



# Catalyst for Cats

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

## NEWSLETTER

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### From the Founder

## Backlog eases as vet services start to open up

As we struggle to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic we are most grateful to the essential workers and first responders, who risk their lives daily as they simply do their jobs. A vaccine cannot come soon enough.

Due to this dangerous virus, spay/neuter clinics have closed throughout the nation. Thankfully, they are beginning to re-open. Our few North County volunteers are doing their utmost to deal with the backlog of breeding cats and new litters of kittens.

Thankfully, the Santa Maria shelter has eased the burden by accepting kittens for socialization and

adoption. And the Orcutt Veterinary Hospital has been available to us for injuries and procedures, for which we are most grateful, as well as for the emergency facility in Orcutt.

We hope our North County partners will be able to carry out their commitment to take over the job of TNR, fostering and completing adoptions, which we curtailed a while back as our volunteer force aged along with the cats. We are still feeding over 300 cats in about thirty colonies daily. We also provide medical care for them and for the public as needed from our

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## Gigi's Choice: Tow Trucks or Tuna?

*By Amy Smith*

I first heard the cries of this little miracle when I went to check on the supply of fresh water at an active TNR site. The sounds came from under the hood of a repossessed car in the rear of a tow trucking company in Santa Maria.

As I stood listening for the sounds, an employee of the towing company came out and told me he and his girlfriend had tried but failed at rescuing the kitten. Unable to lure her with tuna from under the hood, I set a kitten trap under the car. In a few minutes she went into it, but it didn't shut. What a disappointment! She didn't weigh enough to set it off. My assistant, Sarah, suggested we put some weights on the trip plate.

By this point, days of going back and forth and losing sleep weighed on us all. Nonetheless, I placed the set trap (with a weight) baited with tuna under the car and called her with a small meow sound. I knew she was very hungry and thirsty by now, so it had to work this time.

When she came out from under the hood and set the trap off, we literally jumped for joy!

I brought her to the Orcutt Veterinary Hospital for an exam, vaccines, testing and a flea Rx. We will follow up on the spay. My friend Monique named her Gigi and has adopted her. We don't know if she was bred at this site that was not yet completely stable or if she was dropped off there, but either way she is a very young, loving, and lucky kitten.



*Photo by Amy Smith*

*Gigi was too tiny to trip a kitten trap.*

# In Appreciation

🐾 **Santa Maria Animal Services**, sponsors for Beat the Heat, and **C.A.R.E.4 Paws**, working together

for reviving opportunities for spay/neuter denied because of COVID-19, all of which helps offset the backlog of breeding cats and spring litter arrivals.

🐾 **Santa Maria Valley Humane Society** and **Santa Barbara Humane Society** (now merged) for re-opening their spay/neuter clinics.

🐾 **Debbie Merry**, our Florida operative for bringing in 55 cats for spay/neuter surgery, plus overseeing and feeding several colonies. (see Updates page 5.)

🐾 **Marci Kladnik**, who is relocating to Wisconsin

(burr!!!). A former board member, she has worn many hats for *Catalyst* as well as for several local rescue groups, socializing litters year after year, fostering sick cats and kittens, and generally caring deeply for all creatures large and small. She once spent several weeks treating the eyes of a whole litter, thus saving their eyesight. She trapped and rehabilitated feral cats in the Los Alamos area, and locals knew to call her for any cat in need. She was my go to person for computer assistance and editing as well as other various and sundry roles. We are very sorry to see her go and wish her well. Our loss is Wisconsin's gain. —Randi

## Tributes & Memorials

### In Honor of:

**First responders everywhere** – by *Catalyst for Cats*  
**Ethel Barclay**, happy 91st birthday, my dear friend since childhood – by Randi Fairbrother

**Great Granny Ro**, for her love, advocacy and support of cats and all animals in general. She takes her role as grandmother to Ava, a *Catalyst* cat, very seriously, indulging Ava's every whim. Everyone needs a Great Granny Ro.

**Randi**, happy birthday on your 90th – by Nick Priester

**Sissy**, She is the last of a large colony lasting over many years of struggle in Santa Maria. Sissy was six years old when VIVA took her. The feeding site was a difficult and dangerous one due to traffic and dogs. She was lonely after her sibling was killed by a dog. She soon found a friend at VIVA. She is now eight years old – by Veronica Eden.

**David Morris** and **Jim Reginato**, devoted volunteers – by Nancy Schoenfeld

### In Memory of:

**Susan Bower**, a personal friend of many years and faithful supporter of *Catalyst* – by Randi Fairbrother

**Corrina**, my Mom, who rescued every single stray in the neighborhood and taught me compassion for homeless cats and dogs. Thank you! – by Allison Coleman

In loving memory of **William** and **Patricia Dowell**, lovers of many cats and adopters of several *Catalyst* cats – by Kelly Fairbrother

**Marie Foss**, looking down from heaven, she would be proud of her daughter, Randi, who is dedicated to helping cats and kittens – by Ethel Barclay

**Sims Einstein**, the smartest cat I've ever known – by Victoria Blunt

**Gracie**, who was loved by John and Cindy Ross – by Peggy Greer

**Liz Hughley**, an energetic and kind longtime friend and volunteer – by Randi Fairbrother and *Catalyst*

In loving memory of **Mary Ann** and **Bill McKenna** – by Bill Long

**Mek Mek** – by Karen Littlejohn

**Mini, Hannah, Duck** and **Casper** – by Enjil Harrah

**Hazel Mortenson**, who spent her life helping animals – by *Catalyst for Cats*

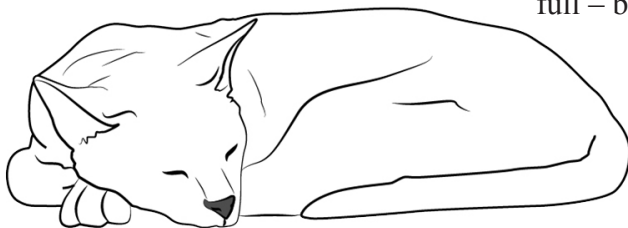
**Ivy Murray**, my neighbor, who loved every stray cat and all cats – Irene Kasper

**My Sammy** – by Nan Cisney

**Shorty**, a gray and white short hair – by Daniel and A. Andrade

**Lucia Teague** – by James Teague

**Sig Wathne**, he lived life well, his glass was always full – by Randi Fairbrother



# Carl's feline family spans 23 years, 4 generations

*As UCSB and I.V. grappled with breeding cats and loose dogs, one lucky group found years of love*

*In the 1990s the UCSB campus and the neighboring community of Isla Vista was swarming with feral and owned breeding cats, as well as roving packs of dogs. It took Catalyst years of working together with individuals in that community to get the situation under control. This is the history of one "family" group lovingly cared for across more than two decades.*

*By Carl Anderson*

**I**t all began in the late 1990s when a white, brown/black blotched, beautifully striped cat showed up at my work place at UCSB. I named her Mamo.

Soon after Mamo showed up she presented me with Queeny, gray/white and petite, her only surviving kitten and probably from her first litter. Then Mamo brought me her second litter of four. Randi found homes for them all. After her second litter, we trapped, neutered and, of course, returned her to my care.

Soon after, Queeny dropped her own litter of two: Smitty (a jet-black male) and Boblini (gray striped and very petite). We trapped and neutered Smitty, but Boblini disappeared before I could trap her. After several months Bobini returned and I noticed she was nursing.

By now my group consisted of four adult cats. Sure enough, not long after, in mid-to-late summer of 2000, I saw Boblini's newly weaned kitten on top of my work shed. He lived in the woods behind my field office and I named him Solo. Of course, in due time we neutered him, too. They all lived long lives, very much loved and well cared for.



*Photo by Carl Anderson*

**The Last Man Standing:** Solo, great grandson to Mamo, the original mom cat of Carl Anderson's feral colony that he tended on the UCSB campus, was born in the summer of 2000 and lived until this past summer. Solo followed Carl into retirement at the end of 2019 and finished out his long life in Santa Paula, enjoying ample food and just the right amount of human affection in a spacious indoor/outdoor enclosure.

**W**hen I retired in December 2019, I took Solo with me to Santa Paula. Even though he had been blind for the last year and a half, he really appreciated the 24' x 8' indoor/outdoor screened cage I built for him while I slept next to him in a tent.

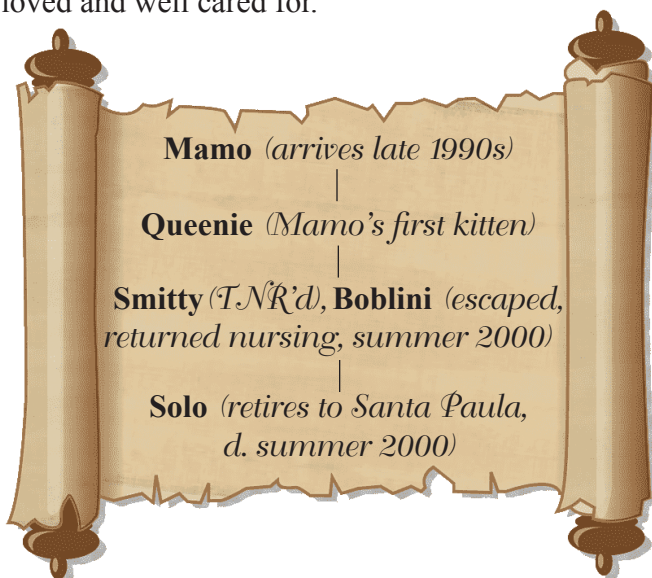
He enjoyed fresh meat and fish, Fancy Feast brand canned food, Max dry food, and each morning he started the day with a bit of half & half.

He was a wonderful cat, distant and feral by nature, but he still appreciated affectionate petting in doses of about five minutes at a time. After that he would start to swat your hand away.

During a heat wave this summer he had a stroke. Sadly, I knew it was time to take him to the Four Paws Clinic in Santa Paula to be "put to sleep." Solo, my last cat, the baby of the family was gone.

After caring for my family of felines for over 23 years I feel very much alone without them. I sure do miss him and my cat family.

But I definitely want to thank Randi; they were my anchor and my compass, and they helped me to keep my love light on. I remember a saying, "Don't be sad that it's over. Be glad that it happened."



# Challenging TNR situation on a local ranch

By Randi Fairbrother

When *Catalyst* retired from active community trapping a few years ago, we'd hoped to settle into mostly maintaining stable colonies, funding medical procedures for cats who had nowhere else to turn, and playing an advisory role for newcomers in the field. But the promised takeover by others hasn't totally materialized, and some situations can't wait for the ideal resolution.

Such a case involved a large ranch within Santa Ynez Valley. Mary, the co-manager at the ranch called me regarding a colony of 15 breeding cats. Most people do not know how many they are feeding with a group such as this, so we were off to a good start.

We had dealings with this ranch previously. We all knew how things can quickly get out-of-hand. It only takes one female to start a colony and it's important to watch and be aware when newcomers enter the scene.

It is not unusual for people to wait two years to finally be overwhelmed with the ever-increasing number of cats and kittens and their caterwauling before they reach out for help. This colony probably represented

two seasons of breeding.

I sent Mary written instructions on how to TNR and referred her to Belinda Burns, our Santa Ynez liaison for assistance. Belinda got right on the job of setting up appointments and

delivering numerous traps, cages, and assorted equipment. At first, Mary thought the job too difficult, but with Belinda's assistance she caught on quickly. Half the challenge is having people follow instructions.

After a week's work they had trapped 14 cats—seven of each sex. The first seven were handled on a recent Sunday by the C.A.R.E.4Paws mobile spay unit, which was parked at the Santa Maria Shelter on Foster Road in conjunction with the shelter's "Beat the Heat" event. The rest were brought in over the next week.

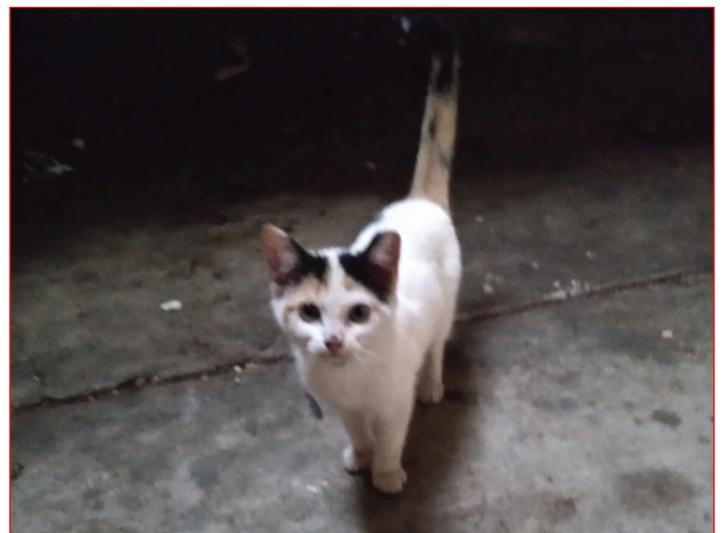
Unfortunately, one female eluded the trap. Mary sees her every day, and we hope to trap her in the near future, perhaps using her kittens as bait.



*Step 1. Fifteen cats require plenty of cages.*



*Step 2. Captured cats need to be held temporarily.*



*Step 3. All of this for ME?*

## Updates:

### Catalyst Action & Related Issues

#### New Director of County Animal Services

Angela Walters Yates, former Executive Director of ASAP Cats (the private non-profit shelter and adoption agency for felines in Santa Barbara) has been named the new Santa Barbara County Animal Services Director in charge of the three County shelters in Santa Barbara, Lompoc and Santa Maria. We expect good things to happen for animal welfare with her in charge and welcome her expertise and experience.

#### Feral Cat Enclosure at ASAP

We understand ASAP Cats has funded and is ready to construct its new feral cat enclosure. It will temporarily house cats that are awaiting placement under ASAP's "Working Cats" program (e.g. at barns, ranches, or businesses) or return to a colony site. The 8-foot by 16-foot enclosure with redwood catwalks and shelves will house cats much more suitably than indoor shelter cages. The enclosure will also be extremely beneficial for feral kittens that are unable to be fully socialized through ASAP's "Tiny Lions" program, to give them a safe place to grow up for a couple of months before being released to a permanent placement.

#### Cat Action in Florida

Catalyst's former North County go-to trapper and problem solver Debbie Merry has remained active in her new home in Florida. Debbie TNR'd these two brothers pictured below prior to Hurricane Michael in 2018. They had since disappeared, but one recently reappeared. Hopefully the brother will also return.



Photo by Debbie Merry

## Catnip, Catmint = Cat Magnets

*Nepeta* is the scientific name for both catnip and catmint. Some cats may be immune to its charms, but many find these plants pretty darned irresistible. Cats need to be about 6-months old before their brain develops enough to respond, and only about 60% do.

**Catmint** (*Nepeta x faassenii*) is a low-growing perennial that is often used for garden borders. It has gray-green foliage and small lavender flowers. The aromatic foliage is attractive to cats. It is also a habitat plant for butterflies, hummingbirds and bees.

**Catnip** (*Nepeta cataria*), like catmint, is a member of the family Lamiaceae. Domestic cats, as well as other felines like leopards, cougars and lynx, will react to catnip. It is the organic compound nepetalactone that causes bizarre behavior in cats. Some drool, roll on the ground, lick or chew it, purr or growl and leap around.



## COVID issues start to resolve

From page 1

Tiny Tim Fund. In the beginning of the COVID-19 era we experienced difficulty in getting food for our colonies, but that is now resolved. Our colonies consist of cats that no longer live on the edge—breeding, fighting, or producing litter after litter to repeat the never ending cycle over and over. As colonies stabilize we can honor the life these cats enjoy and know best.

So we thank you for your support on behalf of our feral feline friends. Your generous donations enable us to provide food for hundreds of felines daily and also provide medical care as needed.

My best wishes to all for a Merry Christmas, happy holidays and a healthy New Year. Stay well and stay safe.

*Randi Fairbrother*



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