

SPECIAL EDITION:

DEDICATED TO SENIORS (CATS, OF COURSE!)

- HOW OLD IS AN "ELDERLY" CAT?
- WHAT ARE THEIR NEEDS?
- HOW DO FERAL SENIORS FARE?



# Catalyst for Cats

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

NEWSLETTER

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## From the Founder

### Always concerned with ways to ease cats' burdens

**W**hile rummaging through the garage recently I happened across my childhood scrapbook from an era

before World War II. One item that really caught my attention was this picture of two adorable kittens (*right*) sharing a saucer of milk.

Talk about Remembrance of Things Past! What a different time that was on so many levels.

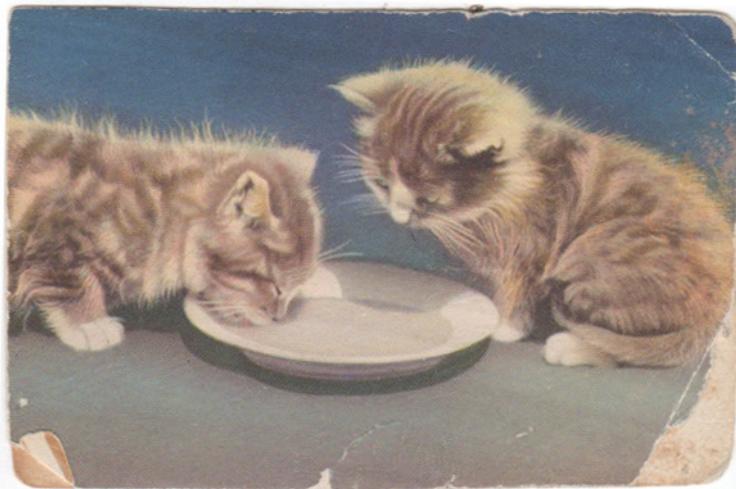
I grew up living in a hamlet on the outskirts of New York City surrounded by nature and nearby woods, and cats and kittens were always a part of our lives. My mother outfitted a cat-accessible window for our house well before cat litter or litter boxes came into vogue. It was a difficult time for felines, and my whole life I've been concerned with trying to ease their burden.

Over 30 years ago, at age 60, I finally figured out how to do something community-wide about a problem that to many of us seemed a hopeless situation: feline overpopulation. *Catalyst for Cats* has been a genuine labor of love for me, but not without pain.

Not surprisingly, I now strongly identify with our senior felines as they continue to age, yet persist in the lives they have known.

Because of Covid and the temporary closing of shelters and spay/neuter clinics, we added some young

cats to our feeding program, but overall the fewer feral cats the better.



One might ask what about mousers? Tame cats love to hunt and make excellent mousers. Keeping them in at night is probably the most important way to keep them safe. Unfortunately, their favorite hunting time is dusk and early morning light when their predators are

also out on the hunt.

Because of you, our donors, *Catalyst* is able to provide food for over 30 colonies. Many more colonies still exist, but their caregivers provide resources for them. We also continue to provide veterinary care as well. For all this we are most thankful and appreciative to each and every one of you.

I am happy to report shelters and spay/neuter clinics are opening up again locally and nationwide.

With the world in such an overwhelming state of pain, despair and turmoil my thoughts go out to all those who comfort and care for animals. Count your blessings if you are able to enjoy a merry Christmas and happy holiday season.

*Randi Fairbrother*

## What you should know about senior citizen cats, especially ferals

**A**s a feline ages several changes occur and accrue. Most apparently, they sleep more and play less. As all of us do after middle age, cats lose muscle mass and seem to shrink. They may become crabby or even strike out if touched at the end of the spine area, a sign of arthritis or joint pain. Mouth issues are common and dental care is very important for overall health.

Sometimes a feral cat who has lived outdoors for many years will get tired of the cold and just walk into the house, even becoming a lap cat. Do you have any idea the pleasure the caregiver gets when that happens? And yes, it has happened!

### *Cats' lives in human years*

**T**he first year of a cat's life is equal to about 15 human years. The second year is comparable to another nine years for a human. After that each year for a cat is similar to about four years in human terms. Veterinary medicine generally considers cats to be "elderly" after they reach 11 years-old.

For senior felines, that means comparable ages look something like this:

#### Cat Years vs. Human Years

15	76
16	80
17	84
18	88
19	92
20	96

### *TNR workshop set for January*

**F**eral Cat Caretakers Coalition will be holding its 15th Community Cats Workshop on January 29, 2022 at the Historic Veteran's Memorial Complex in Culver City. The program will cover humane trapping, post-surgery boarding, agreements for successful returns, safe relocations, domesticating kittens, online fundraising, safe feeding, and sheltering, plus ways to change hearts and minds.

For more information contact Feral Cat Caretakers Coalition at 310-821-4122.

## Tributes & Memorials

### In Honor of

**Amy Smith**, our "go to" person in North County. She is constantly on the move – by *Catalyst Cats* – by Elizabeth Gralewski  
**Ethel Barclay**, my childhood friend of ninety years on her upcoming 92nd birthday – by Randi Fairbrother  
**Jedo** – by Mary Hanson  
My 92-year-old **sister** and her **four cats** – by Kay Harrison  
**Randi Fairbrother**, my cousin, on her birthday – by Sally Troscher

### In Memory of

All the **Catalyst cats** I fostered and those I adopted – by Allison Coleman  
**Patches**, from one of my feeding sites. When I noticed she was failing, I managed to get her to the vet to be "put to sleep" because I did not want her to die alone in a field – by Cara Houghton  
**Arnie Rowkowski**, my most kind and long-time neighbor, who passed away at age 85. Sadly, his granddaughter, Zoa, suddenly passed a few days later. Since Halloween was one of Arnie's favorite days of the year, the family managed to decorate their yard in his honor. The yard featured two large pumpkins grown by Zoa from seed. So much sadness. Even though they are a family of faith it is a lot of grief to deal with. – by Randi Fairbrother

### Winter tips for outdoor cat comfort

**C**ats who live exclusively out-of-doors need extra food during winter and fresh water. Wet food freezes, so put out dry food as well. To keep water from freezing, pour into deep rather than wide bowls and place the bowl in a sunny area. Avoid using metal.

Cats prefer to sleep together and cuddle up for warmth. Heat disperses quickly if there is too much space. Place the shelters out of the wind as much as possible.

Upgrade and clean shelters for winter weather. Replace ground covering with a lot of fresh straw. **Never use hay, blankets or towels because they do not repel moisture and will stay wet and cold.**

And remember to bang on the hood of the car before starting it. Cats will often find shelter under the hood for warmth.

## Survivors: Appreciation for our long-haul friends

*Any feral cat that lives to be called 'elderly' has beaten the odds for survival.  
Here is an introduction to three of our beloved seniors.*

**Lars**—cared for by Barbara Gaughen-Muller



*photo by Barbara Gaughen-Muller*

**W**hen relocated from a colony in Guadalupe, Lars was already an elderly cat. He must now be in his late 90's in human years, but he still loves life.

Yesterday he brought home a baby rabbit, which thankfully got away. He is an outdoor cat except when it rains he sleeps on the sofa. He sleeps a lot yet always knows when it's feeding time. He never misses a meal, breakfast or dinner, two meals a day. I don't leave food around. He still yearns for scratches and is a dear. He has his favorite bushes he loves to sleep under.

**FIV-positive tabby from Santa Maria**—befriended by Melissa Muñoz



*photo by Melissa Muñoz*

**A**fter years of feeding this cat from a large apartment complex he became friendly and started greeting me, rubbing against my legs and chasing after my car as I drove away. He waited for me on the street when I came to feed. Finally, I picked him up

and brought him home to live with me. He has adjusted well to living with my dog and other cats plus the ferals I feed outdoors.

Because of his bad breath we gave him dental care, removing many teeth. He seems to be doing well even though he drools and has tested FIV positive. He spends his days resting and seems comfortable in the time he has left. He still purrs and vocalizes when I talk to him. He went from sleeping in the street to sleeping in my bed. I promised him he will never be cold, hungry and unloved ever again.

**Niles**—admired by Amy Orozco



*Photo by Amy Orozco*

**N**iles is the name of this dapper tuxedo. Equally loving and handsome, Niles is a testament to the strong network of cat advocates Catalyst has built over our 30+ years, particularly in Carpinteria. After he was abandoned and found trying to feed himself at a Catalyst colony, one Carpinteria volunteer adopted him. When a family emergency necessitated an out-of-state move, Niles took up residence with another Carpinteria volunteer.

He seemed to make himself right at home with both re-homings—no readjustment issues, no shyness, but rather lots of lap time, a good appetite, and a purr that sounded like the spin cycle on a washing machine.



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