



Friends of Feral Felines CAT'S TALE

Winter 2008



2008 Marks the 10 Year Anniversary of Friends of Feral Felines



Feral Angels Clinics Continue in 2008

On January 18, 2003, Friends of Feral Felines held the very first high-volume, low-cost spay/neuter clinic for feral cats in the Charlotte area. We are proud to announce that we will be holding additional spay/neuter clinics for the sixth straight year in 2008, including monthly clinics in partnership with the Humane Society of Charlotte.

During the clinics, cats are carefully registered and assigned numbers to ensure that they are returned to their correct caretakers. After being anesthetized, all cats are tested for FeLV and FIV, then spayed or neutered if the test results are negative. If they test positive, cats are humanely euthanized to prevent suffering and the spread of disease to other cats in the colony.



Before they awaken from anesthesia, all cats are given the deluxe "kitty spa" treatment of flea combing and ear cleaning. Recovery room volunteers monitor cats as they wake up after surgery.

Our first clinic of 2008 was held on January 26 at Miller Veterinary Clinic on Monroe Road. 35 unowned feral cats from the community were sterilized on this day, including 20 females, many of which were already in heat. Thankfully, none of the cats tested positive for disease and needed to be euthanized. We would like to thank Dr. Miller and Dr. Yercheck for performing surgeries, along with assistance from vet techs Jenny Moesta Brown, Liz Grainger, Ellen Thomas, Jared Parsons, and Kenso Tochiki. Thank you to the many FFF volunteers who helped move the cats through the process and ensure their safe

recovery: Lisa Steffy, Beverly Sammarco, Ann-Marie Gearhart, Bill Laudati, Al Rich, Annette Collins, Donna Yankoglu, Cindy Henderson, Nicole Schoepflin, Lauren Tucker, Sarah Sammarco, Robin Christmas, Michelle Nedopak, and Ann Gross.



Spring Upon a Chance to Prevent Kittens

Feral cat caretakers know the importance of preparing their colonies for winter by providing adequate shelters from cold weather. They do not usually think about getting ferals ready for spring, but the most important part of spring preparation is prevention - spay/neuter of feral cats before the warm spring weather encourages female cats to go into heat and begin reproducing.

During warm weather, animal rescuers see an incredible increase in the number of kittens born to feral, as well as stray, cats. This rush of births, known as "kitten season", leads to strains on volunteers and resources. As kittens are born, some caretakers finally realize that the only way to keep the population of their colonies at a manageable level is through spay/neuter. Unfortunately, with so many people thinking the same thing, appointments for spay/neuter fill up quickly, and there is often a wait for appointments and trapping equipment.

Although there is a very short time during cold weather months where cats are not mating, this reprieve from reproduction does not last long. Caretakers should continue to spay/neuter cats throughout the year, rather than take the chance of waiting too long and ending up with feral kittens to care for.



Feral mama and kittens

A feral cat can often be cunning and difficult to trap, so it may take several weeks, or even months, of trying before the cat finally is trapped for sterilization. In the meantime, the chances of the cat mating and reproducing continue to increase with every day that passes.

If a feral cat does have a litter, it is advisable to wait until kittens are 4-5 weeks old before trapping the mother cat. Young kittens cannot be without their mother for the few days required for trapping and recovery. With spring weather being unpredictable, a cold night can be deadly to tiny kittens without a mother's warmth. Kittens can be trapped for sterilization when they are 10-12 weeks old.

As far as preparing the colony site for spring, it is a good idea to clean up the area before tree and bush growth makes access difficult. Pick up any trash or other debris in areas where the cats live, including shelters and feeding areas. If the colony area is not tidy, people in the community will associate the cats with the mess, even when the debris is due to irresponsible litterbugs.

Caretakers of feral cat colonies should have all their cats spayed or neutered as soon as possible to prevent the birth of more kittens that will need to be fed, cared for, and sterilized, all at a cost to the caretaker. Spay/neuter is the single most important thing you can do to humanely manage the feral cat population.

Letter From Ann Gross, Co-director of Friends of Feral Felines



Dear Friends,

Welcome to our TENTH ANNIVERSARY YEAR!

This is one of our stories.

I saw courage in action at our FFF Feral Angel Clinic. Thirty-six unowned feral community cats were tested for Felv/FIV (Feline Leukemia and Feline

Immunodeficiency Virus), spayed/neutered, vaccinated for rabies and distemper and given a left ear clip for identification. Also, they were given a free examination, ear cleaning and flea treatment.

Our gratitude and recognition goes to the dedication, expertise and kindness of:

- The dedicated field volunteers who spent two days trapping and recovering their feral cats
- The volunteer veterinarians, Dr. Miller and Dr. Yercheck, for their excellent care
- The volunteer veterinary techs who assisted the doctors and us in every way
- Our lay volunteers who registered, transported and recovered our post-surgery cats
- Our clinic coordinator, Lisa Steffy, for her important preparation and organization
- Our treasurer, Beverly Sammarco, whose delicious chili warmed our hearts and stomachs

And then, two days later...



Look Away

Little feet scurrying across a darkened street;
Mama and baby can't find enough to eat.
Ribs poking out through fur; we're hungry, can't you see?

Look away, look away, look away from me.

Little black tom cat, battle scars everywhere.
No time to stop and rest, it's a jungle out there.
Puffy jowls make you look tough.
Look away, look away, it's easy enough.

Greasy oil makes her coat dull,
But it's warm in the engine when cold winds blow.
Grimy fur, bag of bones, an uncomfortable glance will do...

Look away, look away, no kind touch for you.

Runny eyes, racking cough; what could it be?
Feline leukemia or maybe FIP?

Look for a healthy pet, that is what they say.
No home for you little one, I'm sorry. Look away,
look away.

They say, "Always into my trash, go away damn cat.
Must you find your meals this way?"

Or, "That cat is feral, it's not nice at all. Just you wait,
it will scratch you!"

The HSC/FFF (Humane Society of Charlotte/ Friends of Feral Felines Spay/Neuter Program) gave the same treatment for 24 more feral cats – five of whom had to be euthanized for disease.

Our heartfelt thanks to David Miller, Director of the Humane Society of Charlotte, and his staff, Dr. Robina Walker, DVM, and Tammy, Michele, Nicole and Marsha for their excellent care of our feral community cats.

We must always remember our field volunteers (citizens in every walk of life) who spend their time, energy and money on our low-cost spay/neuter/rabies vaccination for these innocent animals.

We are very grateful also to our network veterinarians who, at a low cost, provide spay/neuter/rabies vaccination on a Monday-Friday basis. Please call our hotline (704-348-1578) for their information.

Over these ten years, Friends of Feral Felines has helped our community with the spay/neuter/rabies vaccination of over 6,000 unowned cats. The birth of thousands of kittens has been prevented. And, the health of those cats has dramatically improved under the watchful eyes of their caretakers who provide daily food, water and shelter.

With the continued generosity of our supporters and dedication of our citizen volunteers, may we work together to improve the lives of the unowned feral community cats and make Charlotte and the surrounding areas a more humane environment.

Look away, look away.

I really don't like being alone, we just speak different languages, you and I.

I'll blink my eyes at you. Rub against the tree.

Then you will know. It's a peace sign, don't you see?

I'm slowly dying, and I do feel so alone.

Inside me there's a pretty cat, give me a chance, then you will know.

Look away, look away, look away from me.

I see the tears in your eyes, look away from me.



For all those whose suffering falls on blind eyes and unwilling hearts, by Jessica Sharfstein

Cat's Tale is a quarterly publication of Friends of Feral Felines

For newsletter submissions (always welcome!), address changes, or to be removed from the FFF mailing list, please email feralnews@yahoo.com

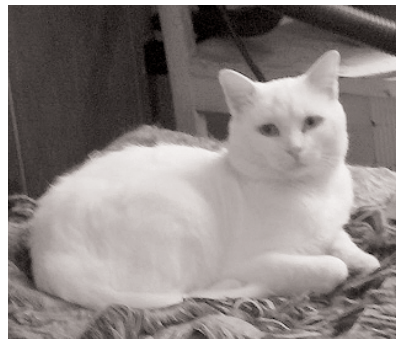
Layout & Design: Michelle Nedopak
Newsletter Committee: Beverly Sammarco, Ann Gross, Mary Ralston, Terri McGirt, Michelle Nedopak, Race and Valerie Farlow, Cindy Henderson, Suzanne Lynn

Feral Feature: LC

By Lisa Steffy

FFF Early one evening in July 2006, my friend/volunteer Donna and I had to go to Animal Control to reclaim three feral cats that FFF was called about. I personally find that going into an AC facility is just very downright emotionally draining, so I really was not looking forward to having to do this.

Due to some confusion about ID numbers of the feral cats we were about to reclaim, the lady at the front desk thought it might be easier if Donna and I just walked back to the cat room to find the two feral cats with left clipped ears. I was now starting to get very nervous knowing I had to go into a room filled with cats - cats that obviously had no value in life to some people, or they would not be there at Animal Control. How could I look at all these poor innocent cats who were given expiration dates for their death by euthanasia? I really do not do well with a situation like that. I told Donna that she could go back in the cat room herself because I just could not feel good about only removing three cats and having to leave all the others behind. After a few minutes of insisting to Donna that I was not going back there, she then went back alone.



Well, she was not gone very long when she came back out to me to say that she had identified the three feral cats with left clipped ears.

There was a cat back there that Donna insisted I go back to see. At this point, Donna was begging me to do this and would not take "no" for an answer. While staff members were processing the two feral cats out of the system for us, I said OK to Donna.

As we were walking to the cat room, Donna was saying to me, "We have to save this poor cat." I looked at her and was thinking to myself, "What poor cat?" We walked over to the cage only to find a solid, dingy white cat with one blue eye and one green eye (odd-eyed white). The head, nose, and eyes on this cat were so swollen, probably from trap trauma, and he was very, very dirty. When he would try to meow, his meow cried "Help me!" The cat was thought to be feral and was scheduled to be euthanized in 48 hours. The poor cat was just pitiful - merely skin and bones just sitting in the cage.

Suddenly our hearts told both of us that we needed to help this cat and get him out of the AC facility immediately. We were then informed that since the cat might be feral, we could not adopt him. After much persuasion on our part, we were finally given permission to adopt him. We came back in 24 hours to pick him up. He needed to be vaccinated and neutered before we could officially adopt him.

The time had come to bring the cat to my home. Not sure how feral this cat might be, I decided that we just needed to take things one day at a time with this poor

boy. I transferred the cat from the FFF carrier to a large dog cage. I had the cage in a room where none of my house cats could see him or bother him. He had everything in this cage to make him as comfortable as possible. I began feeding him a high quality diet immediately. His personality at this point was to hiss at me every time I spoke to him. Donna and I were watching over him like a hawk. At this point, we were not sure if this cat was feral, abandoned, or abused. He would just stare down at the ground and hiss without even looking at you. We would even meow without any eye contact.



We decided that the cat should have a name now. Donna and I kept telling Mr. Kitty when he would hiss that he was one lucky cat. That was it - "Let's name him LC for 'Lucky Cat!'"

Days went by and his facial areas of swelling and skin abrasions were now about completely healed. We noticed that with each day that went by after the first week of having him in the cage at home, his "true" personality was starting to emerge. Still hissing, he started making eye contact with us. I could clean out his cage and litter box around him without LC trying to attack or hurt me. We only had LC two weeks, and we could now pet him on the head. I really never saw a real "feral" side of LC, only sadness in his eyes and big hisses now and again. The time had come for LC to be allowed and trusted to come out of the cage to stretch and be tested for the human bond of "let me pick you up." One month had gone by now, and LC had his white coat all cleaned up, weight was on his body, his face looked normal, and his attitude was improving daily. Wow, he looked like a different cat! The only thing that was still bothering us about LC was knowing he still needed testing for FeLV & FIV. In order for LC to go to a nice home for adoption, the test was very important.

LC came out of his cage without hesitation and acted as if he liked being petted on his head, back, and tail. Not one hiss out of him, only the look of concern. LC went into a carrier nicely for us so that Donna could take him to the vet to be tested and dewormed. LC had transformed so nicely into a beautiful, healthy cat. I was praying so hard he would not test positive. I was hoping that since he bounced back so nicely with good food and love that the test would read negative.

My cell phone rang, and it was Donna calling to tell me that LC was negative and appeared very healthy to the vet. I was relieved and knew that LC would just continue to improve with everything.

LC came back home and was now given freedom of the room, and he only slept in the cage at night. I knew going into this project with LC that I could not keep him. My six cats had to be my limit. Now that LC appeared to look and feel like a normal cat, it was time to find him a special home. A friend of ours who lives in the mountains agreed to relocate the three ferals reclaimed from Animal Control to her property. When

Feral Feature: LC

Continued from page 3

asked about LC, Bo gratefully said "yes" to wanting to adopt LC as well. It was now time to turn LC over to the person who will forever love and care for him for the rest of his life. Donna's and my jobs were done. Our mission for the moment at AC was to save this "poor cat", and we did just that.

LC learned to trust Donna and me, but we knew he would need to learn all over again to trust his new caregiver, Bo, along with a new environment. We knew that LC was finally ready for this.

Update from Bo:

LC arrived at my house on August 10, 2006, along with three feral that Donna was in the process of relocating to my property in the mountains. He had spent several weeks with Lisa while she treated his abraded face and wounded spirit as he recovered from his neuter surgery. Even though LC still wore some scars on his face from his ordeal, I could see that he was an incredibly stunning boy. He was all white, with one green eye and one blue eye. Those beautiful, soulful eyes had me hooked in minutes, and I knew I had to attempt to erase all the hurt and fear that I saw there and strive to replace them with love and trust.



LC made friends with the other cats, and even the dogs, before he was comfortable with much attention from me. He adopted Tani, the little rescue kitten, who was recovering from flea

bite anemia, and he groomed and played with him by the hour. LC even snuggled with my aging Golden Retriever on his bed. Unfortunately, LC flinched like he was ducking blows whenever my hand came near, but eventually, he allowed me a stroke or two along his back while he was busy enjoying some special treat.

One evening, just last month, as I sat curled in the recliner, I saw two little white paws appear on the arm of the chair. They disappeared, only to reappear just moments later, joined by a nose. While I held my breath, LC slowly climbed onto the chair arm beside me. He allowed me to stroke his head for several minutes before he crawled into my lap and turned over to expose his belly and purr with contentment. It was our magic, breakthrough moment, which has now become a sacred ritual, as every evening before supper, LC joins me in the recliner for rubs and purrs.

I feel very honored to have earned his trust, and since LC is a very young kitty, I hope it's a trust that we'll continue to share for many years. LC at first stood for "Lucky Cat", then "Loved Cat", and now finally, "Lap Cat".

Volunteer Update & Opportunities

This year FFF will again be participating in several local festivals to raise funds for FFF. Volunteers are needed to work at our beverage booths in shifts of a few hours each. It's a fun experience and a great way to donate your time to help feral cats! Food Lion Speed Street will be held in the uptown area Thursday, May 22, through Saturday, May 24. The Blues, Brews, & BBQ festival will be on Friday, Sept 12, and Saturday, Sept 13, in the South End area. More details will be announced at a later time. Please contact us to be notified when volunteers are being scheduled. A portion of the proceeds for sales at the booths will go to FFF.

Thank you to the volunteers who worked at our information table at the cat shows in December and February.



We are always grateful to have dependable volunteers helping at these important fundraisers. Those who baked goodies to sell at the show also deserve a big thanks, since people look for our table at every show for a chance to buy more of the homemade baked goods made by our volunteers. The next cat show is the Crafty Cat CFA cat show to be held April 19-20 at the Charlotte Merchandise Mart on Independence Blvd, and we need volunteers to work at our table or bake homemade goodies (packaged individually) for us to sell at our bake sale fundraiser. We also need donations of cat related items (new or gently used items with a cat theme or items for cats).

Book wrapping this past holidays season at Barnes & Noble was another success! At first, we set up schedules with the stores' Community Coordinators. Shortly after Thanksgiving, Bill Laudati (scheduler at the Arboretum) and Beverly Sammarco (scheduler at Sharon Corners and the mall) started getting phone calls: "Can you take on another couple of slots?" Naturally, we took them. The majority of slots early in the season were during the day and a little difficult to fill, but volunteers from FFF once again rose to the occasion. Without fail, every time we received a call to add a slot, the Coordinator always told us that we were their most reliable group. This is a credit to you who volunteered and has helped us maintain our great relationship with Barnes & Noble. We would like to thank everyone who volunteered (many of you multiple times) and also Bill Laudati for the great job he did coordinating the Arboretum. It was a very time-consuming task, but once again, he and Beverly Sammarco did a great job. Please consider joining us this year starting the Friday after Thanksgiving.

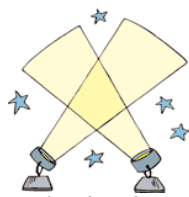


Please continue to check our volunteer website for future opportunities and upcoming events:

www.geocities.com/fffvolunteer

You can also add your name to our volunteer email list to receive notices when volunteers are needed. Please send an email to fffvolunteer@excite.com.

I hold that, the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man from the cruelty of man
- Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi



Volunteer Spotlight: Al Rich

Al Rich first became involved with feral cats in 2002 when he started feeding the cats that were hanging out in the back yard. He enjoyed feeding them, but realized that they would soon reproduce. To prevent this from happening, he went to PetSmart on a weekend and asked some volunteer animal rescuers there how to get feral cats fixed. That is when he met an FFF volunteer, Jane Howard, who helped to get his first feral cat, Roxanne, fixed. Jane told him about FFF, and the rest of the cats were soon fixed - Rosie, Pumpkin, Silver, Lizzie, and Sam.

Lizzie was a neighborhood cat that was abandoned and could have been the mother of the other cats and the start of the whole colony. Unfortunately Lizzie was killed by a car in July 2003. Roxanne was placed in a home. Pumpkin has been missing since January 2007 and presumed dead.

Al attended an FFF meeting for the first time in February of 2003. Since then, he has been a great help to FFF at the Feral Angels spay/neuter clinics. He also makes delicious brownies for cat shows and wraps at the holiday book wrapping fundraisers.

Growing up in Marietta, GA, Al was part of a family of "dog people". He has been married to wife Kathi for 17 years. After being married for five years, his wife brought home Samson, an orange and white domestic shorthair cat. He didn't want the kitty at first, but since he likes animals anyway, he quickly grew attached to the cat. Samson is still with them and is now 12 years old. Al and Kathi have no children, but their cats are their kids.

In October 2002, Al found a tiny kitten in the garage. They decided to keep him and took him to the vet, where he was pronounced to be in good shape. They named him Fred, and he is their best cat because he will watch TV with them and chase after light from a flashlight. He loves to fetch and return to them a milk jug ring.

Over time, they brought all of their feral cats into the house for safety and illness reasons. Sam was missing from the backyard colony for a week or more and came back with his head tilted. Al caught him and took him to the vet, where he was diagnosed with idiopathic vestibular disease - his head is tilted most of the time. They have kept him in their bedroom in the house since August 2006. He will play with them and sleep in the bed with them, but their three roaming cats don't like him.

They brought Silver inside in May 2003 after he had to be reclaimed from the pound by FFF. He has

free reign of the house, along with Samson and Fred. Rosie was brought into the house in October 2005. She lives in the hall bathroom. They can pet her and brush her, but she is scared of their three roaming inside cats.

They now have these five cats living in the house, three of which were originally feral cats (Silver, Rosie and Sam) but have adapted to living inside a house rather well. Rosie is the only female, and they are all long-haired, except for Samson.

There is a new cat Al has seen recently that he still needs to trap to have spayed or neutered, and he also has trapped a cat to be fixed for a friend who was the caretaker.

In his spare time, Al likes to ride his bicycle whenever possible. His toy is his 1964 Corvair convertible which has been in his family since 1965. He enjoys driving it to shows around the country.

Al is a wonderful volunteer and always helps to keep registration running smoothly at our clinics. Al, we would like to thank you for all you have done to help FFF and feral cats in our community!



*Al volunteering at our
Feral Angels
Spay/Neuter Clinic*

GoodSearch Gets Results

Use www.GoodSearch.com every time you need to search for information on the internet. Each time you click on a legitimate search result, funds are raised for our organization - it couldn't be easier! Be sure to select Friends of Feral Felines before entering your search term.

The more people who use the site, the more money is earned by FFF, so please spread the word to your friends, family and co-workers!

FFF Annual Yard Sale

Yes, that's right - we've added a yard sale to our annual fundraising events. Our 2008 yard sale will be held some time in April, as it was last year. The exact date and location are yet to be determined. Start putting aside your unwanted items to donate to our sale, and be sure to tell your friends, family, co-workers and neighbors! For all items donated, we will be happy to issue a receipt for tax purposes. This year, as in the past, we will NOT accept certain items: mattresses, window blinds, torn or soiled clothing, broken or items that are not clean, candles (unless they are brand new and still in their original package) or any appliance (such as a TV) that does not have all the necessary parts (including wires and the remote control). Please be sure that all items are in good, working condition, and clothing items are in gently used condition. As further details are available about the date, as well as information about where to bring donations, we will send out a detailed email message to our volunteer list and have it posted on the website as well. Please send an email to fffvolunteer@excite.com to be added to our volunteer email list for updates.



Stay tuned!



Events Calendar

Tuesday, April 1, and Tuesday, June 3 - General Meeting, 7:00 pm (networking 6:30 - 7 pm) at Morrison Regional Library, Colony Rd, South Park. Dates subject to change, depending on room availability. Call our hotline or check website for confirmation. *New members always welcome!*

April 19-20 - Crafty Cat CFA cat show, Charlotte Merchandise Mart (Independence Blvd). Volunteers, baked goods and cat-related items needed!

May 22-24 - Food Lion Speed Street festival (Uptown). FFF volunteers will staff a beverage booth. Volunteers needed!

Sept 12-13 - Blues, Brews, & BBQ festival (South End). FFF volunteers will again staff a beverage booth to raise funds.

Please check our website or call our hotline for more details and confirmation of event dates and locations.

FFF Wish List

- ◆ Volunteers! Phone & email volunteers, as well as many other areas.
- ◆ Monetary donations are always needed
- ◆ **Urgent need** for landowners or farm owners willing to accept one or more feral cats in need of relocation. FFF will assist in the relocation process.
- ◆ Volunteers for feral cat trapping teams in north, south, east, and west Charlotte, as well as the surrounding communities
- ◆ Donations: dry or canned cat food, medium or large pet carriers for cat recovery, light colored towels for spay/neuter clinics, cat related items to sell at cat shows, items of value for our eBay fundraiser
- ◆ Donated printing services for our newsletter and brochures

Non-profit Organization
US Postage Paid
Permit #3801
Charlotte, NC

A Cat's Tale
Friends of Feral Felines
P O Box 473385
Charlotte, NC 28247
704-348-1578
www.friendsofferalfelines.org



In Memory Of



Mr. Carl W. Dulin, from Jane and Brownen Whitley

My dear wife, Helen, who loved cats, from Tom Perkins

Muffin, from Mary and Len Ralston

Shadow, from Karen Justice



In Honor Of

Laura P. Weaver, from Mr. and Mrs. Robert M. and Jane H. Taylor

Penelope Smith, my wife, from Robert Bowman

If you care to have your loved ones honored, please consider making a donation to Friends of Feral Felines in honor of or in memory of their name.

Register Your Ferals With FFF

Attention residents of Mecklenburg County: If you have not yet registered your feral cats with FFF, please contact our hotline at 704-348-1578 to register the cats as soon as possible. FFF will not share your personal information. It will be used for our database only.

If one of your feral cats is missing, please contact FFF, as well as Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Control, to find out if your cat was taken to Animal Control and needs to be reclaimed. You could be saving the cat's life!

Feral Update



Since 1998, over 6,000 cats sterilized and vaccinated