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THE BRESLAUERS PET PROJECTS AND PASSION

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An exclusive magazine serving the neighbors of Sherman Oaks, South of the BLVD



MEET THE BRESLAUERS

Pet Projects and Passion

By Elyse Glickman
Photos By Maxx & Me Photography

Pets don't just complete the family. They are full-fledged members of the family. Just ask Sherman Oaks residents Alan and Stephanie Breslauer. The couple, who were introduced at a mutual friend's sushi dinner party six years ago and married in 2014, are the proud parents of 13-year-old cats Monkey and Cooper, Piper (a two-year-old cocker/poodle/schnauzer mix), and Zorro, a nine-year-old mutt freshly adopted from the South LA animal shelter.

"Zorro has had a tough life with many owners," says Alan on their family's newest addition. "We wanted to give him a good forever home where he could live out his remaining years under better circumstances. He was a mess the day we brought him home. His hair was coarse, matted, and full of ticks. He walked with a limp, and his anxiety was off the charts. Understandably, he freaked out in a completely new environment and bit Stephanie, sending her

to urgent care. Returning him to the shelter was not an option as it would likely be a death sentence. Instead, we spent months training him, lavishing him with love, and putting him on a healthy diet. And the results have been amazing...he has transformed into a completely new and loving dog."

Today, the family that plays together stays together. Alan and Stephanie walk Zorro and Piper twice a day, taking different routes throughout Sherman Oaks. Indeed, dog parents love Sherman Oaks for its tree-lined streets and the many businesses that cater to man's best friend. However, the same cannot be said for cats which are often left to roam outside despite the inherent dangers.

Experts and cat behaviorists, from America's favorite "Cat Daddy" Jackson Galaxy to the American Association of Feline Practitioners (veterinarians), stress that cats should not go outside unsupervised. While cats benefit from exercise and fresh air, too many hazards, including coyotes, cars, fighting, disease, and poison conspire to knock years off their lives. Indoor cats, however, suffer from a lack of stimulation, which can lead to boredom, obesity, and behavioral issues.

This is why Alan ultimately pounced into action and launched "Custom Catio," which aims to bridge the gap between outdoor and indoor cats by creating safe outdoor enclosures called "catios" (cat patios). After building a couple of catios for his beloved Monkey and Cooper, he sensed a demand for state-of-the-art enclosures that are designed to blend in with the house to ensure homeowners are happy too.

"I saw a need," says Alan, an alumnus of the University of Pennsylvania and Tulane Law & Business School, who spent the last six years in legal marketing before launching the company. "There are 75 million cats living in one-third of all American homes, and nobody was providing a high-end solution to the problem."

Alan's enclosures left an impression with Jackson Galaxy, who hired Custom Catio to appear on his Animal Planet show, "Cat vs. Dog." Alan looks back fondly at the experience and credits Galaxy for his generosity in sharing his vast cat wisdom. "I will forever be



indebted to Jackson who taught me so much about catios. All my clients benefit from the knowledge he imparted to me.”

“While there are prefab catio products on the market, the cage-like structures leave much to be desired,” Alan continues. “We are extremely cognizant of home aesthetics. As such, we’ve done a couple of stained redwood enclosures that are breathtaking. I’m also a fan of translucent roofs that allow sun to shine through enclosures into the home. In terms of seeing how different features come together, it was great fun designing and building a stunning catio for YouTube star Anna Akana, which includes a 20-foot bridge and dozens of shelves for her six cats.”

Alan notes that there are other benefits for both cats and humans, including the ability to move the litter box outside, improving sanitary conditions and smell within the home. Increased outdoor vertical space, meanwhile, often leads to better camaraderie in multi-cat households. Catio owners also report getting better sleep as cats are able to get their nighttime stimulation in an enclosure rather than pestering their human parents.

“The cats love the floor to ceiling sisal rope poles,” he observes. “Watching a cat scamper up a 10-foot pole is awesome! We also paint internal shelves with artificial sand for extra grip. For the same reason, we use industrial strength outdoor carpeting on ramps. Cat safety figures into everything we do, which is why we use spring hinges to ensure doors close automatically, thereby preventing cats from escaping.”

Custom Catios are an investment that will extend the life of cats and improve and enrich the lives of their humans. “On average, it takes our experienced team two to three days to build an enclosure,” he says. “With that said, the price range has been from about \$3,000 to \$35,000 with the average catio running between \$5,000 and \$7,000.”

Despite the cost, Alan says his clients are universally thrilled with the result: “Witnessing the sheer joy and happiness experienced by my clients watching their cats explore the outdoors in a new catio for the first time is incomparable.”

Like all parents, Alan and Stephanie (a Berkeley grad who works at OpenX, an advertising technology company in Pasadena), enjoy date nights and travel. They just returned from the famously dog-friendly Aspen, and also visited Nashville and Atlanta this year. Closer to home, both insist Sherman Oaks now has more good restaurants than Studio City, and feel it is on par with just about anywhere in the city.

“As foodies, we are in heaven,” says Stephanie. “Our favorite Friday hot spot is Augustine. The wine is a draw, but the food is also exceptional.” They both are fans of newcomers Petit Trois Valley and Bluebird Brasserie. “Tippy Cow has the best poutine and Boneyard Bistro the best beer,” states Alan, who adds that “Bellwether is consistently good, The Sherman is pure fun, and Sweet Butter Kitchen is our regular breakfast spot.”

As Alan and Stephanie are firm believers that everybody in the family deserves to experience adventure and lead their best life, they encourage other cat parents to look into a “catio” consultation. To inquire, visit customcatios.com.

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