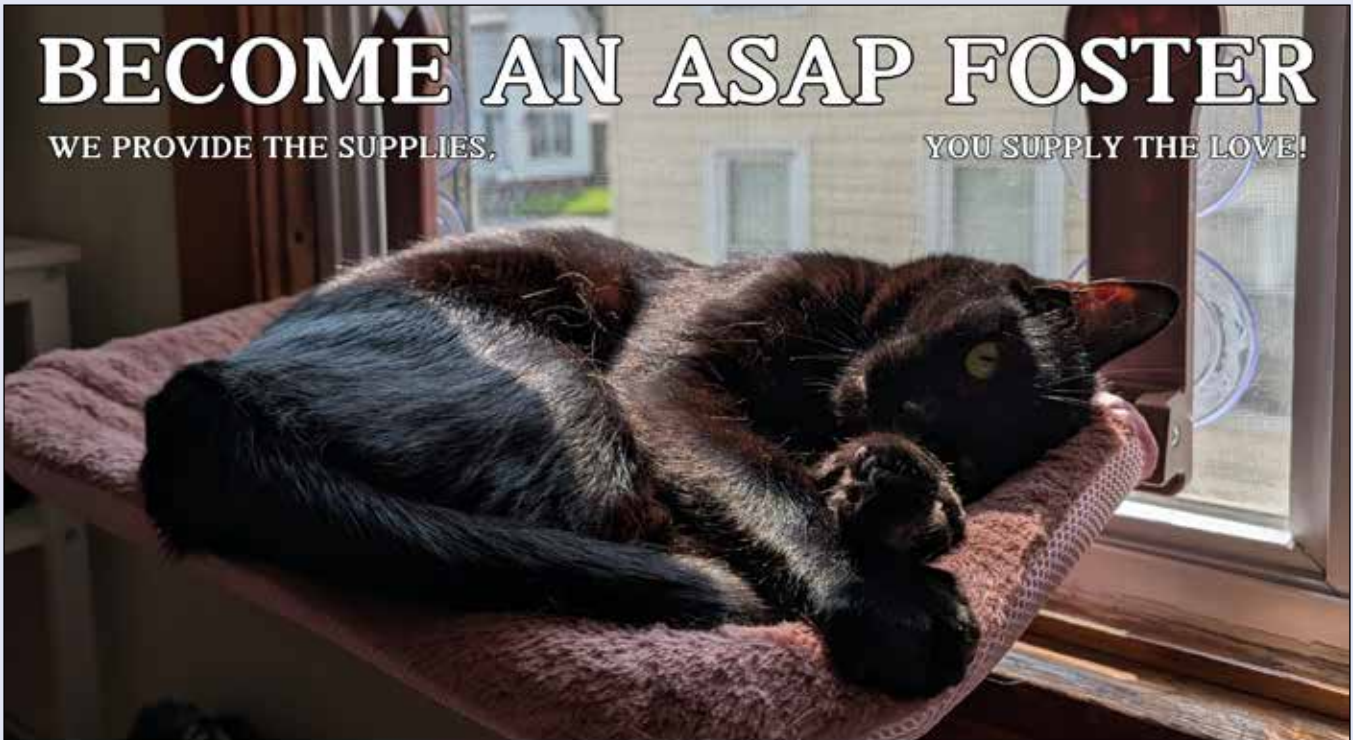
For more information about Basil's Legacy Society and to learn how you can enroll today, visit our website at: **www.asapcats.org/legacy**.



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WE PROVIDE THE SUPPLIES,

YOU SUPPLY THE LOVE!



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Join the ASAP Cats Team!

ASAP Cats is always looking for new volunteers to join the team. Are you 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 fellow cat lovers. You'll get plenty of time to make some new friends — furry and otherwise — and will be supporting a great cause. Stop by the shelter and ask about applying today.



Taking care of needy cats and kittens is a very enriching experience, rewarded by never-ending kitten cuddles, unlimited selfies with cute cats, access to whatever snacks we have in the kitchen, and a full heart knowing you made a difference.

ASAP - Animal Shelter Assistance Program

Shelter location: 5473 Overpass Road #101, Santa Barbara, CA 93111
ASAP is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization ■ Federal Tax ID: 77-0283500