

# projectpurr

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nonprofit volunteer feral cat advocate organization

**Project Purr Board Members:** Margaret Rinner, Director; Lynne Achterberg;  
E.V. Sharp, DVM; Suzanne Haberman; Sheri Benkosky; Lucinda Swan

*Project Purr is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit volunteer organization dedicated to humanely decreasing the feral cat population by providing funds towards our lowcost feral cat/kitten spay/neuter program in Santa Cruz County, California. Project Purr advocates Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) as the preferred method for feral cat population control.*

## Compassionate Action Saves Lives of Feral Cats

It was set-up day for the Project Purr Rummage Sale in September and about twenty volunteers scurried around the field. We unloaded boxes from trucks, unpacked and sorted items, then grouped, organized and moved them into place. I overheard a young woman say, "I LOVE volunteering here, because I know that all of these people love cats!" That made me smile. Yes, we do all love cats.

Cats are now the most populous pet in the United States, and also the most populous stray animal. Unfortunately, many stray cats are raised without human contact and remain fearful of close interactions with people. Plus, any individual stray cat may travel the continuum from pet cat to feral cat and back again in one lifetime. The fate of *all cats* is tied to stray and feral cats because unaltered strays breed so quickly, resulting in many kittens born outdoors.

According to a recent Harris poll:

An overwhelming majority of Americans believes that leaving a stray cat outside to live out his life is more humane than having him caught now and put down, according to a nationally representative survey conducted for Alley Cat Allies by Harris Interactive in April and May 2007. These results reveal a significant disparity between the public's humane ethic and the operating policy of most U.S. animal pounds and shelters.

The current animal control policy is that it is more humane to kill a stray cat now than let him live out his life outdoors; ...what is most salient to note is that the so-called humane ethic of the animal control and sheltering system ends more cats' lives

than any other documented cause of death.

—Alley Cat Allies, [www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org)

Do you feel that the public needs to be protected from feral cats? Or are feral cats actually among the most vulnerable animals, with the fewest protections? Do you believe feral

cats deserve to live?

### The need for a safety net

If you love cats, and you're paying attention to what is happening to cats across this country, it can be very disconcerting.

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## Franny's Surgery A Great Success!

Thank you to all the wonderful people that donated to Franny's surgery fund. Thanks also to the wonderful Veterinary Ophthalmologist who performed the astounding, delicate, complex and state of the art surgery. Thank you, to the anonymous donor who gave \$800 to the matching fund that paid for 1/2 of the \$1,600 total.

As Franny's foster, I was glad I could arrange to be home for the month of Franny's recovery because the aftercare was more time consuming, intensive and nerve wracking than I had imagined it would be. She came home the day of the surgery with a large cone on her head and her dear sweet face shaved and full of neat little fragile stitches. The great worry was that the graft that rebuilt her eyelid wouldn't hold and could she be kept from touching or bumping her repaired eye so that it would have chance to heal. Being extremely careful not to disturb the stitches or any tissues that were healing, I applied lubricating antibiotic eye meds twice daily. She was given warm wet compresses 2 to 4 times a day as well as oral pain killers and oral antibiotics twice a day. I also gave her nutritional supplements in her food. Franny was very patient through it all, as if she knew we were doing our very best to help her.

Today Franny has a new and wonderful functioning eyelid that closes completely. Her damaged blind eye that had become uncomfortable is gone and she is left with a permanent endearing wink.

She is pain free and no longer in need of any eye meds. The outcome of the surgery feels like a miracle. It took the talent of the surgeon's steady loving hands to make this miracle come true. Like so many miracles, it took many kind

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*Franny - before surgery*



*Franny - after surgery*

# Hard Work Pays Off!!! Long Live Feral Cats!!!

Project Purr's Fall 2007 Fundraising Field Rummage Sale was a HUGE success and our biggest sale to date.. over \$23,000 was raised to fund our low cost feral cat spay/neuter program at Adobe Animal Hospital! Thank you to the many businesses who donated so generously to our silent auction...The Buttery, Lundberg Studios, the Bagelry, Staff of Life, Zinnia's Home & Garden, Pacific Cookie Company, Meltzer's Mints, Ocean Honda, Palace Art, DeLaveaga Golf Lodge, Outside-In, The Garden Company, Well Within, Trader Joe's, Way of Life, New Leaf, Outdoor World, Fleur, Purrfect Girl, Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, Bonny Doon Farm, Swift Stitch, Ristorante Italiano, Kitty Hill Resort, Shadowbrook/Chaminade, Sock Shop, Annie Glass, Corralitos Market, Shopper's Corner, Kitty Hill Re-

sort, and especially Gayle's Bakery & Rosticceria.

We are proud and grateful for the hard work from our dedicated wonderful volunteers and the overwhelming community support for Project Purr and Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) - the compassionate action for bettering the lives of feral cats. TNR is effective, cost-efficient and humane...while teaching nonviolence and tolerance for others. As an organization, we are committed to quality care for our feral cats, and safety for both cats and the community. We believe in a feral cat's right to live, free from the stress of uncontrolled breeding. We believe, along with other feral cat



spay/neuter organizations throughout the world, that feral cats should not be killed simply because they were born without a house address. Spay/Neuter is the single most important thing we all can all do to help the animals!

Our yard sales have grown over the past 11 years...from 1996 and \$490 raised at our first yard sale on Branciforte Avenue... to this year's field sale on Thurber Lane/Soquel Drive and \$23,000, we have raised over \$221,000 selling "stuff" to fund spay/neuter for Santa Cruz county's kitties! Our program has never shut down for lack of funds.

Our "Antique Corral" was staffed by knowledgeable volunteer "antiquers" and overflowed with historical treasures... anything and everything.... many items donated from thoughtful local residents....original oil paintings, handmade oriental rugs, weavings, quilts, dolls, china, silver, glass, pottery, jewelry, folk art and paper ephemera. **If you have precious belongings, please consider donating them to help the animals. Project Purr is an all volunteer organization. Your gift will NOT be used to pay salaries or common overhead expenses but instead goes directly to the animals.** Gifts can also be made in recognition of someone and/or companion animals. **Consider Project Purr, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, a beneficiary for your will, living trust, life insurance, pension plan or charitable trust. A true legacy of LIFE!**

Please remember to donate your quality household items for our next upcoming Memorial Day 2008 Rummage/Treasure Sale...just call 423-MEOW. Donations are tax deductible.

It's a wonderful way to give back to your community!

## The Zen of TNR

So often in our to-and-fro lives the presence of a feral cat – or a whole colony – is something that we glimpse on the way to somewhere else. It's easy to put out of one's mind the sad sight of a mangy cat looking for scraps in an alley. Easier still is to put it in context: with global warming, widespread economic disparity, and an endless war all wreaking havoc on countless human and non-human lives, why should ferals be on your to-do list? Yet every TNR is vital, not least because it is a small, finite, act of consequence. It is a practice of care, a concrete act as important as walking instead of driving, giving spare change to someone requesting it, and voting for public school funds. None of these acts are re-

placements for working for a just society, for engagement in politics writ large. At the same time, all of these activities are a part of our role in making the society we want to live in. As Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh writes, love is best understood not as a feeling, but as a practice. Viewed from this angle, caring is a practice undertaken not in order to reach a far-away goal but in order to enact love in "the doing." Feral cat advocacy, especially TNR, is one solid and failsafe way of practicing love, of living in the world as we would like it to be.

~ Sandra Koelle, Ph.D. Candidate  
History of Consciousness  
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# Project Bay Cat

By Cimeron Morrissey

Sure, she's cute with her little white bib and snowy paws, but don't be fooled - Miss Bibs is not an innocent little girl. She produced 36 kittens in just two years, earning her the title of Foster City's Most Wanted Cat.

Miss Bibs is a feral cat that lives along San Francisco bay in California, and is one of nearly 200 homeless felines that call the rocky shoreline home. She is also one of the reasons why a world renowned humane program called Project Bay Cat was created.

Three years ago, I had no idea what a feral cat was, even though I saw them almost every day. My husband and I kiteboard on the bay and we'd always seen a few cats living in the rocks along the Bay Trail in Foster City, but we never thought twice about it. Then one spring day, the boulders were literally alive with kittens. It's hard to overlook dozens of tiny fur balls running across the bike path, crying for food, and darting out from behind bushes.

Following five scrawny and playful silver tabby kittens to learn where they came from, I got my first look at Miss Bibs. Seeing her with her brood, it all became clear. I knew that something had to be done. Little did I know that the seed she'd planted in me would become a program that's setting an example around the world as an effective and compassionate way to manage homeless cats while protecting birds and the environment.

Feral cats are the product of human neglect. Irresponsible pet owners who don't have their cats spayed/neutered are the source of the problem, as are those who abandon their pets. Un-sterilized cats reproduce quickly and their kittens become feral without human contact. The problem exists in nearly every country around the world.

With just a handful of abandoned unsterilized cats living along the Bay Trail in Foster City, the population quickly swelled to 174 cats by the time I finally noticed them. I knew that if nothing was done, more were sure to come. The City of Foster City had also noticed, as they were getting calls from concerned citizens, as had the Sequoia Audubon Society, who wanted to protect the birds living nearby.

**For communities facing homeless/feral cat challenges such as these, there are three choices:**

- **Do nothing and let the cat population grow out of control.**
- **Trap and euthanize the cats.**
- **Trap, neuter, and return the cats (TNR), and find homes for those that are adoptable.**

To me, *Option 1* is simply irresponsible, and *Option 2* is inhumane. But *Option 3* provides a humane way to stabilize the cat population and reduce it over time through

attrition and adoption. Plus, one species need not be eradicated in favor of another - I believed the creative methods could be employed to help all species in the area.

Since I did not want the cats to suffer due to overpopulation, or see them euthanized, I joined a local feline rescue organization, Homeless Cat Network, and began initiating the humane management program myself. We then began working the City of Foster City and Sequoia Audubon Society to address the issues together as a team.

Working in partnership, we created a precedent-setting program called Project Bay Cat. The U.S. has never before seen a municipality, a feline rescue group, and a birding organization work together on such an undertaking. Thanks to the inspiration provided by Miss Bibs and her many progeny, Project Bay Cat was developed to *humanely* curb the homeless cat population growth through aggressive spay/neuter and adoption programs, as well as protect bird habitat and keep the path's landscape debris-free. We also set out to educate the public about homeless cat issues to prevent animal abandonment, encourage spay/neuter of owned pets, and enlist community support for our unique program.

In the two years that Project Bay Cat has officially been in place, 95% of the cats have now been altered, thanks to dedicated trapping efforts on the part of Homeless Cat Network volunteers, and two wonderful veterinary offices that provide sterilization, vaccination and medical services. Using humane traps, I have personally caught over 140 cats and kittens myself. It has not always been easy, but it has certainly paid off. Our spay/neuter efforts have successfully stabilized the population. Even better, we've *reduced* the population through fostering and adoption efforts. Over 70 kittens and friendly adult cats have been adopted into loving homes, which has reduced the population by 35% and has made everyone extremely happy.

The program has also helped to protect birds living nearby, while also reducing debris along the trail. Ten wooden feeding stations were built for the cats by Homeless Cat Network and installed along the trail away from bird habitats. The program's effectiveness is a result of keeping the cats well-fed and concentrated away from avian nesting sites.

The city of Foster City has put up signs in the area informing people that the cats are part of a humane management program, which is a collaboration between the city, Homeless Cat Network and **Sequoia Audubon Society – the first ever in the U.S.**



**“There are fewer cats on the Foster City Bay Trail now, and those that remain appear healthier,” says Robin Winslow Smith, Conservation Committee Chairperson of the Sequoia Audubon Society. “Thanks to the feeding stations and the spay/neuter effort, the cats seemed to have settled into the program and don’t need to hunt for dinner since they have it in their feeding stations.” As further evidence of the program’s effectiveness for the protection of the birds, Sequoia Audubon Society recently found that the endangered California Clapper Rail, which lives in a nearby marsh, is thriving and is not impacted by the cats.**

The program's success makes the whole community happy, including birders, City officials, and animal lovers. “The results speak for themselves about the success of this wonderfully collaborative project,” says Kevin Miller, Foster City's Parks and Recreation Director. “Most impressively, we've achieved success without expense to taxpayers since the program has been implemented by volunteers, and by veterinarians who have donated their services to this humane endeavor. Project Bay Cat is a wonderful improvement effort *for* the community and *by* the community,” says Miller.

***Removal of the cats produces a vacuum effect in which the ones that evade capture over-breed in order to fill the void left by their furry companions. Yet still, many cities trap and euthanize, or poison homeless cats as a means of control. Other cities enforcing new laws and are making it illegal for people to feed homeless cats, which is a cruel and passive means of control.***

I finally caught Miss Bibs late last summer and had her spayed. Her kitten-factory days are over, and now she enjoys sunning herself after eating a nice meal from her feeding station. I'm proud that I did something to save her and all the other cats living on the rocks while also protecting birds and the environment. I'm even prouder that our success is motivating others to take a similar humane approach to control feral cats in their own communities. Thanks for the inspiration, Miss Bibs!

## Tame the Tigers... Fostering and Socializing Feral Kittens

When launching a Trap-Neuter-Return program at a new location, sometimes Project Purr discovers litters of kittens, born "under a bush" to a feral mother cat.

If the kittens are caught young enough, (4-6 weeks old or weaning time), they can often be "turned" or socialized and tamed, and then be adopted out as wonderful domestic cats. There is only a brief window of time for socialization to take effect. If they are not caught and handled by people during this early time, they will learn feral survival behaviors from their mother, such as running, darting, hissing at the sight of humans, and avoiding handling or touch.

Other people also call Project Purr after finding underage kittens that need to be fostered, which we accommodate if foster space is available.

In general, do not separate kittens from their mothers before weaning. Sometimes the kittens are in distress and their very survival is at stake, if their mother is not there to care for them. Sometimes the kittens have been dumped by people, or abandoned by their mothers, or something has happened to their mother.

Fostering underage motherless kittens can be incredibly rewarding...and YOU too can do it! Kittens need to be fed every few hours, pooped and pee-ed. It is easy to learn how to do it, kids can help, and some people even bring the little ones to work in a cat carrier. Most of these kittens adapt quickly to human care and therefore do not become feral. Instead, they soon evolve into very, very special companions.

At first, feral kittens need to be confined in large hutches (cages, which Project Purr provides) in their foster home. Food, play and affection, with lots of time and patience, helps socialize them to people. The process usually takes only two to four weeks. Exposure to many different sounds and experiences in the home, such as dogs, children, and other people, helps build the kittens confidence. When they are old enough, kittens enter into the Project Purr early age veterinary program, where they are tested, vaccinated, checked for parasites, de-wormed and de-fleaed. Our program practices pediatric or early age spay/neuter. The kittens have to be old enough, big enough, and healthy enough to participate (two pounds minimum in weight or about 8 to 10 weeks old). Early age spay/neuter insures that this kitten will never add to the pet overpopulation problem. Our kittens are never available for adoption until after they are spayed and neutered.

Early age spay/neuter has been practiced for more than 20 years, and has demonstrated that there are no negative effects or reason to wait until a later age to spay/neuter. Young kittens recover more quickly from surgery. Early age spay/neuter is an important proactive step to help reduce shelter euthanasia numbers.

To find a forever, loving home, Project Purr showcases kittens on our website. Sometimes we also take ready-to-go kittens to local adoption centers for more exposure. Finally, unless *the foster fam-*

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## Project Purr's Trap/ Neuter/Return Program for Santa Cruz County FERAL Cats at Adobe Animal Hospital

This program is for feral cats: cats who are extremely fearful and resistant to contact with people. Feral cats are extremely fearful and resistant to contact with people. Not all homeless cats are feral; some may be strays who are lost or abandoned. For safety, all cats and kittens (kittens be at least 4 months old) must come in individual traps for surgery. You may NOT use cat carriers. Adobe Animal Hospital is located at 1600 Soquel Drive (across from Dominican Hospital) in Santa Cruz. Their hours are M-F 7:30AM-6PM and Sat 8AM-3PM. NO surgeries on Saturday / Closed on Sunday /831/475-6365.

Humane traps may be borrowed at NO CHARGE (however a security deposit is required) from: Watsonville Animal Shelter, 580 Airport Blvd in Watsonville 831/454-7303 OR Santa Cruz County Animal Services, 27 Janis Way in Scotts Valley 831/454-7303.

Plan ahead! Call Adobe Animal Hospital before trapping to determine when surgery times are available for you. Cats/kittens need to arrive between 7:30 - 8:30AM on their appointment day. Late arrivals or unscheduled cats may not be treated the same day. Adobe Animal Hospital will try to accommodate you. Always call to cancel/reschedule if you are unsuccessful trapping. The following items are included: Anesthesia, FeLV/FIV test (cats/kittens testing positive must be humanely euthanized) Spay/Neuter, FVRCP and Rabies Vaccines and Mandatory Ear Tip! (Eartipping is the humane surgical removal of 1/4 inch of the top right ear and is a permanent visual identification mark.)

**YOU pay only \$25.00 for each feral cat/kitten at Adobe Animal Hospital. Project Purr will pay your unpaid balance!**

### Surgery After-Care Instructions

Spayed/neutered cats/kittens must be picked up from Adobe after surgery by 5:30PM. Take the cat/kitten home and leave it in the completely covered trap in a safe WARM location overnight. Release the cat/kitten the next morning in the exact area where it was trapped. Over time the stitches will dissolve. Provide fresh water and quality food daily in the established feeding location. It is best to feed early in the day. Food should be eaten or removed by nightfall to avoid attracting nuisance nocturnal creatures such as skunks, raccoons, or predators. Continue daily feeding after release even though the cat may not return for several days.

Congratulations! TNR is feral cat TLC!

### The Praise of Strays

I was a wreck the day I showed up on your doorstep  
escaped from a cardboard box on the back of a bicycle  
fur matted, splattered with grease, scrawny and orphaned  
Not the type anyone would want  
and besides you already had a cat  
lots of them in fact, stretched out  
in windowsills behind your opened shades  
But you opened the door as though  
you'd been expecting me  
couldn't believe I'd finally arrived  
You ushered me in and after Friskies  
and milk and a wet soaping off  
that I didn't even complain about  
you held me in your lap and picked  
off my fleas one at a time  
ruffling through my fur as if hunting  
for gold then you ran your finger  
under my chin  
nuzzled me with your nose and told me  
the truth about yourself—  
I will never abandon you



by Cathy Warner

# Franny's Surgery A Great Success!

*Continued from page 1*

people's hearts and minds, talents and time, good thoughts, and sometimes money, to make it happen.

I have been fostering Frannie about a year now. Longer than any of my 236 fosters that preceded her. Most fosters live with me for a month sometimes two before they are placed into good homes. The surgeon felt it imperative to wait until Franny was fully grown before performing the surgery. I felt I needed to get Franny through her surgery safely before I adopted her out. I'm glad I did. She is a dear petite kitty with such a love for life who in her heart believes she is running our household.

Our two big kind mutty dogs love and respect her and let her nudge them over in their dog beds to make room for her at nap time. Our three other cats have accepted her as one of our clan and each one has little games they play with her. Franny is completely familiar with our home and the distance between the chairs and tables and window seat, so she compensates for her lack of depth perception well.

A kind couple adopted Franny's adorable brother Mack as a buddy playmate to their young lively male cat. They also asked to adopt Franny after her surgery. I said yes and then suffered over whether it would be best for Franny to have two busy and rambunctious boy kitties with perfect vision as her playmates and kitty family. I finally decided it would be too overwhelming for her. This wonderful couple were very disappointed but understood my concerns and they still generously donated a large portion of the money that paid for Franny's surgery.

After all she's been through, I wring my hands at the thought of Franny having to make adjustments in a new environment and establishing a new pecking order with a new family. It's true no one else has come forward to adopt Franny and that's OK because frankly, I believe my husband and I, without planning to, have fallen too much in love with her to let her go.

~Lucinda

## Franny ~ for people new to the story~

Franny was about 3 1/2 weeks old when she and her brother (Mack) were found huddled in a shed on one of those coldest winter days last December. It was obvious, after carefully soaking her crusted eyes open with a warm wash cloth, that she had serious eye problems. Franny's right eye was badly damaged and her left eye had a de-

formed lid that wouldn't completely close to cover her eye and the hair grew into the eyeball causing much irritation. I took her to a veterinary ophthalmologist and got the bad news that the right eye was so badly damaged that it needed to be removed and though she can see with her left eye the lid was badly deformed and needed to be reconstructed with a skin graft.

These surgeries would cost \$1,600.00! The doctor said it would be best to wait until Franny had finished growing. The eight months before her surgery I applied lubricating eye medication twice a day. A kind person said they would pay \$800.00 of the bill if Project Purr could come up with the other \$800.00 in donations. We put out a plea on the Project Purr website and also on craigslist telling Franny's story and asking for monetary help from web visitors and our supporters. Many people stepped forward and contributed! Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts!

## Our Promise To YOU

Project Purr is DOING THE MOST GOOD with your contributions.

From 1989 to today, Project Purr's promise is the same: to do the most good with your donations of money, time and resources. We are committed to our mission, with compassion for the animals, and we are changing lives in a positive way.

Together, we are doing the most good.

- Lowcost feral cat/kitten spay/neuter program
- Practice early age domestic kitten spay/neuter
- Always neuter before adoption
- Assist with rescue and placement
- Offer behavioral advice to avoid relinquishment
- Provide hospice care as space is available
- Keep cats out of the shelter, thus reducing county euthanasia
- Advocate sterilization for feral colony cats
- Educate on all aspects of Trap-Neuter-Return
- Rescue and rehome domestic cats
- Manage feral cat colonies
- Coordinate projects to help save cats lives!



## Other Santa Cruz County Spay/Neuter Programs:

Good News! FREE UNLIMITED FERAL CAT SPAY/NEUTER is available regardless of income for Watsonville/Freedom residents and local businesses from FOWAS, the Friends of Watsonville Animal Shelter.

Watsonville/Freedom residents (of low-income status) may also have three DOMESTIC cats/kittens (and dogs or rabbits!) spayed/neutered FREE. Vouchers are distributed through the Watsonville Shelter at 580 Airport Blvd. 831/454-7303 x7

NEW! FOSCCA, Friends of Santa Cruz County Animals, offers free spay/neuter for dogs, domestic cats and rabbits for low-income Santa Cruz County residents. Must show proof of income and residency - 831/454-7303.

Annual income requirements:

- One person - Less than \$25,000
- Two person home - Less than \$30,000
- Three person home - Less than \$35,000
- Four person home - Less than \$40,000

Also, the Santa Cruz SPCA offers low-cost spay/neuter for low-income residents. 831/465-5000.

# “Will Work For Food... Barn Cats: Non-Toxic Pest Control”

Project Purr is often aware of feral cats that need homes and, conversely, homes that want feral cats! Project Purr will only trap to remove and relocate feral cats as a last resort, because a feral cat's territory is the cat's home, and where the cat has learned to survive. Most conflicts involving the location of feral cats can be resolved through education, and addressing specific concerns.

However, in situations where the territory no longer provides a safe environment for the feral cats, we seek new homes. And when environmentally endangered cats are not available, we will rescue feral cats from euthanasia at the shelter to fulfill requests for feral working cats, thereby saving their lives.

Feral cats are not pets, in the normal sense of the word... they are the “forgotten” cats in our society. “Barn cats” is the term often used by people seeking to adopt feral cats. These independent cats are beautiful and healthy, but are not used to being touched. They pay their way by taking care of your rodent problems in exchange for food and shelter and they require a lifelong commitment when YOU give them a second chance to have a happy life!

The cats are tested, altered, vaccinated, wormed and defleaded, and eartipped for easy visual identification, prior to placement. Generally, we prefer to adopt them out in groups of three or more. Cats are social animals and enjoy the company of other cats. At the very least, they need another cat to watch their back and snuggle with.

If a cat comes in with another cat from the same site/or the same litter, we ALWAYS try to put them out for relocation together.

Siblings/companions offer comfort as well as being survival buddies, and companions will help cats stick in their new location. Feral cats can often have a long, good life in such situations — and they make great mousers.

We seek a garden/barn/garage/shed or outbuildings for these cats. What kind of backyard shed or barn makes a good home? The barn or shed needs to have plenty of hiding spots for the cats. Rafters are a good place to go if the cats find themselves chased by another animal. Under bales of hay, on top of a shed, or below a deck, also create good safety zones for the cats. Outdoor areas that are not too heavily

manicured, with bushes, tall weeds or grasses, also help to provide cover. In buildings or shelters, two doors are best, with one as an entrance and the other for escape, to avoid being cornered and trapped inside by predators.

A barn is a building that can usually be closed up. Some barns are more like sheds or carports, with one or two open sides, and do not usually provide enough cover for the kitties. Sheds that are closed up with a cat door installed can be a very safe environment. However, each situation is unique, and we can help assess your environment, to insure that it will provide safety for the cats, and give them the best possible chance of staying in their new home.

If your situation is suitable, the relocation commences. Feral cats are brought to your property in a large covered hutch, with blankets, food, water, a litter box, and a nesting/hiding area within the hutch. The hutch is secured in an area protected from the weather, where the cats can acclimate, become familiar, and imprint with the sights, sounds and smells of their new home territory. We try to place the hutch in such a way as to give them a good view of the surrounding area, and where you will also have easy access to care for them. During the imprinting weeks you feed the cats, observe them, clean their litter box, and relate to them. They bond with you as their caretaker, and many people often experience a growing attachment to them. After the approximately three week period of imprinting, they will be

released from the hutch.

At the time of release, the new caregiver sets up the permanent feeding station, at night closes up the barn (if possible), and clips both hutch doors open. Cats are nocturnal. They will have all night to explore the barn and find their “special” hiding place. The next morning proceed with business as usual in the barn.

The first few days after release are a crucial transition period. Cover the area with lots of wet and dry food, and continue to do the special call you have used during their acclimation period to let them know it is their daily feeding time. “Come and get it!”

After that, your responsibility will be to provide daily food and water, protection from the elements, and lifelong care. Why do you need to feed them, if you want them to hunt rodents? Rodents alone are not a balanced diet and keeping the cats healthy allows them to do a better job of eliminating your pesty gophers, mice and rats from hay, grain and food storage areas.

You'll enjoy watching the cats, learning their habits, and communicating with them. It can be tremendously satisfying to know you have saved their lives by giving them their much-needed home. Many people appreciate the cats themselves as well as the work the cats do—keeping rodents away from electrical wires, motor homes, hay, and many other things. There is nothing else quite like having a daily relationship with these semi-wild beings. Ferals Are Our Friends!



# Theodorable

I knew when I saw “Angel’s” picture on Project Purr’s website that he needed to be my cat. Maybe it was his coloring, or his one eye that looked like he was winking, or maybe it was intuition. Whatever it was, I had to have him. Our family passed the screening and visit, and we brought our kitty home.

First off, he needed a new name. My father lost an eye to sinus cancer surgery, so we gave his middle name, Theodore, to our cat. We call our cat Theo most of the time. Other times we call him Theokins, Theoster, and the ever popular, Theodorable, since he is, in our opinion, absolutely adorable.

Theo, who was a year old when we adopted him, didn’t know about living in a house before he moved in with us, he’d been an outdoor cat on a ranch before. He also didn’t know he had some big paws to fill. We’re generally a one-cat-per-person household. But for several years before Theo came into our lives, my husband, our dog and I all shared Roscoe, a cat who’d adopted us about twelve years before. Roscoe died of kidney failure at the age of 21, and my dog and I in particular were mourning his loss. We knew another cat couldn’t replace Roscoe, but I needed another cat to love and adore, and my dog, Sterling, needed another cat to love and lick, something our two daughter’s two cats would not tolerate.

Theo acclimated to housecat life, befriended the girls’ cats and became dog’s best friend. The two wrestle, tumble and sleep together. Best of all, Sterling can lick Theo until Theo’s fur is stiff and glistening. Theo isn’t perfect, he eats too much too often and throws up, he usually bites me (playfully) after three or four pets, and he catches far too many lizards in our yard. But his imperfections are so minor compared to his purrfections! He talks whenever he enters a room, filling me in on his adventures since I’ve seen him last. The longer we’re apart, the longer the story. He sits on my lap when I watch TV. Sometimes he even lets me knit without attacking the yarn. He sleeps in my room, either between my feet or in the dog bed. He loves to be carried and petted, and has the most fantastic purr.

I can’t help but exclaim, “Theo!” whenever I turn a corner to find him walking down the hall, coming through the cat door from the laundry



room, or napping in a sunspot. Seeing him simply fills me with joy, a joy that is always new, fresh, and unexpected. I guess that’s part of what it means to be a cat lover, exclaiming over the cats you encounter. (I love my dog, but I’m not a dog lover).

I’m so thankful for Theo in my life, and for the Project Purr volunteers, true cat lovers, who open their hearts and lives to foster adoptables, and to spay and neuter ferals, so that humans and cats

alike can experience the joy of being loved and adored. Thanks to Project Purr, many at risk cats in our communities are now safe and healthy. Project Purr can use not only our thanks, but donations of time and money as well. In this season, may all that we give bring great Joy!

Cathy Warner,  
United Methodist Lay Minister  
wife, mother, writer and cat lover  
Boulder Creek

## Of Domestication and Obligation

A recent article in *Science* magazine, “The Near Eastern Origin of Cat Domestication,” reported on groundbreaking research that debunked the previous origin story of how cats came to be among us. It turns out that cats’ domestication did not happen in Egypt five thousand years ago, as was the previously accepted theory. Rather, genetic assessments of five geographically distinct species of wildcats as well as of domestic, “fancy breed,” and feral cats show that *Felis silvestris* came to live with people almost ten thousand years ago. The study notes that “the cat probably began its association with humans as a commensal, feeding on the rodent pests that infested the grain stores of the first farmers” (Carlos Driscoll et al., “The Near Eastern Origin of Cat Domestication,” in *Science* 317: 519-523, 27 July 2007). In other words, cats have been with us – nomadic peoples excluded – since we settled in towns and cities and started tending fields.

This discovery, I think, obligates us to a responsible reckoning with how humans and cats can not just live together, but live together well – with the business of what feminist science studies theorist Donna Haraway calls “co-flourishing.” What are our responsibilities to a species that saw us through the dawn of agriculture, that was with us before the written word, that kept our carbohydrate sources pest-free and plague-free through all our inventions and wars? As we became domestic, cats became our domesticated “commensal.” While we take care of some individuals as lucky pets, our shared history means that we can’t just pick some to care for and ignore the rest. We also have to reckon with the feral population, with strays, and with abandoned and unwanted cats, if we are to do justice to our co-domesticated relations.

~Sandra Koelle, Ph. D. Candidate  
History of Consciousness Department  
UCSC



Dear Project Purr Members,

Born in the garbage shed at Pajaro Valley High School, they were already six month old when I found them. I had heard from the custodians that two of the cats from this litter had already been killed. One in the garbage compactor and the other hit by a car in the parking lot. I knew I had to rescue them, tame them, and eventually find homes for them. They've been spayed/neutered, vaccinated, tested for leukemia, and have been de-wormed. They're litter box trained too. I guess the last step after taming my feral kittens is to find suitable homes for them now. Enclosed find two photos... Duke, who's half Siamese. He has beautiful blue eyes and marking. He is very lovey dovey. He loves to play, eat, purr, rub up against you, and he loves to be rubbed all over... Goldie, a rare beauty with a very cute disposition. She loves to be stroked, loves to play with toys, purrs loudly, and she has one silly black whisker on her face. They are eight months old now. They've come a long way. I'm still working with Ruby, the other orange tabby female. I'm sure she'll be ready in the near future. It is my dearest wish that someone patient, kind, and crazy about cats will adopt at least one of these kittens. I couldn't have done this without your support and referrals. I will be in touch with Lynne, so I can return the hutch and blankets. Thank you for all that you do.

Fondly, Yvette Baltazar

P.S. Thank you for keeping in touch with me throughout the taming process.

I want to speak in support of Project Purr and how important is that the Santa Cruz Animal Services promote TNR of feral cats and kittens. TNR means to trap, neuter or spay, and release back to where the cats were found, with the person who did the trapping responsible for feeding and watering for the rest of the cats lives. TNR is the most humane, kind and effective way to control feral cat populations. It is used all over the world.

Recently Project Purr was a huge help to my husband and me. While walking at a

local school, we found kittens. They were living under a storage container. It was a horrible life.

I had heard of Project Purr, so I contacted them. I was really scared. How was I going to manage this? What would I do with them? We thought at first there were only a couple. Turns out there were six kittens! And if there are kittens, there must be a mom.

Total panic, with school starting soon. Project Purr to the rescue. Lynne and Mar-

## In Support of Project Purr

garet walked us through every step. The short story is that we got all six kittens and the mom trapped. They were tested for disease, vaccinated, spayed or neutered, and eartipped.

While the goal is release where they are found, we knew they couldn't stay at the school. Also with Lynne's guidance I found a great ranch for them to live on. We saved seven beautiful cats who will have a great life. Last week when I saw them, they were playing on hay bales.

It is so important for Animal Services to promote and be supportive of Project Purr. Taking the cats in and just killing them is immoral and unjust.

~ Robin Samuels, Felton

Do you have feral cats in your backyard or immediate neighborhood? Last spring we became the adoptive family for a pair of feral cats that quickly became a family of two adults and six kittens. Fortunately we learned of Project Purr - an organization devoted to spaying and vaccinating feral cats through their Trap/Neuter/Return program. With the help of Project Purr we were provided with cages to safely catch the cats, advice as to how to catch them and other personal services

Then Adobe Animal Hospital provided the spaying services for a very reasonable fee. As well, Adobe Animal Hospital treated the feral cats with great care as every few days we caught a new one and ap-

peared on their doorstep at 7a.m. They checked them all for rabies, feline leukemia, and general health before providing shots and the surgery.

The two original cats have returned to our yard and are healthy and happy and friendly. Four kittens have new homes and two prefer the outdoor life.

Thanks to Project Purr and Adobe Animal Hospital for their support of the feral cat project. We have averted more litters and chances of having unhealthy animals in the neighborhood. Watsonville has a similar program through Friends of Watsonville Animal Shelter.

Sincerely,  
Diane Siri  
La Selva Beach

(FYI: Project Purr funds the excellent feral cat program which is generously discounted and graciously made available by Craig Evans, DVM and staff at Adobe Animal Hospital. Please note that Watsonville Friends "similar" program does not include disease testing for (FeLV) feline leukemia or (FIV) feline immunodeficiency virus.)

My home is in a neighborhood of fences - some 5 feet, some 6 feet. These fences are a railway for raccoons and cats cutting from the gulch of Rispin Mansion to 41st Avenue in Capitola where the fast food places and businesses have their garbage dumps.

On one side of my house is a sliding glass door and a concrete pad. As these wild and feral animals use their railway, many times they stop and glance at my indoor cat - who sits and watches (probably in envy) as they go by.

On the other side of my house there is a covered patio. One day a cat came to my patio just outside my kitchen widow. I ignored her. The next morning when I opened my bedroom curtain to see the day, she was on my patio with her four small kittens, two or three weeks old. I had rejected a feral nursing mother. Of course I fed her. I am a mother also. The mother (I called her Hannah) left when the kittens were weaned. The kittens stayed.

I wish I had known about Project Purr at

*Continued on page 9*

## Know the Difference:

### Santa Cruz County Animal Services Authority (ASA) and Santa Cruz SPCA

Many people confuse the "shelter" and the "SPCA". They are the two largest animal welfare organizations in our county, and while some services overlap, they are not the same. For many years, the local chapter of the SPCA had been contracted with Santa Cruz County to run Animal Control and the public shelter. In 2002, Santa Cruz County established its own animal services agency as a brand new entity (ASA).

It is important to know the difference between these two organizations.

Contact ASA if you need to locate lost animals, apply for free spay/neuter services, report animal cruelty, have found a lost animal that needs to be surrendered, purchase dog licenses, adopt an animal, or borrow a humane live trap, among other services and programs.

**Santa Cruz County Animal Services (ASA)** – provides Animal Control services and is the only open admission animal shelter, with two locations, one in Scotts Valley and one in Watsonville. The ASA is the agency responsible for lost and adoptable animals in our county. The cities and

county pay for these services, so ASA is actually funded by your tax dollars. The shelter board sets animal shelter policies, and has a monthly meeting which is open to the public. The ASA is building a large, permanent new shelter to replace it's Scotts Valley branch, and is projected to open in Fall 2008, in Live Oak on the corner of 7th and Rodriguez streets.

General Manager: Katherine Vos.

Website: [www.scanimalservices.us](http://www.scanimalservices.us)

Phone: 831/454-7303

#### Santa Cruz SPCA

As a private non-profit agency, the local chapter of the SPCA continues to provide a variety of services in the county, including humane education, adoptable animals, low-cost spay/neuter services, assistance for senior pet owners and care for sick, injured or abandoned animals. Located on 7th Avenue in Live Oak.

Director: Lisa Carter.

Website: [www.santacruzspca.org](http://www.santacruzspca.org)

Phone: 831/465-5000

## In Support of Project Purr

*Continued from page 8*

that point. I heard about them not long after that and contacted them.

When the kittens were old enough, Lynne and Margaret trapped all four, and they were taken and neutered and spayed at Adobe Hospital at an extremely reasonable cost to me - and they paid the balance due. I had two boys and two girls, and they now have names and know me - but they are still feral.

All four of them consider the patio as their home and me as their provider. Every morning when I feed them, they are waiting for me to join them and talk to them as they eat their breakfast. Each evening before dark, I join them again and we visit - they are always there waiting for me.

Project Purr is a fantastic solution to extermination, and the expense of it, of unwanted feral cats, also domestic cats. I would like to see it the organization recognized as a viable alternative to destruction of these poor God-created creatures needlessly slaughtered because someone feels that the expense of neutering and spaying is too much for their purse, or they are just too lazy to do it. Project Purr is there to give them help, and they do so gladly. They put a lot of time and effort into their worthy cause. They are to be commended for their hard work. Thank you, Vernette Godfrey Senior Resident of Capitola

Dear Project Purr,

Your latest newsletter was probably the best I've seen. The story, "Nobody's Cats", "Franny's Story", and "Beautiful But Untouchable" lifted my spirits. To know that others feel as deeply as I do makes me feel so good.

How you can accomplish all the good that you do on a budget of \$90,000 is unbelievable!

Sincerely, Ronaele Findley

## Tame the Tigers

*Continued from page 4*

ily decides to adopt their fosters... they must be prepared to let their foster kittens go on to new homes. As a foster, you participate in assessing potential adopters. While it can be bittersweet saying goodbye to your kittens, by providing a foster home, you've helped these kittens thrive. Your home and care give them a loving start on life...and thanks to you, they can become well adjusted members of a caring family. A forever loving home of their own is what we hope and strive for, for every companion animal.

Project Purr is fortunate to have reliable, observant and conscientious fosters who are committed to keeping our kittens safe while providing food, vet visits, lots of play and love, while teaching the social skills that help them become beloved family members. Fostering is a rewarding, life enriching experience. You literally are saving lives of cats and kittens who otherwise would have nowhere to call home.

Many thanks of gratitude to all of our amazing foster moms over the many years. Hugs and kisses for all the time, effort, and extraordinary love that you have given to Project Purr and to the deserving kitties!



November 6, 2007

Dear Project Purr

Please accept this donation  
in the amount of

\$ 60.00

This money was raised  
for your organization  
at our annual Community  
Fund Raising Pumpkin Patch.

Sincerely, Greg Lopez



# Compassionate Action Continued from page 1

Right here in Santa Cruz County, we have a unique and complex situation. Our county has had a mandatory spay/neuter law in effect since 1995. Shelter impound numbers for both cats and dogs continue to drop. *While the total number of cats being euthanized is dropping, still 5-6 out of every 10 cats in our shelter system are euthanized.* Cats comprise the largest category—78%—of the animals euthanized in our shelter. One quarter to one third of all cats euthanized are categorized as feral, usually the single largest category of animals euthanized each month. (Data is from the Santa Cruz County Animal Services board packets.)

It can be distressing both for community members and for shelter staff when we focus on cat euthanasia at our local shelter. What happens at the shelter is a result of both shelter administration and policies *and* local community ethics. In order to ultimately improve care and reduce euthanasia, public input and participation are needed. *We* are responsible for what is done in our name and with our tax dollars and *we* must help move the shelter towards reducing cat overpopulation in a nonlethal manner.

## **Each cat is individual and unique**

It is especially distressing to juxtapose these statistics with individual cats we know and love, such as these recently rescued cats.

There was Quince, scavenging from a dumpster in Aptos, a black cat, barely glimpsed, as I came to feed her at night. She waited by the dumpster till I drove away and then jumped down to eat. Finally, after two weeks, she allowed herself to eat while I stood a few feet away. The next night, she meowed to me, and soon allowed me to touch her. She wasn't a true feral, but a dumped domestic cat.

There was Lilly. Rescued in the dark from a road above Corralitos, her long, tall frame and black and white coloring made her appear to be a skunk. How shocked the driver was, when she opened her car door to check on the "skunk" by the side of the road, and Lilly jumped into her car, putting her paws around her neck as if to hug her.

There was Fruit Batty, a scrawny bug-eyed 3 week old kitten, tossed out next to Highway 17, who showed up at someone's door at 1 am and meowed so loudly and insistently, until the door was opened.

There was Grandma Puzzle-master, a savvy, somewhat bony matriarch of three generations of cats living outside at one address. Her grandbabies were easily trapped on the first night. The mother of the babies was trapped on the second night. We then spent many more nights while Grandma exhibited her genius and eluded capture by removing all of the food from three different kinds of traps without tripping them. Even without touch and watching from a distance, my appreciation and respect of her skills increased each day. Persistence paid off, and finally she was caught in a trap disguised with cardboard and sweatshirts to not look like a trap.

There was Sly, who dropped kittens in a friend's yard, hiding behind the wisteria, between a shed and a fence in the weeds. When the friend was finally able to scruff her and move her inside with her kittens, Sly purred like mad, thrilled to be safe and warm and fed.

These cats and others come to mind when pondering the statistics. I do not want these unique beings wiped out of this world. We can do better.

## **Trap-Neuter-Return: The Humane Solution**

Alley Cat Allies believes that animal control and shelters must embrace a paradigm shift resulting in entire municipalities endorsing Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) as the most humane, effective, and cost-efficient method to combat feral cat overpopulation. They're aiming at a tipping point, moving from grassroots efforts of the last 20 years towards mainstream endorsement of TNR.

Trap-Neuter-Return needs to be embraced community-wide in Santa Cruz County. Project Purr's low-cost spay/neuter program for feral cats, and their Trap-Neuter-Return expertise, are a tremendous resource for our community. However, in order to increase effectiveness, capacity, and



ultimately save more cats lives, *grassroots efforts need to grow in combination with mainstream endorsement.* Each one of us needs to advocate to friends, neighbors and colleagues that TNR is the method of choice for dealing with stray and feral cats, and that feral cats do not belong in the shelter. It is not just Project Purr's issue. Unless more resources are brought to bear, along with an incredible cadre of volunteers, and participation and collaboration by all animal welfare groups, we cannot fix cats more quickly than they can breed.

In addition, to successfully combat animal overpopulation, TNR needs to be practiced in conjunction with other programs such as early-age spay/neuter, and financial help provided for needy individuals in getting their own companion animals sterilized. The John S. Strauss Spay/Neuter fund, a program of Friends of Santa Cruz County Animals, is one such resource, which provides free spaying/and neutering of pets owned by qualifying low-income Santa Cruz County residents at the offices of local participating veterinarians ([www.foscca.org](http://www.foscca.org)).

## **It's The Law!**

Part of creating a strong safety net for cats is learning how the law applies to feral cats, and uniquely so, here in Santa Cruz County. There is an ordinance, now being enforced, governing feral cats and feral cat caretakers. Beyond neglect and cruelty ordinances, which apply to all dogs and cats and their caretakers, the feral cat ordinance sets a higher standard with more requirements to meet than the rules applied to domestic cats and their

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# Compassionate Action

Continued from page 10

caretakers. One requirement is that caretakers who feed more than one feral cat must register as a colony caretaker with the shelter. To read the laws governing feral cats go to: <http://www.scanimalservices.us/>, select Animal Ordinances, Santa Cruz County, Regulation of Animal Breeding, Care of Feral Cats.

**If your feral and/or eartipped cat disappears** for a day or two, you need to be especially vigilant. A substantial number of eartipped cats are being brought into the shelter. Not all eartipped cats are truly feral, and the shelter evaluates each cat to determine its temperament. A cat deemed feral by the shelter is only held for three days before being euthanized. The shelter now posts eartipped cats on their web site. Search for stray/lost animals: <http://www.scanimalservices.us/rescue3.htm>, click the button for cats, then click Search. Search for adoptable animals (who have past the stray holding period): <http://www.scanimalservices.us/rescue4.htm>. Also check the shelter log of animals reported found by the public, not surrendered to the shelter. The shelter recommends micro-chipping so owners can quickly be located and reunited with their animals. Shelter phone #: 831-454-7303.

Will Santa Cruz County ordinances and policies result in reducing euthanasia for cats in our county?

## Help Extend the Safety Net for Cats

The SF/SPCA runs a model program which recruits volunteers to form Cat Assistance Teams, or CATS. CAT members provide hands-on assistance, practical advice, and moral support to people in the community who are trying to help the city's untamed, abandoned cats. This team approach has made feral cat care more efficient, resulting in an increased number of cats altered. It has also expanded the circle of compassion by encouraging more people to get involved and teaching them how to help cats. CAT members often work with one another to humanely trap ferals for spay/neuter surgery, and to socialize and find homes for cats who are able to adapt to life in a human home. Members also coor-

porate taking turns feeding colonies or "colony sitting" when another member goes on vacation.

Volunteers focus on neighborhoods in which they live and work, and then also network with each other to help provide flexibility and coverage. Can you imagine that model working in Santa Cruz? Would you be willing to help cats in your neighborhood? To help by volunteering, call Project Purr at 831-423-6369.

## Pleasure, Happiness, Joy and Satisfaction

Recent brain studies indicate that performing acts of altruism or kindness also have a selfish component. Altruism, which is defined as unselfish concern for the welfare of others, is associated with greater well-being, health, and longevity. Doing good helps us to feel good and feeling good also makes us more likely to do good. Helping feral cats can increase your sense of connection and meaning, generate pleasure, happiness and joy, and build vital community networks.

There is no other feeling like the feeling of saving a life. Chicago volunteers described the feral cats they care for. "They're not yowling looking for boyfriends and girlfriends. ...I look forward to the cats that I help. I look forward to seeing them outside. They're happy and healthy, and they can romp and play... and they're not worried about finding their next meal."

Alley Cat Allies reminds us that: "...the true measure of our success is in each and every cat who has reaped the benefits of TNR. This is what inspires us to continue. All of us who have seen happy, healthy feral cats rolling in the grass, sunning themselves on fences, and trotting purposefully on some mysterious feral cat mission know that this is success of the highest order."

The cats we love need our assistance. *Turn your love into action.* Become an important part of the community safety net for cats. All of our efforts are needed. Let's make Santa Cruz County truly a humane and loving place for all animals, including feral cats.

by Rose Z. Moonwater, volunteer



## How You Can Help

- Join a neighborhood cat assistance team. Be available to help cats in your neighborhood.
- Foster litters of kittens.
- Foster a cat pulled from the shelter.
- Feed and care for a feral cat colony.
- Help Trap-Neuter-Return in your neighborhood.
- Help educate, problem solve, and resolve neighborhood feral cat related conflicts.
- Educate people you come into contact with about Trap-Neuter-Return.
- Look for barn/shed/garden/outdoor homes for feral cats, which are always needed.
- Talk to your city councilperson about your feelings and concerns about feral cats.
- Advocate for feral cats and insist on reducing feral cat breeding and numbers without killing.
- Donate to Project Purr. Keep the low-cost spay/neuter program funded.
- Write a letter to the editor of any of our local papers about feral cats and trap-neuter-return.
- Write a letter to our local shelter or speak to the shelter board about policies governing feral cats.

Katherine Vos, General Manager  
Santa Cruz County Animal Services  
Authority  
27 Janis Way, Scotts Valley, CA 95066

SCCASA (shelter) board meets once a month. Information about these meetings, including time, location, agenda and minutes (summaries) are posted on the SCCASA web site at: [http://www.scanimalservices.us/Board\\_Info.asp](http://www.scanimalservices.us/Board_Info.asp)



nonprofit volunteer feral cat rescue organization

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www.projectpurr.org  
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Santa Cruz, CA



*Yes! I want to help Project Purr's rescue efforts.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

*Or donate securely on-line at [Networkforgood.org](http://Networkforgood.org)*

*Thank you.*

*Together we are making a difference.*



*Compassionate Action...Trap-Neuter-Return...Saves the Lives of Feral Cats!*



**Compassionate Action  
Trap-Neuter-Return  
Saves Lives of Feral Cats**