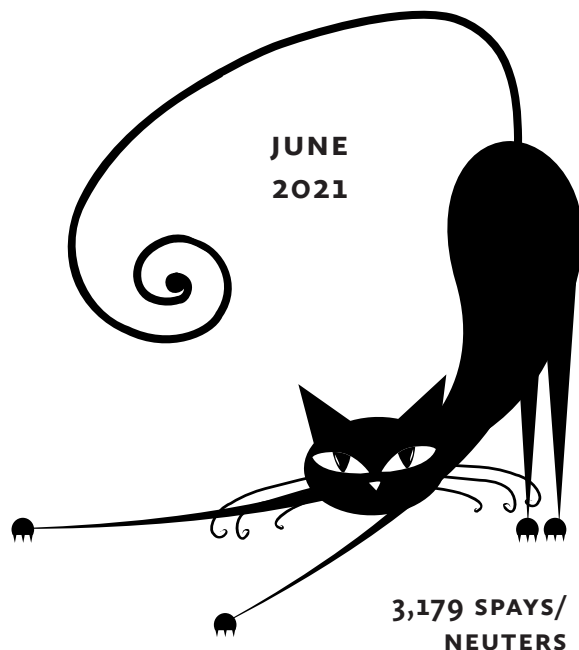


# cat tales

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FELINE FRIENDS NETWORK



## Another successful foster failure ;)

Colleen Ireland

Let's talk about my continuing failure as a foster parent. Last year I told you the story of Scooter, who was my first foster – well, first foster fail – and is the ongoing light of my life. Now, I'll introduce you to Murphy.

Shortly after Remembrance Day 2020, a handsome, sweet-tempered boy named Seamus (who has since been renamed Murphy because of his habit of chirping “murp murp” whenever he thought food was on offer) was brought to me to foster. He was recovering nicely from his neuter surgery but he had another issue going on with his teeth.

I always start my guests off in the VIP suite (my upstairs office) and he immediately went to the ledge under the window,

got comfy, and seemed to expect a belly rub. Very unusual for a kitty five minutes into a strange place! I asked him if he was the most chill cat in the universe, but he just said “a little to the left sister, feels good.”

It turned out Murphy had more going on with his health than some missing teeth. Over time I learned that his laidback demeanour was just a cover and he had stress issues that showed up in his digestion and recurred with each upsetting vet visit. He developed plaques on his skin that were also most likely stress-related. However, as the winter wore on and Murphy learned that he was in a safe place, both issues cleared up.

Unfortunately, the news about his teeth got worse with every vet visit. Not only were most of his teeth on the left side shattered, the gums were growing over the remnants. The amount of time he would need to be under anesthesia meant not one, but two visits to Guelph for a specialist's exam and surgery.

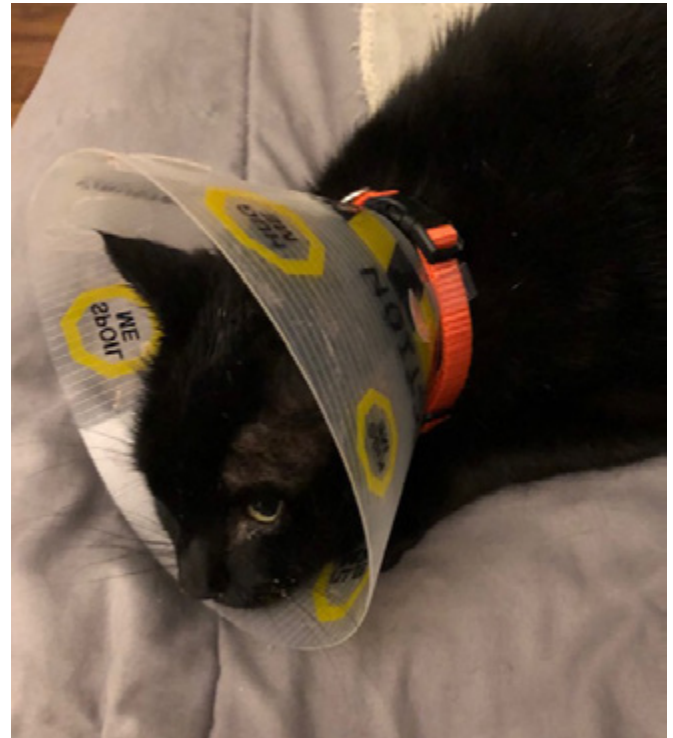
FFN Foster/Adoption volunteer Holly handled this end of things and had some shocking news for me after in-depth x-rays were done – this beautiful boy had *bullet fragments* in his head. No one can know for sure what really happened but, according to the vet, the most likely scenario is that a bullet hit something

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near Murphy and he was hit by a ricochet that shattered his teeth and sent fragments of the shell into his head. It's horrific to contemplate.

As time passed, Murphy became a wonderful friend and playmate to Scooter and very attached to me. And by *attached*, I mean *really, really glued* to me. I could not go into another room without him following right behind. Bathroom visits are accompanied by the polite but persistent sound of Murphy knocking on the bathroom door. I am subject to close inspection each time I brush my teeth and showers have become a group activity. I have to arrange a kitchen chair for him when I cook or he will walk through the food and supervise each step of the recipe from a spot too close for comfort. I have a tattered decoy Amazon box that I put beside the computer if I'm working because if I don't put him into this box, he will sprawl on the keyboard and pat at me. Every single night, he gets between me and my book, kneading his paws on



my chest until I have no choice but to stare back into his eyes and say, "Yes, I love you too, Murph."

Although Murphy's dental surgery was successful, his recovery was not easy. He had a reaction to his sutures, which led to inflammation and then infection. Healing took time and a lot of babying of a sad, sore, and probably pretty hungry little guy living on medication and squeezable treats, which were all he could handle for a little while.

Foster families foster in order to get deserving cats into homes that are great for both the adopter and the adoptee. I had a foster baby who was adoptable. But we were starting to wonder what it would be like for this sweet, sensitive boy to start all over again in a new home – even if it was a wonderful one. I was torn. Here I was with a little soul who was very confident and chill on the surface, but found it difficult to learn that he was safe and cared for. After all his time with us, he truly believed he was home.

My husband and I had one of our morning coffee summits and, this time, it was me who said, "I can't let him go." I asked Holly if we could keep him and she said yes.

I have failed again. I could not be happier.



## 100 Feline Friends Who Care

For the third year, FFN is looking for 100 very special friends. Not the type of friends you only greet in passing when your paths happen to cross. We're talking about the kind of close friends you know that you can really count on when you need them. Our goal is to find 100 Feline Friends Who Care ... 100 generous friends deeply committed to the welfare of felines who are able to donate \$100 each to raise \$10,000 in support of our programs.

Since it was founded in 2006, FFN has 'fixed' over 3,100 felines, preventing many thousands of kitten births in our community. We aim to do even more to reduce cat overpopulation and homelessness but, as a small, 100% volunteer-run organization with no paid staff, sustainability is a major challenge. We work with veterinary clinics to get reduced pricing on spay/neuter surgeries and other necessary medical care for the cats and kittens in our programs. However, even with discounted pricing, our veterinary expenses are significant and ongoing.

A huge thank-you to donors who have started the ball rolling in 2021 with their donations of \$100 or more!

If you would like to help FFN to continue the work we do to prevent unwanted litters, help homeless cats and save lives, please sign up at <https://www.felinefriends.ca/join-100-feline-friends>. You can then send your donation by:

- e-transfer to [info@felinefriends.ca](mailto:info@felinefriends.ca) – please put “100 Feline Friends” in the message field and include your email address;
- cheque to Feline Friends Network, c/o 134 Brunswick St, Stratford, ON N5A 3M1 – please write “100 Feline Friends” on the memo line of your cheque; or
- online payment through PayPal Giving Fund or Canada Helps.



We truly appreciate everyone who recommits to this effort, as well as all newcomers! The names of FFN's 100 Feline Friends can be found at <https://www.felinefriends.ca/100-feline-friends-who-care-members-2021>. However, wishes to remain anonymous are always respected. Please join us!

### SPRING ONLINE AUCTION

Thanks to the generosity of donors and winners – some of whom even added a donation to their auction payments – FFN's Spring Auction fundraiser raised \$3,846! The proceeds will support FFN programs – Foster/Adoption, Trap-Neuter-Return of barn cats, and our Low-Income Spay/Neuter Assistance Program. Our volunteers thank you, and the cats in our programs thank you too. These fundraisers make it possible for FFN to continue to help more cats!

# The challenge of Compassion Fatigue

*The following is an excerpt from Compassion Fatigue: Emotional Burnout in the Animal Care Field by Colleen Mehelich. We wanted to share this so that you will understand what FFN volunteers go through and why – although we would like to – we can't say yes to every request.*

In the animal care field, you become a volunteer because you love animals and you think that you can help make a difference, but little did you know that the emotional stress that comes along with that is draining, exhausting and takes a toll. You can't imagine NOT helping once you are invested, but at times it starts to feel like you don't have "a life" outside volunteering. It's a double-edged sword because you love what you do but the heartbreak and emotional strain on you is sometimes too much. There is a term for all of this, it's called compassion fatigue (CF) and it's very real.

CF rears its head in your personal and work life and it can cause sleepless nights, exhaustion, acute sadness, depression, isolation from friends, a life that feels out of balance and/or anger towards people in general. CF is [more] prevalent in the animal care field than *in any other field*.

The sheer number of animals needing help creates a burden on the heart and soul of the caregiver. Everyone responds differently to these stressors and everyone has different coping skills. CF is not exclusive to those dealing with euthanasia and end of life situations either. Here are a few interesting facts:

- Females have a slightly higher CF score than men
- CF has nothing to do with the number of years you've been working/volunteering in the animal care field
- CF has no correlation to age
- CF is only minimally related to euthanasia

Nobody is born with CF but anyone can develop CF. CF is "the cost of caring for others (whether human or animal) in emotional pain."

Did you know that people reflect and think about events inducing negative emotions five times as long as they do about events inducing strong positive emotions? It is simply human nature. We replay negative and traumatizing events over and over in our minds.

So how do you balance the happy (Compassion Satisfaction) with the sad (CF)? You need to take care of your own needs so that you can make more room in your life for Compassion Satisfaction.

- Honour yourself and feel proud of the difference you make.
- Be sure you are not putting the animals' welfare before your own.
- Practice creating emotional boundaries.
- Carve out time in your life to relax and play (choose activities that have nothing to do with your volunteering) You need to recharge your batteries and rejuvenate your soul!
- *Lastly* – accept your reality and own limitations – as much as you'd love to, you can't save every animal in need. We can each make a difference one animal at a time.

## IN MEMORY OF...

Our deepest sympathy and heartfelt thanks for the donations FFN has received in memory of loved ones. Since our last newsletter, a generous bequest was received from the estate of **Margaret Montrose**, for which we are truly grateful. Donations have also been made in memory of **Marlene Macke** and **Graham Cox**. We are greatly honoured that you have chosen to remember these friends and family members by helping FFN carry on our spay/neuter and foster/adoption programs.



# Adopting Archie

by *Melissa Chios*

When we first decided to adopt a cat, we considered getting a kitten from a friend's barn litter. But a kitten can be a 20-year commitment and – as a first-time cat owner – I wanted to know what I was getting into. I also wanted an animal who would be a great fit for our family. And, if I was being honest with myself, the intense needs of a kitten weren't exactly the "speed" I was looking for.

I began following several rescue groups online, waiting for a cat to catch my eye. One morning, while scrolling through my social media feed, my attention was captured by Archie (at that time "Morrie"). I immediately expressed my interest and, that very same morning, I received an email letting me know his foster would be in touch. That evening, Archie's foster, Lynn, texted and asked if I'd like to meet him through FaceTime.

While Archie played with a feather wand, Lynn and I talked about his personality and history and I told her about our lifestyle and my children. Although Archie had only been with her for just shy of a month, Lynn really seemed to have a solid idea of who he was and what type of home he would thrive in. She said she suspected that, with his friendly, adaptable temperament, he would be a great fit for us. So I said yes!

The adoption forms were in my inbox the next day. After completing them and forwarding the adoption fee – which is amazingly low for a fixed and vetted cat – we made a plan to pick him up that weekend. As for fit, Lynn was right! Archie strolled out of his carrier, right into the heart of our family.

Adopting Archie from FFN has been an excellent experience. The entire process was extremely smooth and also much quicker than I expected. And having cats in a foster-based rescue is amazing because the fosters are able



to offer their insights into the cat's personality, so that you're better able to decide if he/she is going to be right for you.

Archie is thought to be around three or four years young and he's the perfect mix of chill, affection, and bursts of energy. Adopting a young adult cat was one of the best decisions we could have made in our search for a new pet. Don't pass them by, or you might just miss out on a real gem of a pet!

We adore our sweet Archie. And we're so grateful to FFN and his foster Lynn for nursing Archie back to health so that he could become a forever member of our family.

## THANK YOU, THANK YOU ...

... to **Pet Valu Stratford** for their generous donation of food for our foster cats and kittens!

... to **Ruffin's Pet Centre Stratford** for helping us with our supply of cat food and KMR (Kitten Milk Replacement). We would also like to thank everyone who made this possible by purchasing items for our kitties. Feeling so grateful!

... to **Gina Lynn and her pup, Lucy**, for the kind donation of food, KMR, and a scratching post for our fosters.

## AND THANK YOU!

... to **Barbara Black** for her generous donation of beautiful, colourful, hand-knitted blankets for our foster cats and kittens.

... to **Val, Corinne** and, of course, **Gracie** at **Feed-All Pet Centre** for their continuing support. Val's Made With Love Masks sell for \$8 each, with all proceeds going towards the medical costs of cats in our care. We are so grateful for the continuing support of everyone at Feed-All Pet Centre.



Gracie the Rat with masks at Feed-All Pet Centre

## Join the club!

If you haven't renewed your Feline Friends membership yet this year, it's not too late! If you have renewed, why not ask a friend to join too? The more members we have, the more cats we can help!

Memberships are \$15. As a bonus, you'll receive a 10% discount at the following businesses: Feed-All Pet Centre, \*Split Rail Country Store, Shuttercraft Window Coverings, \*Run's Pet Centre, \*Global Pet Foods, McPhail's

Pet & Animal Needs (St. Marys), and B&B Pet Supplies (Mitchell).

You can pay by e-transfer to [info@felinefriends.ca](mailto:info@felinefriends.ca) or by cheque, payable to Feline Friends Network, c/o 134 Brunswick St., Stratford, ON, N5A 3M1. Please write "Membership" and provide your e-mail address in the message field of your e-transfer or on the memo line of your cheque.

Please note that the discount applies to cat-related products only at businesses marked with an \*

## New Stratford and Sebringville bottle drop locations

Our bottle drive fundraiser has expanded! We now have two locations to make it more convenient to participate. You can leave your empty cans and beer, wine, or liquor bottles at either:

- 365 WEST GORE STREET, STRATFORD: There are bins on the front porch for empties. Please pull into the left side of the driveway and avoid blocking the neighbour's side on the right. Thanks to volunteers Pauline & Wilf for accepting empties at your home!
- 276 HURON ROAD, SEBRINGVILLE: A blue bin for empties is between the tree and porch steps. No steps to navigate! Thanks to Shannon and family for offering your home as our second drop off location!

There are Feline Friends Network signs at both homes to let you know you're in the right place.

Please remember to rinse out your empties to reduce the mess and odour for our volunteers. If cans are not in a case, it's helpful if you put them in a clear plastic bag with a note showing how many are inside.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR  
garet markvoort