



# Catalyst for Cats

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

## NEWSLETTER

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### From the Founder

## Mission re-focused on colonies and care

Contrary to rumor, *Catalyst for Cats* continues its rescue work. As previously mentioned, we suspended our foster/adoption program at the end of 2014. With the number of rescued kittens we found it too difficult dispensing supplies and providing veterinary care with our fosters scattered throughout the county. Also, without a central place to show the kittens they did not get enough exposure to be adopted quickly.

Last December we discontinued our TNR endeavors. Despite neutering 400 to 500—sometimes even 600—cats annually for many years, primarily in North County, we were not able to keep up with the demand. A larger organization than ours is required to take on that challenge. Fortunately, as mentioned in the last newsletter, the Santa Maria Valley Humane Society agreed to start a TNR program. Their new state-of-the-art shelter and clinic allows them to do this, and all of Santa Barbara County should be grateful to them for stepping up to the plate.

We find it distressing that with a population of over 100,000 in Santa Maria alone, and despite our providing several trapping workshops, new volunteer trappers cannot be more readily recruited. We've

paved the way, but it is time to pass the torch on to their community.

Although *Catalyst for Cats* has officially suspended TNR, our few dedicated trappers are unable to look away from the plight of the number of cats needing

help. They are now working independently, busy trapping cats and bringing them to the SMVHS for surgery, using our equipment and expertise. I dread to think of the results without their efforts, especially during kitten season.

So, one might ask, what is *Catalyst for Cats* doing to help felines, and why do we still need your donations?

Over many years we have stabilized hundreds of colonies that are still being fed. Fortunately, most caregivers handle the cost of feeding themselves, but when someone simply is unable to bear the financial burden of providing food, we step in. It is the same when the caregiver tells us one of the cats needs veterinary care.

The colonies range from a couple of cats to more than 30. Currently we feed 367 cats

daily at 47 feeding stations in the Santa Ynez Valley and North County. This is why all feral cat organizations constantly are in need of food. Stabilized

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*Photo by Debbie Merry*

***We're Not Washed Up:*** Despite Catalyst's ceasing longstanding TNR efforts, the need to rescue cats and kittens obviously persists.



## In Appreciation

🐾 **Beth Rushing** – for her dependability, resourcefulness and favors.

🐾 **Debbie Merry** – for her total expertise and dedication to improving the lives of so many felines. She’s constantly alert for cats in need and for situations in her community that require attention for the welfare of cats--young, old, and yet unborn. When action is required, Debbie does what’s necessary.

🐾 **Melissa Muñoz** and others who pitched in for Debbie’s feeding stations while she was on a well-deserved vacation.

🐾 The adoption agencies that helped place our spring kittens: **Animal Shelter Assistance Program (ASAP), RESQCATS, and Santa Maria Animal Center (SMAC).**

🐾 **Deanna Koens** – for her kindness and expertise when asked to help with neo-natal rescues.

🐾 **Denis Sty** – for assisting with fostering kittens.

🐾 All those who lovingly care for colonies

🐾 The generous supporters who donate to the *Catalyst for Cats* TNR Fund, and to those who give monthly through PayPal.

🐾 We’ve been instrumental in successfully responding to calls regarding spay/neuter services, medical and behavioral questions, general information, and most importantly, TNR needs. We appreciate all those who care enough to ask for help.

## 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:

**Lily and Rufus** – by B. Calado

**Gracie** – by R.V. Salotti and family

**Tigger**, a sweet ol’ man kitty – by Dian and Mark Poudrier

### In Memory of:

**Pearl**, a rescued calico kitten who lived a charmed life for over 20 years – by Randi Fairbrother

**Romeo and Buster**, they were quite a pair – by Allison Coleman

**Snow, Sam, Maybe and Chairman** – by R.V. Salotti and family



*Cat Camouflage: This grouping of four kittens (count ‘em!) rescued in Santa Maria seem to blend in well in their temporary home, but they were soon to be adopted thanks to RESQCATS.*

### Founder’s Letter continued:

## Still caring for stable colonies

*From page 1*

colonies can survive for 15 years or more, so it is a long-term commitment on our part.

It is truly a pleasure to observe a well-cared-for colony of ferals. We see healthy cats, enjoying the only life they have known, afternoon napping in the sun, chasing whatever they can find, interacting with one another. No kittens are born from a properly maintained colony. Any newcomers that show up are taken care of quickly. And don’t forget we also provide veterinary care for them as well as for the public when assistance is needed for their cats.

These are ongoing needs and the reason we continue to ask for your financial support. We are a group of dedicated volunteers with no paid staff doing our best to make every cat a wanted cat. It is a labor of love and not an easy task.

*Randi Fairbrother*

## An Unusual Rescue

*Teamwork gets the job done when “routine” turns to “plan B”*

One of Debbie Merry’s many TNR efforts this spring in Santa Maria didn’t go quite as smoothly as expected. When it comes to rescuing and placing adoptable felines, though, “routine” can mean different things.

While recuperating from surgery, Debbie had noticed a particular tortie at a feeding station that seemed unusually docile.

The cat was hanging around a hotel site in Santa Maria where people routinely drop off unwanted cats. We had left notes by the feeding dishes saying we will assist with neutering, but had never gotten any response. The cats at this location often appear to have had some socialization, which reminds us of what a tragedy it is to dump off socialized felines just to have them revert to their feral state, having to fight for survival and cope with all the difficulties of breeding.

When Debbie assessed this cat’s temperament and touched her, she began to purr. We planned to relocate her, but when I picked her up in Santa Maria for the relocation to Santa Barbara, the promise of the new site fell through. So, there I was, stuck with a cat in the carrier and no place to take it.

In desperation, I called upon Beth Rushing to foster her while I searched for another placement for the cat. Beth has never failed to come through, nor did she this time. Beth soon determined the tortie would probably not be suitable for relocation because of her temperament.

Eventually, I thought to call Amy Orozco (one of our *Catalyst for Cats* board members). She and her husband Al had adopted a calico from Santa Maria many years ago. Before adoption that one had had six, six-week-old kittens removed from her all at once. That’s really too young to separate kittens from a mother, but Nella lived happily with the Orozcocos for 14 years, and she fiercely protected her territory.

Based on that positive experience, Amy said she would take the tortie, but that they were house-sitting and would not return for another three weeks.

I informed Beth, and as usual she said she could hold her. The cat was very easy to foster—almost to the point of making us wonder if she was altogether



*Home at Last: Noticed for her docile demeanor at a common dumping site in Santa Maria, this elegant tortie showed promise for relocation in Santa Barbara. When that fell through, it took Catalyst board member Amy Orozco’s stepping up to give Ava a real home.*

well. I explained this to Amy, and still she agreed to the adoption, and named the new family member Ava.

As it turned out Ava was extremely shy, hardly ever venturing out from several hiding places. If they cornered her behind the sofa she just sat there, never showing any sign of aggression when approached, and always purring when touched. Slowly she became braver. Her favorite spot was sitting on Al’s lap when he was at the computer.

Amy reports, “She has come such a long way. Playful and cuddly. Slowly working her way to tyrant status.”

She does prefer Al to Amy, but Amy is OK with that. She has even begun to enjoy the outdoors, but stays close to home. She is one very fortunate cat, thanks to several people who cared.

*—By Randi Fairbrother*



# *From Homeless to Hopeful!*

*Photos by Debbie Merry*

*A Gallery of Successful Rescues—Entirely From Kitten Season 2016*



**N**orth County's homeless cat saviour **Debbie Merry**, working independently though keeping in touch with Catalyst, has rescued **66 kittens since the end of April**—all from the streets of Santa Maria. Very few are tame, so she usually makes an effort to “work” with them before handing them over.

Most of them Debbie finds through her TNR endeavors, but some come from homes where people have discovered momma and kittens in their yard and need help. Typically, folks are willing to keep adults, but want the kittens rescued and put up for adoption.

ASAP, RESQCATS, Santa Maria Valley Humane Society, Santa Maria Animal Center, and Santa Barbara Humane Society have all stepped up to facilitate these adoptions.

“I believe that there is a high adoption rate,” Debbie says, “Maybe even 100 percent.”



# Updates: Catalyst Action & Related Issues

## Spay/Neuter and More

**C**atalyst for Cats continues to be devoted to facilitating veterinary care for feral and rescued cats. Other than spay/neuters, the **Santa Maria Valley Humane Society Clinic** is only equipped to deal with simple medical procedures. Therefore, cats needing medical care must go to a full-service vet clinic. We appreciate all the help the Orcutt Veterinary Hospital provides in this respect. If the cat needs to be spayed or neutered, we cover the cost of that as well, including vaccines, worming, and flea treatment as we have for many years.

To help meet this commitment, a **Catalyst TNR Fund** has been established at the Santa Maria Valley Humane Society (P.O. Box 1700, Santa Maria, CA. 93456-1770) for spay/neuter of feral and stray cats. If you wish to support this fund please make the check out to the **SMVHS** with a notation **Catalyst TNR Fund**. That way the funds will only be used for that purpose. You may also use our enclosed envelope to send in the donation, but be sure to make the check out to SMVHS with the correct notation and it will be forwarded to them.

The same holds true for the **Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society (SYVHS)**, 111 Commerce Drive, Buellton, CA 93427. The need is great, and we hope for and continually seek out volunteer trappers and feeders.

## Former Board Member Takes Top Prizes

**M**arci Kladnik, former *Catalyst* board member and volunteer, brought home three top awards from the recent Cat Writers' Association annual conference held in Phoenix. She won Muse Medallions for both story and photo series from her last official TNR job in Los Alamos two years ago. The two-part article, *Trapping Truths*, appeared in our winter 2014 and spring 2015 newsletters.

The third win was the Kari Winters Rescue and Rehabilitation Award for an article that appeared on Catster.com about a blind *Catalyst* kitten named Amelia that Marci had fostered and subsequently adopted out.

Marci currently holds the title of President for the international Cat Writers' Association and is one of the local independent feral trappers using our equipment.

## Spay/Neuter Ordinance Buy-in Now Complete

Now all of Santa Barbara County is on board. Cheers erupted in June when the Santa Maria City Council passed its own spay/neuter ordinance unanimously—the last town in the county to do so.

This has taken the work of many dedicated advocates over the years. The ordinance reads, “Each owner in the city of a cat or dog over four months of age must obtain an unaltered animal license of the animal, or the owner must have the animal spayed or neutered.” Some are exempt from this ruling such as breeding service dogs and pets at risk for health reasons. If the owner does not want to comply, the pet must be taken to a veterinarian and be licensed.

Three hundred dogs and 303 cats (none requested by owners) were euthanized in Santa Barbara County for the 2014–2015 fiscal year. This is a vast improvement over several years ago and the result of many people and groups working together. The hope is this ordinance will result in fewer surrenders to the shelters and fewer cats and dogs euthanized.

The behavioral benefits from neutering your pet include diminished aggressiveness, roaming, and spray marking, but most importantly, it prevents the breeding of surplus puppies and kittens.

Santa Barbara County offers low-fee spay/neuter services year round, both at its three shelters and all four humane societies as well as through several non-profit rescue groups. In addition, during the year, many promotions are offered for dogs and cats and special mixed breeds at extremely low cost and often free.



Three lucky rescues from the streets of Santa Maria. Much suffering will be spared through the city's new spay/neuter ordinance.

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# Updates: Catalyst Action & Related Issues continued

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It is not only the animal that pays the price when left to breed and/or be surrendered to the shelter, but all of us—rescuers and taxpayers. There is no excuse for not getting your pet “fixed” within Santa Barbara County.

## Remembering a Brave Spay/Neuter Advocate

**R**on Faoro, DVM. (1954 – 2015) was instrumental in formulating the first local spay/neuter ordinance. It was for the un-incorporated areas within Santa Barbara County. It proved to be a very difficult and nasty undertaking. Despite enormous opposition, especially at the first few meetings before the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, he persisted.

The opposition came mainly from “dog people” from the Los Angeles area, who appeared to be mostly backyard breeders. The policy took years to formulate and for leading the way Dr. Faoro even received threats. But the committee which he chaired finally came up with a solution. He would be very happy to know the county now has spay/neuter ordinances in place everywhere.

As head of the St. Francis Pet Clinic in Santa Barbara he assisted us for many years, taking an interest in helping the ferals in the early days. We were on a learning curve and his clinic was extremely generous and kind. Unfortunately, he passed far too soon in a tragic paragliding accident. He is remembered fondly by many.

## Scabies Alert

**S**cabies, a type of mange in cats, continues to be a problem. We saw our first case about five years ago and had no idea what it was. We now believe the drought is responsible for the increase of cases.

It is a worm that burrows under the skin to lay its eggs. When they hatch it produces severe itching, hair loss and a nasty-looking crust. The areas usually first affected are the face, neck and ears.

The treatment is not difficult, but it takes two to three weeks of confinement. Medicine must be given every couple of weeks to be sure the eggs are killed when they hatch.

With ferals, this confinement is difficult but required because scabies is contagious (gloves are recommended) and to ensure the right cat is medicated. The cat also needs at least two vet exams—the first to confirm



A case of scabies, a parasite that seems to be on the rise.

the diagnosis and the second to check if the treatment is successful. Examining, confining and medicating a feral can be quite a challenge.

Luckily, if caught early enough, the cats respond well to treatment.

## Comparative Ages of Cats and Humans

Age of Cat	Human Age
1 year	15 years
2 years	24 years
5 years	36 years
7 years	45 years
12 years	64 years
15 years	76 years
18 years	88 years
21 years	100 years

## Wish List

- **Feeders:** We welcome feeders and substitute feeders for our colonies in Santa Maria (call 685-1563) and in the Santa Ynez Valley (call Belinda at 688-6359).
- **Donations of Cat Food:** Wet or dry. Meat flavors are preferred.
- **Safe Relocation Sites:** For feral cats who will earn their keep by keeping rodents at bay, call 685-1563.
- **Trappers:** For North County, call 685-1563



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



**Can you help feed us in  
the Santa Ynez Valley?**

**Volunteers needed to help feed  
established cat colonies.**

**All food provided by Catalyst for Cats**

Feeding time can be as little as 5 min. to half an  
hour, depending on location  
& number of cats  
Volunteers appreciated for sub. feeding too!!

## **Cats come with claws!**

**N**ever 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.

