

cat tales

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FELINE FRIENDS NETWORK



Rusty (at left) with her daughter Brownie and Brownie's three kittens

A family of 2 humans and 19 cats

by Michelle Kyle

When Bill and I sought a rural home in 2011, a small one-eyed cat who the realtor had not seen before led our tour of the acreage that we bought. Rusty and her kittens had arrived a year earlier, and a neighbour told us not to feed them or let them in our house because he wanted them to kill mice on his property. We obeyed, which was hard as the cats became our good friends, and when it rained, they stood on our back porch getting soaked, watching our cats who were safe and dry indoors. Since I was very allergic to cats, we had hypoallergenic Siberians. We had shared a small Toronto condo with three, and soon after moving into a house, we took in three more retiring mothers who needed homes and one Siberian kitten, as I wanted to experience a kitten. Little did I know that in 2012 we would have 12 cats and 12 kittens!

Rusty and I were outside when a very thin, injured black tomcat approached Rusty, who welcomed him as a friend, and he let me pet him. Then I found his body in our greenhouse. His death was my turning point. These outdoor cats were not getting the care they needed, so the next day I took Rusty to a vet for her chronic illness. In St. Agatha, I saw a hit-and-run driver hit a cat and took her to a vet. I named her Hope, hoping she would survive. For four days I gave her meds and eye drops every few hours and syringed water into her mouth as she lay motionless, depressed, and not eating. I returned to the scene, asked around, and learned she had lived under a restaurant with four kittens, and drank milk. I brought her kitten Sophie home. Seeing Sophie and milk, she wanted to live, stood up, drank milk, and gradually recovered. After the ordeal we shared, I had to give her a forever home. Hope and Sophie were the first non-Siberians to live in our house. Love was greater than allergies.

The day I met Hope, Rusty's daughter Brownie gave birth to three kittens outside on our camping chair. More tragedies led us to bring Rusty and her 14 surviving offspring into our home: kittens Skaara, Ginger, Brownie, and Patches; and grandkittens Charlie, Francine,

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Blackie, Merlin, Clementine, Bronwyn, Brianne, Heather, Willem, and Jonas. A few tomcats arrived individually: thin, afraid Skaara (Rusty's son, who disappeared for a year); FIV-positive, toothless Max; individualist Benjamin; and sick, injured Jeremy.

I first saw Jeremy eating our chicken feed. He was skeletal, sick, and dirty, and his throat was an open wound. Later a neighbour said he had seen him losing tomcat fights at his farm. We put food out, used an FFN trap to catch him, and promised him a forever home. FFN paid for his neuter and removing his rotting teeth. The vet said he would have died soon without help, and called him domestic long hair, although his fur was short. As he recovered, it grew long! He developed close friendships with Max, Skaara, Sophie, and Hope who, like him, has only one functioning eye. Despite being about 16 years old, he is full of energy, play-fights with the young bullies, and quickly jumps up on the counter to taste-test canned food before it is served.

We now share our house with 19 spayed/neutered cats, all age seven or older, with cat doors and tunnels to outdoor enclosures to keep



Feline friends Hope, Jeremy, and Skaara cuddle up



Nap time for Jeremy, Sophie, and her mother, Hope

them safe from human drivers. Brownie's second litter of five kittens were born in our basement, always had a home, and knew their grandma and dad, which is rare among cats. They have a sense of entitlement and bully others, so our cats live in two groups – upstairs and downstairs cats. Brownie and her offspring are downstairs cats; Hope, Patches and her son Charlie, and the Siberians are upstairs cats; and some, including Skaara, Jeremy, and Sophie, are members of both groups.

At breakfast time, I call "Brownie and kittens!" The downstairs cats run downstairs to eat, and stay in the basement and far enclosure during the day. After supper, they come up into the living room, and some upstairs cats go up to the second floor for the night. Everyone gets a comfortable night's sleep and human affection. We have adapted our house, adding doors for cat management, inexpensive furniture with washable covers, and uncarpeted wood cat trees and wall shelves for cats.

FFN helped me connect with EVAH low-cost veterinary service, which has really helped our large family, as several have required dental surgery, and more will as they age. Our cats help me teach animal reiki in my home. I've been teaching for five years, and all my classes donate to animal rescues including FFN every year. Animal reiki involves peaceful meditation with animals to relieve stress and enable healing for animals and people. Level 1 is offered 13–14 April and 13–14 July (www.purrhealing.ca).

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Seeking sweet volunteer for chocolaty fundraiser

Do you want to help make a difference in the lives of cats?? Feline Friends is looking for a volunteer to coordinate and expand our Milk Chocolate Mintie Bars Fundraiser to increase the amount of money raised during this sweet event. The fundraiser takes place from approximately mid-November to mid-December – and is timed to take advantage of the need for Christmas stocking stuffers. As the fundraiser coordinator, you would be responsible for:

- recruiting friends and/or family who work in larger offices/factories to sell mintie bars and/or to ask their employer to display the bars for sale at the reception desk
- organizing FFN volunteers who wish to sell and/or purchase chocolate bars
- distributing chocolate to sellers and recording number of bars delivered to each
- following up with volunteers to collect and record proceeds and pick up unsold chocolate
- redistributing unsold chocolate bars to those who feel able to sell additional bars
- tallying, recording, and reporting final proceeds of the fundraiser

While FFN already has a few established places/sellers, we need a volunteer who would be able to invest some time to expand this fundraiser. If you think that could be you, please contact Holly@felinefriends.ca.



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Thanks to a system of tunnels and enclosures, Michelle Kyle's 19 cats can safely enjoy the outdoors

Rusty was a master teacher who purred whenever a student was in the peaceful space, and stopped whenever the student's mind wandered. She has passed on, but thanks to her guiding us when we first met, her family is safe with us.

Postscript by FFN: Many thanks to Michelle for sharing her story with us, and for her annual donations to Feline Friends Network – she is indeed a good friend to cats!

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THANK YOU “SIP & SHOP”!

A huge thank you to all the vendors at the Sip and Shop Night Market for thinking of Feline Friends Network. They raised \$150 in donations for us. We would also like to thank everyone who attended, donated, and stopped by to chat with our inveterate volunteer crafter, Pat Burnell.

[A cat's] friendship is not easily won but it is something worth having.
– Michael Joseph



Myth-busting! The true story of fostering

MYTH #1: I could never be a foster ... I'd keep them all!

TRUTH: While “foster failures” (when the foster adopts the foster cat) do happen – and there’s nothing wrong with that! – they can be avoided by focusing on the important work you are doing as a foster in giving the cat an opportunity to live in a home setting. Fosters provide valuable information about a cat’s personality and how it behaves with other cats, dogs, kids, and more that helps us place the cat in the right forever home! While it can be hard to say goodbye, a “farewell” to a cat that has been adopted is also the opportunity to say “hello” to another cat that needs your love and care.

MYTH #2: Plenty of people foster so FFN doesn't need my help.

TRUTH: Not true – there are always more cats that need help and our fosters also need breaks between cats! Any assistance you can provide could make all the difference for a homeless cat. The need is great, so please consider helping!

MYTH #3: I don't have enough room.

TRUTH: Don't let this stop you! Any heated space, whether a spare bedroom, bathroom, office, or sunroom and/or garage with in-floor heat, will do!

MYTH #4: That's too big of a commitment!

TRUTH: It is a commitment. But it doesn't have to be a huge one! Even if you try it out and find it's not for you, you will still have saved a life!

MYTH #5: My pet(s) wouldn't like it.

TRUTH: While you know your pet best, with a commitment to one cat, your pets might surprise you by not reacting in the way you expect. And since we often recommend that you



keep the foster cat separated from your resident pets, it might not be an issue at all.

MYTH #6: I can't afford it.

TRUTH: This is a valid concern. Although FFN usually asks fosters to cover food and supplies for their charges, if that isn't an option we can provide you with the supplies needed.

MYTH #7: I'm not qualified.

TRUTH: Plenty of “regular” people are fosters and FFN foster/adoption coordinators are eager to support your volunteer work as much as possible by answering questions and assisting you, especially the first time you foster. Please don't discount the impact you can make!

MYTH #8: I love to travel so I can't foster.

TRUTH: Of course you can travel, go on vacation, or take whatever time you need! In fact, since there isn't a long-term commitment, fostering is ideal for people who travel often. And while you're away, FFN can provide a temporary foster home for your foster cat.

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A cat determined not to be found can fold itself up like a pocket handkerchief if it wants to.

– Louis J. Camuti, DVM



Starring Feline Friends

Annnnd ... ACTION! Feline Friends was recently invited to work with Eric Ferreira, a student at Conestoga College in his final year of Video Production. Eric got the idea of featuring FFN in his “capstone” video project from his girlfriend, who adopted two of our foster kitties.

For the project, Eric will create video content that FFN will be able to use on our website and in social media. His short videos will help promote FFN – and, hopefully, earn him an A+ at the same time! A very big thank you to Eric and his project partner Heather for choosing FFN. And stay tuned! Details to come regarding when and where you can watch the films.

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IT TAKES A COMMUNITY

Cheers to Keystone Alley Restaurant for selecting Feline Friends as the recipient of their ‘Community Hours’ fundraiser! For an hour each Saturday during the month of February, 50 per cent of the sales of selected items were donated to FFN. In total, Keystone Alley Restaurant donated \$100 to support FFN’s programs. Many thanks to owners Anthony and Kimberly!



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MYTH #9: Rescue cats ALWAYS have problems.

TRUTH: While some rescue cats have medical or behavioural issues, most don't. FFN will ensure that you have the resources necessary to support their needs.

MYTH #10: Male cats spray.

TRUTH: Contrary to popular belief, cats rarely eliminate outside the litter box. In fact, the ASPCA says that only 10% of cats will do so at some point in their lives.

MYTH #11: Cats ruin furniture.

TRUTH: Cats can and should be trained to use scratching posts. FFN will provide you with a scratching post for your foster cat if you don't already have one.

MYTH #12: Cats need to go outside to be happy.

TRUTH: With regular play, affection, and window perches, your foster cat will live a rich and happy life without ever going outside.

If you think you might be interested in giving fostering a try or if you want more information, please complete our online application form at https://felinefriends.ca/ffn_foster_application.php. Applying does not obligate you to foster.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR
garet markvoort

