



**Best
Friends**
Save Them All®

Forever Friends

GENE FALTUS

Words come easily, draped in a distinctive New England accent, from the warm and expressive one-time broadcast engineer. Gene Faltus is now retired, but his energy and focus are contagious as he works passionately for the cause through which he will undoubtedly leave his imprint in this world: saving the lives of homeless pets.

“The best use of your time and free speech is to speak for those who can’t,” he explains. And Gene offers both — his time and his voice — in abundance. As a Best Friends volunteer, he spent much of the past year making calls on behalf of animals at an underfunded shelter in southern Virginia. Having reached the end of his list of phone numbers, he’s already signed on to begin another outreach project.

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Just don’t attempt to thank him. Gene is loath to accept any credit for his work creating better lives for dogs and cats. He insists that he’s the lucky one. “Ten years ago, I was told I had six years to live. And here I am,” he says matter-of-factly. “A credit not only to great medicine but to having a purpose in life.”

That purpose includes a houseful of rescued pets he shares in New Hampshire with his wife and daughter. It also includes the firm belief that by working together we can reach



no-kill nationwide. Gene's introduction to Best Friends came via the National Geographic show *DogTown* — the series that featured pit bull terrier-like dogs rescued from Michael Vick's dogfighting ring and brought to Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. Gene was struck by their journey. "I really wanted to get involved with anything at Best Friends that I could do," he says of his support, adding succinctly, "I reached out, and we made a legacy gift."

Though he doesn't explicitly say so, Gene's legacy gift in his will to generations of pets to come pays quiet tribute to the animals who have loyally accompanied him along his seven-decade path. A dog he called Vegas. A cat named Ebony. And many more. "Every animal life is worthwhile," he says. "It has meaning. It has value. I'm hoping that people recognize that

and that more people treat animals as fellow travelers through life."

Not everyone who's handed a daunting medical diagnosis will turn each day into an opportunity to do something meaningful for others. Indeed, with its inevitable instances of heartbreak, animal welfare can take its toll on even the strongest. But Gene likens life to an ever-expanding mosaic: Dark stones may appear with the loss of a dear pet, but they're soon surrounded by bright ones as new experiences and new love emerge.

"It's not a question of protecting my heart," he adds. His eyes are shining, and his voice is vigorous. "It's adding to my heart. It's keeping love alive." He pauses, and then he smiles. "That's the way we view it."



Bear



THE STRENGTH OF MANY, THE POWER OF ONE

The power of a single individual to save lives and create a more compassionate future lies at the heart of advocacy, volunteering, and giving. Each person has the potential to move us closer to a shared vision, and every effort — no matter the size — truly makes a difference.

That's why we're not only working toward a nationwide no-kill future but also empowering animal lovers everywhere to step up and make the greatest impact possible.

This past spring, Best Friends launched a series of no-kill summits in five communities across the country. The series culminated in June with a free virtual event, open to anyone interested in helping end the killing of pets in shelters — no matter where they live. Each summit offered a chance to connect with industry leaders and fellow advocates, all united by a common purpose. Participants left not only inspired but

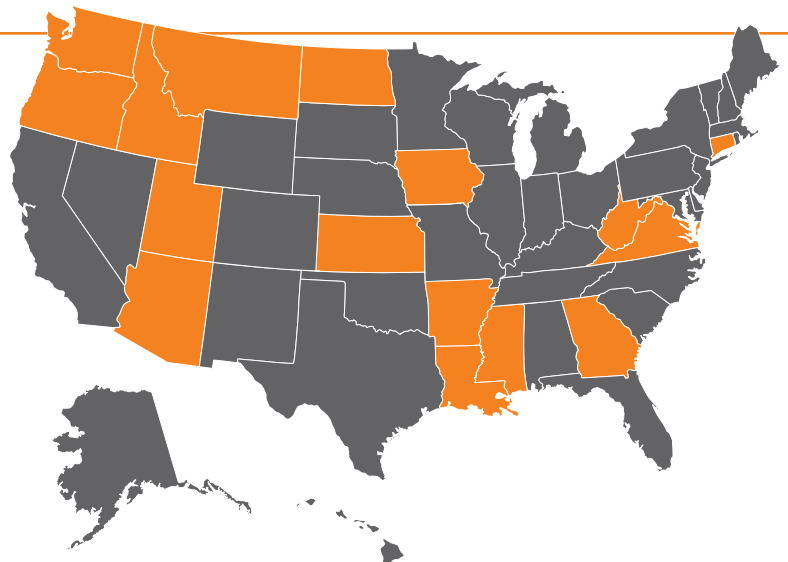
also equipped with toolkits, strategies, and concrete next steps for achieving and sustaining no-kill in their own communities.

As part of this broader initiative, Best Friends has also been working with governors, legislators, and city leaders to shine a light on their local shelters through official no-kill proclamations. Since 2024, elected officials across **16 states** have signed proclamations urging their communities to unite around this lifesaving mission — setting a powerful precedent and encouraging others to follow.

As we work to save the lives of homeless pets in every corner of the country, **each action matters**. Individually, we create ripples. But together, we are building a wave of change — one strong enough to carry the nation to no-kill. **Every effort counts. And we are deeply grateful for yours.**

States with no-kill proclamations (2024–2025):

Arizona	Kansas	Utah
Arkansas	Louisiana	Virginia
Connecticut	Mississippi	Washington
Georgia	Montana	West Virginia
Idaho	North Dakota	
Iowa	Oregon	



REMEMBERING *Gregory Castle*



“
We don't make goals.
We make commitments.”

Best Friends is mourning the loss of Gregory Castle, our CEO emeritus and one of the original founders of the organization.

Gregory was a Cambridge-educated gentleman (gentlemanly to his very core) who rolled up his sleeves and joined with his friends in building from scratch the world's most beloved animal sanctuary. In addition to picking up a shovel and getting dirty, he figured out how to install the electricity and plumbing, with no prior experience whatsoever.

For years, he then worked in Salt Lake City on Best Friends' behalf, fostering a spirit of collaboration in animal welfare and bringing a fresh vision and a kindness that not only saved lives but also changed the culture of saving lives for the better.

In 2009, once Best Friends had become a thriving national organization, Gregory became the CEO. He was a calm and reasonable presence who never flinched. It seemed absolutely impossible for anything to rattle him.

When he retired as CEO in 2018, he had done such an outstanding job of setting Best Friends on the right course that the board of directors named him CEO emeritus. And he remained a graceful, steady figure within Best Friends for all his days.

A Renaissance man, he loved both J.S. Bach and Bob Dylan. He liked highly artistic films that no one else could sit through, but he also enjoyed *Spinal Tap*. He could spend an hour discussing philosophy or an hour discussing your cat.

He could fly airplanes, he could run marathons, and he could play the bagpipes.

But his greatest love was for the animals. His profound affection for animals was central to his personal, quiet set of beliefs. And saving them is what he dedicated his life to.

He once said that Best Friends has not set the goal of ending the killing of pets in shelters all across the country. Instead, we have made a commitment to do it. "In your head, there's a difference," he explained. And he was right.

Gregory, you will never be forgotten. We love you and we will always carry on your commitment to the animals.