



# Catalyst for Cats

A Non-Profit Organization Dedicated to Altering the Future for Ferals

## NEWSLETTER

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### From the Founder

## Cat welfare has become more reality than dream

As I write this newsletter I reflect on the progress that's been made regarding the welfare of our county cats. Much of that progress was only a dream two or three decades ago, but now, happily, some of our dreams have become reality.

These accomplishments came about over the years with the establishment of various new programs, more rescue groups, improved availability for adoption opportunities, different goals, and a variety of innovative ideas formulated toward animal welfare. The result has been better care, treatment, survival rates, and quality of life for our animals, resulting in a better community over all. And still the work continues.

Our Tiny Tim Fund enables us to provide medical care for companion felines as well as our colonies. The Fund has provided treatment for, among other things, eye removals, amputations, skin conditions, various illnesses, injuries, and health exams. In addition, we have provided flea treatment and vaccinations.

The feeding program for our colonies remains an important part of our mission. We feed approximately 350 felines daily at over 25 feeding stations. Once fed

and fixed many of these cats, even though feral, will often live as long as companion pets.

Our referrals tend to come from word of mouth, through volunteers, and from the Internet. Requests for information—often from other counties—cover matters such as where to adopt, help with Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR), low cost spay/neuter services, and dealing with problem situations.

*Catalyst for Cats* remains committed to its dedication to help felines. I trust during this season of giving you will remember our feral feline friends. They depend on us for their welfare and survival.

As the old year ends and the new soon begins, I extend my appreciation for your support of our rescue work and wish you

a Merry Christmas with health and happiness during this holiday season.

*Randi Fairbrother*



**The Shirt Says It All:** County cats depend on us and several other animal welfare groups for their health and survival. And Catalyst depends on dedicated volunteers like Amy Smith, who has organized feeding stations and much more, in the North County. Milo (above) was rescued from the streets, fostered and now enjoys a loving home that Amy found for her.

# Tributes & Memorials

Each one of these names represents a level of love and caring to those remaining.

## In Honor of:

**Felix**, the greatest kitty who ever lived in the universe – by Peter Mortensen

**Randi**, my longtime friend – by Ethel Barclay

**David Morris** – by Truett and Jill Thach

## In Memory of:

**Buster**, my very first *Catalyst* rescue in 1994. I will miss my boy forever – by Allison Coleman

**Foster** – by Margery Nicolson

**Keesha**, our beloved cat of 16 years – by Teresa Hall

**Leroy and Fred** – by Truett and Jill Thach

**Raven** – by Victoria Blunt

**Romeo**, my sweet feral cat who one day decided he wanted to be a tame and loving companion – by Allison Coleman

**Trouble Kittie**, for 18 years the best companion anyone could have. He was mostly indoors, going out only

when dad was there to keep an eye on him. He loved me chasing him home from visiting the neighbors.

Had his own

chair when we sat outside. Slept with us at night.

Woke me up after my alarm went off. Miss him terribly. Trouble was no trouble at all. – by Richard Wilson

**Sam** is and was my beagle who passed away 9/9/17 at 15 years and 2 months old. She loved everyone and everything. **Milo** is a foster kitten found on the street and saved. Now has a loving home with my catering



coordinator with Panera Bread. Too cute. All a joy! – by Amy Smith



# Updates:

## Catalyst Action & Related Issues

### Banning the Sale of Dogs from Puppy Mills

Governor Jerry Brown recently signed a bill banning the sale of puppies from puppy mills in pet stores. California is the first state to do so. Pet stores will be required and encouraged to get their puppies, cats, kittens, and rabbits from shelter and rescue groups. This is an important milestone, and we hope other states will follow. Our appreciation to all who worked to get this important bill passed.

### Beat the Heat

The County of Santa Barbara offered its annual “Beat the Heat” promotion for cats during the entire month of September throughout the county. The \$30 package included spay/neuter, rabies and distemper (FVRCP) vaccinations, and a flea treatment. Micro-chipping cost an additional \$10.

### The importance of feeding properly

Our feeders rescued two felines of late because the feeders kept an eye out for newcomers as suggested in a “how to” included in *Catalyst’s* summer newsletter. Because newcomers tend to stay in the background as they approach a colony, the feeders trapped them both easily. Briefly the rules are take a quick census of the cats when you feed, try to establish a schedule, and remove whatever food is not eaten within 10-20 minutes. **Do not leave food out.**

# In Appreciation

🐾 **Orlando Saoit** – for lovingly tending his colony and fostering a couple of scabies cats. He is a dedicated and valued volunteer.

🐾 **Maureen Lynch** – for her generous food donation

🐾 **Pet House** – for food donations

🐾 To all of **our volunteers** – for their tireless efforts. Without fanfare they quietly perform acts of kindness for our furry friends.

## Wish List

- We are in dire need of a **feeder or feeders for a site near Buellton**. It is a five-minute drive from Buellton and would take another five minutes to feed. Please call Belinda Burns at 688-6369.
- We welcome all **donations of food**.

# Skeeter, The Cat With Great Trousers

*Suddenly uprooted from Buellton, he found a safe home and admirers in the Santa Ynez Valley*

*By Belinda Burns*

For those of us in the world of cat rescue the question often comes up, “Where did this cat come from and what is its story?” This is Skeeter’s story.

Some years ago one of our volunteers asked us to assist Bobby, an older gentleman who lived in Buellton. He had many cats and lived in an old trailer on an empty field and did not like having anyone on the property. Our volunteer befriended him and spoke to him about allowing us to TNR his colony. After much assurance that his cats would be returned, he agreed and we TNR’d more than eight cats.

We continued to visit Bobby regularly, assisting him with cat food and sometimes supplying him with sweet treats, which he enjoyed. We earned his trust and were glad the cats were cared for.

Years later I received a phone call from Bobby saying, “Come get my cat! I have to vacate the property tomorrow morning and I don’t have a place to live.”

That evening I picked up his friendly and beautiful long-haired ginger cat. Bobby had never seemed to name it, so I called him Skeeter. The next morning Bobby left the property with his bicycle and whatever he could carry. Someone heard about Bobby’s situation at the Senior Center in Buellton and weeks later arranged for housing at the Salvation Army facility in Santa Barbara. Bobby now had a warm place to sleep, hot water to bathe in, and clean clothes to wear. Months later, I visited him and we shared pictures of Skeeter.

Skeeter became very well situated within a colony of about 15 well cared for cats. My friend Jill, who fed the colony with me, loved him and petted him saying, “Look at those wonderful trousers you have.” He ran to greet us everyday. I laughed each evening when it was time to lock him up for the night to protect him from the coyotes. He would fall on his side, lie on his back and point all four paws up. He knew the trick of postponing being locked up at night for his safety.

Sometimes he required trips to the vet for abscesses. One time they shaved his whole head and inserted two drains. He looked like he’d been put through a dishwasher.



*Carefree but safe: Catalyst volunteers were already assisting with Skeeter when he had to vacate his terrain in Buellton. He found a “forever” colony in the Valley thanks to the same folks.*

All in all, he was the favorite. Eventually, my friend Jill passed away. She always loved that cat. A year went by and Skeeter started losing weight. He also started to hide inside the cupboards in the safe room. I knew he was not feeling well. When I took him to the Buellton Vet Clinic (BVC), they diagnosed him with severe kidney failure, too advanced for treatment.

I made an appointment to euthanize him, but brought him home to my house for a “sleep over”—his last night. We spent the night in a separate room from my other cats and I made sure he was cuddled and felt like a regular cat with a person and a bed to share.

The following day I held him in my arms as they gave him his first “sleepy shot” and then he drifted off in my arms ready for the final shot to relieve his discomfort.

I asked that he be cremated. Brianne, at BVC made a plaster impression of his paw and decorated it with his name on it. I picked up his ashes and sprinkled them on the tree pictured above. His paw imprint hangs from the tree branch in a small silk bag along with some of his gorgeous orange fur.

I smile when I think of him. It gives me joy to think of Jill waiting for him in heaven to tell him “Look at those wonderful trousers you have.”

A purring feral kitten fills the space in a heart that it seemed no other creature could

## Finding Rune

By Cara Houghton

Just 20 days after the one-year anniversary of the heart-wrenching decision to put my nearly 20-year-old Manx-mix fur baby Bangles to sleep due to kidney failure, Rune entered my life.

Who would have thought for even one moment that this tiny and very young little feral kitten would end up becoming the next love-of-my-life.

I'd gone through a period of seeking another companion pet, but regardless of how much I missed Bangles it just didn't work out.

So after retiring from over 20 years of teaching, and figuring that I could get my kitty fixes in without having to make any long-term emotional commitments, Amy Smith approached me about feeding feral cat colonies close to home in Santa Maria.

As time progressed, though, I started forming bonds

with many of "my cats," and due to a variety of circumstances my three sites eventually increased to 12. This kept me pretty busy.

Regardless of how much I missed Bangles and was convinced I wasn't ready for a new "fur baby," I still found myself visiting the animal shelter on more than one occasion in contemplation.

In addition, I ended up fostering an adorable Chihuahua named Roxy for three days. She had "found" me while I was tending to one of my sites one evening. But I soon found her owner, who was, as it turned out, homeless. (A great reunion for them, but another loss for me.)

I also briefly considered Torque, a handsome ten-year-old lab/beagle mix, who was left at a vet's office in San Diego with instructions from the owner's family to euthanize him since the owner could no longer care for him. Torque was an aging dog with cataracts and separation anxiety issues, but I decided to give myself a week at least before making my final decision.

Fortunately, the vets and their office decided to keep him themselves and eventually found the perfect home for Torque.

Then one day a little black and white kitten entered my life. She had shown up unexpectedly, as is often the case, at one of *Catalyst's* feeding stations, and Amy asked me to foster her until she was old enough to be spayed.

After the first touch—and a shockingly large purr!—she was clearly "home." I've adopted Rune and loved her since that fateful evening in late September.

She makes me smile and laugh each and every day. She's got incredible hunting instincts, and everything around her fills her with wonder. When she's not checking everything out or playing with her stuffed animals, she's perfectly content to curl up in my lap or in my arms. She's got a very loud purr, which is what connected us that first night in the transfer cage. One touch was magic.

Rune is the perfect addition to my life, and she's found her "forever home" with me.



Photo by Cara Houghton

**Accept No Substitutes:** It started with the loss of a beloved companion of nearly 20 years. That loss seemed irreplaceable, but despite several unfruitful attempts eventually Rune showed up at a *Catalyst* feeding station. The rest is a simple love story.

## Heading cross country, but into familiar territory

By Debbie Merry

As many of you know I left Santa Maria in March and headed east for my new home in Florida. Leaving was bittersweet, and I left with an emptiness deep down inside.

On the positive side, though, I am extremely grateful to Amy Smith, who has taken on so much of the *Catalyst* work that I had to leave behind. When I told her about my plans to move and how desperate I was to find help for my feral feeding stations, she quickly gathered a team together to cover those stations. She is an outstanding, compassionate lady, and I will always be grateful to her and her team.

Though my home base may have changed, my involvement with animals in need wasn't left behind in California. On my last day on the road I called my father to wish him a Happy Birthday and learned he was on his way to the hospital. Upon my arrival in Florida I unloaded my animals and belongings and the next day started the eight-hour drive with my dog Sunny to see my dad in Jackson, Tennessee. A week later he was out of danger, and I returned home to Florida.

By sheer chance I came upon a pregnant kitty in the hospital parking lot. UGH! I bought a carrier and food in hopes of catching her, but with all the activity in the parking lot and with time constraints I had to leave her. It was heartbreaking.

I still wonder about her fate.

After about four hours on the road I stopped for gas and food along the highway in Alabama. And what do I see? Yes, a little black cat watching me. She meowed—an indication she was tame. I immediately got the cat food I'd bought earlier in the day out of the trunk, and not surprisingly, she came right up to it. When I asked the station attendants if they knew anything about her, their first comment was, "Can you take her?"

They thought someone dropped her off. I could see there were no houses around for miles.

I began the process of coaxing her to me. It took some time, a lot of talking, but eventually she came close enough for me to scruff her and drop her into the carrier. And we were on our way.



Photo by Debbie Merry

*Can You Help Me?* Debbie Merry rescued this needy girl who approached her at a gas station along the highway in Alabama and got her to a shelter in Florida. Some things never change.

We arrived home on a Saturday night, so she stayed in our garage, free roaming until Monday morning. Since I had brought five of my cats with me, I knew I could not keep her. Without a Florida ID I didn't even know if I'd be able to relinquish her to the shelter.

My biggest concerns were what were her chances of finding a home, and would they be able to keep her long enough to find one? Animal Control reassured me that since she was tame her chances of acceptance by one of the rescue groups in the area were pretty good. Two days later I saw her listed on the adoption page of a local newspaper.

I am thankful for having had the opportunity to help the thousands of cats over my 11 years volunteering for *Catalyst for Cats*. The resources for TNR here in Florida are a far cry from what I experienced in North County of Santa Barbara, but the plight of stray or uncared for cats is much the same.

I often look at the pictures I collected throughout the past 11 years working in cat rescue. I'm pretty sure I'll be taking more.

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*Editor's note: Debbie Merry's commentary from her new home will be continued in our next newsletter.*



*Catalyst for Cats, Inc.*  
Post Office Box 30331  
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**Every litter adds to the problem  
Every spay/neuter adds to the solution!**



Can you help feed us in  
the Santa Ynez Valley?

**Volunteers needed to help feed  
established cat colonies.**

**All food provided by Catalyst for Cats**

Feeding time can be as little as 5 min. to half an  
hour, depending on location  
& number of cats

Volunteers appreciated for sub. feeding too!!