

Be Furractive

Love of Cats



Catopia designer and builder Jason Gluck hopes more shelters will follow his lead with cage-free, enriching cat environments.

A Feline UTOPIA

BY SANDY ROBINS

A “utopia” is defined as an imagined place in which everything is perfect. So, can you imagine just how idyllic Utopia would be if it included cats?

Meet Jason Gluck, the man who created such a reality in Catopia, a gorgeous, imaginative, magical (no apology for the string of adjectives), state-of-the-art feline adoption center in Jupiter, Florida. The cats who live here (albeit temporarily) have no idea that they are homeless.

“I have a passion for all things furry and dedicate my time to exposing others to the gift of love that one receives from connecting with animals,” explains Jason, co-chairman of the Furry Friends Adoption, Clinic and Ranch that for the past 40 years

has run a 27-acre rescue center and animal sanctuary in Palm City, Florida. Recently, it opened Catopia at its second 15,000-square-foot location in Jupiter. The building also features the Pups and Cups Catfé in full view of Catopia, where both people and

pooches are welcome to have a cappuccino and a selection of light menu items and enjoy the feline antics.

There’s also a state-of-the-art veterinary clinic that serves the local community.

“My ultimate goal in designing and building Catopia was to provide a forward-thinking vision to cage-free living, a respite and, I hope, the future model for rescue housing,” Jason explains. “When visitors tell us how lucky these animals are to be living in Catopia, I know we’ve done our job.”

Catopia’s inspiration

Jason’s background is in entertainment and digital management. He led the team that developed the Disney Channel original series *Hannah Montana*, which made Miley

Cyrus an international star.

He lives on his own private animal sanctuary where, interestingly, no cats are allowed.

"It's home to my family of dogs, lemurs, a kangaroo, a zebra, a horse, a cow, pigs and my fiancé, Gabriella," he says. "My family of animals are here to live their lives out in peace and serenity. I don't have cats on the property due to the possible exposure to toxoplasmosis, which could be fatal to both the lemurs and my kangaroo. That's where Catopia comes in. It fulfills my inner feline love."

Jason says he was inspired by home design innovations in Japan where space is usually quite limited.

"Also, in Japan and Korea, cat cafes are usually hip and sophisticated spaces where visitors can watch and interact with cats in spaces painstakingly designed for their enrichment," Jason says. "Cats' native instincts and curiosities are fueled by discovery."

Jason says further inspiration for this two-story, loft-styled feline experience came from mid-century interior designers like Ray and Charles Eames, Verner Pantone, Eero Saarinen and furniture manufacturers Herman Miller and Knoll, who focused on designing spaces that were easy to maintain, using natural and hard surfaces. This helps modern cat parents make cleaning simple and keeps the cats safe from diseases.



"Everything I've created is something a cat parent can do in their own home, too, by taking a wall and giving their cat vertical space," Jason says.

Fun and games

Speaking of vertical spaces, the cats (there are about 40 at any given time) enjoy access to a 15-foot-tall cat tree that extends into another 10 feet of custom designed vertical living spaces.

"We have a plethora of enrichment and resting spaces, even modern spaceship chairs that rotate 360 degrees around for the cats to keep

an eye on all the fun," Jason says. "The cat arcade is where you can check out all the cool cats and kittens 'gaming.' It offers wall-mounted interactive games designed to entertain, train and enrich. Best of all, it doesn't require any quarters! After hours, all the cats head to the disco with laser shows for late-night entertainment."

Cats are crepuscular, meaning they are most active at dawn and dusk, so the cat arcade keeps them active, engaged and social.

And there's more! The 24/7 live cams are designed for cat lovers from all over the world to enjoy multiple angles in Catopia. The antics can be watched on explore.org and furryfriendsadoption.org.

Jason's vision is destined to be a trendsetter in the world of animal rescue and welfare. There are more initiatives and ideas in the planning stages. For now, let the photographs take over and do justice to this unique, original and simply spectacular adoption center. Again, no apology for another string of adjectives. Catopia has earned every single one of them. 🐾

#pawsforthiscause So what can YOU do?

1

Donate or volunteer: Furry Friends Adoption, Clinic & Ranch is the Humane Society of Greater Jupiter/Tequesta, Florida, a nonprofit, no-kill facility whose mission is to rescue, rehab and re-home cats and dogs in need.

2

Be a copycat: Jason Gluck and his team also plan to create and distribute no-cost animal care, education and other outreach materials to further their reach and inspire other organizations as well as cat lovers of all walks of life to provide the best care and enrichment for animals. So, reach out to them for their materials and lobby your own local humane society.



Sandy Robins is an award-winning, multimedia pet lifestyle expert, author and pet industry personality. Her feline muses, Ziggy and Tory, like to disrupt the workflow by demanding games of fetch with wand toys and directing food operations in the kitchen. Learn more about Sandy at sandyrobinsonline.com.