



# Catalyst for Cats

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

## NEWSLETTER

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### From the Founder

## Still present and caring after all these years

Even now, I still hear of people who think *Catalyst for Cats* no longer exists. Let me try and set the record straight.

We first began to trap, neuter and return (TNR) cats in Santa Barbara in 1991 and became a non-profit devoted to that mission in 1992. At that time TNR was a relatively new concept and few even knew what it meant. We began to see the effectiveness of our efforts immediately. In neighborhood after neighborhood spayed females were no longer dropping litters—usually two litters per year—and we began to see the never ending cycle of the sick and dying start to ebb.

As word spread and our volunteer base increased, we expanded our efforts into Carpinteria, Summerland and eventually into Santa Ynez Valley and finally the North County, which proved to be, by far, the most challenging.

Over the years the stats began to improve significantly and after two and a half decades we felt we had done our part by showing the way. With difficulty, we made the decision to pass the torch to other committed groups.

Slowly over several years, existing agencies have expanded and developed programs to deal with overpopulation. New groups formed—all with the goal of fewer unwanted animals. It is a work in progress and our community is better for it. We thank all of those who work towards that goal, however it may be

achieved.

In regards to *Catalyst*, though we no longer regularly tackle the exhausting TNR component of our original mission, our other programs continue. We supply food for hundreds of cats daily for the approximately thirty colonies we oversee and care for. Also our active Tiny Tim Fund provides medical care not only for our colonies but for the public at large in the Valley and North

County. And we are a source of referrals for many asking for spay/neuter services as well as other requests for assistance regarding animal welfare.

It's easy to become discouraged during these troubling times. In the Hebrew phrase, "tikkun olam" Jews are exhorted to "repair the world" one person at a time in whatever way, big or small, that is possible. I believe almost all of us can find something to do to improve our world or benefit the creatures we share it with. It might even lift your spirits enough to make it a habit. A thought to keep in mind for the New Year.

I want to take this opportunity to extend my appreciation for each and every one of you for your support of our ongoing rescue work. My best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a happy holiday season with health and happiness for the New Year.

*Randi Fairbrother*



Photo by Keith Morrison

**Getting Comfortable:** A Carpinteria feral rescue named Stray is a survivor of the December 2017 fires and the floods of last January. She has come a long way from the feral she once was. She is a happy, healthy, contented, and affectionate feline cared for and loved by Keith Morrison.

# In Appreciation

🐾 **The Santa Maria Valley Humane Society** held a free Spay/Neuter Day on Sept. 16th. In just over six hours 100 cats were sterilized. Thanks to the **Western College of Veterinary Medicine** and the **Shelter Medical Program** led by **Dr. Zara Hedge** and her student staff volunteers. Also special thanks to **Dr. Tom Thompson** (many remember him from when he operated the Adobe Veterinary Clinic in Santa Barbara), **Dr. Daveilie Smalley**, **Dr. Mike O'Hara** and the **staff and volunteers at the Humane Society**.

🐾 **Sean Hawkins**, Director of the Santa Maria Valley Humane Society, for his new and innovative programs. It is great to have him on board.

🐾 To our Los Alamos volunteers for coming to the assistance of cats in need: **Marci Kladnik**, **Rose Koller** and **Lyla Oyakawa**.

🐾 **Kia Beckert** for assisting with TNR in the Santa Ynez Valley.

## Tributes & Memorials

### In Honor of:

**David Morris** and **Jim Requate**, who feed feral cats – by Nan Schoenfeld

**Randi Fairbrother** on her September birthday (88 years) – by Ethel Barclay

**Nap-Master Jimmi** – by Ernest Pratt

**Rufus** – by Barbara Calado

### In Memory of:

**Bugsy** – our first congenital glaucoma kitten. His diagnosis was devastating to us who rescued him, but he lived a good and long life of 22 years thanks to Christine and Rick Whitaker. Bugs slept by Rick's neck each night. (*see Memorial, right*)

**Buster** and **Romeo** – two very special *Catalyst* cats – by Allison Coleman

**Devonny**, our beloved cat for 18 years – by Tom and Teressa Hall

**Max** and **Lilly** by Barbara Calado

My dear **Sheila Pratt** – by Ernest Pratt

**John Tapia**, my brother – by Irene Kasper

**Scratch-Happy** – by Karen Littlejohn

**Tom Snow**, **Sam**, **Chairman** and **Maybe** – by Mr. and Mrs. Salotti and Cara

**June Whitlock**, for her faithful support – from *Catalyst for Cats*.

## Memorial

### The Amazing Bugsy

I recall a time when Bugsy went missing. We live next to a creek, and because of that we have lost a couple of cats over the years if we don't take them in at night. Bugsy went into the backyard and was gone for 11 days.

We put up flyers, Craigslist notices, and still nothing. Then at 4 a.m. at the back sliding door he arrived. He managed to make it over the cement wall, past the gate, around the pool and come home to us. Not that impressive, you might be thinking, but did I mention that Bugsy had been blind since birth?

He was born with opaque glassy looking eyes. In one eye he could not see anything but a blue haze, and in the other, you could see the detached retina floating in his eye.

Yet he managed to navigate the house, the dogs and all the other cats with great ease. He even learned where the pool was and would go out on the Jacuzzi to take a drink (as pictured below), walking along the tile squares. He used his tail for reference to the pool water.

He became very resourceful in overcoming his



*Blind But Resourceful: Bugsy couldn't "see" where he was, but always knew how to navigate his surroundings.*

visual disabilities. In our last house he would climb up on the roof and get himself down without any help other than a nearby tree.

He passed away last month at the ripe old age of 22. He is greatly missed.

—Rick Whitaker

# Injured caregiver impacts large Guadalupe colony

In the last newsletter we included a story about our largest colony. Diane and Mark Poudrier live in Guadalupe and currently care for about 30 cats within their colony. Over the years they have TNR'd 130–140 cats in their yard alone and another 60–70 scattered throughout Guadalupe.

Mark and Diane truly know the ins and outs of managing a feral cat colony, and with the help of *Catalyst for Cats* this has become a very stable situation. These cats are visible throughout their garden, usually napping as cats often do, yet most will scatter when newcomers approach.

Since our report, though, Mark took a serious fall while on a ladder trimming a tree, resulting in multiple injuries, including two broken legs, a broken right arm and hand and a shoulder injury. He was taken by ambulance to Stanford Medical Center in Palo Alto.

Recovery will be a very long and difficult one. In the meanwhile, Diane, despite using a walker and being on oxygen, is coping as best she can to care for the colony—with help from a neighbor, Luz Garcia and a long-time *Catalyst* volunteer Rayma Brayton and Mary Lou Cello pinch hitting two evenings a week.

Diane and the cats miss Mark very much. One of the oldest residents of the colony, Tigger, a long-haired orange male, prowled through the house looking for Mark, even though the cats are not normally allowed in the house. Mark has arranged many areas on and around the patio for their comfort.

After seven weeks and several surgeries at Stanford

Medical Center, Mark is now in a convalescent home in Santa Maria slowly recovering, much to everyone's relief. We are all happy he is at least near home. It will be a joyous day when he returns home for his human as well as his feline friends.



Photo by Denise Clift

**Unfortunate Events, Lucky Cat:** Just a few days before his fall from a ladder, Mark Poudrier rescued this gray kitten in Guadalupe. While Mark has been recovering in hospital in Palo Alto, Gray was taken in at the Santa Maria Valley Humane Society. (See story below.)

## A lasting impression from even brief stay at SM Humane Society

*From Denise Clift, Cat Program Manager & Rescue Coördinator, Santa Maria Valley Humane Society:*

Yes, Gray did get adopted; he was here with us for all of 2½ weeks. Most of that time he lived in my office and was my little “guard” kitty. He'd sit atop my desk and watch the door while I was out and the minute I came back he'd come over and want to be petted and then held. I set up a blanket behind me on my chair so it was between me and the arm of the chair and he'd snuggle up there and sleep for as long as I'd sit working at my desk.

I'd let him spend the night in my office and he

quickly learned that I'd be back and never knocked stuff over or made any kind of a mess during his time alone. He was a very special kitty—quite the personality for having been in a feral colony.

It was very hard to let him go, but I believe he went to a good home and the family was very excited to have him. Of course, we'd allow them to bring him back for any reason should things not work out, and we'd gladly take him back.

I miss him, but am happy he found a new home, and I thank you very much for sending his rescuers our way so that we could give him that opportunity.

## Updates:

### *Catalyst Action & Related Issues*

#### **Voters Pass Prop. 12**

California voters approved of Proposition 12 by more than 60% in the Nov. 6 mid-term election. The new law will allow for more humane treatment of chickens, cattle and pigs by establishing minimum space requirements for calves raised for veal, breeding pigs, and egg-laying hens, and bans the sale of veal from calves, pork from breeding pigs, and eggs from hens when the animals are confined to areas below minimum square-foot requirements.

The Prop. 12 campaign was endorsed by California veterinarians, family farmers and animal shelters, the ASPCA, the Humane Society of the United States, the Center for Food Safety, and the United Farm Workers.

#### **A Clean Pet Bowl for Health**

A dirty pet bowl is an ideal surface for bacteria, yeast and mold growth, which can make a cat sick. Plastic bowls are the worst. Not only are they more difficult to clean well, but bits of plastic break off and can be consumed. Dirty bowls often contain E. Coli, Salmonella and/or yeast. This is especially troubling when feeding feral cats because they are difficult to diagnose and treat. We recommended a disposable feeding dish be used and the water dish cleaned well often.

#### **Feed Your Cat on a Saucer**

Pet stores have a plethora of cute feeding dishes in all sizes and depths. For water and kibble, choose the deeper ones, but for wet food go shallow.

Cats' whiskers are sensitive, specialized hairs used for measuring the width of openings and in hunting. Sticking their faces into a deep dish causes the sides of the bowl to press on the whiskers. Cats eat off the ground in nature, so maybe your kitty is trying to tell you something if she is scooping her food out of a bowl onto the floor before she consumes it.

Saucers are perfect. The cats love them and they take little room in the dishwasher. Be sure to wash them after every meal!

#### **Beat the Heat**

More free spay/neuter surgeries are planned for February in the Santa Barbara County. Beat the Heat is a project of the Responsible Pet Owners Alliance and supported by Santa Barbara County Animal Services, the Santa Maria Valley Humane Society and C.A.R.E.4PAWS.

## Mom's Favorite?



*Photo by Amy Smith*

*This gray and white mom delivered four kittens at one of our feeding sites in Santa Maria before we could trap her. We managed to trap three of her kittens, but she hid the fourth and last one (above left) until he was too old to socialize. We returned him to the colony. Amy Smith, the feeder, sees them every morning and they are usually together.*

### *A Fragile Circle*

*"We who choose to surround ourselves with lives even more temporary than our own, live within a fragile circle; easily and often breached. Unable to accept its awful gaps, we would still live no other way. We cherish memory as the only certain immortality, never fully understanding the necessary plan.*

*"Another cat? Perhaps. For love there is also a season; its seeds must be resown. But a family cat is not replaceable like a wornout coat or a set of tires. Each new kitten becomes its own cat, and none is repeated. I am four cats old, measuring out my life in friends that have succeeded but not replaced one another."*

*Irving Townsend  
American record producer  
(1920-1981)*

(Submitted by Allison Coleman)

## Even a hurricane can't stop her rescue, TNR work

*By Randi Fairbrother*

As many of you are aware, our tireless North County feral feline advocate Debbie Merry relocated to Florida (Panama City) well over a year ago. Debbie, who fostered, fed, socialized and trapped in the North County for many years, frequently reported here in the *Catalyst* Newsletter with both nail-biting narratives and helpful photographs.

In the last issue we briefly mentioned she has continued to promote her TNR skills in Panama City. I watched and worried when Hurricane Michael devastated the area. I spoke with her on the phone the evening prior to Michael's landfall (Oct. 10). She was safe in a hotel with her family of animals (Sonny, her dog and her five cats transported from Santa Maria) plus four foster cats she managed to pick up along the way. She seemed to be in good spirits with a good supply of food and litter.

We lost contact for a few days. When I finally reached her, she was not only home safely, but all was intact: her storage shed, newly built deck and the hot dog cart. A fallen tree on the roof had caused no serious damage. There was no drinkable water or electricity at that point, but she had propane gas available

for cooking.

Regarding spay/neuter opportunities, a local clinic does TNR clients on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays with people waiting in line. The clinic can do as many as 90–100 cats each of those days, but like many of the local businesses has not yet re-opened since the hurricane.

Thanks to Debbie's exemplary efforts, *Catalyst* appears to be branching out. One of our donors, upon hearing that Debbie continued to TNR in Florida, sent us a generous donation toward her costs. To be able to continue our work is very meaningful to us. I compare it to the effect of the ripples made when a rock hits a body of water.



**Protective Mom:** Stepping in for homeless cats in her new home in Florida, as she always had in Santa Maria, Debbie Merry rescued this then-pregnant gray and white stray, who she named Sweet Pea, last spring in a nearby trailer park. According to residents, Sweet Pea had already had numerous litters, and Debbie provided a cozy place for her to give birth to four beautiful kittens (two or more seen here), which Debbie continued to foster. Mom and kittens all tested FIV positive, but the kittens eventually tested negative. They have all been spayed/neutered and adopted through the Humane Society of Bay County, except for Sweet Pea, who has become one of Debbie's treasured indoor cats.

**Photos by Debbie Merry**





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

We must continue to spread the word for cats.  
Whether deemed feral or stray, abandoned or  
free roaming, they deserve our care, support  
and respect, just as any other cat does.  
They are not responsible for their misfortune  
of being homeless.

