Like the felines she so adored, Cynthia Lombard was quietly independent and sweetly unassuming, yet she was an unfailingly strong and loving presence among her extended family and circle of close friends.

The avid camper and hiker grew up in Southern California, one of five children, and cats were a fixture in the home. Indeed, the connection between Cynthia and four-legged companions was cemented early, and for the rest of her life, she cared for, adopted and provided for animals, especially cats. While hardly flashy herself, she harbored a special fondness for the fluffiest of the species.

In 1964, Cynthia received her bachelor’s degree in sociology from the University of California, Los Angeles, and then graduated from Whittier Law School. After passing the State Bar of California, she went on to a successful and distinguished nearly four-decade career in human resources with Los Angeles County.

In retirement, Cynthia’s affinity for the animals and her natural gift for photography led her to travel the world, often in hopes of capturing the big cats via her ever-present lens. Africa was one of her favorite destinations, and her adventures took her all over the continent, from photo safaris in Kenya to the forests of Uganda, where she observed mountain gorillas in their native habitat.

A strong supporter of Best Friends’ mission, Cynthia ensured that her lasting legacy would be in furthering the no-kill movement. Mountain Humane, a Best Friends Network partner near her family’s property in Idaho, is also a recipient of Cynthia’s generosity. Indeed, two of her beloved cats, Harry and Olivia, each have a room named for them at the facility.

Cynthia passed away in 2019, but the next generation of Lombards is keeping her passion and devotion alive. Her nieces have adopted the cats who were with Cynthia through the end of her life, and Cynthia’s nephew is guardian to one of her cameras, even taking it on his own African safari trip.

Cynthia Lombard is remembered for her “avid interest in the welfare of all beings.” For her unwavering compassion and sense of duty, we honor Cynthia Lombard’s memory and give thanks for her extraordinary kindness.
When Dennis Brown describes the first time he spoke to his future wife, Arlene, it’s impossible not to hear the love in his voice. Though both devoted animal lovers, both originally from Maryland, the two had never crossed paths until an evening out in Tampa (their home at the time) led them to strike up a conversation. The year was 1984, and the two became inseparable — and were soon married.

Dennis’ work for a distributor of electrical and telecom products meant the couple relocated often. But their devotion to each other, and to experiencing life together, kept them rooted and grounded. Their first cat, a friendly calico they called Callie, showed up as a stray. When the Browns had no luck trying to find and reunite her with her person, she became their very own. It wasn’t long before they decided she needed a feline friend, so they made a trip to their local shelter and adopted a fellow calico: Casey.

It was just a short time later, when the Browns landed in Conroe, Texas, that they rescued a third cat. Arlene had spotted the cat once in the yard, but it wasn’t until the following week, during a downpour, that the small Prussian blue made another appearance. This time, Arlene brought her inside, literally for shelter from the storm. When the Browns learned that the sweet cat’s people did not want her, they christened her Stormy and made her part of the family.

It was by pure chance that Dennis and Arlene discovered Best Friends. Settled in Nevada, the two were visiting Zion National Park when they happened to hear about Best Friends Animal Sanctuary — and as animal lovers, they were strongly encouraged to visit.

Dennis recalls that they spent hours on the grounds, touring the animal care areas and learning about Best Friends’ mission and work. They were moved by the idea that at the Sanctuary, animals of all kinds were given love, care, rehabilitation and the opportunity to find a loving family. They were particularly struck by the community cat programs being implemented all around
the country. Ever since that fateful visit, the Browns have been exceptionally generous supporters, ensuring that countless homeless pets receive the hope and healing they deserve.

Dennis' voice cracks with emotion when he talks about losing Arlene in May 2020. “I miss her dearly,” he says. Arlene’s magnetism affected living creatures of all species, including humans. She was an extroverted and giving friend, a humble athlete and a woman of strong faith, as evident in her kindness and compassion. The Browns’ legacy and Dennis’ extraordinary gifts in memory of his wife are not only providing lifesaving second chances today to the animals she loved, but will do so for generations to come.

Dennis and Arlene, all of us at Best Friends are profoundly touched by your faithful devotion.
When Scott Ryan and Jon Tannler pull up to a stoplight in their convertible, it’s not unusual for people in the car next to them to start snapping photos. Of course, the couple knows the flashbulbs aren’t for them; the intended target is their 13-year-old dachshund, Archini. With his front paws resting on the top of the door and his perfect pink tongue dangling coyly out the side of his mouth, Archini is one part hilarious, two parts adorable. Scott and Jon get it — because they’re his number one fans.

Archini came to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary after his person passed away, bringing with him a few idiosyncrasies. He can be slightly territorial around the humans he loves, he has hind-leg and spine problems common to his breed, and he doesn’t have a single tooth to speak of. In other words, just Scott and Jon’s type. The two have become the customary first stop — and sometimes the last stop — for dachshunds with special needs in Oregon.

Longtime Best Friends members, Scott and Jon travel to the Sanctuary every year around Christmas for a week of volunteering. In 2018, they were literally on their way to Kanab when they noticed Archini’s adoption profile on the website. Upon arriving, they immediately inquired about meeting the quirky pup — and were informed that his adoption papers had just been signed. But a few days later, when the pair was volunteering at the Parrot Garden, they received a call from Dogtown. The adopter had gotten cold feet and Archini was now available.

The couple wasted no time getting acquainted with the spunky senior, and the following day, he accompanied them on a field trip to Zion National Park. The dog sat on Jon’s lap the entire ride; by the time the trio reached the entrance to the park, there was no reversing course. Archini would be going home to Oregon with his two new dads.

As luck would have it, a snowstorm delayed the flight back to Portland, so Scott, Jon and Archini spent Christmas Eve in Salt Lake City. Perhaps indicative of the lovely new path on which he was about to embark, Archini’s holiday dinner consisted of fresh chicken and broccoli. And Scott and Jon got their first taste of what life would be like with Archini, watching heads turn and smiles form as the delighted pup strutted around the airport.

For Archini, adjusting to West Coast living was easy. There were already four dachshunds in Scott and Jon’s home, including a blind 18-year-old brother-sister duo. Sometimes Archini grumbled when another dog would try to climb into bed with him, but even to the other pups, it was clear his curmudgeon act was purely for show.

Then one day, Scott and Jon received a call about a deaf dachshund who had been living outside a barn in a food trough and had never had much human contact. They were eager to help, but weren’t sure they’d be able to reach the neglected dog emotionally. Indeed, it was Archini who first put Sweet Pea at ease. Where Archini went, Sweet Pea was sure to follow. These days, she hardly leaves his side, and Archini couldn’t be more in love. No one guessed that, just like his dads, Archini would rescue dachshunds in need.

Christmas 2020 was the first time in a decade (due to COVID-19) that Scott and Jon were not able to visit the Sanctuary. They spent the holiday at home, surrounded by their furry family. But they’ll be back as soon as it’s safe to travel again. As Scott says, the annual visit to Best Friends “fills my soul for the entire year.”
THREE REASONS TO PUT STOCK IN THE ANIMALS

You can make a gift of appreciated securities — publicly traded stocks, bonds and mutual funds — to Best Friends and help the animals and you. It’s simple and one of the most tax-smart ways to give.

You can give more

By donating stock that has appreciated for more than a year, you are actually giving 20% more than if you sold the stock and then made a cash donation. The reason is simple: You avoid capital gains taxes. The maximum federal capital gains tax rate is 20% on long-term holdings. If you donate to Best Friends, you avoid capital gains tax. Plus, you are still eligible to deduct the full fair-market value of the asset you donated from your income taxes (up to the limit allowed by the IRS).

Potentially reduce future capital gains

Many investors have stocks that they love and want to hold for the long term. Consider donating some of your appreciated shares to the animals and then buying new shares to reset your cost basis at the current, higher price. This will reduce your future capital gains tax exposure if the stock continues to grow in value.

Receive income for life

You can give a gift of publicly traded stocks and mutual funds to fund a charitable gift annuity. Doing so will give you the previously noted tax benefits as well as fixed annual payments for the rest of your life. In addition, it saves the lives of homeless pets in the future. Please contact our planned giving team at 435-644-2001, ext. 4503, or plannedgiving@bestfriends.org for more detailed information or to discuss making this type of gift to the animals.

Please note: It is important to talk with your tax advisor to determine the best strategy for you.
HELPFUL HANDS

All around the country, neighbors are reaching out to help neighbors, and Best Friends’ very own gift planners are no exception. Below are just a few ways that the planned giving team members are giving back to their communities.

Andrea Grane

Native New Yorker Andrea Grane credits her years volunteering for small local organizations with leading to her planned giving role at Best Friends. She pitched in wherever she was needed, from organizing adoption events and coordinating shelter supply drop-offs in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy to fundraising, adoption matchmaking and assisting with animal transports. A recent transplant to Austin, Texas — and mom to a newborn human — Andrea is itching to volunteer in her new community.

“I love fundraising,” Andrea says, “because it’s so important to every aspect of animal welfare, whether it’s keeping the shelter lights on or paying for one more lifesaving kennel. But it’s also really fulfilling to see animals find their perfect match and to know you helped change their lives and the lives of their new people. Part of the reason for our move to Texas was the opportunity to make a difference in the state that most needs help saving pets’ lives.”

Kathy Stolzenburg

Kathy Stolzenburg and her husband, Will, were already sharing their home with nine rescued pets — eight cats and a dog — when the pandemic hit. But when Best Friends CEO Julie Castle reached out to staff and encouraged each person to get involved in their community, Kathy decided it was the right time to try fostering. The first foster dog they brought in found a home after about three months. The second one, too, was only with them a short time. Then they learned about a pit bull named Missy who was surrendered after eight years with one family and was not adjusting well to life at the shelter. Kathy and Will didn’t hesitate to step up.

“The rescue group we volunteer for asked if we could foster Missy, and by her looks — her grayish little face — we didn’t expect a playful little ball of fire. But that is what we got,” Kathy says. “She even managed to engage our own dog, Towpath, in play — something we had not seen in quite a while. After fostering her for three months, we decided we had to make it official. Missy is now permanently part of the family.”
When Karen Gallardo left her home in the area of Washington, D.C., for a work trip at the Sanctuary, she had no idea she’d be returning from Kanab with Little. The tiny Chihuahua had been adopted by a family on the East Coast, and Karen not only escorted him on the flight across the country, she chauffeured him up I-95 to New Jersey, where he could connect with his new people.

Turns out, Little was just the beginning. Karen now assists with transports whenever possible. Perhaps the most special trek occurred last December, when Karen was part of a seven-leg road trip for a young pup named Jorge. This time, however, Karen’s leg was the very last — because Jorge’s new home was with her.

“Transports like Jorge’s are the epitome of people working together to make a difference,” Karen says. “Even in the middle of a pandemic, we can each do our part to save lives. And we can do so safely, as part of one journey, all taking on different pieces of it. I still share Jorge photos and updates with each of the folks who drove a leg to get this amazing dog closer to me.”

Lifesaving success in 2020

While 2020 proved to be one of the most challenging years ever, together we achieved some big wins for the animals, including this one: **Los Angeles is now a no-kill city!**

You might remember that when Best Friends launched the No-Kill Los Angeles (NKLA) initiative in 2012, only 56% of dogs and cats were making it out of L.A. city shelters alive. But thanks to the hard work of so many, including the entire NKLA Coalition, devoted volunteers, Mayor Garcetti, Los Angeles Animal Services, and a fabulous community of advocates and generous supporters, we are thrilled to announce a sustained save rate of 90.49% for 2020.

It’s difficult to overstate the enormity of this moment and its place in the history of the no-kill movement. Together, we’ve demonstrated that we can achieve no-kill in a major metropolitan area. And by taking this collaborative model of shelters, rescue groups and communities working together and expanding it nationwide, we can bring the entire country to no-kill by 2025.
A different approach to animal control

Best Friends’ shelter embed program, in which our experts work alongside local shelter staff, includes training animal control officers in new practices to help both pets and people. Every day, officers respond to situations involving lost or stray pets. It’s one of the main ways that pets have traditionally ended up in shelters, but a better approach is to try to return lost pets to their people rather than bringing them to the shelter. Officers can scan found pets for microchips upon pickup and bring them home if they locate the pet’s family.

Another best practice is that officers can give out spay/neuter vouchers instead of issuing citations to community members with unaltered pets. These days, the goal is to help animal control officers serve as a resource to their communities and to change the public’s perception of animal control.

Work in progress: community cats

For decades, community cats (outdoor, free-roaming cats) were trapped and killed in failed attempts at population management. Thankfully, this ineffective and inhumane approach to managing community cats is steadily being replaced with progressive community cat programs (CCPs) in shelters across the country.

At the heart of all CCPs is a simple, humane philosophy: Cats are accepted members of many communities, and they are often valued and cared for by multiple residents. The best way to manage the community cat population is to humanely trap them so they can be vaccinated and spayed or neutered, and then return them to their outdoor homes.

In the coming year, we’ll be focusing on advocating for these types of programs through interaction with local governments and animal control agencies in targeted communities. Because 69% of the animals currently losing their lives in shelters are cats, this will solve a large part of the lifesaving gap.