

cat tales

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FELINE FRIENDS NETWORK



A stray story

by Cecile Munro

It all started when our next-door neighbour, John, asked if I'd like to meet a mother cat and 2 kittens he had seen under a dumpster in the parking lot next to his place. One month earlier, my husband Ross and I had had to put down the cat we had loved for 14 years. Although I told John that we weren't ready to get another cat, I couldn't help being concerned when I saw the skinny, scruffy-looking, unkempt mother cat and her 2 kittens peeking out from under the large red dumpster.

I went home and got Ross to help me bring over some water and some wet and dry cat food. I placed the containers about 4 inches from the edge of the dumpster. The mother cat stretched out her front paw, dragged both the food and the water under the dumpster, and wolfed it down, leaving nothing for her kittens. We went home for more food.

/continued on page 2



Help FFN get the sale of pets in pet stores regulated!

Currently, it is legal for pet stores in Stratford to sell animals – including cats and kittens – that are un-spayed and un-neutered, making pet stores yet another source of unaltered cats that contribute to the problem of over-population that FFN is working to control.

Not all local pet stores sell animals – and we APPLAUD the businesses who help find adoptive homes for spayed/neutered cats and kittens from rescues and shelters – but the ones that do benefit financially (the current cost of a kitten is in the \$100 range) while accepting none of the responsibility for their actions.

FFN sees the effects of pet sales frequently, with calls from people who have purchased kittens at a local pet store but are unable to afford to have their new pet spayed or neutered. If the pet owners qualify as low income, FFN will cover the cost of the surgery.

While we are very happy that some pet store kittens are being spayed/neutered through our Low Income program, it does impact our budget, 100% of which comes from donations and fundraising efforts. And not everyone

/continued on page 4

/continued from page 1

Once the mother was full, she let her kittens eat – keeping one eye on me and the other on her kittens so they didn't stray. When the kittens finished eating, she hid them out of my sight farther back under the dumpster, and then poked her head out to look at me. I told her that I meant her and her kittens no harm and promised to bring more food the following day.

Ross and I feed a colony of four feral cats at Kemp Crescent so the next day I called FFN's Cheryl Simpson. She suggested that I try to gain the mother's trust so that we could trap her and her babies to find homes for the kittens before they became feral and to spay the momma before she became pregnant again.

TNR coordinator Marg Usprech gave me some advice on gaining the mother's trust. Every day, at 7:00 am and 4:30 pm, I put food down just outside the dumpster, gradually moving the food farther and farther away so the cats would have to come out from under the dumpster to eat.

Ross helped by distracting our ferals, who were also interested in Cleo and her kittens but were fortunately too big to get under the dumpster. When we caught them trying, Ross would lure them back to their shelter with cat treats and keep them occupied with treats and playtime while I tended to Cleo and her babies.

As the mother cat began gaining weight, I started to call her "Cleo," short for Cleopatra, because of the way she sat upright – very regal-looking! After a month of feeding and talking softly to her, she let me give her a pet while she was eating. Her kittens watched us bond from under the dumpster.

Marg had visited to assess Cleo and her kittens and Ross and I had agreed to care for Cleo while she recovered from being spayed. We set up a trap near the dumpster early on so that the cats could start getting used to it.

By September Cleo had started to leave her kittens alone while she followed Ross and me home. And one morning, while Cleo was out



exploring, the kittens let me pet their heads while they ate. It was time to trap.

In the third week of September, we trapped the kittens at noon and Cleo later that day at 5:00 pm. Everything went off without a hitch. Cleo's kittens were taken to the Stratford-Perth Humane Society and were both adopted. And Cleo came to stay at our house. She hid under the couch for the first three hours but then came out to eat and find the litter box. She is now 33 inches long, very healthy, and loves playing with her toys. And she was such a loving cat, we just had to adopt her ourselves!!

FFN Annual General Meeting

Sunday, February 28 | 2:00 pm
Optimist Hall (downstairs)
72 Water Street, Stratford

Don't forget to bring your "pennies" to this short meeting featuring refreshments, Pat's "Puddy Products," and a fun penny raffle. Meet your fellow "feline friends," renew your membership, hear a recap of what FFN accomplished in 2015, and discover our exciting plans for 2016!



FFN's adoption successes

by Holly Roulston

The FFN Foster/Adoption Program was a HUGE success in 2015 with an unbelievable total of 57 cats/kittens adopted out in just one year!

Where did they all come from, you ask?

Taking a look back over the well documented list, prepared by Brenda Ford (thanks Brenda!), the majority of the cats were friendly cats who, we assume, were dumped by uncaring owners. They have come to us from every corner of Perth County – Milverton, Shakespeare, Mitchell, Nithburg ... to name just a few. Some appeared at our feral colonies and were not accepted by the colony cats. A handful were kittens of feral moms that we were able to trap early and socialize. The majority of them are only alive and well today because someone cared enough to take the time to help them.

There was "Sammy Sad Eyes" who was barely surviving outdoor life and needed surgery to help correct scar tissue on his eyelids ... Dina, who spent last winter trying to stay warm on the heat vent outside a St. Mary's apartment building, is in a home today thanks to the ladies in the building who felt they needed to help her ... Winter (aka Carmen) who was scheduled to be returned to a barn. FFN decided to keep her inside for a few more days because she was sick with an upper respiratory infection. When foster coordinator Marg Usprech discovered what an absolute lovebug Winter was, she became determined to find her an indoor forever home. She is so loved that her adopter's daughter wants a kitten just like her!

And then there was Ginny, who made her way to a country property on the outskirts of Stratford and slept on the owners' porch in all winter weather – even during construction on the house. When FFN took her to the vet to be spayed, we learned that she already was. Could she have been someone's loved companion at one time? Smudge, another front-porch dweller,



this time in a shelter at a house in St. Mary's, who proved to be not feral but only very shy and timid. This gentle long-haired beauty now lives happily with a family that includes two dogs.

And sweet, shy, soft-spoken Popsicle (pictured above) who suffered constant infections in his teeth – possibly due to malnourishment when he was a kitten – and is scheduled to have all of them removed this month. Popsicle has been extremely cooperative with his myriad medications and is still available for adoption to a quiet, adult-only home.

We could go on and on as every single cat or kitten has a story. But the message is that we still have work to do in educating people to spay or neuter their cats. It's the only way that we will end the cat overpopulation problem in Perth County!

A thousand "likes" to all our members who share our Facebook posts to help these cats find homes.

We also couldn't have done any of this without the foster families who devote love, patience, and time to bringing these traumatized cats out of their shells and teaching them to trust humans again.

FFN is always looking for foster homes – to save more cats and to keep our current fosters from burning out! If you think you could spare a bit of space in your home for a short-term stay, we would love to hear from you. Contact Holly Roulston (Holly.Roulston@freedom55financial.com) or Marg Usprech (usprech@cyg.net) for more information.





START THINKING CAT VIDEOS!

Early submissions are trickling in for our 4th annual Feline Film Festival, but we need many more! Come on cat-lovers, we know you're watching – and loving – all those funny, weird, and wonderful kitty antics on the interweb. We also know that if you've got a cat, they probably get up to some kooky shenanigans. So why not capture them on video and share them with us? Whether international or homemade, we'll pick the best and put them all together for our annual Film Fest. Here's how to help:

1. New this year, we're putting a limit on submissions of 5 videos per person to help our selection team. So make sure your absolute top 5 are extraordinary!
2. To submit your favourite videos, please post them to our **Facebook events page**.
3. If you're not on Facebook, you can submit videos by emailing the links to films@felinefriends.ca.

Note that all videos must be downloadable (video posted on Facebook or Youtube.com are generally downloadable). If we can't download them, we can't use them.

And mark your calendar now for Friday, 3 June 2016 at Knox Church in Stratford. As well as the screening, there will be hors d'oeuvres, wine, beer, alcohol-free beverages, a silent auction, unique pet-related items for sale, and tarot readings! It's a fun, relaxed evening with all proceeds going to support FFN's programs – and what could be better than that?

/continued from page 1

qualifies for our low income program and the other impact is on the animals and the community. When new pet owners don't spay or neuter their kittens, these cats can potentially go on to have generations of litters that may end up at the shelter, in the foster homes of local rescues, or out on the streets.

Feline Friends believes that pet stores should not be allowed to sell un-spayed/un-neutered animals but instead only be allowed to offer spayed/neutered pets from reputable shelters and rescue organizations.

About a year ago, we submitted a position paper on this topic to the Stratford City Council. You can view this paper on our website at http://felinefriends.ca/ffn_pet_sale_regulation.pdf. The issue was referred to city staff for research and there has been no indication of when it will be back before Council.

Help us to get this back on the table!

Please contact Stratford City Councillors and let them know that the issue of pet sale regulation is important to you! It's easy – you can email all members of Council and Mayor Mathieson in a single step by going to the 'Email City Council' page at <http://stratford.survey.esolutionsgroup.ca/TakeSurvey.aspx?SurveyID=82KMmlz> and submitting your message.

Add your voice – it will make a difference!

Stratford-Perth Humane Society Adoption

The Stratford-Perth Humane Society will be hosting a Friends and Family Day Weekend Adoption Campaign from **February 9th to 14th**. All animal adoptions – including cats, dogs, and small animals – will be an incredible 50% off! There will also be special treats and a warm welcome for our friends and families in the community.

SPHS is located at 345 Douro Street. Opening hours are Wednesday and Thursday 12:00 to 5:00 pm, Friday 12:00 to 8:00 pm, Saturday 12:00 to 4:00 pm, and Sunday 12:00 to 3:00 pm.



Show Us Your Heart!

We are so lucky! Once again, Stratford's Global Pet Foods has chosen Feline Friends as their charity for their Show Us Your Heart Campaign, running from February 12th to the 28th.

Donate as little as \$1 and Global will donate the same amount to FFN. Or donate \$5 for a paper heart and Global will donate \$1 AND give you 10 Air Mile bonus miles. Last year, the store's front windows were covered in hearts. Let's do it again. Please shop early – & donate often! – so FFN can help as many cats as possible in 2016.



ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS

One of the benefits of an annual paid membership to FFN is a 10% discount at many of the pet stores and businesses that sell pet related items in Stratford/Perth County. We appreciate their support!

It has come to our attention that, due to corporate policy, the 10% discount may no longer be available at the new Pet Valu store located out by Sobey's. When shopping at Pet Valu, it would be a good idea to inquire about any discounts before making your purchase.

The following businesses are offering a 10% discount on pet-related to active FFN members in 2016:

Stratford: Feed-All Pet Centre, Global Pet Foods, the Split Rail Country Store, and Pet Valu* (*ask about availability before purchase)

St Marys : McPhail's Feed Services Ltd

Mitchell: B&B Pet Supplies

Seeking donations for 2016 Upscale Yardsale

Planning is in progress for this year's Upscale Yardsale which will take place on Thursday, March 10th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at 16 Fern Street.

Donations for the yardsale can be dropped off at the same address any time after the 8th of February. We're looking for books (except text books), jewellery, and other household items – all in excellent condition. To arrange to have your donations picked up, please email Pat Burnell at pmburnell@hotmail.com.

And avoid disappointment – email Pat to pre-order food from the following menu:

Moroccan beef stew	\$10	feeds 2
Shrimp bisque	\$8	feeds 1-2
Minestrone soup	\$8	feeds 1-2
Mushroom Provençal	\$8	feeds 1-2
Chili, vegetarian	\$10	feeds 2-3
Chili, meat	\$10	feeds 1-2
Quiches (<i>salmon, shrimp, mushroom, or ham & cheese</i>)	\$8	
Lasagna (<i>meat or seafood</i>)	\$10	feeds 2-4

Come by, come buy! Grab a glass of wine and nibble on your way downstairs. You'll have a whale of a time at the upscale!

Paws of Perth County Adoptathon

Saturday, February 27 | 10 am to 3 pm
Global Pet Foods (684 Ontario Street)

For further info, contact Paws of Perth County
519.949.1695 | 519.272.0848 |
pawsofperthcounty@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
garet markvoort

