

**CommunityCatsPodcast\_Ep444\_Kennedy\_220222.mp3**

<https://www.communitycatspodcast.com/episode-444-jae-kennedy/>

**Kristen Petri** [00:00:03]

You've tuned in to the Community Cats Podcast. Ready? Let's go.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:00:13]

Welcome to the Community Cats Podcast. I'm your host, Stacy LeBaron. I've been involved helping homeless cats for over 20 years with the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society. The goal of this podcast is to expose you to amazing people who are improving the lives of cats. I hope these interviews will help you learn how you can turn your passion for cats into action. And today we're speaking with Jae Kennedy and Adrienne Lefebvre. Two crazy cat ladies are with us today, and they are cat advocates, social media influencers, bloggers, and content creators. They offer a full line of natural supplements, Feline Essential made to help treat and prevent many common health issues in cats. In 2015, motivated by the lack of available resources for natural feline health, Jae and Adrienne dedicated their lives to learning and sharing all they can to help cats live the longest healthiest, and happiest lives possible. They host regular live shows on social media to connect with cat parents and answer questions they have about their kitties, as well as sharing tips about cat health and happiness via blogs and videos. Also worth mentioning, they always have a cocktail nearby. Hmm, interesting. Well, welcome to the show. So, Adrienne, you want to just share first how the two of you or how you, personally became passionate about cats?

**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:01:34]

Thank you so much for having us. I have to say, how this all came to be was almost accidentally. I think we both grew up thinking we were more dog people and we just started accumulating cats. Never went to shelters and looked to adopt, but they just came to us. And we really, as you mentioned, in 2015, we really recognized how many things we didn't know about cats, specifically. We worked in pet nutrition since 2005, but it was very dog-centric, and we were going through a heartbreaking experience with one of our cats with feline leukemia. And we were searching for more answers, more information, and we just couldn't find it. So we really realized then just how much we didn't even know about our own babies and how much we can do to help enrich their lives. So we did. We branched out from pet nutrition, which was very dog-centric, and started looking at what we could do to help our feline friends and looking at building a community really that better addressed our cat's needs.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:02:36]

Yeah. Excellent. Jae, do you have anything you want to add to that?

**Jae Kennedy** [00:02:40]

I think she pretty much hit it nail on the head. Yes. We now have six cats, and I guess what we really did was we became the resource that we could not find or we're working to become the resource that we could not find at that time, back in 2015,

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:02:57]

Adrienne. You mentioned that you're working with dog, a lot of dog companies, dog food, dog-dominated world, right?

**Jae Kennedy** [00:03:05]

Yeah, totally.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:03:07]

How can we change that?

**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:03:09]

I think it's persistence. I feel like and maybe it is. There's that stereotype. We call ourselves the two crazy cat ladies because we felt like, well, our friends called us that and we kind of took a little bit of offense to it, almost like you think about the crazy cat lady as the neighbor down the road with 30 cats, and she's always in her robe with that kind of stereotype. And that was not at all what we thought. And we realized that there is a bit of a stereotype attached to cat people. Part of that, I think, is that we're more introverted or quieter. We're not always at the dog park hanging out with each other and having a good time. So I feel like we really wanted to kind of change that. And I'm forgetting the question now.

**Jae Kennedy** [00:03:54]

I think it's about awareness, like, it's really getting out there, and that's kind of what we're doing. As you're saying. What we're doing is trying to get out there and let people know. And it's amazing, Stacy, the world that opens up and how many other people are just like us. They absolutely love their cats. They don't want to tell their friends that they love their cats. They don't want to tell their friends that they're looking at their phones to see the video of their cats while they're at school or out at a dinner or something because they're embarrassed of it. And we want it to be something that everybody embraces, just as dog people embrace having and loving their dogs as family. We should be able to do that with our kitties as well.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:04:34]

And I think some people start to talk about elevating the cat status sort of out there in the world. And you were talking about trying to get the right medical treatment for your cat and not being able to find the natural resources, the natural health resources. Tell me a little bit about the evolution and discovery that you went through in the supplements and developing those resources to be able to help the cats in your care as well as then sharing with everybody else.

**Jae Kennedy** [00:05:01]

Yeah. So when we started in pet nutrition, it was actually with my family business back in 2005, and they were working with a beautiful, holistic animal scientist. And he's the one that created many of their products. So when we branched off, we reached out to him. Dr. Campbell is his name. He's in Oklahoma. And we were like, do you have anything that would work specifically for cats? Because we're in the pet nutrition world, it's basically all made supplements and things like that are all made with dogs in mind. And it's like, oh, they're good for cats, too. But most cats don't like a dog treat. Most cats, and they don't really do any research behind the cats themselves. So we reached out to him, and he was just elated that somebody wanted to help cats because he himself had rescued over at that time, over 100 cats. And he was creating formulas to help nurse even cats with feline leukemia, natural formulas to help fight viruses and help nurse them back to health. So he was like, I can share my formulas with you if you'll let people know that there are resources for cats. And we were like, okay, let's do that. So we were really excited about that. So we just started a full line. He currently makes all of our supplements, and it's expanded upon the years when we find a need for something but herbal, herbs, plant extracts, minerals, that's all what our liquid formulas are all made of. And we make it in a liquid formula because it's very easy to add to a little bit of wet food. And it's also very absorbable rather than like a treat or a pill or something.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:06:34]

Yeah.

**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:06:35]

And to piggyback on top of that, I do think we're talking about supplements and health, but I think, too, and that being so dog-centric back when we were working with that company, I think, too, though, that it is a remarkable thing. You talk about elevating the cat status. I think so often people think of their pets, dogs and cats, and they kind of lump them together as companion animals where cats are so very different from dogs, not just in what they may need nutritionally or medically in that way, but also just their environment and what enriches a cat's life. We were talking the other day about how if someone goes out and gets a bird or a guinea pig or a rabbit, they spend a lot of time

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being like, what do rabbits eat and how do they live and what do they need in their day and what do guinea pigs want? And when you go and get a cat, it's kind of like they're

not little dogs. It's not the same kind of situation. And being able to really not just elevate the stereotype or whatever it is of cat people, but also giving more attention and enrichment to cat's lives and what they need, it's really an exciting thing to do as well.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:07:41]

Yeah. I had a conversation earlier today where folks were talking about this idea of folks getting cats, and you put food out and you scoop the litter box, and sometimes people scoop the litter box only once a week and they're not doing it every day. But then there's a whole other category of enrichment puzzle feeders. I don't think a lot of people know what puzzle feeders are, and I don't think that they know that it's important for cats to catch their prey at the end of a playtime. And I was discussing, I said, well, the cats I've been very unsuccessful at preventing my cats from waking me up during the night, the night time, that kind of thing. So what are those great tips to be able to have a full night's sleep and that kind of thing? And there's just so much more that we should be doing with our cats and it should be part of the package, but it's not part of our innate package of cat ownership.

**Jae Kennedy** [00:08:33]

Yeah. Unfortunately, many of us think and we're guilty of this, too, when we first became cat parents way back in the day, 20 something years ago, people just think that the cats just sleep all day. They just hang out. They're basically more of like an accessory instead of a family member. Right?

**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:08:50]

They're more like a convenience companion.

**Jae Kennedy** [00:08:52]

Convenience companion. Yes.

**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:08:53]

Yeah. Everyone thinks costs are very low maintenance. As you said, you just put a bunch of food down in a trough and let them graze away all day and maybe they look cute on the couch for a little while. And oh, what about that litter box? And you think that that's it. If you're going to get a cat, you get a food bowl, some cat food, and a litter box and you're good where we started. And I think to be honest with you, so much of what we do and what we share and our motto is learn, share, and grow. And we're trying to continue doing that every day. A lot of what we share are our mistakes or things that we, mistakes is a harsh word, I guess, but yeah, mistakes that we made with our cats, not

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recognizing, not realizing their needs and not giving them their best life, really, not letting them live their healthiest, happiest most enriched life. And it's very exciting to continue learning and finding people. I think it was about 2007 when we went through

feline leukemia with Taiki. It seems like the internet was very young at that time. Right? Did they even have Google then? I don't even remember. But it was hard to find things. And one of the first websites that we found was Dr. Lisa Pierson's website, [Catinfo.org](http://Catinfo.org). And it was like, oh, wow, this is a lot of information, but it was one of those one, it still is one-page website that just goes and goes and goes. But it was exciting to start seeing that there are little pockets of resources out there, and it's a matter of really trying to accumulate as much as you can and gosh.

**Jae Kennedy** [00:10:28]

We have learned so much even just since 2015 starting this business. We have learned so much about how to enrich our cats' lives, whether that means diet, nutrition, supplementation, but even more so, the environmental things that they need, like vertical space. That's not something that we ever did. Now we have half of our house built in vertical space for our cats. We have catwalks and cat runs and stuff everywhere because we learned that that helps to reduce our cat's stress. And we are basically stressing them out by keeping them in four walls and not playing with them and not giving them environmental enrichment. I mean, obviously, all the statistics show that cats that live indoors live a lot longer life, but we want them to still live the happy life because they would live if they were outside on their own. But we have to make effort. We can't just keep them as a convenience pet or an accessory. We have to enrich them.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:11:27]

So my niece has a cat. She was a dog person who adopted a kitten. It's so interesting because when I was visiting her when she had the kitten. We were going outside. We were going to go and play paddle tennis. So I'm like, okay, will you leave the cat inside? And we all go. And she's like, no, you bring the cat with you. And she had a cat carrier and stuff. And then she transferred the cat into a harness, and then she had the cat backpack and all of that stuff. Now the cat goes kayaking, goes on paddle boards, will actually swim in the lake. She's a college kitty. She's at college. And I'm like, wow, this is this dog mentality of like, we don't leave our cats at home. We bring them with us. So she's created this, I mean, the two of them have created this bond, a travel bond, I guess. So do you think it's cool that people bring their cats around with them?

**Jae Kennedy** [00:12:25]

I think it's absolutely amazing. We call them adventure cats. Every cat is different. Every cat has a different personality. We have one cat that would be considered an adventure cat. He likes to go in the backpack. He likes to be on a harness. He likes to go in the

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car. But actually, none of our other cats really like that. We've tried, and we just test their personalities. If you have a cat that you can take outside, we recommend bringing your cats outside, just supervised in some way, on a leash, in a catio, in your backyard, in a small enclosed area where you can supervise them because putting their feet to the

earth is very good for them mentally and physically. But just letting them run outside is just, unfortunately, exposing them to dangers that they wouldn't be exposed to otherwise.

**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:13:11]

Well, I do think, too, that some cats do have, obviously, a personality that really loves that adventure side. And you can find cats even that are older that are like, yeah, let's do this, let's roll. But I do think that there is that window, something that we've heard from behavioralists is just that there's a window of not just socialization for cats, but I think when they're young, getting them accustomed to things that are stereotypically more difficult for a lot of cats, whether it's playing with their paws to make it easier to trim their nails, playing with their mouth to make sure you can keep an eye on their teeth, taking them for car rides to make sure that the vet visit isn't something super traumatic for them. So I think if you go into it. It sounds like your niece was very consistent about how she really included her cat from a young age in the activities that she did. And I think that's part of it, consistency is something that's really important for cats and that routine kind of so that they where it becomes something that they're not scared of. It's something they're looking forward to. And I think that's brilliant.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:14:10]

Yeah, I agree. Well, and it's funny because with a previous dog that they had, she did dog training with the dog and the dog became a service dog and that kind of thing, or a therapy dog, that kind of stuff. She probably was looking for kitty school. Right? Which we don't necessarily there are some kitten schools out there, but it's not like obvious. But from the dog world, I just found it fascinating, this transfer of how she overlaid some of the behaviors that she had with her other pets to her cat. And I'm like, no, but this is a cat. And she's like, but why? Why should I consider it any different? So I just found that really, really interesting.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:14:50]

We interrupt this podcast for a quick trivia question. Where's the single place with answers to all of your animal welfare questions? Yes, even the one that kept you awake until two in the morning? Anyone, anyone, Bueller? It's Maddie's Pet Forum. Maddie's Pet Forum is the only dedicated forum for our industry where you can find answers from colleagues, fast and free. Stop doom scrolling and join today. Visit [forum.maddiessfund.org/cats](https://forum.maddiessfund.org/cats).

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**Stacy LeBaron** [00:15:13]

Could your animal welfare organization use a tune-up? Humane Network can help. You can get a free 30-minute consultation to talk through your challenges and get ideas on how your organization can be more successful with less stress. From board

development and fundraising to strategic planning and operations, Humane Network has got you covered. Whether you are a large or small, nonprofit or government. It's a live and thriving program led by a certified animal behavior consultant. Features specially designed training for shelter and clinic staff on enrichment, stress reduction, safe animal handling, and behavior modification. With Humane Network, you receive individualized advice and support customized to meet your organization's unique needs. And Humane Network can lighten your load by taking on fundraising, communications, and other tasks you struggle with. Contact Humane Network today for a free 30 minute consultation. Visit [Humanenetwork.org](https://www.humanenetwork.org) that's [Humanenetwork.org](https://www.humanenetwork.org).

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:16:08]

Team Doobert is at it again. And now they have an amazing companion case management module that once again revolutionizes how you rescue animals. Doobert partnered with Dallas Pets Alive and the Spay Neuter Network to build a powerful solution that allows you to manage cases of any kind, whether owner surrender calls or emails, community cat tracking, and reporting. Doobert is the only system that integrates two-way text messaging, automatic follow-ups, and even a rehoming solution that every organization can use. No more trying to manage ten different technologies when everything is all in one place and tightly integrated. From fostering to transport, fundraising to e-commerce, supply, and demand to case management, Doobert has everything you need to streamline your operations so you can focus on saving more animals. Check out the new companion case management module at [www.doobert.com/ccm](https://www.doobert.com/ccm) and get signed up today.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:17:09]

So, you, two, have a podcast, don't you? Tell me a little bit about the podcast.

**Jae Kennedy** [00:17:11]

We do.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:17:12]

Tell me a little bit about the podcast.

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**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:17:14]

It's called Back in the Closet with the Two Crazy Cat Ladies. It's kind of funny, but we actually recorded it in our closet because that's where the best audio is. And we record it every week and drop it on Apple, Spotify, Google Podcasts, you know, all those platforms, and we really talk about everything. So our podcast is different from many of the live videos and the cat tips and things like that. Sometimes we're talking just about a cat issue. Sometimes we're talking about our life and our business and something that just happened that's on our mind. So it's kind of all over the place, but it's a way to better I guess, get to know us. Right?

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:17:58]

So you're really heavy into social media, so I'm sure I can't get away without asking you, what are your tips and tricks for successful social media? Because I know a lot of people ask about that and how you got it started and how does your business work? You make money off the supplements. I mean, we also have to figure out a way to live in supporting our passion for cats. I'm trying to do it. You're trying to do it. Our nonprofits are trying to do it to be able to serve their missions. Our trappers that are out there, 78% of the people that were at my last trapper certification workshop, they're doing this on their own. They're funding it. They're paying for the spay and neuter. They're buying their traps. They're doing all this. So we're all trying to figure out ways, you know, how can we possibly keep the lights on and be able to help more kitties in our communities?

**Jae Kennedy** [00:18:48]

Yeah, it's actually really difficult. Right. Especially in the cat world. Such a niche market. Which you wouldn't think because the dog world wouldn't necessarily be considered a niche market. And it's a billion-dollar industry on its own. And yet more cats are owned in the US than dogs. Right, so it's interesting. But as far as just like with our cats, when it comes to social media, consistency is key. We're still not paying ourselves six years later. Bully. We're living, but it's hard in the cat world to get off the ground and make money. But consistency is key. If you just keep going on social media and then listening to your audience, listening to your followers, what do they want to see? It's been interesting, especially even just this year on TikTok. We make cat tips every three times a week. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. We have a cat tip of the day that we create edit, put together, and drop online. And we see the people on Facebook, they tend to go more towards the health-related ones, and the people on Instagram tend to go more towards these type of cat chips. And then on TikTok, it's like they want to know about Worcester Strikes. It's like, wow, we're really to the tiny things about primordial pouches in cats. And what was that thing that's called the Henry's pocket in my cat's ear? They're interested in fun facts, more so than helping. So it's paying attention to your audience

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and then curating that content based on what they want. I think it's the key to social media success.

**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:20:22]

Yeah. And I think some of the nuts and bolts are really looking at lighting, looking at not just paying attention to the audience, but understanding that people have a very short attention span these days. So engaging people as quickly as possible. And when you said successful social media, we're still working towards that. I think that it's a challenge every day, and we learn a lot from our community. We really do. But some of the other nuts and bolts, as we mentioned, we started in 2015. We both just, Jae has been running this completely on her own for almost



**Jae Kennedy** [00:20:48]

Six years.

**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:20:50]

We now have a small team of beautiful women that are helping us with our social media promotions and customer service and that sort of thing. But it is, I hear what you're saying, especially for those that are out in the field, really in the trenches helping community cats and doing rescue work and that sort of thing. It's difficult to figure out how can we balance this in a way. And I feel like we were very spoiled because we were able to start the business and Jae had worked full time and I kept a full-time job until July of this year. So it's a very long road of just being as consistent as possible. But it's so true that it's the passion that drives it most.

**Jae Kennedy** [00:21:35]

Yeah, 100%, because we made every mistake you can make as a business when we started because we were like, okay, well, business, we have to make money, so we have natural products. We are going to reach out to cat parents and we're going to help sell products to help cats. And for the first two years, that's what we tried to do. And we found out that we suck at sales. We don't sell products very well. We're just not good at that. I could sell somebody else's product all day long, but selling our own just feels weird. So after two years, we honestly went bankrupt, literally bankrupt. But we weren't going to stop because we knew that our mission was to help cats. And it grew over those two years too. So we ended up changing our perspective. And instead of trying to sell products, we started selling our passion. And that's when we really started learning everything that we could. So we're just giving out free information left and right, left and right, left and right. This is how you can help your cat. You don't have to buy our product. You can do this. You can do that. Then our profits started to increase because  
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people started to really trust the brand and trust that we actually care. And I think that's been our key to success so far.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:22:43]

Before we wrap up, I have to circle back to your cat that had feline leukemia because feline leukemia is near and dear to my heart. Also, the organization I was with, we've been adopting out feline leukemia cats since 1996. So I adopted out one of the first, I adopted the first cat, and her name was Nala. And she was a mom cat. And unfortunately, her kittens, as well as we had orphan kittens that latched onto her. And this was back in the day. And the vet tested the kittens after she had nursed them for months and months and months. And at that time, the vet thought we had a euthanasia policy with regards to positive kittens. And her kittens got positive, and the orphan kittens were positive, and they were just euthanized. And we freaked out when that happened. And then Nala, the mom came into our adoption center, and she's healthy.

and they were like, well, you should probably have the mom come in and get tested. Mom got tested. She was positive for feline leukemia. She picked him up from the orphan kittens, said, there's no way we're going to put this kitty to sleep because she gave her life for those babies. And so we had her in, we had her in our adoption center, and I adopted her out to a seven-year-old girl. The girl came in, she fell in love with Nala. She thought she was wonderful. And I said to them, I pulled the mom aside. I said, you know, you realize we don't know what's going to happen here with feline leukemia. And she goes, the bond is more important than anything else. And she goes, my daughter's connecting with that cat. The cat's connecting with her. We need to take her home for whatever time she might have. After that, we never had any cat that tested positive for anything put to sleep after that point in time. And so hundreds of feline leukemia-positive kiddies have been adopted out through the program. But with all that being said, I'm assuming you feel as equally passionate about feline leukemia kitties based on your experience.

**Jae Kennedy** [00:24:43]

Yeah, absolutely. The stuff that we have learned, it's actually so refreshing to know that a cat with feline leukemia or FIV even, can live a long and healthy and happy life just like any other cat. They just need a little bit more support than maybe the average healthy cat. But it doesn't stop them from getting a chance at life. And we didn't know when we got that awful diagnosis. We just heard feline leukemia, had never heard of it before, we thought cancer. And then the vet that we were using at the time actually requested or asked if we wanted to do chemotherapy. So, of course, we thought it was cancer. So we were like, okay. And obviously, we ended up opting out of that because he ended up passing. But he was my soul cat. And so it was a very traumatic experience for us. So now that we've learned better, now that we know better that it's a  
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virus, that it's a virus that's in the gut, and that the virus, obviously, I mean, luckily, most cats don't even pass from feline leukemia itself. It's a secondary infection due to the weakened immune system. So knowing that now that we can support our cats, both proactively and reactively, if need be, with immunity support that they can still have a chance. And we see it happen every day now. And it's just beautiful.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:26:03]

Yeah. Well, thank you so much for promoting and advocating for feline leukemia positive kitties, for FIV positive kitties. They're all near and dear to our hearts. We had a presentation several months ago about CH kitties, the wobbly kitties, and we've had some of those. They're all wonderful. That's all. It's so easy to fall in love. If folks are interested in finding out more about the Two Crazy Cat Ladies, how would they do that?

**Jae Kennedy** [00:26:35]

You can go to our website@[twocrazycatladies.com](mailto:twocrazycatladies.com). That's [twocrazycatladies.com](http://twocrazycatladies.com). And

you can also find us on Facebook and Instagram. The Two Crazy Cat Ladies. Tik Tok, Two Crazy Cat Ladies. You'll see our little cartoon heads. And that's how you'll find us, and YouTube as well.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:26:37]

Fantastic. Anything else you'd like to share with our listeners today?

**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:26:57]

I just want to say thank you for having us on this program. I think that it's really wonderful to, as you said, about FELV kitties and cats in general, and just helping other cats live a better life. Cats really are some of our best teachers as well. And I feel like we've all had that special cat in our life that helps us be a better human and helps us better take care of the cats that come into our lives. Thank you for all that you do. And thank you for having us.

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:27:23]

Yes. And thank you for spreading the words. That's great. And I think also we all have an Aha moment. You know we have this aha moment, and it pushes us over a bridge and puts us on this path. And we keep walking down it. And we just grow and build and grow and build. And I think that's the moral of the story for everybody. It's just keep taking one step forward you know, each day, and we're going to all grow together, and our cats are just going to be so much happier and healthier for it, for sure.

**Jae Kennedy**[00:27:51]

Yes.

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**Adrienne Lefebvre** [00:27:53]

Amen

**Jae Kennedy** [00:27:53]

Amen

**Stacy LeBaron** [00:27:55]

Allright. Thank you.

**Kristen Petri** [00:27:57]

That's it for this week. Please head over to Apple Podcasts and leave a review. We love to hear what you think and a five-star review really helps others find the show. You can also join the conversation with listeners, cat, caretakers, and me, on Facebook and Instagram, and don't forget to hit, follow or subscribe on Spotify Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, YouTube, Stitcher, or wherever you listen to podcasts so you don't miss a

single show. Thanks for listening and thank you for everything that you do to help create a safe and healthy world for cats.

**Kristen Petrie** [00:28:26]

Did you attend the Online Cat Conference in January? If you did, we hope you enjoyed the incredible content provided by our expert presenters and hope their information and encouragement will help you turn your passion for cats into action. Events like the Online Cat Conference would not be possible without the support of our generous sponsors. Our Premier Sponsor was Maddie's Fund. Leadership Sponsors include Best Friends, TICA, Dr. Elsey's Cat Products, and Care. Sustaining Sponsors included Vest Pets Atenial, Humane Network, the MSPCA, and the Vermont Humane Federation. If your business or organization would like to support content that makes a difference for cats in communities worldwide visit [CommunityCatsPodcast.com/eventsponsorship](https://CommunityCatsPodcast.com/eventsponsorship)