

A CAT'S



TALE

Friends of Feral Felines

Fall 2003

FELINE FEATURE



MEET LILLY GRACE by Beverly Sammarco

I help maintain a colony of beautiful feral cats close to my home. I have been feeding at this location for more than a year. Cats come out to meet me and some come close to the car when it's time for me to put the food out. One orange and white kitten caught my attention. It had something wrong with one of its eyes, but I could never get close enough to it to examine it. It was illusive, and there were times when I wouldn't see it for days. When it did come out, it was very scared and shy and often ran away to hide under a large holly bush. I would try to put food in between branches. Most of the time another cat would be watching and then go under the bush and eat the food. I hated it when I didn't see this little one because I had a feeling it wasn't going to eat until the next day. One day, I hid near the bush for a few minutes to make sure it came out to eat. It was then I saw it had the bluest eyes, but one was draining and the other was clouded and looked like it had a cataract. Time went on and so did the routine of seeing the kitten on and off. It concerned me deeply, because I wanted to get it spayed or neutered and have the eyes looked at. It was getting colder and the weather forecast wasn't getting any better. I enlisted help to trap the cat. I was totally convinced this would take hours, but since it was hungry, it was trapped in less than 10 minutes! I brought it home and put it on top of my washing machine so it would be inside and warm. I fed it, and it ate everything. It also hissed and spit at me when I approached it, so I let the kitten be!

The next morning I took the kitten to the vet's office and asked them to look at the eye in addition to performing the spay/neuter surgery. I wasn't sure if it was male or female. Later that day I received a call from the doctor, who told me that it was a little female and she was recovering just fine. But he told me that something needed to be done about her eye because it looked like she couldn't see out of it. The other eye did not look good either. He said I could think about it overnight and let him know my decision the next day. I remember thinking, "great, this is just what I need." I couldn't return this cat to the colony with such bad eyes. I called a friend and discussed the situation. I was already emotionally involved. I cried a lot. She gave me the right advice – go with my heart and do what I thought was best.

Surely one more cat, especially one with sight problems, would not be a problem. Besides, the only female cat in my house needed a sister. She was so little and sweet

and needed a special name. I finally chose Lilly Grace.

Lilly Grace, come meet your six brothers and your sister. I had a nice, large enclosure she could stay in for a while so she could get acclimated to her surroundings. She had food and water dishes and a litter box. A few days went by and I noticed she had a few granules of kitty litter in her eye. We went to my regular vet's office so they could clean out her eye because I wasn't confident trying to get it out myself. The doctor examined her eye and said it didn't look good. I got two medications to put in the eye. By the third day, Lilly didn't want anything to do with drops six times a day. She went back for a recheck. I was told she should be seen by a specialist. I have to be honest here; all I saw were dollar signs. I had insurance for my other cats, but Lilly already had a pre-existing condition. Even if I did buy insurance for her, it would be a moot point. Off to the specialist we went.



The doctor explained two procedures – one to save the eye and the other to remove it. He explained the eye was ready to erupt in her head. She probably had herpes virus when she was born that caused this problem. I gave the okay to proceed with surgery. The hospital called and said I could pick her up after work. When I arrived at the clinic, the doctor told me she did great. She would recover and be back to normal in no time. Yeah, but what about me? I was in line waiting to check out crying my eyes out, convinced that I couldn't cope with this! The staff was so nice and reassured me she'd be fine. I couldn't even look at her when they brought her out, but she heard my voice and started to meow. Sure, tug at the heartstrings a little harder. We went home, and she went in her crate with no problem. One hour later, she ate an entire can of food!

As the days went by, I let her out to wander around but watched her closely. She didn't care; she sniffed everything and walked through the house like she was born there. She even climbed to the top of a five-foot kitty condo and I had to wrap a towel around her to get her down. About a week after she came to live with me, I heard strange noises during the night. When I got up, I discovered Lilly was out of her crate and walking around. I thought it was too soon for her to be roaming so I put

contd. on p. 2

LETTER FROM ANN GROSS CODIRECTOR OF FFF



Dear Friends,

Many good things have happened since the last newsletter. Our volunteers and veterinarians have been busy with day to day spay/neuter/vaccination of homeless feral cats, as well as working at our Feral Angel Cat clinics. We thank each and every one for their fine efforts in reducing the homeless feral cat population. We are proud of each and every caretaker, FFF volunteer and our dedicated veterinarians and their staffs. For each cat going through our program, the reproduction is stopped. Their life is immeasurably improved under the caretakers' watchful eyes and daily food, water, and shelter they provide.

We also welcome two new veterinarians, Dr. Mary Alexander, DVM, and Dr. Brandy Parsley, DVM. We are so fortunate to have their compassionate care for our feral community cats. They join our valued team of participating veterinarians.

On August 16 and 17, FFF had an information table during lunchtime hours at the Atrium at Wachovia uptown. We gave pamphlets, articles and information to the people who stopped by. We were there with the Animal Adoption League, Humane Society of Mecklenburg County and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Control. Our thanks to Karen DeMart and Sue Logerwell for their fine efforts in manning our table.

On September 8, we attended the UNCC Volunteer Fair with the goal of giving information about the campus homeless cats. We want to encourage, teach and work with the students, faculty and community of UNCC. Their efforts as a volunteer group would provide long-term humane care and management of the campus cats, instruction about humane treatment of animals for fellow students and reduce the number of cats/dogs on campus. We look forward to successfully working with them.

On October 16, we celebrated National Feral Cat Day with an information table, cookies and candy at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Animal Control. They graciously invited us and provided a tent, tables and chairs. We talked to people and animal control officers alike.

We look forward to seeing you at our December 2nd meeting and celebration. Please plan to attend.

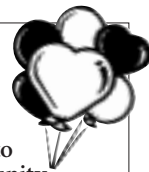
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her back in and made a mental note to make sure I put down the latch to lock the door. She did the same thing three nights in a row. I started putting twist ties on the door, but she was able to get them untwisted and get out. This was a definite sign that she was ready to be a free woman!

A few months passed. This little girl is a pistol! At five and one-half pounds, Lilly eats like there was tomorrow and begs like a pro. She bats her little yarn balls all over the house, then whimpers when she cannot find them. She's just about lost all sight in her remaining eye, but you'd never know it. She hides out where the litter boxes are and "attacks" the other cats when they come out. She actually leaps from the bathroom door onto my bed, which is a distance of about four feet. She lies down next to me and purrs a lot before falling asleep. She loves to get kisses on her head.

FFF CELEBRATES ITS FIFTH ANNIVERSARY IN DECEMBER

By Ann Gross, Codirector



Five years ago, a small group realized a great need to reduce the homeless feral cat population in our community through the use of the non-lethal method of trap/neuter/release.

Since then, our goals to reduce the homeless feral cat population, prevent the birth of thousands of kittens and provide humane care of feral cats in our community have been an ongoing challenge. However, we have succeeded in sterilizing 2,250 to date!

FFF is proud to acknowledge the following for their excellent and tireless assistance to help Charlotte and surrounding communities with non-lethal animal control for homeless feral cats. Without their efforts, none of our work would be possible.

- We owe a great debt of thanks to our contributors who encourage and support our efforts. Your generosity and loyalty have kept us growing these five years.
- We appreciate the dedication of the the veterinarians and staff participating in our Veterinary Network.
- A gracious thank you to the veterinarians and staff who volunteer their time and facilities for our Feral Angel Cat Clinics.
- Caretakers, who learn the safe way to trap, neuter and return community cats and your efforts in providing daily care for these innocent animals.
- Foster homes who provide care and socialization for feral kittens so they can be adopted and taken off the streets.
- The quilt makers, bakers, crafters, poster/sign makers, yard sale volunteers, and table volunteers who make our fund raisers possible and successful.
- Lay volunteers for your fine efforts in promoting the cause of non-lethal TNR in our community for homeless feral cats
- The dedicated and skilled voluntary veterinary technicians - Allyson Crunkleton, Kim Earp, Tamara Herbert, Katie Lassiter and Sally Smutko
- All of our lay volunteers who work tirelessly at our clinics - Lisa Steffy, Ann Gross, Susan Snyder, Kathy Jolly, Judith Jolly, Beverly Sammarco, Bill Laudati, Michelle Nedopak, Cheryl Nedopak, Karen DeMart, Ann-Marie Gearhart, Bethany Weikart, Linda Timmer, Jane Howard, Holly Weathersby, Johanne Woodall, Kay Jones, Gigi Wasiak, Race and Valerie Farlow, Victoria Crosland, Al Rich and Toni West.
- Lisa Steffy, clinic coordinator and codirector
- Beverly Sammarco, treasurer and fund raiser coordinator
- Michelle Nedopak, webmaster and secretary
- Karen DeMart, editor and publisher of A Cat's Tale
- AnneMarie Gearhart, plaques and signage
- UNCC volunteers - Ann-Marie Gearhart, Bill Laudati, Barbara Babst-Koch, Sue Logerwell and others

**FFF thanks you from the bottom of our hearts
for a very successful five years and
look forward to growing stronger with
your loyalty and support.**



To watch her, one would never guess she has practically no eyesight. In addition, she doesn't hear very well either. Sometimes I see her looking for her ball and it's right in back of her. It makes me sad that she can't see it. I have to tap her food bowl so she knows its there. But she doesn't care. I know by the way she curls up with me at bedtime that she's a happy camper. I don't know which of us is the luckier.

BUILDING FERAL CAT SHELTERS

Southern winters are generally mild, but we do have frosty nights and damp rainy days. Please protect your feral cat colony from the winter elements by providing a sturdy shelter in which the cats can huddle to keep warm and dry. During cold weather cats use more calories to keep warm. Healthy portions of food containing a high-quality fat source such as omega 3 fish oil or flax seed oil can also provide energy for warmth and control dry winter coats.



Shelters should be compact and large enough to allow for several cats, but not too large to cause loss of body heat generated by the cats occupying it. Alley Cat Allies recommends the shelter to be at least 2 feet wide x 3 feet long x 18 inches high with an opening small enough to prevent dogs from entering. This size shelter should probably house no more than five to seven cats. For detailed instructions and drawings for building a wood shelter, log on to www.alleycat.org/caretakers.html

The structure need not be complex and can be built inexpensively from a variety of sources.

- Wood - New or used wood. Check your local lumber yard for unused/damaged wood. Angle and hinge the roof so water can flow off, and you will be able to open the shelter to add/change the bedding.
- Heavy Cardboard Boxes - a large box can be used for the main area with small boxes attached to create hallways. A box within a box works well. Waterproof the boxes by using duct tape to tape plastic bags or heavy plastic securely over all sides of the shelter, including the top and bottom.
- Dog Houses - Reduce the original door size and add a flap to keep out wind and rain.
- Large Plastic Trash Cans - Secure the top with duct tape and cut a door into the side.
- All shelters should have bedding. A generous layer of wheat straw works best. Do not use pine needles, carpet, blankets or towels. Carpet/blankets/towels retain moisture and promote flea infestation. Bedding can be sprayed with flea/tick spray.
- Elevate the shelter from contact with the ground by setting it on bricks, wood pallets, or 2 x 4s. If possible, place the shelter front facing south, which maximizes warmth.

FERAL ANGEL CAT CLINIC UPDATE

By Lisa Steffy, Clinic Coordinator

This was a wonderful year for FFF helping to sterilize and vaccinate the homeless feral cats that live in our community and surrounding areas. Since January, FFF has held six Feral Angel Cat Clinics. The feral cat population will slowly decrease in size when TNR programs are implemented and understood. Major cities around the U.S. have greatly reduced their feral cat population by gaining strong support of TNR from their communities and by working in conjunction with their local animal control and humane societies.

FFF recognizes the need for all-volunteer feral cat clinics and remain very committed to increasing the number of clinics in 2004. We welcome and encourage more veterinary clinics to sponsor at least one Feral Angel Cat Clinic a year. With this additional support from more veterinarians in our community, our goal can be accomplished. Also, new lay volunteers and vet techs are always needed and welcomed.

Again, our gratitude to all the veterinarians and staff who volunteered their time and facilities to participate in sterilizing 200 clinic cats. A generous thank you to our lay volunteers and volunteer vet techs. You helped make a difference in decreasing the feral cat population in our community and surrounding areas.

FFF ASKS YOUR COOPERATION

- **FERAL ANGEL CAT CLINICS ARE ONLY FOR HOMELESS FERAL CATS .**
- **TAME HOMELESS CATS OR KITTENS ARE NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THESE CLINICS. YOU WILL BE TURNED AWAY**
- **A RESERVATION FOR A CAT MUST BE MADE IN ADVANCE OF THE CLINIC BY CALLING 704-348-1578. Reservations are based on the number of volunteer vets doing sterilizations that day.**
- **IF YOU SHOW UP WITH A CAT WITHOUT A RESERVATION, YOU WILL BE TURNED AWAY.**
- **THE CAT MUST ARRIVE AT THE CLINIC IN A HUMANE CAT TRAP.**
- **FERAL CATS BROUGHT IN PET CARRIERS WILL BE TURNED AWAY.**

AUGUST 25 AND OCTOBER 5 FERAL ANGEL CAT CLINICS



FFF had two successful Feral Angel Cat Clinics at Freedom Animal Hospital on August 25 and at Paw Creek Animal Hospital on October 5. A total of 74 cats were sterilized, vaccinated, ears clipped and cleaned and flea combed. Seven were humanely euthanized because of feline aids and/or leukemia.

We want to thank the dedicated veterinarians for volunteering their staff, facilities and time especially on Sundays. We also thank our volunteer vet techs and our lay volunteers. Without the continued support of our contributors, these Feral Angel Cat Clinics would not be possible.





In Memory Of

Our feline children, Dusty and Brandy by Patsy and Ray Ledford

**FFF NEEDS A
VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR
TO HELP ORGANIZE OUR
VOLUNTEER GROUPS**

CARETAKER DESPERATELY NEEDED

We need an additional caretaker in the Albemarle area to help the current caretaker with an existing colony. Help is needed to feed, trap and transport cats. Donated cat food is also needed.

Call our hotline at 704-348-1578 .

**FOOD NEEDED FOR
OUR FERAL COLONIES**

Dry and/or canned cat food needed for caretakers feeding large feral colonies in our area.

FERAL UPDATE

AS OF 1998,
OVER 2,250 CATS
STERILIZED & VACCINATED
TO DATE



PUBLISHER'S CORNER

A Cat's Tale is a quarterly newsletter of Friends of Feral Felines

Comments, opinions, articles and photos welcome.

Editors: K. DeMart, M. Nedopak, B. Sammarco

Layout & Design: Karen DeMart • kedemart@earthlink.net

Deadline for Winter 2004 A Cat's Tale is Jan.7, 2004

UPCOMING EVENTS



November 19 - Best Friend Forgotten Tour event at Ovens Auditorium, Independence Blvd. at 6:15 p.m. Tickets available at www.givevoicetoanimals.com or 1-800-6voice6. When ordering tickets, please specify donation goes to FFF. This is an important event for our community, and your participation will be greatly appreciated.

December 2 - FFF General Meeting and 5th Anniversary Celebration, refreshments, 6:30 p.m., Morrison Regional Library on Colony Road (South Park area).

December 13 & 14 - FFF will have a table at the Dixieland Silver and Golden Cat Club Show, Piedmont Kennel Club, Choate Circle (near Carrowinds) Sat. 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. and Sun. 9 a.m.- 3 p.m.

**VOLUNTEER FOR FFF
CHRISTMAS BOOK WRAP
AT BARNES & NOBLE**



This is a major fund raiser for us and your time will be greatly appreciated.

ARBORETUM DATES AND TIMES

Thursday, Dec. 18: 4-7 p.m. & 7- 10 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 19: 9 a.m.- 1 p.m. & 1-4 p.m.

Monday, Dec. 22: 9 a.m.-1 p.m., 4-7 p.m. & 7-10 p.m.

SHARON CORNERS DATES AND TIMES

Friday, Nov. 28: 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 5: 12-5 p.m. & 6-9 p.m.

Tuesday, Dec. 16: 11 a.m.- 3 p.m.

Thursday, Dec 18: 10 a.m.- 1 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 24: 9 a.m.- 6 p.m.

BIRKDALE DATES AND TIMES

Saturday, Dec. 20: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Sunday, Dec. 21: 1-4 p.m.

Call 704-348-1578 to schedule your time slot.