



# Catalyst for Cats

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

## NEWSLETTER

PO Box 30331 • Santa Barbara, CA 93130 • Phone: (805) 685-1563 • Email: [catalyst4cats@cox.net](mailto:catalyst4cats@cox.net)

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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 cats and kittens. Catalyst for Cats, PO Box 30331, Santa Barbara, CA 93130 is a free newsletter published three times a year by Catalyst for Cats, Inc.*

### From the Founder

## Solving Problems From the Grass-roots Up

Sometimes it feels like a battle ground and we are the troops on the front lines. From spring until fall we receive call after call with reports of mother cats and kittens.

More often than not these are not sweet kittens that can be picked up, but rather kittens that run around frantically scarfing up any food thrown out for them. Yes, I mean that literally, thrown out to them, on the dirt or driveway. In other instances we see them jumping out of dumpsters with food scraps. A sorry sight indeed. Not to mention the common occurrence of sick and dying kittens that we try to save.

So often people say, "You can't save them all." No, we can't. But I still maintain this is a fixable problem. Once we've spayed a mother cat we never again have to hunt for "forever homes" for her offspring.

We assist a minimum of about 10 cats per week for spay/neuter. In one week, in mid October, we brought in 47 cats. They consisted of a colony of over 23 in Buellton, another group of 13 from Guadalupe, and we filled in with a couple of smaller jobs.

We thank the **Santa Maria Shelter** clinic staff and

the **Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society** for giving us the extra appointments needed to get the job done. Each of these cats will live a healthier life without the hormonal drive that causes so much suffering, as well as benefiting those who asked for our help.



***The Purrfect Holiday:** Recently rescued, this cute boy and three littermates (including the female on page 2) are being socialized by a Catalyst foster and will soon be ready for adoption.*

The Wall Street Journal recently published an article on charitable giving headlined "Dig Deeper When Checking Out Smaller Charities." It featured suggestions for "choosing well" and describes how a growing number of donors, hoping their money will be put to the right use faster, are drawn to smaller, local charities with less red tape. In the last paragraph it says, "The more grass-roots

organizations you're funding, the more directly it goes to services rather than being sucked into the vortex of a larger organization."

As you all probably know, *Catalyst for Cats* is a grass-roots organization with no paid staff that relies entirely on our volunteers and your financial support.

May you enjoy the good will of the holiday season with family and friends. We extend our best wishes for the coming New Year .

*Randi Fairbrother*

# In Appreciation

**W**e 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. Some are mentioned, but all are appreciated.

**Beth Rushing and ASAP (Animal Shelter Assistance Program)** – for their assistance in dealing with the feral cat colonies in Santa Barbara and Goleta areas.

**Joe Avelos**, head animal control officer for the Santa Maria Shelter – for his efforts to contact and educate people regarding animal care and abuse. We appreciate the cooperation from the officers as well as the shelter staff.

**Sharon Betzendorfer** – for her kindness in adopting a special needs kitten and his sister in order to keep them together. She also provided a safe refuge for a group of cats from an apartment complex where they were being poisoned.

**Belinda Burns** – Despite working full time, she devotes many hours during the week as well as her weekends as the Santa Ynez Valley coordinator for feeding of feral colonies, trapping, trouble shooting and relocating of barn cats. This saves lives that would otherwise be cut short because they are not adoptable. We hear many reports of the outstanding job these “mousers” are doing.

**C.A.R.E.4Paws** and the **Buellton Veterinary Clinic** – for help and generosity with spay/neuter services in the Santa Ynez Valley.

**Charles Clouse** – assistance with typesetting our updated brochure as well as his expertise in typesetting our newsletters.

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

**Monica and Lavi Gonzales**, the “Pied Pipers of Santa Maria” – They play multiple rolls of feeding, trapping, socializing ferals and trouble shooting.

**Malissa Munez** – an 18-year-old who started trapping at age 17. She succeeded in stabilizing a troublesome

“hot spot” area of Santa Maria of long standing. She’s become a dependable trapper and recently a foster for a feral mom and her litter of four. These kittens will be needing adoptive homes in about a month.

**Tim Oliveria** – He monitors and is caregiver for a colony of cats. Throughout the years we have dealt with over 100 cats from this one trailer park. We did a lot of TNRing and removed kittens as well as the friendly strays for adoption. The caterwauling was almost constant when we started many years ago. Over the years the number of cats diminished. Many children live in the park and he educates them as to the importance of neutering and showing kindness to animals. This has been a real success story.

**RESQCATS** – for finding adoptive homes for many of our socialized litters.

Several families in the north county on fixed and low income and unable to bare the cost of spaying/neuter are very grateful to **RESQCATS** for assistance with getting their tame cats done.

**Santa Barbara Humane Society** – for their assistance in adopting our teen and adult felines.

**Debbie Merry and Debbie Walker** – for ongoing efforts with trapping and fostering.



*A Merry Girl: One of Debbie Merry’s recent fostering graduates.*



# JD, The Very Hungry Kitten

By Marci Kladnik

James Dean (JD) came into my life at just nine weeks old. Skin and bones and less than half the size of his littermates, he was a pathetic little creature weighing a mere 15 ounces. He was infested with ear mites and had bad diarrhea from giardia which caused him to be severely dehydrated. In fact, he was a mess.

His siblings trampled him at feeding time, pushing him out of the way as they gobbled up the food. He was amazingly energetic, considering how emaciated his tiny frame was, but the few bites he managed to grab were vomited up a short time later.



*Malnourished: JD at nine weeks and 15 ounces.*

Needless to say, JD was always in starvation mode.

I offered to take this kitten on as a single foster in hopes of fattening him up through free access to food. He needed to reach the two pounds required for neutering before we could adopt him out. I thought maybe the vomiting was due to the fact that he had to eat quickly in order to get anything at all, but even not having littermates to compete with, it continued.

The dehydration also continued so I learned to give subcutaneous fluids and made chicken stock to encourage him to drink. I also began to liquefy his food.

Still barely over a pound at fourteen weeks, the tips of his ears suddenly drooped giving him a distinct Yoda-like appearance. Very endearing, but puzzling, and we feared his circulatory system was compromised from starvation. Still vomiting up food after every meal, he was only gaining maybe two ounces a week instead of the four a kitten should.

Jeffyne Telson of RESQCATS suggested he could have megaesophagus, as did our foster Rose Koller, so I began to do symptom research and polled the two online feline chat groups I belong to for their input. Everything pointed to this condition although rare in cats, and we decided that JD should be tested.

His barium X-ray showed an especially bad case of mega-e, one that was not treatable surgically. With little hope that he would ever grow out of it, or rather grow into his esophagus, I refused to give up on him and continued his schedule of medications and feedings, requiring six hours a day of my time.

His food had to be blended into a slurry so that it would slide down his throat and not get caught in the esophagus. I added homemade chicken stock to special canned food in hopes of adding a few extra calories, and pumpkin to calm his stomach.

I was bottle-feeding him and holding him in an upright position for 20-30 minutes after each meal to let gravity move the food to his stomach. Sometimes it took over an hour to get four tablespoons down without their coming back up. With all that time spent in my arms and in my lap, he became one with my heart.

Everyone who met JD fell in love with his sweet little face with the big green eyes, spotted gray coat and gentle demeanor. He had quite a team rooting for him, and he became a favorite of the vets and staffs.

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*Backyard Romp: Soaking up the fresh air and sunshine, JD enjoyed moments of normal kittenhood.*

# The Story of Reggie, FIV Positive Survivor

## *How a ranch cat became a house cat*

*Reggie, a very handsome guy, came from a Goleta ranch and was to be a routine TNR (trap, neuter and return) cat. I thought it was a “done deal” when I received a call from the vet’s office saying that he had tested positive for FIV (the feline form of AIDS) and was to be “put down.” They had already kept him several days beyond the time normally allotted because he was such a charmer.*

*When I went to see him, he rolled over in the cage and I saw why the vet techs felt they wanted to save him. I thought, there must be a home for him out there somewhere. Then I remembered Jill Mosher and her fondness for orange cats. I asked if she would foster him and was very relieved when she agreed. As often happens the foster home became a “forever home.” We don’t know Reggie’s exact age, but he is over 15 years old and has lived with Jill for at least 13 years. His story here is told by Jill.*

—Randi

**H**e was so shy and frightened upon arriving at our home that he took to hiding in my husband’s closet. This was all right until he had a little accident, which didn’t go over well with his new dad. Because he was an outdoor ranch cat he had a hard time adjusting to us, but eventually became a regular family member.

One night Reggie got out the front door. I was very ill with a terrible cold, and my husband wouldn’t allow me to go out looking for him. The night was very dark and cold, but my brother came over and they went out calling his name. When he didn’t come home, I left the gate open, put a light out and said a prayer. Within a

few minutes he came strolling in nice as pie.

Later on my husband spent a day building a cat fence, which allowed Reggie to go outside and enjoy the patio unaccompanied. One night my husband heard a rumpus in the living room, and found Reggie sitting calmly with nothing amiss. In the morning we found half a dead

rat on the doorstep and that “yum” look on Reggie’s face.

After years he allows me to hold him while he purrs and relaxes, making

this an enjoyable experience for both of us. We have a lovely morning routine. He greets me with a series of different meows, like he is saying “good morning,” and he expects a few little treats. On cold mornings he’ll stand at the fireplace looking at me, then at the fireplace until I turn on the gas log. He enjoys this so much that I frequently turn it on for him even if it’s not cold.

Reggie has been a quiet and interested listener for many of my tales of woe. He is an inspiration as a survivor in life, and my life will not be the same when he is gone. He has outlived his expected time and been healthy with very few vet visits.

He’ll grin and bear baths, which I feel are helpful for all of us. After the bath he’ll yowl a bit, then purr along with the blow dryer and enjoy the brushing as he sits in my arms. I have a small scar on my left arm—my fault, as I slipped getting him into the bath the first time, and he held on like nobody’s business. I carry that little scar as a sort of cat tattoo that will remind me of him when he is gone.

Now, I don’t mean to say that Reggie is going anywhere soon, but as with people, cats only live so long. I’ve enjoyed him and have loved him and am grateful to Randi for bringing him into our lives.

—Jill Mosher







*James Dean, 11 Weeks: JD snuggles close to the dog for warmth and companionship.*

## JD won the hearts of us all

*Continued from page 3*

At four-and-a-half months he finally reached that magic weight of two pounds. Now technically a teenager, he sported the long gangly legs but was still skin and bones. Even with liquefied food and meds, the vomiting continued.

A four-month-old kitten should weigh at least four pounds and be half the size of a small adult. JD still was the size of an eight-week-old but with long skinny legs. His frame was so small and pathetic looking, we knew he was still starving.

The kitten became a dumpster diver, coming out of wastebaskets with empty chip bags on his head. I once even pulled a large book off a shelf and found JD with a food wrapper hiding behind it. In the mornings when I'd open his door, he'd run past me, down the hall and stairs to the kitchen below to eat anything my cats might have left on their plates. I found him in a box in the garage where he had ripped open a bag of kibble, something he could never eat, try as he might.

Full of life as he seemed, it was obvious that he was constantly hungry and just not thriving. With broken hearts we made the decision to end his suffering. I gave him a day free of meds and let him eat anything he wanted, vomiting be damned. He played outside in the sunshine, chasing butterflies and romping with my cat, Barney. Hungry no more, he is now buried on a hillside overlooking the rolling valley on a friend's ranch.

I tried so hard to save him, but it wasn't enough. Sweet JD, you are missed by many.

## A Tale of Three Kitties

*By Rose Koller*

When I offered to foster three “teenage” feral kitties a year ago, I had no idea what I was in for. They were beautiful tabbies that had the look of Abyssinian to them: wedge faces, large ears, and large, expressive eyes. It took only a few weeks to tame the first one (Holly Golightly), a few more weeks for the second one (Natalie Wood), and a couple of months for the toughest nut to crack (Ashley Judd). But it was worth it. (I like to name my fosters after celebrities or famous characters with the hope that it will make them more appealing to adoptive parents.)

Just as the three sisters were about to go to RESQCATS for adoption, I noticed one had really bad breath and another had inflamed gums. The vet checked them out and gave us some bad news: all three had gingivitis—not a serious illness, but one that would compromise their health in the future and thus their adoptability. As all of us fosters know, it's hard enough to find homes for the “perfect” kitties, let alone the “imperfect” ones.

That's when I went from having six cats to nine. I figured I could deal with occasional illnesses and such, but less than a year later Holly started having problems with her left ear, and it was off to the vet again. After treating her with antibiotics and drops over two months, the ear was still oozing, and she was

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*Post Op: After expensive surgery, Holly is on her way to recovery.*

# 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:

**Belinda Burns**, thanks for your help with neutering two kittens – by Kim Bramsen

**Friend** – by Lessie Nixon

**Marci Kladnik**, much thanks for all her help – by the Wrather family

**Marci Kladnik**, for her devoted and untiring efforts on behalf of our special needs kittens – by Randi T. Fairbrother

**Penny** – by Margaret Jones

**Randi** – by Bill Long

**Suzanne Shaneleo**, for her Oct. 30 birthday – by Jeffrey and Leslee Sipress

## In Remembrance of:

**Alex**, a beautiful cat – by Gloria Shepard

**Edna Bevilacqua** – by Ernest Bevilacqua

**Buster** and **Missy Grey**, friends forever – by Lois Robinson

**John M. Carman** – by Despina Danos

**Rose Marie “Rickey” Johnson** – from friends and family

**Dee Rich**, a cat lover and our angel, **Scruffy** – by Jody and Buddy Fleace

**Maggie** and **Ivy** – by Joanne and Jim O’Roark

**Myrt Starr** – by Kay McWilliams

**Penny** – by Margaret Jones

**Romeo** – by Jill Kent

**Sammy** – by Martin Thruston

**Sylvia Saxe** – by Susan Tova

**Shadow** – by Diana Poudrier

**Tom Snow** – by Mrs. Salotti

**Sweet Pea** and **Quatro** – by Lynne and Buddy Borderre, Jr.

## In Remembrance of Berka Smock:

Everyone in the cat world of Santa Barbara of the old days knew of Berka. I don’t think it would be far fetched to call her the Original Cat Lady of Santa Barbara. It started with one cat in downtown Santa Barbara when she and her husband, Jim, ran the Redwood Inn restaurant. It featured German food and Berka did the cooking while Jim baked the pies. The house is still standing as is the huge redwood tree.

After they closed the restaurant, Berka sold antiques in the house for many years, but her feline philanthropy began with one stray cat and grew wildly from there. She never could turn away a cat in need.

It was she I called in 1990 for help when my daughter told me about some stray cats behind a shopping center. A co-worker mentioned a blond woman who was always at St. Francis Pet Hospital with cats when he brought his cat in. St. Francis gave me her name, and we were out trapping that very evening.

That first episode of trapping actually became the catalyst for *Catalyst for Cats*. We sat there night after night until all the cats were trapped and neutered. What a great feeling—those stray cats would never again need to struggle to care for their kittens.

Over the years Berka opened up several second-hand shops to fund the care of the cats. When she went non-profit, she chose the name The Tenth Life Foundation because her specialty was caring for older and disabled cats no one wanted or could no longer care for.

When Jim died it became increasingly difficult for Berka to properly care for the large number of cats. When the city intervened, changes had to be made. This proved to be a difficult time for her.

Despite many physical ailments she did the best she could for her beloved cats. For the last few years she lived in an assisted living situation, and care of the remaining cats has been taken over by Rafael Macias and his family, who also love them and reported to Berka daily.

An era has come to an end with Berka’s recent passing. Donations can be made to the Tenth Life Foundation, 615 Bradbury St. Santa Barbara, CA 93101, to help with the care of the remaining cats.

—Randi Fairbrother

## A Prayer for Return

Do not be afraid dearest little ones. Today, I am returning you to the place you call home. It is not what I would have chosen for you, but for now, it is all I can offer. You are dear to my heart and special in my life. I embrace your spirit as I lovingly care for you in the years ahead. Be safe and hearty and know that you are loved.



# Updates: *Catalyst* Action & Related Issues

## Cats Meow Raffle Results

*Catalyst for Cats'* Oct. 14 raffle, held at Sharkeez in downtown Santa Barbara raised \$2,932—all of it earmarked to better the lives of cats in Santa Barbara County.

Raffle prize winners include **Margareta Jamar**—Lake Tahoe Cabin Getaway donated by Allison Coleman; **M.L. Ingraham**—El Rancho Marketplace Lunch and Wine Picnic for 6 at a Santa Ynez Valley Winery; **Jan Cibull**—Historic Upham Hotel Midweek Getaway; **Elizabeth Wineman**—gigantic gift basket #1; [no first name given] **Zuchowiot**—Café del Sol gift certificate for dinner and cocktails for two; and **Danielle McGraw**—gift basket #2.

Two of the five winners are from Santa Maria, a positive sign that the plight of the North County cats is becoming better known and the presence of *Catalyst* is widening.

It is impossible to express our gratitude toward the generous donors who make this annual raffle possible. What we can do is patronize their businesses and/or send them special thanks. In addition to the donors named above, generous gift basket contributors include Lemos Feed and Pet Supply, Flatbread Pizza in Los Alamos, Coastal View News, and the Curious Cup Bookstore in Carpinteria.

## Santa Barbara Foundation Grant

We are pleased to be the recipient of an Express Grant from the Santa Barbara Foundation for printing a new supply of the *Catalyst for Cats* brochures. The brochure explains what feral cats are, our program of trap, neuter and return (TNR), and how to help alleviate feline overpopulation.

## Feeding Fido and Fluffy, Too

Dr. Bud Stuart, a retired local veterinarian is the author of a book on nutrition for cats and dogs. It is full of good tips for keeping your pet healthy. He does not like plastic food bowls (the plastic gets old and leeches into the food and water) and stresses the point that dry food contains mostly carbohydrates, is very high in calories, and we give our pets far too much of it. This causes them to gain weight, resulting in problems with arthritis, hips, and their organs.

He points out “Ten Tips to Remember” for a healthy pet. Here are three of them:

- Young pets (under one year) need a multi-vitamin to help them grow.
- Adding a small amount of safflower oil each day makes for a more healthy coat and also aids in reducing hair balls in cats.
- Cats are carnivores. They do much better on canned food or meat/poultry than on dry food.

Available from Amazon.com, *Feeding Fido and Fluffy Too—Plus Lots More* (Trincket Press) might make a good Christmas gift for your friends with pets.

## Successful surgery for Holly

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still scratching it and shaking her head.

The third trip to the vet we got the bad news: she had ear polyps, which is fairly common in dogs but very rare in cats. The only treatment was surgery, for which we were referred to Dr. Sikes at Animal Surgical Group in Arroyo Grande.

Holly, who loves to cuddle on your shoulder, had



**Golightly:** Holly is more “perfect” than ever.

a rough recovery. The polyps had grown inside the ear canal down to her jaw, and she returned home with a drain, a pain patch, and a cattywompus eye. At first the protective collar spooked Ashley and Natalie, but eventually they accepted their sister back into the fold.

*Catalyst* very generously offered to pay for the expensive surgery, but since I had offered to take the litter “for better or for worse,” we struck a happy compromise and each of us paid half!

She chirps when she wants me to pick her up, and she still loves to cuddle on my shoulder. I’m so grateful to have her in my life and to *Catalyst* for helping her get there.

*(Editors note: Our Tiny Tim Fund helped pay for Holly’s surgery, and we thank Rose for her generosity as well.)*



*Catalyst for Cats, Inc.*  
Post Office Box 30331  
Santa Barbara, CA 93130

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

## Wish List

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

- Transporters, feeders and trappers for the Santa Maria areas.
- Fosters for the kittens that need socializing.
- Cat food for the many, many colonies we monitor and maintain. We spend thousands of dollars helping to feed these colonies. We prefer meat flavors from Purina, Friskies, or Costco rather than fish flavors. Wet food is a treat.
- Soft stuffed animals for the kittens and cats for snuggling and warmth.
- Loving homes for many of our tame teenage cats who are out of kittenhood. Call Marci Kladnik (805) 344-4663 for information.

## 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.

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