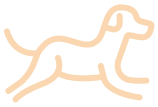




**Best
Friends**
Save Them All

Forever Friends Companion

'IT'S ABOUT ALL ANIMALS EVERYWHERE'



Mica Hill and his wife, Laureen, turned their passion for animals into a way of life.

When Mica and Laureen decided to include Best Friends in their estate plans, it wasn't a financial calculation. It was a declaration. "It's not just about Best Friends," Mica says. "It's about all animals everywhere."

That simple sentence captures everything Mica has come to believe — and it's what drove him to change his life completely.

For decades — since he was 17, in fact — he has worked in the hospitality industry, managing hotels and working to star-rate hotels for Forbes. But one volunteer trip to Haiti, where Mica witnessed suffering firsthand, made him question everything. "I thought I have to do something more meaningful in my life than just star-rate hotels," he says.

So when Mica got word that the executive director of a small animal shelter in Atlanta — where he served on the board — had just quit, the timing felt serendipitous. At 50 years old, he left the only career he'd ever known (with Laureen's full support behind him) and started his path in animal welfare.

However, starting a new career isn't always easy, and Mica felt completely out of his depth. "I rated hotels, and now I'm dealing with dogs and cats," he recalls. "The staff knew I was on the board of directors, but they saw me as somebody that really didn't know the animal business."



Mica and beloved dog Scooter (2010-2025)

Mica hit the ground running anyway. He networked, built valuable relationships, proposed new ideas, and achieved small wins that built some credibility with the shelter staff. But Mica wanted more for the shelter — more lifesaving, more second chances, and more homes for all the animals in his care. And with a little help from Best Friends, that's exactly what he got.

Judah Battista, Best Friends' chief Sanctuary officer, recognized that the small shelter could use a helping hand. When he asked Mica whether he could use some help, Mica responded, "Yes, please rescue my rescue!" And the difference was night and day. "We went from 170 adoptions a month to over 300 a month almost overnight," Mica says.

That was just the beginning of Mica's animal welfare journey. Since working at the shelter in Atlanta, Mica has brought his hospitality expertise to Best Friends' board,

Continued inside

BEST FRIENDS GRATITUDE GARDEN

A place of meditation and mindfulness



Have you visited the Gratitude Garden at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary? This sacred space of beauty and peace was created and designed by Anne Mejia, one of the co-founders of Best Friends Animal Society.

The garden is a tangible way for Best Friends to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone (including donors, volunteers, and staff) committed to saving the lives of animals and forever changing the way the nation views and treats pets in shelters. The path through the garden takes you to the Labyrinth, which offers a meditative experience with a dramatic view. The Labyrinth was created by Cyrus Mejia, another co-founder of Best Friends.

Co-founder Sharon St. Joan wrote the following poem when the garden opened:

In Gratitude

*Traveling far through sunlight and
shadow*

*We arrive at a place where we pause
in the snow-winged light of many
blessings.*

*The tall, towering cliff, ancient
guardian, whose face shines gold in
the setting sun, watches over all those
who walk in the spirit of kindness,
wherever they may go.*

*Here, beings of innocence grace our
lives; dogs with ears that go down or
ears that go up, chase dancing leaves
that spin round and round.*

*With a sharp bark, they guard the
whole galaxy, from gobbling ghouls in
the dark.*

*Cats who purr, tiptoe in the moonlight
that falls through the window pane of
white flowers.*



Cyrus Mejia, Best Friends co-founder

IT'S ABOUT ALL ANIMALS EVERYWHERE, *continued*

where he has served for more than 10 years. His favorite thing about being part of Best Friends isn't just seeing more homeless pets find the families they deserve. It's the honor of working directly with the founders, experiencing their passion, and seeing the purpose and mission put into action. Noses in and tails out. Rescue to adoption. Rescue after rescue, state after state. Building a nationwide contagious culture to Save Them All.

"They're not only about heart and soul; they're about muscle. They get it done," Mica says. "Best Friends has a can-do attitude, whether it's responding to some disaster somewhere or the really audacious goal to lead the country to no-kill."

That can-do attitude and willingness to pursue bold goals align perfectly with Mica's own journey. So for him and Laureen, including Best Friends in their estate plans just made sense.

For them, it wasn't just about supporting an organization they love. It was about investing in a future they want to help create. It was about ensuring that, as Mica says, "all animals everywhere" have a chance at love, safety, and second chances for years to come.



*Horses run clear and far under the
rainbow of an ancient star.*

*We thank the earth for her many
beings*

*For the black-winged raven, who
rides off into unknown wind-blown
skies, up high, in the time-twisted
juniper, the old owl winks his
feathered eyelids, wise.*

*Here, now and again, geese, on
their wintry way, glide by overhead,
honking in the air, blue and cold.*

*Cottontails – brave and alert – wait
at the gate of sunrise to greet the
dawn of roses*

*Coyotes laugh gently in
undiscovered hills*

*In the quiet beyond time, one can
hear alone, in solitude, the silent
sound of many voices, presences
beyond the web of time*

There where the rustling wind runs

*through every day and year, a
river of wind weaves through the
cottonwood leaves.*

*Arriving at a place of gratitude,
which is the wind worn
steppingstone to peace,*

*Is to climb beyond the din of
a world, crowded, seeming all
awry, and to know the trills of the
whippoorwill*

*And that nearby, the meadowlark
calls, her song – a silver thank you
to the dawn.*

And so no one is gone,

But each one is here,

*In the echoing melody beyond all
time*

*In the rain, singing, ringing on the
rocks and in the smiling rays of the
sun.*

You're welcome to visit the Sanctuary at any time. You can schedule a behind-the-scenes tour, have lunch with a founder, volunteer in an animal area to meet some of the animals whose lives you've touched, and experience the magic of this incredible space in person.

The Gratitude Garden is open to the public during normal Sanctuary hours, daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mountain Time.



“

Whether it's retirement, life insurance, annuities, whatever, it's so easy to leave Best Friends a legacy. They make it so super, super easy.

*Bonita Vanderkooi,
Forever Friend*

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Bonita and Tidbit



What's your 'why'?

There are so many reasons to help the animals.

For some people, making a gift in their will to the animals is a way to leave behind a positive, lifesaving legacy. Others want to ensure that future generations of cats and dogs will have cozy beds, full bellies, and lots of love. And for many animal lovers, a planned gift is the ultimate way to honor the furry friends who brought joy to their lives, ensuring that countless others have happily-ever-after stories, too.

No matter how, or why, you choose to give, please know that when you make a gift to the animals in your will, you're giving them a safer, brighter future.

Scan here or visit
bestfriends.org/mywhy
to share your why.



Give today to ensure a brighter tomorrow for homeless pets

A program to make a gift to the animals through a will or bequest was created in 1994, thanks to Best Friends co-founder John Fripp. The very first planned gift was \$30 and came from an unknown donor.

Forever Friends are critical to the incredible progress we're making together. In fact, in 2025, nearly 1 in every 3 lifesaving efforts was powered by a planned gift. People like you who have made a gift in their will to the animals ensure that our lifesaving efforts continue long into the future.

We are so very grateful for your generosity and kindness. Together, we can change communities for the better. Together, we will Save Them All.

