



Where it really is a cat's world

In this special place at the Sanctuary, felines rule the roost

BY HEIDI LOSLEBEN



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 Since 1998, Cat World has welcomed more than 9,000 cats

Every one of the animals at Best Friends receives care according to his or her individual needs. In Cat World, where felines live at the Sanctuary, cats are thoughtfully placed in the house that best suits their temperament, behaviors and any medical issues they may be facing.

No matter where the cats come from — whether it's from a shelter nearby or a rescue organization across the country — or what challenges they have to overcome, each is treated with love, respect and dignity. Most get adopted, of course, but those who don't are welcome to call the Sanctuary, and Cat World in particular, home for life.

People power

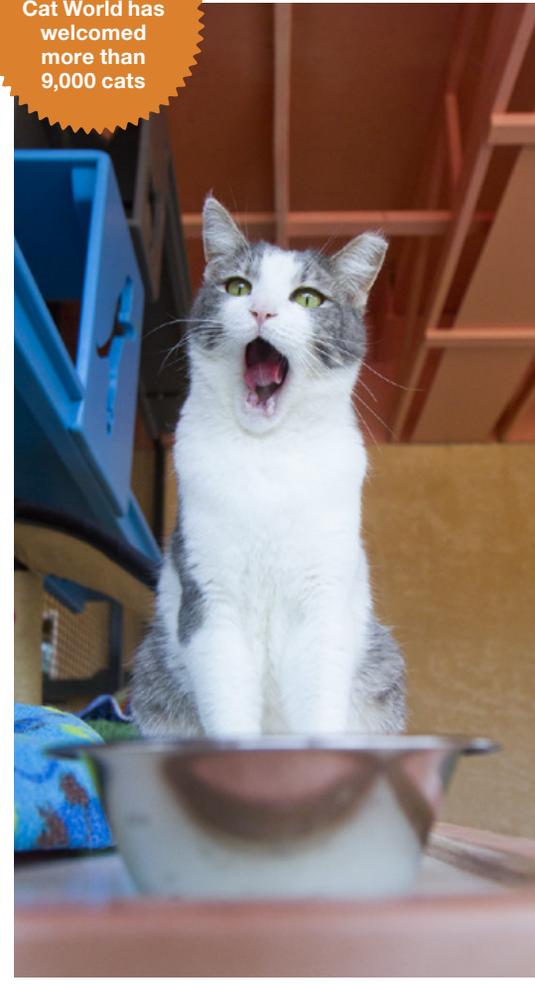
Cat World has a staff of around 40 people devoted to the fortunate cats in their care. “Whether cats are here for a week or their whole lives, we do everything we can to offer them the very best quality of life,” says Jenn Corsun, Cat World manager.

The caregivers at Best Friends know that cats’ and kittens’ emotional health is as important as their physical health. Through a variety of enrichment activities, including stroller rides and walks outdoors (on a harness and leash), the caregivers make sure that the cats stay happy and engaged.

Creature comforts

There are 11 buildings at Cat World. Each one is designed for the comfort, safety and well-being of the cats who reside there. All feature indoor rooms and enclosed outdoor “catios” that provide plenty of space to climb and romp around, as well as hidey-holes for privacy. Cats can choose how to spend their time; they can schmooze with people or look down from the rafters if they prefer. Here’s a look at where the cats of Cat World hang their hats, so to speak.

The aptly named Hope House is where all cats arriving at Best Friends start their





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Cat World is home to about 550 cats at any given time



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Cat World uses 245,000 pounds of litter per year, about 670 pounds a day



VOLUNTEER LOVE

► **Cathleen Halsey**
GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN

Best Friends is one of the most serene and peaceful places I have ever visited. There were so many amazing experiences, but sleepovers with Hooper the cat were a highlight. I am really excited to have more sleepovers during my next visit!

► **Joanna Colrain**
DECATUR, GEORGIA

My 15-year-old daughter and I have come to Best Friends four times to

volunteer. It is always her first choice for our summer vacation. We volunteer where we can give and receive love from all kinds of cats. It's rewarding to watch the shy cats roam around safely in the rafters. The staff is so dedicated and loving to the animals.

► **Avery Regan**
WOODBRIDGE, VIRGINIA

I tell my friends that the Sanctuary is the place I reboot my soul. I spend my vacations volunteering there, mostly in Cat World. The landscape, so quiet

and sublime, is the perfect setting to refocus on the importance of unconditional love in all our lives.

► **Joyce Marder**
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

In 2016, I chose Best Friends as the location of my 65th birthday. This was the first time my spouse, Budd, would also volunteer. His first job was as "cat couch" for three cats at the same time — two lap cats and one shoulder cat. Then he came with me while I took Gus for a walk. Gus gave us a grand tour of Cat World.



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 4,397 people
 volunteered
 in Cat World
 in 2016 alone



journey. They stay here for a bit to ensure they're healthy before moving in with their new feline friends. During these initial weeks, caregivers observe and interact with the cats to get to know them better and to determine where they are most likely to thrive.

Hope House also features an on-site mini-clinic. With a full staff of veterinary technicians and veterinarians at the Sanctuary, the clinic is able to provide most medical services and treatments as needed. For major surgeries — spaying and neutering, for example — cats head on over to the main clinic.

Cat HQ and beyond

Cat Headquarters, more commonly referred to as Cat HQ, is where Sanctuary visitors go to get their volunteer assignments. In all the Cat World buildings, volunteers can help socialize shy cats, walk or clicker-train cats, entertain them with food puzzles, just hang out with them or clean their rooms. Cat HQ features 20 rooms and caters to cats who prefer to live alone or in small groups of two or three. Of course, a few rooms are set aside just for kittens.

The felines of Cat HQ might stay there because they need a little extra help with behavior issues, as do some of the residents in the area known as The Colonel's Barracks. With room to roam for close to 100 cats, The Colonel's Barracks is the largest part of Cat World.

Benton's House and Quincy House are home to cats who are incontinent, have mobility or neurological issues, or are just getting up there in years. These cats are

available for adoption just like all the others, because (while it goes without saying, we'll say it anyway) they still have plenty of love to give.

Casa de Calmar is the living quarters for cats who have feline leukemia, which can be spread to cats who don't have it. Those who live in Sinjin's House are watching their waists as members of the Biggest Winner's Club (a positive spin on the Biggest Loser's Club). Sinjin's features a kitchen, a laundry room and a break room for cats who crave a more home-like environment. (Although we've yet to find a single cat who can take care of his or her own cooking or laundry.)

Morgaine's Place is home not only to adult cats, but kittens, too. (Cuteness overload is a risk most visitors are willing to take.) And the lobby is where you'll find cats who might not move through the world in the same way as others do, because of various conditions that affect their neurological systems. They might be a tad wobbly, but they're immensely popular as greeters.

Jill's Diner, Mondrian's House and Vinnie's House are three of the smaller buildings in Cat World. Mondrian's is a cozy, comforting place for shy and older felines, and several of the residents of Vinnie's get special diets necessary to keep them feeling their best.

Daily miracles

Simply put, Cat World offers the best accommodation option for every wonderful cat who comes through the doors — taking into consideration each cat's unique needs and disposition.

"In the 14-plus years I have had the privilege to work in Cat World, I have seen it grow and change," Jenn says. Yet despite the evolution, she notes, "One thing that has never changed, though, is the love and dedication of everyone who works here. I am especially proud of our current team of caregivers and medical technicians. They make miracles happen every day." ■

