



Catalyst for Cats

A Non-Profit Organization Dedicated to Altering the Future for Ferals

NEWSLETTER

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From the Founder

Bumpy road after Covid, but we're still committed

As a non-profit we are required to save our records for seven years. As I sorted and shredded papers older than that recently, I could not help but reflect on the many colonies and hundreds of cats and kittens we have helped through spay/neuter, thus changing their lives for the better.

Also, with National Volunteer Week having been celebrated in June, we extend our sincere thanks to our many volunteers who all helped make it happen one way or another. Occasionally I hear from some of those volunteers and it makes my day. Many continue to do rescue in their own way wherever they are — Texas, Arizona, Florida, Wisconsin, etc. and of course, locally.

You may remember we dedicated our last newsletter to our senior felines, some of whom are over 100 in human years. In this issue we include an additional article by Marci Kladnik on signs to watch for as cats age, with tips on making their lives a bit more comfortable.

Catalyst for Cats remains committed to feeding about 250 cats daily — mostly in the North County — and providing them with medical care as needed.

We also provide medical care through our Tiny Tim Fund and emergency spay/neuter. Thankfully, several organizations countywide have taken over our TNR (Trap, Neuter and Return) work and adoption program, as our volunteers have aged along with the felines.



Photo by Debbie Merry

Felines Afield: Over the years, some Catalyst volunteers have moved out of our area, but continued to use their skills. Veteran cat rescuer Debbie Merry looked after Lightning while living in Panama City, FL.

The road has been long and bumpy since Covid-19 entered our lives. When some shelters closed and only limited surgeries were available, it left little help for feral adults and savable kittens. Consequently, many cats dropped their litters before they could be spayed, and feral kittens often went unnoticed until they were too old to be rescued for socialization. This situation added to some of our colonies, even as

the cost of food has steadily increased.

Despite the difficulties so many of us face in these trying times, we hope for your continued support in our commitment to feed our feral friends.

Wishing you a bowl of peaches and cream this summer as we face the many challenges ahead worldwide.

Randi Fairbrother

In Appreciation

🐾 **Mary Scott** of ASAP - for her help in arranging rescues of both cats and kittens.

🐾 **Amy Smith** for her endless energy and dedication in North County.

🐾 **John Oldman** from Buellton, who covered the euthanasia costs for a cat within their colony.

🐾 **Diane and Mark Poudrier** for their personal attention, care and acceptance of each of the felines in their colony.

Tributes & Memorials

In Honor of

Chloe – by Sharon Tate

Gamma & Tom – by Charlene Maltzman

Thank you for helping me with **my three feral cats**, now seven years old and doing well – by Bonnie Brown

Thank you for all you do for **needy cats** – by Peggy

St. John Animal Care Center – by Enjil Harrah

Randi – Thanks for all the years and years. It's so nice to have you in life's journey. Plenty of peace and love – by David Morris

In Memory of

Lucia Teague – by James W. Teague

Bernard “Buddy” Borderre – by the Borderres
Spice – a beautiful all gray kitten, who lived with seven dogs, thinking she was one of them. She lived a short but happy life and was loved by them all. – by Kayann Zadrozny

Jack Moir – by Carol Moir

Arby Lubky – He was the “baby” of our tennis group. We all enjoyed our tennis group for many years. – by Randi Fairbrother

Shirley Jean Otto – passed Feb. 13, 2021. She shared her ten acres in Montecito with many rescues. At one time she cared for 27 cats and nine Great Danes. She accepted many ferals from us. The last one (an orange tabby male) found his way to her second story bedroom window and they shared the same pillow for years – by *Catalyst for Cats*.

Silky – beloved cat of Dora Drake

Chuck VanDerveer, one of our long time volunteers. He always did his best for whatever cat he came across – by *Catalyst for Cats*.

Midge, Hannah and Duck – by Enjil Harrah

My dear friend **Sig Wathne** – by Barbara Muller

Tributes & Memorials (Cont.)

Shy Boy – the last of the juvenile cats to join our colony. For a while he kept his distance, but stayed nearby, hence “Shy.” And after TNR, “Boy.” So Shy Boy was his name. Of course, over the years he outgrew both parts of his name. But the name stuck and he grew to know, and answer to Shy Boy. A real tabby from nose to tail and even his paws. He was a gentle cat, except when he knew that surely it must be his turn! He greeted and socialized with me and the colony members.

He was never a fat cat, but around six months ago I noticed he was getting thinner. The vet determined the cause to be thyroid related with an inevitable end.

A brief discussion ensued, and we decided that since he was not in discomfort, just thin, that with regular medication Shy Boy's good life could be extended, and so it was. I fed him more frequently than the others—usually with a dose of medicine. I noticed that after a couple of these special feedings the other cats seemed to understand Shy Boy's needs and no longer crowded him when he was eating.

Throughout this time. I petted and talked to him frequently. Three days before his passing I called him, but he ate less than normal. The last two days, he did not eat. The last day I tried to give him food and water, but he showed me he no longer wanted any by walking nearby and lying down among three cats. In the evening, I found him wedged, tail end first into the bird of paradise. He had situated himself so that he could be approached head on. He took no notice when I offered him food and water. Another cat, Fluffy, moved around the plant, but was unable to find a way to Shy Boy's food. Shy Boy had chosen his final resting place well. As it grew dark, his breathing slowed as I petted him one last time and said my Good Byes. By morning he had departed to cat heaven.

So we are now down to 12 cherished colony members and three occasional visitors. The visitors look well-fed and cared for by someone, though two are spooked when they see me, and one tipped cat looks over what's on the menu then leaves. Also, I am able to flea treat nine of the 12 colony cats. Attempts to treat the other three usually ends up wasting some or all of the medicine.

Writing about Shy Boy's life and his passing helped with closure. We miss him. – By Mark Poudrier

On the Subject of Senior Cats...

Continuing the discussion from our last issue, an award-winning cat scribe describes things to watch for in older felines and ways to make their lives easier.

By Marci Kladnik

In the blink of an eye, it seems, my kittens have become geriatric cats. Two are 15, and the eldest is 16 years old. You can fairly accurately gauge a human's age simply by looking at them, but not necessarily a cat's. Outwardly they don't change much after about one year, so to suddenly realize that my cats are 15 and 16 is a shock.

A cat is considered a senior once it reaches the age of 11. By 15 it is geriatric or about 80 in human years, both cognitively and physically. This explains why Spencer, my 16-year-old, no longer does a lot of jumping. It also explains his mats as he isn't grooming himself the way he used to.

Barney has, in recent months, developed the unwelcomed habit of pooping outside the litterbox, sometimes right in front of me. Sometimes it's diarrhea, but mostly "soft serve" consistency. He's been vetted and examined with nothing to indicate the reason, which is maddening for me, and his veterinarian as well. Thinking possible IBS, we are presently trying Barney on a low dose of Prednisolone, which seems to be making a difference. Paws-crossed he finds his way back to the box soon.

Luckily my third cat, Nemo, has not shown any outward signs of aging. I say luckily, because although I've had him since he was a feral kitten, he still will not allow me to pick him up. Getting him to the vet would be a difficult task.

As a cat declines, there are subtle changes one should keep an eye out for. Here are just a few:

- The **coat can become dry or oily and matted**, especially if the cat is medium- or long-haired.
- Your normally pudgy cat is **losing weight**, or your sleek kitty is **looking pudgy**.
- Kibble and hard treats are no longer enjoyed and she has **bad breathe** due to dental issues.
- Your cat **no longer naps atop her favorite cat tree or sleeps on your bed** because arthritis makes jumping down painful.

- **Litterbox "oopsies"** may indicate kidney disease or, perhaps, the sides of the box are too high for arthritic limbs.

- A normally quiet cat may begin to make **frequent and loud calls**, indicating a possible loss of hearing.

- **Bumping into things** may indicate loss of sight due to cataracts.

- **Strange lumps appear on the cat's body**, an indication of possible cancer.

- Kitty is **always hungry or thirsty** although losing weight.

- **Behavioral changes** including aggression.

While some of these signs are just the normal progression of aging, others may indicate health issues requiring a visit to the veterinarian. In fact, senior cats should see their vet twice a year, keeping in mind that a cat will hide health issues for as long as possible.

With today's advances in pet care, making your cat's Golden Years truly comfortable and long is within reach. First, the diet should be slowly changed to a senior formula. Modifications to the home can help by simply adding a ramp or pet stairs to a favorite sleeping spot, purchasing a heated cat bed, and modifying or replacing the litterbox for one with lower sides or a low-sided entrance. Try using a large under-the-bed box which has very low sides and is large enough for an arthritic cat to maneuver in easily.

In short, make a senior check-up appointment as your cat turns 11. Be sure to take along a list of any changes, large or small, that you may have noticed, even if they seem insignificant.

And give your senior kitty lots of love.



Notes from Debbie

Florida cats get the Merry treatment

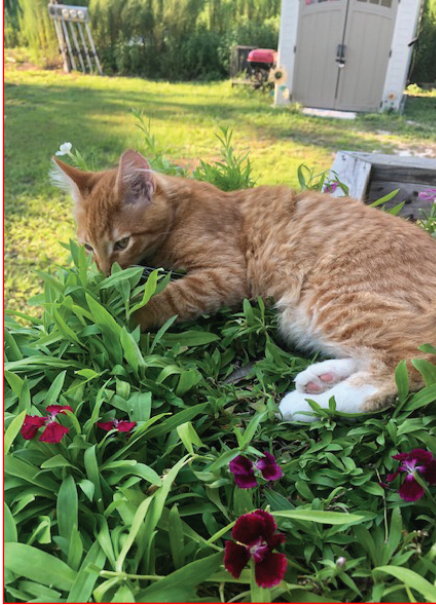
Debbie Merry, our longtime associate who spent years trapping, rescuing, and simply caring for homeless cats in our North County has stayed in touch after relocating in Florida—first to Panama City, and now, in Tampa.

One of the delights of her earlier location was an orange tabby over white that Debbie called Lightning. Naturally, she fed him, applied flea meds, and saw to it he was neutered and vaccinated.

“He was a kitten with such a big personality,” she writes. “He was always playing rough and could hold his own with all the older, larger cats.”

Lightning was left in the care of others when Debbie moved to Tampa, but she says she still misses him.

In the suburbs of Tampa, though, she has resumed rescue work under the *Catalyst for Cats* umbrella. The young “torbie” below is so far unnamed, but had already given birth to a litter before Debbie could take her in to be spayed.



Updates:

Catalyst Action & Related Issues

Another Muse for Marci Kladnik

Longtime volunteer and former *Catalyst for Cats* board member, Marci Kladnik, once again took top honors from the Cat Writers' Association for her article on renal and liver failure in cats. Written through the pain of suddenly losing her beloved cat, Tweety, she hoped to share the signs she missed with others in order to save their cats. You can read her article on our website under the Newsletters tab. Choose “Spring 2020” and go to page 3.

Feral Cat Caretakers Workshop

If you are interested on attending an excellent day intensive workshop on how to trap feral cats, the Feral Cat Caretakers Coalition is holding its 15th Community Cat Workshop August 20, 2022, at the Historic Veterans Memorial Complex, 4117 Overland Ave. Culver City, CA 90230

Each graduate will receive vouchers for a 36” Kit-2 Tomahawk Trap with two dividers (shipping included) and a Deluxe 2-door Top Paw boarding cage.

Sign up at www.feralcatcaretakers.org. Several of our trappers have attended and speak highly of it. You will learn about TNR, long-term management care, relocations, domesticating kittens, sheltering, online fundraising, and how to skillfully change hearts and minds.

And this interestingly marked Calico female is also headed to the vet's for a spay appointment.



Photos by Debbie Merry

The Feral Cat Chant

Meow! Meow! Cry the Cats



Meow! Meow! Cry the cats
 So Grateful are they
 That a gal named Randi
 Has heard their call
 Among it all
 The RN turned
 from Humans to cats
 How about that!
 To brighten their day
 She Founded an Army
 Not in the Military sense
 But the "Salvation" kind
 An Army always there
 To offer the upmost care
 From food to vets
 With plenty of love in between
 The years have passed
 And would you believe
 It's been over three decades
 Since it all began
 So as the "Fair" winds blow
 How happy are the Cats
 That she became their "Brother"
 Thank you! Thank you! Randi
 Meow! Meow! And more Meows!

—By David Morris

A GOOD FRIEND'S PASSING

Russell Drake helped us relocate cats in SYV—and much more!

By Belinda Burns

I first met Russell Drake almost 30 years ago when I was a volunteer feeder with *Catalyst* for several cat colonies in the Santa Ynez Valley. We had been feeding and monitoring several colonies at a world-famous horse trainer's property.

After years of feeding every day and paying for countless spay and neuter surgeries, we were told that we were no longer allowed on the property. After a meeting with the ranch owner's wife, it was agreed that we would be allowed to remove the cats and relocate them.

I approached Russell next door at River Edge Farm. He gave us permission to relocate all 6 cats to his annex property across Highway 246. Thus began our long-time friendship, and we also made friends with all his wonderful ranch staff.

Eventually the ranch cut back on horse breeding and

he allowed us to use the barn. For more than 25 years we used that barn as an unofficial storage space for all our cat equipment. We relocated more than 70 cats to the property when we needed to place them quickly.

It was an easy spot for clients to pick up traps when we needed to assist them in TNR, and Russell was always there for anything I needed.

He always had a twinkle in his eye and a wonderful southern drawl. He not only helped me with cats, but he also helped me save a dog that was being mistreated. One of his ranch hands had been given a dog and kept it penned up all day in his own excrement and fed it junk scraps off the table. I urged the ranch hand to give him to me so I could find him a good home. Instead, he told me he would sell the dog to me for \$100. Russell gave me that \$100. I was able to remove the dog and we found a wonderful family who loved him. This gentle soul will be missed.



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