



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 rescue 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 cats and kittens.

From the Founder

After 25 years, a time of challenges and changes

Twenty-five years ago this spring Berka Smock helped me trap a colony of feral cats behind a shopping center in Santa Barbara. I found it exciting and extremely rewarding to know these cats would no longer struggle with caring for their kittens. The following year “Catalyst for Cats” became incorporated as a non-profit.

We have many to thank for our success—both in changing public attitudes and in improving the lives of our feral feline friends by preventing an untold number of unwanted kittens from being born. Our work encompasses all of Santa Barbara County with the exclusion of Lompoc, which is well-served by VIVA.

The past two years’ litters were smaller than usual (with a few exceptions), which some of us attributed to drought conditions. That was offset by third litters being dropped. Also last year our first litter was rescued the second week of February; this year it was a couple of months later, which enabled us to get many more females spayed before they dropped their litters.

But what is happening now? The drought is still with us, yet the litters are starting off larger than last year. Why is that? Are felines adjusting to the dry conditions? Continuing the survival of the species is one of the strongest of instincts. This is food for thought.



Photo by Debbie Merry

Reality Check: *This is a sizable feral cat colony, all TNR’d by Debbie Merry, our north county mainstay. They live behind the chain link fence of an unoccupied former business. There were several pregnant females, one nursing mom, and a contingent of unaltered males—18 in all. Without cooperation from the landlord she not been able to rescue the three kittens from the nursing mom.*

Meanwhile the usual challenges in the north county persist. The overwhelming numbers, the socioeconomic as well as the cultural differences, and the language barrier all add to the problems. After much thought, I’ve come to the realization that our organization does not have the capacity to carry out the concentrated effort needed to deal with these challenges—neither in terms of volunteers nor the ability to generate the necessary funding.

We are in the process of reassessing our role in the north county. I have not been able to find a replacement for myself and after 25 years it has become increasingly difficult to carry out the responsibilities at my age. Thus, we are working with several agencies county-

wide to help in a transitional phase toward putting

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In Appreciation

Our volunteers are the backbone of our organization and absolutely essential. We applaud the dedication of our team of fosters, trappers, feeders, and all the others who contribute to saving and improving the lives of hundreds of felines every year. There are so many to thank:

Joe Avalos, Animal Control Officer in Santa Maria – His persistence resulted in five cats of various ages being neutered from one household in Guadalupe. This is a site where Randi Fairbrother and Monica Gonzales walked door to door seeking out a group of breeding cats they became aware of. Despite leaving spay/neuter literature at the door the residents never responded. We followed up with Animal Control and even though they denied the cats were theirs, the people allowed the cats to be neutered because of the Responsible Pet Ownership Ordinance.

Kia Becket, our Valley trapper – for assisting with trapping 16 feral cats (seven males and nine females) from a 300-acre ranch in Buellton. The **Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society** altered them within a two-day period. This would have produced nine litters of kittens this spring alone, and those that did not become coyote bait would produce more even kittens.

Shirley Cram of VIVA – for her kindness in accept-

ing two FIV positive cats at VIVA's sanctuary.

Barbara Hilaire – for her unwavering support of our TNR program.

Maureen Lynch – for her generosity in donating food supplies for our Santa Ynez Valley ferals.

Debbie Merry – her energy and dedication continues in the Santa Maria area. One would find it difficult to measure the effectiveness of her efforts. So many kittens rescued, so many cats neutered who now live a better life, so many unwanted litters never born to live a life of struggling to survive on the streets.

Free Spay/Neuter – The “Cat Nips” program offered free spay/neuter services countywide for owned cats during the month of February. Thanks to all three county humane societies, C.A.R.E.4Paws, Santa Barbara County Animal Services and VIVA for their participation in getting 155 lucky felines (74 males and 81 females) done. How great it that? This is an exemplary program that would benefit any community.

Foster/Adoption – Thus far this year we have rescued over 50 kittens and the agencies who committed to taking over our F/A program have all come through with flying colors.

And finally, many thanks to all those who **donated cat food** for our colonies.

Tributes & Memorials

Each one of these names represents a level of love and caring to those remaining. They each have their own story.

In Honor of:

Kia Becket, having worked with her in Solvang, she was wonderful – by Melody Long

Brenda and Gerry Beatty – by Circle Star Pet Resort **Catalyst** for getting Lucy, my feral, medical help – by Allwyn Brown

Clay and Beth – by Patricia Massette

Felix, the greatest Kitty in the Universe! – by Peter Mortenson

Foster – by Margery Nicolson

Rufus and Lily – by Barbara Calado

Our 48th Anniversary – by Nick Priester, with congratulations from **Catalyst**

In Memory of:

Beethoven, Mozart & Tiger - by Sandra Doria

Chessie, “America’s Sleepheart” for over 20 years – by Jan and Chas. Clouse

Cinnabar – by Ernest Pratt

Ron Faoro, DVM – by Kathleen, Nancy and Dan George, and Randi Fairbrother

Isis (Egyptian Cat Goddess) – by Al and Amy Orozco

Itty – by Wilma Titus

Libby, our Golden Retriever with a beautiful soul who never met a cat she didn’t like – by Amy and Al Orozco

Merlot – by Karen Schloss Heimberg

Nana, 15 years of love – by Carol Moir

Patrick Hocknell – by Thomas W. Hocknell

Rae, she lived on her own terms – by Victoria Blunt

Sam – by Barbara Calado

Sara – by Eleanor F. Wyatt

Elizabeth Smoot – by Stan Krone

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Off-leash dogs, but the real menace is the owner

A threat to a feral colony is beaten back by a courageous feeder and a 911 tape

By Debbie Merry

My evening of August 30, 2014 started out just like any other, making the rounds to my feral cat feeding stations, where the cats have all been trapped, neutered and returned (TNR'd) to a location they consider "home."

One particular TNR site hosts a large colony of feral cats that a young man and his mother care for, a place that had been problematic in the past with attacking dogs. Now on my rounds, a text message came in from the young man saying the dogs were loose again and had a cat trapped in the engine compartment of a truck. He wanted to know what to do.

I told him I was on my way; then I called 911.

I arrived to find Roxy, a female German shepherd/pit mix, under a jacked-up truck with at least one cat trapped up in the engine compartment. I called the dog and yelled, but she did not stop trying to reach the cat. (I knew the dog's name and breed because two complaints had been filed previously with Animal Control on the same dog for the same behavior.)

I was on the phone with the 911 dispatcher when Roxy managed to get hold of an adult black cat, pulling it out from the engine compartment, dragging it around and shaking it violently. I approached the dog and tried to get her to stop, but she wouldn't.

The 911 dispatcher listening to me scream and cry out advised me to please, please get away. She acknowledged how hard it was to watch, but for my own safety told me not to approach the dog.

The owners of the dogs (and I say dogs because there was another one running around frantically barking) finally heard the commotion and came out. Their first response was to yell and cuss at me about all the cats. Just then a police car pulled up and the man finally put the dogs in the house.

The woman had been screaming at me, saying the whole street was her dogs' yard and they had the right to run around. She wanted the dog to kill the cats and accused me of feeding and owning them.

I explained that the majority were unwanted feral cats, I was not the one feeding them, and I had been there earlier in the year to TNR all the cats I could find. Also, this was the second time the young man

had reached out for my help regarding this woman's dogs. The first time I was called, I took the young man's sister to the county animal services, where she filled out a complaint on the same dog that had gotten ahold of the cat. Animal Control knew this dog as it was the second time the owner had been cited for the same violation.

Now the black cat lay motionless on the side of the road while one police officer listened to my side of the story, and the other officer talked with Roxy's owners. The cat was still alive and, while we were talking, managed to crawl behind a tree to die.

I eventually heard from the City Attorney asking if I thought the lady had learned her lesson...if the dogs had been out since...did I think this was an accident...and did I want to continue to pursue it?

My response was absolutely to go all the way. Not that I wanted the dogs punished, but because the irresponsible and very angry owner of these dogs was someone who needed to learn the consequences of her actions. With her response to this incident and her previous record with the dogs, in my mind this was no accident, although she claimed the fence was broken and it was not intentional.

The woman claimed innocence and wanted to go to court. The City Attorney asked if I would be willing to go to court. Of course I said yes, so he told the dogs' owner that they had a witness willing to testify, and yet she still claimed innocence.

When the dogs' owner and her attorney listened to the 911 tape, though, the woman decided that it would be in her best interest to change her plea to no contest and avoid going to court. Sentencing was delayed for a year, and if there are no further incidents within that time period, the woman will be fined \$250.

I have shared this unfortunate incident because I want people to know that it is worth the time and effort to pursue acts of animal cruelty and abuse. I do not feel the punishment is severe enough, but it is a start.

You can believe I will be keeping in contact with the neighbors, making sure those dogs are not running loose to chase and kill the innocent cats just trying to survive.

Our foster/adoption program has changed

One of the most difficult and expensive parts of the Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) approach to curbing the feral cat population has always been the fostering and medical care for nursing feral mothers and their kittens. More than simply cost, the lack of foster families and a physical adoption outlet has made it impossible for *Catalyst* to continue our foster/adoption program.

Recruiting new volunteers has not been successful. Those dedicated fosterers who have already given hundreds of hours of their time over the years have reached “burn out” caring for and socializing scores of kittens. The fact that they are also scattered throughout the county makes delivery of food and supplies a challenge. With limited vets available, kitten wellness exams are difficult to schedule.

In past years several of the rescue groups throughout the county have come to our aid by taking some of our older kittens for adoption. A sincere thank you to The Humane Societies of Santa Barbara, Santa Ynez Valley and Santa Maria, ASAP and RESQCATS for their kindness in doing so.

Now for the big news...

After several coalition meetings between all the rescue groups in the area, we are thrilled to announce that ASAP, RESQCATS, and the Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society have all stepped up and taken over our fostering/adoption program. This is wonderful news as it allows us to better use our time and effort towards our TNR program, which is at the core of preventing feline overpopulation.

We are so very grateful!



Photo by Debbie Merry



Throop Family photo

Happy Days: Socks (above) and Sir Purrsalot (below) are fine graduates of the *Catalyst* for Cats foster/adoption program. They were adopted last year by the Throop family of Santa Barbara, who report the cats are “healthy and happy and loving their life.”



Throop Family photo

Fostered With Care: A coalition of animal welfare groups is stepping up to relieve *Catalyst* volunteers of its foster/adoption responsibilities. This litter, rescued by Debbie Merry, is one of dozens being fostered by one of the groups.

Gimme Shelter!

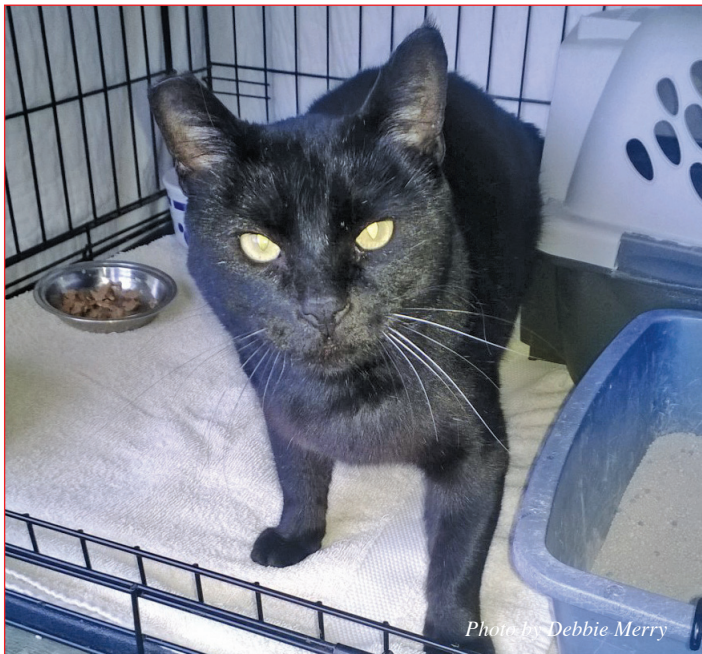
VIVA's feral cat sanctuary steps in when no other place could

Some kittens have all the luck—healthy moms, warm beds, loving households—and others have none of that unless someone steps in to take control of an otherwise appalling situation caused by rampant breeding and inhospitable living conditions on the street or in a vacant lot.

That “someone” may be an unassisted individual or a volunteer from one of the various area rescue and welfare groups like *Catalyst for Cats*, ASAP, VIVA, or RESQCATS.

The animal care world is at its best, though, when all of us work together. That collective effort seems to be more and more evident these days.

The two cats pictured on this page were rescued



Shadow: “This kitty had jumped in my car on several occasions. He was from a colony of breeding cats we stabilized over a year ago at a “low income” residential site, now reorganized for “farm workers” only. One day I found one of the owners shooting at the cats with a BB gun to frighten them. When the cat next jumped in my car, I drove off with him. I wasn’t sure what I was going to do with him, but I knew I wasn’t leaving him there.

“Later that day I found out about a relocation spot where they were fond of black cats, so needless to say, I was ecstatic. I took him in for testing and updated vaccines, worming, and flea treatment. Unfortunately Shadow tested FIV positive and now could not be relocated to this particular spot. After keeping him for a couple months, I finally asked Shirley Cram at VIVA if he could live at the feral cat sanctuary in Lompoc. Shirley welcomed Shadow and another FIV cat that I’ve had since November.”

at different times by our extraordinary north county volunteer Debbie Merry. As she carried out her usual efforts to salvage the lives of these otherwise unprotected animals—feeding, fostering, and securing necessary health exams and vaccinations, she hit a roadblock called “FIV positive”—Feline Immunodeficiency Virus.

If you recall, our previous Newsletter reported on new research out of Purdue University’s Department of Veterinary Clinical Sciences that shows FIV positive cats can live long, healthy, and relatively normal lives with no symptoms and need not be isolated from non-infected housemates. That, however, is not yet a widely adopted attitude.

Fortunately, the folks at VIVA (Volunteers for Inter-Valley Animals) agreed to take these two into the fold at their feral cat sanctuary near Lompoc. We are most grateful for their generosity and cooperative effort.

The captions below relate how these cats came to Debbie’s attention and how their lives have improved thanks to her work and the cooperation of the cat rescue community in our county.



Gentle Ben: “This kitty showed up at one of my feeding stations eaten up with scabies. I fostered him until he was well, took him in to be neutered, vaccinated and tested, and he tested positive for FIV. I couldn’t bring myself to dump him back on the streets. I named him Gentle Ben and his name is very fitting. He is also going to live at the sanctuary in Lompoc.”

Tributes & Memorials continued:

From page 2

Snow & Sam – by Richard Salotti Family

Tux – by Jill Stassinis

In honor of those above who adopted kittens from us years ago and continue to support our cause – from *Catalyst for Cats*.



Ron Faoro, DVM

March 19, 1954 – March 1, 2015

Ron Faoro died far too young in a tragic accident while paragliding above the foothills of Santa Barbara. His whole staff at St. Francis Pet Clinic worked with us and assisted us from the very beginning, which we are very grateful for. In those early days everything was new—TNR, saving neo-natal kittens, dealing with feral felines—and Dr. Faoro took it all on.

He truly loved animals and acted upon that belief. A strong advocate for spay/neuter, he courageously chaired the Responsible Pet Ownership Ordinance effort to encourage people to spay and neuter their companion pets. This ordinance passed throughout every city in Santa Barbara County except for Carpinteria and Santa Maria, resulting in more pets being altered.

His passing is a blow to many within the community and beyond. Our thoughts are with family and friends as we cope with his loss.



Nella

She wasn't the easiest cat, that's for sure, especially in the beginning. Ouch! She came around, though. Became very loving. Always a great talker. I never really thought about the term "copycat" until Nella. She was a shameless mimic. Used to copy the way our dogs lie with their paws crossed in front. Saw a neighbor cat drinking out of a sidewalk puddle and copied that, but there was only the sidewalk, no puddle. Never picky about her food; she ate what was given to her. Had a curious predilection for potato chips. Loved 'em! Knew the sound of the bag opening.

She was also very good about making use of her toys, beds, and other accessories given to her. You hear stories about people spending scads of dollars on cat toys only to have the cat turn its nose up. Nella was never like that. We could tell she didn't have a

privileged upbringing, and probably didn't have much time with her mom either, as her cat skills kind of lacked. She wasn't graceful, kind of clumsy, really, nor was she very good at grooming herself. Very haphazard about that. Couldn't climb a tree to save her life (literally). Also, didn't cover her poop.

We had that crazy ol' Calico for 14 years. She was loved, and we will miss her. So far, 2015 has been a tough year for pets in the Orozco household.

—By Amy Marie Orozco

Note: *I first heard about Nella when her six, six-week-old tame kittens were to be given away all at once. I wasn't able to get her kittens, but did manage to get her. From Santa Maria. Nella had probably been taken away from her mom too young. As so often happens, when the kittens reach the age when food needs to be purchased, the kittens will be given away to friends, neighbors, at yard sales, on craigslist, or any way that will "get rid of them." Seldom will these kittens be given any medical care let alone get "fixed." But in this case Mom found a loving home.*



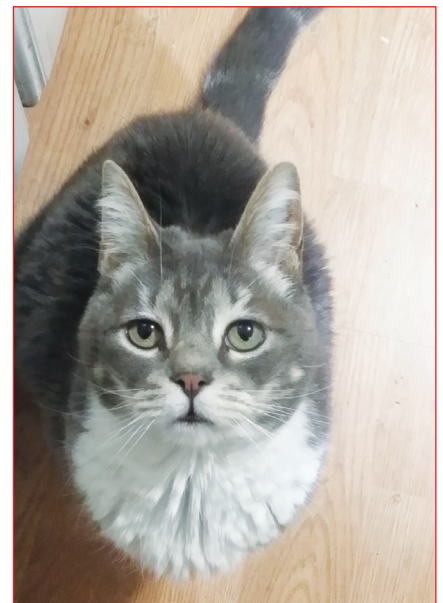
Mango

Mango was rescued about eight years ago, when she was found in the Goodwill parking lot in a shoe box at about eight weeks old. She looked very sick; the vet said she had neurological problems. She wasn't supposed to live more than a few years.

After two years she was strong enough to be spayed.

She was a very happy and healthy cat until last February, when she stopped eating all of a sudden. She passed with her feline and human family at her side. She was a very special cat who gave us many years of joy and companionship and will be so missed.

—By Monica and Lavi Gonzalez



Updates: Catalyst Action & Related Issues

Diatomaceous Earth For Pets

Diatomaceous Earth (DE) For Pets is a naturally occurring fine powder composed of crushed fossils. This remarkable substance is a drying agent that can be used externally on dogs and cats to destroy through dehydration the waxy outer shell of fleas and ticks.

Food grade diatomaceous earth contains 15 trace minerals, including calcium, potassium, copper, zinc, iron, phosphorus and selenium. It is safe and effective when mixed with a pet's food and can be used as an organic wormer and to treat internal parasites.

DE is an environmentally friendly alternative to toxic commercial flea and tick treatments, and the EPA has approved it as a food additive.

To use externally, massage the powder into the pet's coat, avoiding eyes and nose. Sprinkle around pet bedding as a further deterrent. Thoroughly treat floor and bedding in and around pets' sleeping quarters. Treat surrounding cracks and crevices, baseboards, carpeting and wherever fleas and other crawling insects are suspected. Allow up to 72 hours for results. It is safe to use weekly or as needed.

However, **never use pool filter grade DE around animals**. Pool filter grade DE is toxic and harmful to pets.

Food grade DE can be purchased from Nitron Industries www.gardeniq.com/diatomaceous-earth or perhaps at your favorite pet shop.

Wish List

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

For the Santa Maria area:

- **Trappers** – an exciting and rewarding job that will keep you on your toes. We will show you the ropes. Guaranteed to never be boring.
- **Transporters** to deliver cats to the clinics in the morning and/or afternoon post-op pick up.
- **Feeders** – We feed many colonies from the Santa Ynez Valley and north county. Substitute feeders are also welcome.
- **Food** – We welcome food donations—both wet and dry. Meat flavors tend to be healthier.

Directions for use of Diatomaceous Earth

Treat once per day for a week.

Mix with food as follows:

Kittens	1/2 teaspoon
Cats or Puppies	1/2 - 1 teaspoon
Dogs under 35 lbs	1 teaspoon
Dogs 35-50 lbs	2 teaspoons
Dogs over 50 lbs	1 Tablespoon
Dogs over 100 lbs	2 Tablespoons

Humane Society Grant to Support TNR

We are most grateful to the Santa Barbara Humane Society for a generous grant in support of our spay/neuter efforts in the north county. This grant allows us time to transition our basic TNR program to north county, where need is greatest.

Donation Receipts

C*atalyst for Cats* will henceforth be sending out donation receipts yearly – beginning in January 2016 for donations made in 2015. Please call 685-1563 with any questions. We are most grateful for all donations throughout the year.

Founder's Letter continued

Passing the torch in north county

From page 1

our work into capable hands. In the past, by working together, great strides towards animal welfare have been made. Our hope is that this trend will continue because slipping backward – or even the status quo – is not acceptable. It is time to pass the torch on to the north county community. We will keep you updated in future newsletters.

TNR was in its “pioneer days” when we began and I don't think any of us at the time had any idea of the degree of need. I am both proud and blessed by our accomplishments. Please accept my sincere appreciation to all who helped along the way. Our services are still in great demand, and I hope you will enable us to continue our sorely needed work.

My best wishes for a safe and enjoyable summer.

Randi Fairbrother



Catalyst for Cats, Inc.
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**Every litter adds to the problem
Every spay/neuter adds to the solution!**

Help Catalyst for Cats When You Shop Online

Every time a purchase is made through

AdoptAShelter.com

at any one of over 400 top name online stores, 100% of the amount displayed is donated to the animal organization or shelter chosen by the shopper. You can buy just about anything online and earn a donation, all without logging in or remembering a password.

Check us out at www.AdoptAShelter.com

Cats come with claws!

Never declaw a cat! Declawing often results in irreversible physical and psychological damage. An excellent scratching post is available from **Felix Company (206) 547-0042**. Ask for their catalog. The **#1** (large) is a good selection.

No-hassle donating can now be done using **PayPal** or **credit card** using the Donation Form button on our website. Catalyst is also registered with **Cars for Causes**, also accessible through our website.

