

Old Paws, New Beginnings

Meet Margaret Slaby, Golden Oldies Cat Rescue's finder, who believes every cat deserves a second chance, no matter their age.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Margaret Slaby, founder and executive director of Golden Oldies Cat Rescue, is helping to fill a major void in the pet welfare industry — finding homes for senior kitties
- Nominated for a Game Changer award by Patty S., Slaby started Golden Oldies Cat Rescue, based in Monterey County, California, in 2016
- Golden Oldies has saved the lives of 162 older cats, ranging in age from 6 to 19, and counting
- Cats come into their care from shelters or guardian surrenders, and live in foster homes until they're adopted
- Golden Oldies Cat Rescue is supported by a large community willing to not only foster but also donate, adopt and volunteer their time and services

Margaret Slaby, founder and executive director of Golden Oldies Cat Rescue, is helping to fill a major void in the pet welfare industry — finding homes for senior kitties. Nominated for a Game Changer award by Patty S., Slaby started Golden Oldies Cat Rescue, based in Monterey County, California, in 2016.

With only a dream of making Monterey County a better and safer place for cat 6 and older, along with a handful of volunteers, they've grown into a trusted resource for older cats in need. "We fund an annual budget of probably about \$150,000, and we've saved the lives of, to date, 162 older cats ranging in age from 6 to 19," Slaby says.

Finding Loving Homes for Older Kitties, 'One Cat at a Time'

Slaby was driven to start a rescue organization after working at an animal shelter as an animal care technician for 2.5 years. Many older cats that entered the shelter were euthanized:

"The euthanasia rate there was 50%, so half the animals that came in didn't make it out alive. A lot of those were older cats. They were either shy or scared, they were traumatized, and they were deemed not adoptable. They had maybe a basic medical need like needing dental care.

I had to hold a lot of them while they were euthanized, and all I could do was basically offer them a last meal and tell them I loved them and give them my love and let them feel my love in their last moments as I held them while they were euthanized. It was breaking me, so I had to leave the shelter.

I looked at my mom and I said, 'Mom, there's something more I have to do. I just feel it in my heart and my soul.' I said, 'I want to start a rescue.' My mom looked at me and she said, those three words, 'Just do it.'"

Today, all cats that come into their care live in foster homes until they're adopted. **Golden Oldies Cat Rescue** is supported by a large community willing to not only foster but also donate, adopt and volunteer their time and services. Typically, the cats in the rescue come from area shelters or guardians who can no longer care for their cat. Slaby says:

"I would say more recently more guardians, because as the word's gotten out, people are contacting us. But in the beginning, it was more shelters because people didn't know about us. But now that people know about us, we get a lot of people."

I would say the top reason is somebody's died, no plans in place for their cat, and the family is going through this grief process, and then they're trying to find a home for a cat. So, they contact us, either the family members who are left or the friends of the family. The second reason is people are moving and there's no place that they can take their cat when they're moving."

In October 2023, the organization also completed Buster's Bunkhouse, a tiny home that provides a safe space for foster cats to live in until an available foster opens up. "It's named after our first cat, Buster, who came to us from the shelter," Slaby explains. "He passed away in 2020, but we had his guardian cut the ribbon. So, it'll house cats temporarily while we look for a foster home or until they get adopted, whatever comes first."

Giving Older Cats a New Beginning

Many older cats in shelters are at risk, as people tend to pass them by in favor of kittens. Slaby's organization gives such cats a second chance, even if they're facing medical issues. Finding homes for these cats in need is what Slaby loves most about the work she's doing:

"That's kind of our slogan, second chances at new beginnings, knowing that they have a safe and loving home for the rest of their golden years. If they need to come back to us for some reason, and we have had a few come back because their people can't care for them anymore, if they need to come back to us, we always take them back."

So, we're providing a lifetime safety net for any cat that we take in. I think it's just knowing that we're making a difference in these cats that can't speak for themselves, can't advocate for themselves."

Like the cats at the shelter, they couldn't advocate for themselves, and a lot of them gave their lives because of that. But now we're here and we can advocate for them. We can make a difference for them. And just seeing them going from being scared, shy, traumatized, hiding under beds, hiding in closets to sitting on the lap of their foster, playing, they just make that change, and they start to enjoy life again and trust and know that they're safe."

Slaby also wants the world to know just how much love older cats have to give, and how much joy they can bring into your household. At Golden Oldies, it's a team effort to help older cats in need:

"These older cats just have so much love to give and so much life left to live. A lot of people write off older cats as they're not important. Everybody wants kittens. These cats just deserve everything we can give them, and that's what Golden Oldies is doing — we're giving them that forever home.

But I do have to say that it's all because of the people that have stepped up and joined us and said, 'I believe,' because it's the fosters, it's the adopters, it's the volunteers, it's the donors. I had the dream, but without all these people, the dream would've died. It would never have happened.

Golden Oldies wouldn't be here. I'm not the hero, all these people are the heroes, because you can dream all you want, but if you have people that don't join you, the dream dies. And so, Golden Oldies is here because of all those heroes out there who are with us and helping us do our work."

If you're interested in fostering, donating, volunteering or adopting — or just want to know more — about Golden Oldies Cat Rescue, you can find them at [**gocatrescue.org**](http://gocatrescue.org) or contact them via email — [**goldenoldiescatz@gmail.com**](mailto:goldenoldiescatz@gmail.com) — or phone, at 831-200-9700. "We may be small," Slaby says, "but we look at it as one cat at a time. Each cat we save is one more cat that's not going to go into a shelter and be at risk of not making it out of the shelter."
