

# A CAT'S



# TALE

Friends of Feral Felines

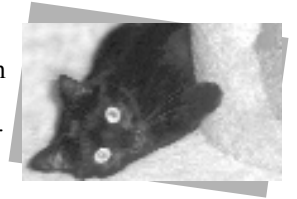
Summer 2004

## FELINE FEATURE

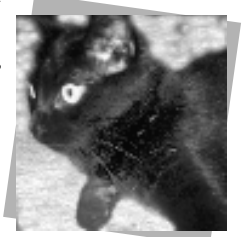


### GABBY'S NEW HOME by Jenn Dugas

We participated in the first Friends of Feral Felines spay/neuter clinic on January 18, 2003. We trapped cats from a local golf course. Two were sisters from the same litter. One sister was a little more relaxed than the other. The other was extremely mean due to her fear. The third cat went to a good home after the clinic. Since she was a kitten, she became easily socialized. On February 15, the most feral cat squeezed through a tiny hole in her cage and escaped. We never saw her again.



We decided to keep the other sister and work with her. We named her Gabriella. I would take her inside the house on weekends and force her to be held. I chose a small room that didn't have much furniture or knickknacks. If she broke free and started to literally climb the walls, she could not hurt herself or break anything. She would hide her head under my arm and purr while I petted her. After doing this for several weeks, I let her in the room without me restraining her so she could investigate her surroundings. After a few more weeks, I let her roam the house keeping a close eye on her. Gabby adjusted to the house after about two weeks, but spent lots of time hiding under the bed.



Gabriella is now adjusted to our home and loves us very much. We love Gabby too. She does not like to be held and still plays shy when we come to pet her. She comes to us on her own terms, but quite often. She loves to rub on everything in her path and purrs if you just talk to her. She has a favorite toy, a spot on the bed to sleep, and a place to sun herself each morning in front of the window. Gabby doesn't even miss being in her old outdoor home.

### FERAL CATS DO GOOD DEED by Jane Howard



For about four years I have been feeding a colony of feral cats at two motels.

Shortly before Thanksgiving while I was putting out food for the for one of my gangs, I was approached by one of the guests. She asked if I was the "cat lady" that came every day. I said yes, and she told me she had put down some leftover food the day before and hoped it was okay. I told her it was no problem because motel residents were always leaving leftovers for the cats. We introduced ourselves and chatted.

A few days later I saw Robin and we talked more. I found out that she and her husband, Jerry, had been staying at the motel for a few days. They had moved to Charlotte from Ohio. Jerry had found a job at an asphalt plant. The second day on the job, he suffered a horrible accident. He was taken to the hospital and was diagnosed with breaks to both legs, requiring extensive surgery to repair the damage. Although Jerry's employer had been wiring money to them to pay for the room, there was virtually no money left for groceries and other essentials. Groceries were provided by church food pantries, but they would skip meals at times. The motel where they were living wasn't an ideal environment for recuperation.

Robin was trying to find a job as a housekeeper at one of the several motels/hotels located nearby, but to no avail. Since she was without a car, any employment would have to be within walking distance. A light went off in my head. I told her I knew the manager of the the other motel. He was looking for housekeepers, and I told her I would call him when I got home and get back to her.

I headed to the grocery store to buy cat food to finish feeding my colonies. I also picked up some milk, bread, cereal and such to drop off for Robin and Jerry. I called the manager and

explained the situation. He and his family had come to Charlotte a couple of years ago from Michigan and had suffered some bad luck when their van caught fire and destroyed all their possessions, and they ended up at the motel. While staying there, he worked various jobs for the motel. He helped improve the property and its environment and eventually became manager. I had been feeding the cats a long time before his arrival and had removed numerous kittens and tame cats because the former owner threatened to have them removed by Animal Control. I met the current manager when he saw me feeding the cats at night. I explained what I was doing and he said it was okay with him. He would even let me know if there were kittens or other new additions to the colony and where they were hiding out.

He did need housekeepers, and he also had a handicap room available for Jerry. Robin could work for room and board. He called Robin, worked everything out and told them to move in the next day. Once settled, Robin started her new job immediately. Since they have a permanent address, they qualify for government assistance so Jerry can receive continued medical care and physical therapy. A huge gray cat showed up at the motel, which Robin started to feed. He took quite a liking to Jerry and makes regular trips to the room to visit with him!

During the course of feeding my feral colonies, I have met some really nice people. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that this "cat networking" could have resulted in such an outcome. Because of a few feral feline friends of whom I am very proud, this wonderful opportunity to render service presented itself. For that I am most grateful.

#### FFF GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday, 6:30 pm, August 3 at Morrision Regional Library on Colony Road. See [www.friendsofferalfelines.org](http://www.friendsofferalfelines.org) for meeting place confirmation.



## LETTER FROM ANN GROSS, CO-DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

As summer approaches, there is an urgent need for TNR (trap/neuter/return) to help control the homeless feral cat population, especially the growing number of kittens being born now. We continue to spread the word by teaching and communicating within our community and also by providing low-cost sterilization for homeless feral cats through our dedicated Veterinary Network and Feral Angel Clinics. Even though we have had local veterinarians join our cause, we need more to participate in this non-lethal approach.

Thank you to each of our 49 volunteers who worked at Cityfest Live 2004. Our homeless feral cats and kittens will certainly benefit because of your time and efforts.

Anne Marie Gearhart, Bill Laudati and I attended "Paws for a Cause" on May 15. The event was sponsored by the Humane Society of Union County. We were honored to be there with Alley Cat Allies (our mentor), the TNR national organization from Washington, DC.

On May 18 & 20, Karen DeMart provided an information table at the Wachovia Atrium. We were invited by our fellow rescue group, Animal Adoption League, and were joined by CMPD Animal Control and the Humane Society of Mecklenburg County.

Annette Collins, Lisa Steffy and Kay Jones represented FFF at the May meeting with the Gastonia Animal Control, local caretakers and veterinarians for a discussion of TNR and non-lethal animal control.

We want to thank Laurel and Jon Moretti, Michelle Nedopak, Sandra Synder and Beverly Sammarco for initiating the FFF eBay account, which has already been successful because of their hard work. We are grateful to Theresa Gahren for volunteering to assume the responsibility of our eBay site.

**A NOTE OF IMPORTANCE:** Frequently, we are asked by Animal Control, other rescue groups, city council members, etc., how many members we currently have. Although we have worked with many caretakers and rescuers, we do not have an annual membership roster. We are asking each one of you who believes in TNR for homeless feral cats to stand up and be counted. Membership fee is \$5.00. If this is a hardship, please let us know by calling our hotline. The monies collected will be for our general spay/neuter fund. Please use the cut-out form and return it with your check.

**We have enclosed our Summer Contribution envelope because additional contributions are always needed and greatly appreciated to fund our work in our community. Remember, your donation is tax deductible.**

Our continuing gratitude to our generous and compassionate veterinarians, vet techs and supporters who make our work possible.



**FERAL UPDATE**  
SINCE 1998,  
OVER 2,020 CATS  
STERILIZED & VACCINATED  
TO DATE



Guess who wrote the wonderful tribute to Margaret Hailey in the Spring issue? Mataya did. I apologize for omitting your name from the article. - Karen

## MAKE A SQUARE FOR OUR RAFFLE QUILT

Charlotte Harkey of Quilt Patch Fabrics in Matthews is kindly donating her time to put together a quilt for our December raffle.



We need volunteers to make at least 20, 11-inch squares for the quilt. If you will make a square, contact Karen DeMart at [kedemart@earthlink.net](mailto:kedemart@earthlink.net) or 704-552-1304.

### Charlotte's Guidelines:

- Theme of the quilt is Purr-fect Cats For All Seasons – holidays, sports/leisure, etc. The cat is the focal point.
- Utilize applique, embroidery, cross stitch, fabric pens, buttons, ribbon, etc. For applique - use a sewing machine zigzag, buttonhole or blanket stitch. Don't forget to fold the edges under a little. Use fabric glue to keep edges from fraying. Iron-on fusing tape can be used to secure pieces to the background before stitching.
- Fabric should be 100% cotton, colorfast and preshrunk. If it is not preshrunk, lightly prewash fabric in clear warm water.
- For the square/background, use a fabric color that will be a good contrast behind the subject of the block. It can be solid, but prints add more interest.
- Colors – tones or tints of any color will do.
- Use a fabric pen to write some cat sayings or do some drawing on the square.
- Be creative. Think simplicity.

If you have any questions, contact Charlotte Harkey at 704-821-7554. Her website is [www.quiltpatchfabrics.com](http://www.quiltpatchfabrics.com)

**Deadline for the square is Sept. 1.** If you live near Karen, (7519 Whistlestop Rd., Beverly Woods), she will be collecting the squares and will take them to the shop Sept. 2, or mail them to Charlotte at Fabric Patch Quilts, 1017 Stallings Rd., Matthews, NC 28104. Specify it is for the FFF Quilt.

## HEALTHY COLONIES NEED DEDICATED CARETAKERS

by Colleen Crittenden

It's been two years since I first noticed dozens of cats wandering around the park I run in. I've always loved animals, but I never knew that there were "wild" cats. I went home and searched the web until I found the Friends of Feral Felines website. The information I found stated that feral cats are not socialized to people. They range from cats who have never had any human contact to semi-tame cats who were once pets. They are usually living in loose associations known as colonies. They become well adapted to their territory and typically live a contented life wherever they can find food. They can be found at apartment complexes, alleyways, parking lots, vacant lots, backyards, and a host of other locations – urban, suburban and rural. I decided to investigate and find out where these cats were living. How did they find food, water and shelter? This led me to an apartment complex that backs up to the park where I found them eating out of the dumpsters and living under the breezeways. I found this to be totally unacceptable. This is what motivated me to become a Friends of Feral Felines caretaker.



With this responsibility, I had to learn the correct way to proceed. I contacted FFF and read as much material as I could find. Hopefully, the information below will be helpful to others who want to become caretakers.

### DETERMINE IF THE CATS ARE BEING CARED FOR

Veterinarians usually notch or tip one ear to indicate the cats have been spayed or neutered. Unless all the cats have clearly clipped ears, you should assume they are not yet sterilized.

If you notice kittens, there are cats that need to be sterilized.

Do you see evidence that the colony is being cared for? Are there food dishes, water bowls, or shelters? If someone is already feeding the cats, perhaps you can help by having the cats spayed or neutered.

## STERILIZATION

**Spay/neuter is the single most important thing you can do to help feral cats. It is the most humane and effective way to control the feral cat population. Not only does spay/neuter prevent more kittens from being born, it also decreases behavior like spraying, fighting, howling and roaming. In addition, it greatly improves the cats' health. Watch for newcomers to the colony, and have them spayed or neutered as soon as possible**

**Sterilization takes precedence over socialization and adoption.**

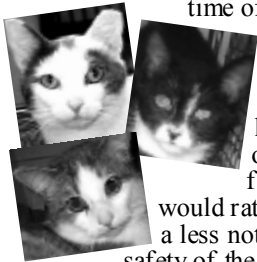
**Optimally when possible, kittens 4-12 weeks old can be socialized (kittens can be sterilized at 4 months of age), and adoption of sterile tame cats should be considered.**

**For detailed information, call our hotline and see [www.friendsofferalfelines.org](http://www.friendsofferalfelines.org) and [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org)**

## FEEDING AND MANAGING THE COLONY

Feed the cats at least once a day. Dry food is preferable and should be left as inconspicuously as possible. Place dishes under shrubs, behind dumpsters or near walls. Don't forget daily fresh water!

Stick to a regular feeding schedule if possible. A consistent time of feeding will make trapping easier.



Minimize the number of feeding locations. So far I have not been successful at this. However, this means less work for you and less chance of someone noticing. Not everyone is happy to see someone trying to help feral cats. I've encountered people that

would rather just have all of them killed. Feeding in a less noticeable place is best for you and for the safety of the cats. It also makes it easier to keep an eye on the cats and to monitor the colony for newcomers.

Feed the cats in areas as secluded as possible, away from people and centers of activity.

If possible, do not feed at night. Conflicts with wildlife are one of the primary reasons neighbors complain about feral cat colonies. Daytime feeding reduces the chance of wild animals helping themselves to the cats' food.

Keep feeding areas clean. Change the dishes when they get dirty and pick up trash even if it isn't yours. I eat out most of the time so I save the plastic containers from the restaurants and use them for food and water. Don't leave empty cans or large piles of food. Dry food is less messy than canned. If you only feed dry food, canned food will be more enticing to make trapping much easier. I'm the "Queen of Pet Food Coupons" and have talked all my friends into cutting them out for me. I also watch the newspaper for sales. I've found the best deals are at Food Lion, Bi-Lo and PetSmart. I get totally excited when I find a 24-pound bag of Nine Lives for \$6.99 and then I have a \$1.00 off coupon.

"Out of sight, out of mind" is the motto of many feral cat caregivers. Try to be inconspicuous in your feeding and trapping activities. If someone notices and asks what you are doing, explain that sterilizing and feeding the cats will decrease their numbers quickly and humanely. Most people are supportive of what you are doing.

**You also must keep a record of sterilization and vaccination for each cat in your colony.**

## SHARE RESPONSIBILITIES

Do you have friends, co-workers, family members, or other caregivers who will feed the cats one day a week or colony sit while you're on vacation? Perhaps they can socialize a kitten or keep a cat for post-surgery recovery while you continue trapping. The more people who participate in caring for a colony, the better off the cats and you will be. Network with the FFF members.

Most importantly, don't let yourself become overwhelmed. The following has become my motto:

*"I am only one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And the something I can do, I will do."*

This experience has been one that has given me incredible joy mixed with a little heartbreak. Many of the cats in my colony have been diagnosed with feline leukemia. Even though I understand putting a sick cat down is the right thing to do, for me, it is the hardest part of being a caretaker.

A bonus of a FFF caretaker is that I have met some incredible and dedicated people. My deepest thanks to all of you!

I hope this information will be helpful in encouraging you to give your time to a great cause that will give back to you more than you can imagine.

## WE DONE GOOD AT CITYFEST LIVE 2004!

by Beverly Sammarco



Who knew selling beer in 90° plus weather with ear-piercing music playing non-stop a hundred feet away could be fun? Ask any of our volunteers who were there! FFF had a booth selling beer at the Cityfest event held uptown on May 7-9. It was hot, the ice was freezing cold and the music, though good, was loud, but we had the best time selling beer, water and rum coolers. The front line checked IDs, the middle line made sure the tubs were supplied with ice and drinks and the back line handled the money. We had four donation boxes for tips and they filled up more than once during the evenings. The event was a huge success for FFF! We look forward to being invited back next year.

FFF would like to give a special thanks to Toni and Rick West, who were solely instrumental in putting us in contact with Cityfest management to secure a booth. A special thanks also to Sandra Snyder, Volunteer Coordinator, who sent endless e-mails to coordinate days and times and for getting us the great plexiglass donation boxes, and to Ann Marie Gearhart, who graciously made and donated an outstanding 8-foot banner with our logo, name and purpose for use at this event and at all others.

Thank you volunteers for helping make this a success – Rob & Barbara Bapst, Paul Beckett, Liz Blakeney, Marc Bowes, Flo Cattlett, Len & Tina Clark, Doug Cook, Bill & Renee Crenshaw, Colleen Crittenden, Don & Karen DeMart, Dedra Ellis, John Emelianoff, Race & Valerie Farlow, Corina Gardner, Tim Gibby, Amanda Glocke, Geoff & Patty Green, Peter Gross, Jamie Hancock, Jeff Hicks, Patty Lee, Chris & Allison McLean, Laura Marshall, Sis Mirabelli, Tina Revier, Derek Rome, Duane Ruff, Beverly Sammarco, Tom & Sandra Snyder, Greg & Lisa Steffy, Stephanie Stevens, Christy Thom, Mary Kay Wagner, Gigi Wasiak, Dawn Watkins, Holly Weathersbee, Toni West, Belinda Wilbourn, Jolly Young, and Mary Lee Young.

## TIME FOR AN UPDATE

If you are no longer interested in receiving *A Cat's Tale* and want your name removed from our mailing list, please e-mail:

[kedemart@earthlink.net](mailto:kedemart@earthlink.net) or [fffcharlotte@yahoo.com](mailto:fffcharlotte@yahoo.com)

## FERAL ANGEL CAT CLINIC

We held another successful clinic on March 28 at Paw Creek Animal Hospital. We sterilized 38 cats. Four were euthanized because of feline disease.

We want to thank the veterinary staff for volunteering their time and facility on a Sunday. They are Dr. Angie DiLillo, Dr. Joyce Carnevale and



Dr. Belinda Madison. Vet techs – Robin Major, Tamara Herbert, Allyson Crunkleton, Kim Earp, and Kelly. Thank you FFF lay volunteers: Al Rich, Bill Laudati, Lisa Steffy,

Ann Gross, Beverly Sammarco, Karen and Sara DeMart, Michelle Nedopak, Robin Byrd, Brenda Thrasher, Sandy Hawkins, Anne Ingram, Jamie Hancock, Ann Marie Gearhart, Allison McLean, Toni West and Sandra Snyder. We appreciate the time each of you gave.



*"...So Dear God, please hear me, please answer my prayer and send me somebody who will really care."* from "Stray Cat," author unknown

## HARRIE, A GOOD FRIEND TO OUR FERAL FELINES

Meet Harrie, a good friend of ours. These photos were sent to us by Harrie's owners, Max



Maintenance Company. They have been very generous supporters of FFF for a few years. Harrie was adopted from the Humane Society about five years ago and celebrated her 5th birthday on May 1. Harrie is known as "Harrie the Traveling Cat." She has appeared on ESPN, NBC and

many times on local WSOC TV. Harrie has traveled all the way from Bellhaven, NC, to Ft. Lauderdale, FL, twice by boat!

She attends Panthers pep rallies and is known by name at the marketplace in Charleston, SC. She even has her own e-mail address! Our gratitude to Harrie and Max Maintenance.



### *In Honor Of*

*Bill Lundell* by Mr. & Mrs. Tom Phillips



### *In Memory Of*

*Blackie, their very special pet,* by Ann Gross & family

*Katarina, daughter of Fricena,* by Allison & Chris McLean

*John, the little tuxedo cat,* by Beverly Sammarco,

**STAND UP & BE COUNTED**

**FOR ONLY \$5.00**

You can become a member of Friends of Feral Felines. Membership is from Jan 1 to Dec. 31. Join now and become a member through 2005! Your dues will be used for our general spay/neuter fund. Your dues are tax deductible.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

State/City/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

e-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

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