



Catalyst for Cats

A Non-Profit Organization

Dedicated to

Altering the Future for Ferals

NEWSLETTER

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Our Mission:

As a feral cat organization our primary purpose is to spay and neuter feral and abandoned cats, and to socialize and find homes for rescued kittens. These services are designed to address the feline overpopulation problem and to prevent cruelty to animals by preventing the birth of unwanted and uncared for cat and kittens.

From the Founder

Spay/neuter fixes more than just the cats

It has been a challenge to get this newsletter out because we are getting so many requests for our services. The economic downturn has placed far greater demands on animal agencies and rescue groups, and we are all coping with it as best we can.

Abandonment continues to be a huge problem countywide, but especially so in the North County. Neutering cats there would improve chances for caregivers to take them, or at least fewer would be left behind. But the problem mushrooms when hungry cats start roaming the neighborhoods looking for food, and then the eternal breeding begins, worsening the situation immeasurably.

Whole blocks become populated with hungry, abandoned, stray and feral cats producing unwanted litters. In one rental house in Santa Maria alone, over thirty cats and kittens were left behind this year.

Sometimes someone will call and ask, "Do you want any kittens?" Of course we don't want any (more) kittens, yet they refuse to let us help them spay the mother cat, because they "don't believe in it."

It makes no sense, but all too often that is what we are up against. They have no idea of the effort, time and personal sacrifice all of us put out. None of it is easy, in fact, much of it is difficult, yet we persist.

Spaying one female prevents thousands of future kittens from being born, and we find spaying even one female rewarding because of the far reaching consequences. It is prevention at its best.

Feline overpopulation is a fixable problem, unlike

so many problems in our society today. Our method of trap, neuter and return (TNR) has a proven track record. Everything gets better; the caterwauling, the fighting, the roaming and aggressiveness, but most importantly, the parade of unwanted kittens comes to an end. With hormones no longer ruling their lives, life improves for all—not just for the cats, but for society as a whole.

We have become aware of a great new opportunity to spay and neuter large numbers of cats—an organization called "Fix Nation" in Burbank. Bill Long and I made our first run to Fix Nation in early August with 12 cats from Guadalupe. It was an exhausting 15-hour day, but if this is what we have to do to get the job done, so be it. This trip alone prevented the birth of dozens of unwanted kittens just this summer. And then there are the multiple future litters we avoided and the improved welfare of the cats themselves. The problem of breeding cats does not go away if ignored, it only gets worse.

During these difficult economic times we need your financial support more than ever. Our volunteers put their hearts and souls into helping the ferals live better lives. I can only hope that those of you who are fortunate enough to be in a position to assist us will do so. Our volunteers work tirelessly to help alleviate feline overpopulation and to work towards our realistic goal of "making every cat a wanted cat."

Randi Fairbrother

In Appreciation

We are very grateful to those who participate in our goal of preventing feline overpopulation. Unless you are “into” animal rescue no one understands the amount of time and effort our volunteers contribute.

Our volunteers are the ones who make it happen. It is a true labor of love and often personal sacrifice, and we thank you all enormously. The reward is the satisfaction you get from helping the animals in whatever way you can. We rely on you, our volunteers, who give from the heart. Only some are mentioned here, but all are appreciated.

Robert and Susana Haake – for the Spanish translation of Penal Code #597. Unfortunately, we have received several requests for this flyer in English and Spanish. Sometimes bad people do bad things to cats when there are too many of them.

Barbara Hilaire – for her unwavering and generous support of our program.

Teresa Mitton – for her generosity with spay/neuter of both dogs and cats in the North County.

David Morris – for helping with TNR in the South County for many years.

Beth Rushing – for help with TNR in Santa Barbara. **ASAP, ResQcats** and the **Santa Barbara Humane Society** – for their assistance with placement of our socialized felines. Their contribution is greatly appreciated.

Brenda Forsythe, DVM of Orcutt Veterinary Hospital and her staff – for their help with not only neuters, but with care of the injured and sick. She has been very generous with her compassionate care.

Our fosters who socialize the feral kittens in order for them to be adopted: **Allison Coleman, Monica and Lavi Gonzales, Lee Heller, Kristina Houston, Rose Koller, Rose Soto**, and, of course, **Marci Kladnik**, who multitasks on so many fronts.

Tim Olivera, who continues to rescue felines from his trailer park. We’ve probably dealt with over 80 cats in his park over the last several years, both through TNR and adoption. It was indeed a sorry mess when we first started.



Foster Care: Miss Mask and her littermate were saved from the tough life as ferals in Los Alamos and now await their forever homes while living it up in foster care. Their mother was trapped, spayed and, being feral, was returned to the maintained feeding site where she was caught.

Wish List

Catayst needs the following in order to carry on its charitable and educational goals. If you can help, please call 685-1563:

- Trappers, transporters and feeders for the Santa Maria/Guadalupe areas.
- Safe relocation sites for mousers who will earn their keep. We try and socialize our older kittens because we prefer they have regular loving homes, but depending on circumstances and personalities, it’s not always possible. Sometimes we realize they must go to a relocation site more suitable to their temperament, such as a barn situation. With time, they have the potential to warm up to the caregivers. When they do, it’s very satisfying for everyone.
- Sheets, all sizes and colors, which we use for covering the traps immediately after capture to calm the cats down.
- More people who understand the importance of getting their pets “fixed.”
- Small-to-medium-sized cat carriers.
- Cat food for our many, many colonies we help subsidize.

A Saga of Seven Sick Kittens

Months of heroic effort save the eyesight of seven herpes-infected kittens

By Marci Kladnik

April 24, 2009:

I have had the honor of caring for many sick and injured cats over the years. Even as I write this, I am on a crazy medication schedule of eight times per day, up to seven meds, each administered five minutes apart, for seven kittens. You do the math, and you'll see what I'm up against.

They all have horrible eye infections, and I'm trying to save their sight. Additionally, one of the nursing mothers developed mastitis, so she's on meds as well. My house is a mess, and my social life is on hold, but hey, I'm losing weight with all the exercise.



Hunter: First to grab a new toy, last to leave home, blind in one eye, crossed in the other. What a boy!

When I was first given charge of two nursing queens (mother and daughter) and their litters, we had no idea how critical the condition was of the kittens' eyes, as they were glued shut with a dark discharge. We thought it was the usual URI (Upper Respiratory Infection) so common in feral kittens, and began treating the older ones with antibiotics and eye ointment. It soon became clear that it was much more.

A trip to Dr. Schmidt, a veterinary ophthalmologist in Arroyo Grande, confirmed our fears. They all had the herpes virus in their eyes, which was attacking the corneas; this accounted for the dark drainage.

One kitten, Donna, was expected to lose sight in one eye and possibly the eye itself. Her other eye and those of her littermates were terribly inflamed with swollen lids. Severe corneal scarring with limited permanent vision was diagnosed. It was a daunting task that Dr. Schmidt set before me, with orders to medicate these poor babies for 21 days with a series of two oral medications, four different eye drops, and an ointment.

I sequestered one mother and five kittens upstairs. The other family I arranged in the garage. These little ones were only about 10 days old, and their eyes had not yet opened. We hoped for the best, although we knew there had been cross-nursing going on.

Four days later, I was driving them up to A.G. They, too, were put on meds, though not as many nor as frequently administered since we had caught the infection early. Interestingly, these tiny ones were the hardest to deal with, as their survival skills involved intense gyrations of their bodies. I had to wrap them in a towel to quell their flailing as I put drops in their eyes.

Then I discovered that their mother had developed mastitis in two of her mammary glands. This is a serious and painful condition for any nursing mom. Our vet advised me to start antibiotics, applying warm compresses and binding a cabbage leaf (no kidding!) to her breast. She did mention that the latter was an old wife's tale, reportedly worked, but she had not tried it herself. Well, it does indeed work, and after only 36 hours. It is fortunate that both mothers and

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Look Here: Donna's eyes were the worst of the bunch, but she's quite the "looker" now.



Multiple meds save eyesight

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kittens are easily handled, or I would indeed have become the crazy cat woman by now.

Then the diarrhea—due to the meds— started upstairs. Difficult enough to deal with in one cat, multiply that by five and you'll get an idea what I saw when I opened the door that morning. Luckily, I had some canned pumpkin on hand, and immediately started mixing it with the wet food. In 24 hours it was lessening, but I continued the pumpkin just in case.

Dr. Schmidt said the kittens were all infected with herpes in the birth canal, even though the mothers showed clear eyes. Being carriers of this virus is just another problem our feral cat communities face.

Each subsequent visit to the vet brought a brighter prognosis for these beauties. It is gratifying to know that all my hours of toil were not in vain.

6/25/09 Update:

A final eye exam today revealed that 13 of the 14 eyes have been saved. It was not Donna who lost her eyesight, but Hunter, her brother. He is blind in one eye with scarring in his “good” one, which is crossed due to his Siamese heritage. All the other kittens have relatively clear eyes and are released from follow-up care other than weaning off meds through September.

They will need to be indoors only, but will require no special needs other than possibly Hunter. He may at some point require the removal of his blind eye if it begins to atrophy. This is not a given, just a possibility. All of them will make wonderfully loving pets.

9/6/09 Update:

I am thrilled to report that all seven kittens found loving forever homes. On Sept. 1, Hunter was the last to be so blessed.

Tiny Tim Needs You!

The medical costs for this single group of kittens exceeded \$2,500 and greatly depleted the Tiny Tim Fund. The money was well spent as it saved the eyesight of Donna, PurrPurr, Miss Chetah, Mr. Stripey, Hunter, Simon and Zoe, otherwise known as “The Seven.” Donations to replenish the coffers for our special needs cats would be greatly appreciated. Please indicate “Tiny Tim Fund” on your check.

We Get Letters

Our Outreach Education Coordinator and over-worked foster and adoption advocate Marci Kladnik often receives mail from the lucky people who have opened their homes and hearts to our cats:



Cobalt and Teal

We are really enjoying our new kittens. They are so cute. They are getting along with our other cat and dog very well. Thank you so much. Our family is now complete.

Kathleen Haberman

Marci,

I was just trying to type an email as Kobe casually stepped on my keyboard and it reminded me to send you a note, as I haven't since January. We



Kobe and Lucy

are so grateful to have both he and Lucy in our home. They are both doing very well despite an ongoing battle with feline URI which now finally seems under control. They are cuddly, happy and loving cats that have added so much joy to our house. Thank you again for sharing them with us. Here is a recent picture of them relaxing.

Hope all is well with you.

Jennifer Engmyr

Hi Marci—

I just wanted to thank you so much for our lovely kitty. We met you on a weekend at Albertson's in Buellton and you were so nice, and, of course, the kitty just loves Michelle. They have made quite a pair. She named him Nutmeg and so we are calling him “Nutty” all the time. Thanks again for making our family even happier!

Mary Henderson, RN

Director of Nursing Services / Vista Del Monte

Fighting feline overpopulation: Here's how it's done

By Randi Fairbrother

Last April, I responded to a call about a couple of kitten litters in Santa Maria. What I came across that day was very disturbing.

I found a Siamese mix mom nursing five, five-week-olds, all with their eyes glued shut. A second mom, also a Siamese mix and daughter of the first mom, had three kittens remaining from her litter of four. These smaller ones were only ten days old, about the time the eyes are supposed to open. But they were also crusted over. Fortunately the mothers were not feral, so it was very easy to trap the mothers and pick up the babies.

Normally, with a little gentle soaking and ointment applications, the eyes will open and improve but this was not the case here. All that could be seen was angry red membrane; then the eyes closed again immediately. I had no idea how long the eyes had been in this condition, but my guess is it had been a long time.

Marci Kladnik took both moms with their litters home to foster, a total of ten. (See "A Saga of Seven Sick Kittens," page 3, for that story.) Another of the youngest litter died over the weekend, leaving two to hopefully survive, which is a very demoralizing happening for any foster.

But there was still unfinished business back in Santa Maria. The caregiver told me the cats had shown up and, feeling sorry for them, he started to feed them. He said he had also been feeding a couple of others who started showing up about the same time, a black cat and another Siamese. Since a Spay Day was scheduled for Sunday, April 26, I made plans to return the day before to capture these other two cats.

I was told that the black cat was a nursing mom, so I didn't want to catch her without finding her litter first. I don't like to remove a nursing mom from her kittens for obvious reasons, but as I turned around to set another trap, she was captured. It was very upsetting

for both of us.

That's what started the investigation. I really needed to find her kittens. I spoke to the neighbor over the fence and asked if there might be a litter of kittens in his yard. He didn't think so, but he said he often saw a black cat climb over his fence and go into the neighbor's yard.

When I asked him if he had any cats, he said yes, he had a couple of male cats

that a co-worker of his wife had given them as kittens. One would come inside occasionally but they were now running around fairly wild. I explained the need for neutering and said we would return and help them in that regard.

Down I went to the third house and again asked if they might have a litter of kittens in their yard. The woman said she never went into the backyard or allowed her children there either because of the cats, since she was allergic.

I asked permission to look for the kittens, but she wanted me to wait until her husband came home. I gave her one of my newsletters and she changed her mind. I spent about 30 minutes or so looking in between the bamboo, under branches and overgrown brush and into and under boxes and debris to no avail. Dejectedly I moved on to the next house, the fourth.

I repeated my question about kittens in the yard, and this woman also said she didn't think so. When I asked if they had any cats, she said someone who lived with them had left several cats. She had provided food, but one by one they disappeared. Lo and behold, the mystery of the tame Siamese moms, the black nursing mom, and what the caregiver thought was a young Siamese male was solved.

A few minutes later I received a call on my cell from the women in the third house saying her husband had found the kittens in a box. He had watched a black cat coming and going from this box for about four weeks.

Catalyst founder and chief pet detective Randi Fairbrother puts all her tracking and trapping skills to use to wrap up a major case in Santa Maria.



Tributes & Memorials

Honoring or remembering a special person or pet provides a means for the donor to recognize the richness and happiness brought to someone, and allows *Catalyst* to improve the lives of cats less fortunate. Donations have been made....

In Honor of:

All the glorious kittens – by Larry and Claudia Mitchell
Cosmos – he misses his dad in Afghanistan
Randi Fairbrother – by Bill Long
Marci Kladnik, for her efforts in saving the sight of seven kittens – by Randi Fairbrother
Grady Dog Arnoldi – by Margie Arnoldi
Lily – by B. Calado
Ruby – by Rebecca Hardin
David Morris – by Shirley Nelson, for helping with the little stray gray striped kitten

In Remembrance of:

All the cats I have ever lost and loved – by June Whitlock
Bill Beam – Martin Thruston
Brandy, Baron and Cassie – Michele Noreen, DVM
Bronwen, (in Welsh it means silky black hair with white chest), a rescued cat with a big attitude – by Victoria Blunt
Buddy, a polydactyl cat, lovingly cared for by Kelly Fairbrother after his original caregiver died.
Bunny Pennington, who lovingly fed dozens of neighborhood cats. Finally, we TNR'd all of them. She made delicious brownies for our fundraisers for years. The **cats** and **chickens** who perished in the Jesusita Fire – by Randi Fairbrother
Charlie, we miss you terribly. What a great cat! – by Kelly, Leah and Byron Fairbrother
Jean Johnson, my “sis” for 69 years – by Bonnie Wilson
Joyce Hart, a cat lover and my sister – by Barbara Thornburgh
Krinkles, Domino and Spook – by Lois Waldref
Lily Cat Arnoldi – by Margie Arnoldi
The little cat with the Dirty Face – by Victor Lee
My beloved **Lucy**, my soul mate – by Natasha Carr
Cheryl Mills – by Cindy Young
Molly – by Jen Engmy
Romeo, “Romeo, Romeo, where art thou? I am Everywhere” – by Allison Coleman

Diane Seltzer, a very willing volunteer for several years – by Randi Fairbrother

Gabriel Silva – by Mary Silva

Trevor – by Marie Trip

Dixie Unander – by Karen and John Jostes

We've been at this a long time now and many of the cats and colonies from the early 90s have died out:

Grace and **Suki**, a lovable, secure charmer with a most winning personality – by Gerry and Chuck. And **Caesar**, brother of Suki, adopted by another couple who named him Caesar because he ruled supreme.

Buddy was “put to sleep” because of advanced cancer of his white nose. He is the last of a colony in Goleta, which originally consisted of about eight cats. They lived the best of the outdoor life, enjoying its sights, sounds and smells, playing, sleeping, socializing together and hunting in a near by field.

Ed Miller called us for help in 1993. Grandma and Grandpa had a litter of two surviving kittens. Then they had another litter and the first litter (Mama cat and Uncle) had a litter, and that's the way it goes. Once we'd stabilized the colony and placed some of the youngest kittens, Ed lovingly provided food, water and shelter, and they waited for him every day. In the last several years the colony got smaller and smaller, and Buddy, the last survivor, greeted Ed with loud meows. After Ed retired last year, he'd make a daily bike ride to care for Buddy. Sadly, there's no need for that trip any longer, but I'm sure he misses the need. **BW** and **Johnny Cat** are from a colony Patricia Feingold took over when an elderly neighbor sold her house five years ago. We relocated many of the cats (all had been fixed a couple of years prior) as mousers, but Pat volunteered to care for seven of the remaining cats. She and Johnny Cat enjoyed evening walks together. She writes, “I believe my cats are at least 7–8 years old—pretty good run for ferals, especially in a neighborhood like mine which sits right up against a huge piece of undeveloped land and several creeks. So, although I am sad to have lost them, I am happy knowing that I helped to give them a better life while they were here. I was able to pick up and cuddle both of them. Johnny was absolutely exceptional, and I had a very special relationship with him. BW was a funny little character (kind of a “clown cat”) and loved being brushed!”

Updates: Catalyst Action & Related Issues

A Succession of Spay Days

Since the last newsletter, three more Spay Days were held at the Santa Maria Shelter: April 29, June 28 and August 23. *Catalyst* volunteers brought in 131 cats during those three Spay Days. Spay Days offer us an opportunity to deal with large colonies, which are so prevalent in Santa Maria and Guadalupe. Fall through early February is by far the best time to spay/neuter because it is prior to breeding season, and the chance of trapping a pregnant or nursing mom is much less. Even so, we are far behind with the Spay Days and receive many more calls than we can keep up with. We hope the Spay Days will continue next year—they are sorely needed.

Many thanks to the veterinarians: Dr. Ron Faoro (of St. Francis Hospital), Scott Smith (Animal Medical Clinic) and Letty Obleta, who participated in April. Dr. Faoro and Dr. Kellye Harmon (also of St. Francis Animal Hospital) and Dr. Darcie Barnes participated in June, and Dr. Brenda Forsythe (Orcutt Veterinary Hospital), Dr. Ruth Corman, Dr. Frank Stanton and Dr. Karen Love were there for us in August. It takes a great deal of preparation and many volunteers to make it go smoothly. We thank all the dozens of volunteers

who help make these Spay Days a success.

Grants

Catalyst for Cats is the recipient of a \$1,000 grant from the Solvang Rotary Foundation. We are honored to receive this grant to help combat feline overpopulation.

Another Successful Raffle

The cats are the biggest winners again with our third Cat's Meow Raffle. This year the drawing was held at Santa Barbara Arts on State St. in Santa Barbara. We were very happy with the \$6,000 we raised, which will help to improve the lives of our ferals. We extend our sincere appreciation to the donors of these excellent prizes: El Rancho Market, Upham Hotel, Allison Coleman and Charles Clouse for the Tahoe Cabin donations and Sue Hillyard for the Windhaven Glider Rides.

Congratulations to the lucky winners: **Rhonda Cardinal** – El Rancho Market lunch and wine tasting picnic for eight; **Stephonie Welch** – Historic Upham Hotel (one-night stay); **Rickey Johnson** – Lake Tahoe cabin (two-night stay); **Kim Snyder** – Lake Tahoe cabin (two-night stay); **Vanessa Shuemaker** – Windhaven Glider Ride over Santa Ynez Valley.

Cat sleuth: Looking for those elusive kittens

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I immediately returned to the yard and there they were, just where he said. Four beautiful, healthy kittens about four weeks old, hidden all warm and cozy in a box full of stuffed animals. I had noticed that box and even moved it, but the top was pinched closed so I never looked inside. I removed the kittens, leaving behind the fattest fleas I'd ever seen crawling around.

I took the family to the shelter. Mom and kittens were set up in a double cage with a little tent for mom to hide in. The next day, Spay Day, she was tested, vaccinated, and given a flea treatment. Her spaying would have to wait until the kittens were weaned. After I picked the kittens up, the male black cat belonging to the immediate neighbor was trapped and placed in the van for delivery to the shelter, ready for

Spay Day. The last cat, a tabby, a sibling of the neighbor's black cat, was trapped later that afternoon.

So there they were, eight adult cats captured within a four house area. The catch included four females (three with litters and one pregnant) and two males.

Including the number of surviving eleven kittens, the colony totaled 17.

The two Siamese moms in foster care with Marci,

remained with their kittens through weaning, and adopted through ASAP. Second Chance Cats placed the black mom and her four kittens into foster care, as well as the third Siamese female. All were successfully adopted. The two males went home.

What a happy ending for this group of cats. Despite the stress, you have no idea how enormously satisfying and rewarding that last day proved to be—unless, perhaps, you are into animal rescue.

It's a Crime

**Intentionally Harming
a Cat is
Animal Cruelty
and a punishable
offense under
California
Penal Code #597.**



Five-week-old "Stitch" was the victim of BB gun target practice by teenagers.

**The penalty can be a
fine of up to \$20,000
and/or a year in jail.**

**Lastimar Intencionalmente
a los Gatos es un
Acto de Crueldad Hacia
Los Animales
y constituye un delito
sancionado por la ley bajo
la sección #597 del código
penal de California.**

**La sanción puede ser una
multa de hasta \$20,000
y/o un año de cárcel.**

Report It!

**Every litter adds to the problem
Every spay/neuter adds to the solution!**

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