



Witty Kitties, Inc. Newsletter

A Special-Needs Shelter

Winter 2005

Heart Breakers

by Jenni Doll, DVM

Dealing with animals day in and day out, especially those that hadn't had homes prior to coming here, is a very rewarding endeavor. If it weren't for those moments of joy when an ill animal is finally feeling better, or a once stray cat finds a loving home, or all the purrs from the many kitties that sit on you while at the shelter, NO one could stay in the animal rescue "business" for long. However, for every joyous event, there are at least as many heart-breaking stories. Since we lost our first Witty Kitty, Jasper, in 2000, to Feline Leukemia Virus-related problems we have had numerous kitties come and go in our lives. Each one leaving his or her own paw prints on our hearts in some way or another. I remember Scamper, partially paralyzed on his back half and having to wear his little "orthopedic" shoes to protect his legs from getting sores. I can't scoop a litter box in the Felv room without having the feeling of expectation that Mike (who we recently lost) is going to jump on my back. I could go on forever with stories, but I have to say the kitty that won over the most hearts during her time here was Peanut.

Peanut came to us in March of 2003. Renee Pohlman had been renting a house in the country, becoming friendly with the local farm kitties. Two years prior, she took in a tiny kitten that had been injured. She was suffering a dislocated right shoulder and jaw. A veterinarian was able to replace the shoulder, but didn't observe the jaw problem at the time. Soon after, the jaw fused in its dislocated position. Peanut couldn't open her mouth. Her good samaritan fed her especially mushy food which Peanut was able to suck through her teeth. This kept her going, but she was constantly hungry, as she could never fill herself up.

In spite of the messy mouth and chest caused from the messy, drooly way she ate, she looked like a happy trim healthy cat when she arrived. We took her in and fed her as she had been accustomed, 2-3 times daily. It wasn't

*Peanut*

long, though, when I decided to put her under anesthesia to get a good look at her mouth. I discovered the lower jaw had dislocated, and was displaced caudally (towards the back), and tilted. Her teeth were all overlapping, and only had the tiniest spaces through which to suck her food. After giving her a ton of pre-emptive pain killers, I removed all her teeth. Due to the tilting of the lower jaw, some had to be removed by removing a bit of bone. A few hours after surgery, to my surprise, Peanut was half awake and purring! I can still see her as she groomed herself for the first time since she was 2 months old. She had her tongue back!. She wasn't the prettiest sight due to the bleeding that occurred due to the extractions, but she was happy.

Peanut could finally lap up food, and she was able to fill her belly with as much food as she wanted at a sitting. That helped us, as it allowed us to only have to feed her twice daily. We fed her canned foods, supplemented

(continued...)

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by milk replacer. Soon she was carrying surplus weight, and proud of it. Peanut initially lived in the old shelter; then we allowed her to live in our home for several months. I admit, it was not a “love-hate” relationship we had, but something more like an “I-love-you-but-don’t-get-so-close-to-me” relationship. Peanut still drooled and accumulated a lot of food on her face when she ate. We were constantly wiping her face, and the area around her dish. She tended to smell bad, despite regular bathing. This was a problem, as she was a very loving kitty, enjoying a lap to sit on, and rewarding you with nuzzling to your face. Many nights we awoke to see her funny, tongue-out face staring down at us, blowing bad breath on us, and kissing us. Though she could pull her tongue completely inside her mouth if she wanted, she rarely did. She liked to let it hang out, and due to her undershot jaw, it REALLY hung out there. She was messy and added to the already numerous chores in the house, so, after finding out we were pregnant, we moved her to the new shelter.

Peanut wasn’t happy about her new home at first, but soon was discovered by visitors and volunteers who took pity on her and gave her the attention she craved. When folks came to our shelter, Peanut was often the first kitty they saw as her outdoor enclosure was at the front of the building. Her dirty and dry tongue was cause for amusement in some, and dismay in others. “Why don’t you amputate that?” I’ve heard more than once. We continued giving her her special food and cleaning up the big mess afterwards. Peanut was truly the epitome of the “special needs” kitty.

In September of last year, I was surprised one evening to find a large amount of blood in her dish. I briefly looked at Peanut’s tongue, figured she must have gotten a scratch on it, as it was so prominent, and let it be. Next day, the same thing — so much blood was in her dish I decided to anesthetise her. I examined as much as I could see, which wasn’t much, and let her wake up. The scene replayed itself the next day as well: blood, anesthesia, nothing, wake up. The entire time this was happening, Peanut felt fine. She had no idea she had a problem. I brainstormed on breaking her jaw, to allow a

better view of her mouth and throat. I considered finding a vet with a fiberoptic scope that was only a few mm in diameter. I wondered, “how far do we go?” This is a dilemma many pet owners face with their pets, and I’ve faced many times before.

In the end, it was decided that we should euthanize Peanut while she still felt good, for it is a rule at Witty Kitties that no one suffers. We were concerned about the amount of pain she would need to endure. We also have the sad fact that money and time must be spread over several dozen cats. “The need of the many outweigh the need of the few” is a frequent saying at many shelters. After putting Peanut down, and crying a tremendous amount, I made myself take a look at Peanut’s throat, a difficult task I won’t go into details about. She had a mass in her pharynx. What kind? I can only speculate. But I know I would not have been able to remove it in its entirety considering the situation.

Peanut is buried under a tree near the shelter, and continues to pop into my mind when I walk past her. I like to remember how funny she looked, and how happy she always seemed, except during bathtime. I have a favorite photo of Peanut, taken by a wonderful volunteer and friend, Steve Fasnacht. It is of Peanut sitting in the driveway, staring at a mouse. She looks content, though she knows there is no way she could ever eat that mouse. Images like that, and Peanut’s joyful, yet short time here is one of those stories that keep me going, and doing what I can to make a tiny speck in the world a happier place.



Safe at last

President's Message

by Kathleen Schoon

So you want to adopt an animal. Why should you go to a shelter or rescue group instead of finding a friend whose cat just had kittens or to a pet store or even a breeder? Have you ever heard of someone who was discouraged from adopting a rescue animal because of high adoption fees, a lengthy application form and interview process? I have heard these general complaints from pet owners and would like to explain why rescue groups who desperately need good homes for their animals ask potential adoptive families to jump through some rather difficult hoops before they can take home their new family member.

Witty Kitties' adoption fees may vary depending on the type of animal; at this time our adoption fee for a cat is \$100.00. The cat will go to its new home having already received all current vaccinations, been spayed or neutered, been tested for FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus) and FELV (Feline Leukemia Virus), as well as micro-chipped for identification purposes.

Say you decided that \$100.00 was too much money for a cat and went down the street to take home a free kitten. Your "free kitten" would not have had any of the above necessary veterinary care. Once you have taken your new kitten to your own veterinarian for these services, you will have paid considerably more than you would have spent had you adopted from Witty Kitties.

Our application process is designed to ask questions that help the potential new family and the agency find a good fit for the animal and family. It is the adoption agency's responsibility to make certain that the new family will not only provide a responsible quality environment for their pet but that they understand the long term and — hopefully — unconditional commitment they are making when they bring a pet home.

Finally, when you adopt from a rescue group or animal shelter, you have done a wonderful thing for the world. Your money goes to a worthy charity and you have taken in an animal that may have been rejected or abused, and they always make very grateful, loving pets. You will have done your part to help with the pet over-population problem and one less animal will be euthanized because of you. When you adopt a rescue animal you have not given valuable funds to pet stores who often receive their animals from "puppy mills," and if you don't get your kitten from the "free box" down the street, you might be encouraging that pet owner to have her cat spayed before the next litter can be produced.

I realize that most of you who are reading this newsletter are already great supporters of shelters and rescue groups, but you can help spread the word to others who might be thinking about getting a pet. Tell them to go to a shelter first and help them to understand the importance of adopting a rescued animal.



Editor's Note: All Witty Kitties' photos are by Tom Langdon of Iowa City

We Give Thanks!

It's hard work to keep a shelter running, but it's been made easier for us by the many friends and supporters who choose to help us. We want to single out and thank the following people for their extra support and let them know how much it means to us:

Nicky and Clint Graf

of Conroy, IA were invaluable in building the outdoor enclosures for our current shelter. They also installed electrical equipment and did some plumbing. We thank them for their help and want them to know how much we treasure their hard work and efforts to make our shelter comfortable and fun for our kitties.

Stephen and Jen Fasnacht

work for Camp Courageous of Iowa. In spite of the fact that they are really busy with the camp, they spent many weekends helping with the labor of building the new shelter. They also brought lots of neat equipment for our Spring fundraiser -- a dunking booth and carnival-type games for the kids who attended.

Eleanor & Thomas Dvorchak

of Muscatine, IA gave us a very generous donation this Fall to help keep the shelter running smoothly. Their donation also provides memorials and honorariums for the following animals who are gone but not forgotten: From Eleanor, Tom, Margee, Cupcake, Friday —

In Memory of **Mitzie, Blondie, Redford**

From Cuddles, Pacino, Rambo, Albert, Morris, Bones —

In Memory of **Simon, Natalie, Diamond, Citrus**

Bill Law

dedicates himself to plowing out the Witty Kitties' driveway each and every winter.
Thanks, Bill -- you're a saint!

Cindy and Janak Thompson-Adhikari and Jean Walker

have supplied us with substantial grants -- again -- this quarter. We are SO grateful.

Marla Griffith and Judy Patterson

played holiday elves, making a huge delivery of toys, treats and catnip just before Christmas. Santa couldn't have done a better job than these wonderful gals!

Memorials & Honorariums

In Honor of **Jordan Smith**, my grandson, by Charlotte Grishaber

In Memory of **Josh**, by Linda and Joe Skvor

In Memory of our dog, **Pokey**, by Terrie and Jeffrey Webster

In Memory of **Fluffy**, pet of Dennis & Ronny Wieland, by Lois James

Honoring or memorializing a person or pet pays a special tribute while helping our shelter animals who cannot help themselves.

**Thank you, EVERYONE, for your generosity and caring spirit!
We couldn't do it without YOU!**

Witty “Kiddies”

by Jenni Doll, DVM

We're thrilled to have received support from folks throughout Iowa, as well as a few other states -- Texas, California, Florida and Minnesota. But on December 23 of last year, a young girl celebrated her 11th birthday and decided to dedicate much of the party -- and donate many gifts -- to Witty Kitties!

Hannah Davita Doll-Schmitz, niece of Dr. Jenni Doll, invited twelve of her friends, and asked each to bring gifts for our cats (making sure, of course, nothing was too heavy to be shipped here from the out-of-towners). Each of her guests received a Witty Kitties' shirt, and joined in a real feline-themed frenzy, playing “Pin the Eye Patch on the Kitty,” making “cat tail” treats, and hitting a pinata filled with treats.

I'm not sure who had more fun with this idea -- the kids or the cats that received the gifts! We received some monetary donations, catnip, food treats and a plethora of toys. After evening chores that evening, Joseph Klingelhutz, cousin of Hannah Davita, carefully distributed a few toys to each room, followed by catnip, and finally, the tasty treats. The cats had a wonderful time tossing around fuzzy mice, chasing balls and batting around at the air in their catnip-induced drunkenness!

Hannah Davita isn't the first young person to include Witty Kitties in a birthday celebration. Sam Skavor of Marion, IA was the very first to do so, and actually held his party **in** the Witty Kitties Shelter in the Fall of 2003. Emily Jones of Solon followed suit last summer.

We can't begin to tell you how impressed we are with you, Hannah, Sam and Emily, and want you to know we appreciate your generosity toward our kitties!

Wish List

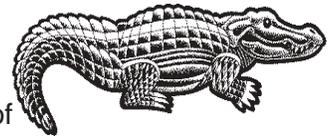
- * **Cat Food (Purina Cat Chow is the favored brand)**
- * **Cat Litter - scoopable**
- * **Donations of skill - carpentry, plumbing, etc.**
- * **Volunteers - please call to arrange a visit and see just how you can help our furry friends**
- * **Homes for our special-needs animals**
- * **Plastic grocery bags, newspaper, paper towels, small paper plates**
- * **Monetary tax-deductible donations -- any amount is welcomed!**
- * **Web Master needed to update existing web site and keep information on our web site.**



**We can't say it enough -- THANK YOU to those of you who support us in any way.
We hope we are conveying just how special you are!**

Exotics Corner

by Torben Platt



In the course of my lifelong infatuation with animals I have been the recipient of several — sometimes quite painful — bites, scratches, tail whips, kicks, etc. Besides being painful, these encounters have another thing in common: they were all my fault. I have never been minding my own business and suddenly come under attack, and while I suppose this sometimes does occur, it is extremely rare. Animals are usually too busy just trying to survive to waste their energy attacking humans.

Unfortunately I have occasionally been guilty of carelessness (or stupidity) when handling animals and trying to demonstrate how harmless they are, and have gotten myself bitten. At our second Open House I was feeding a 14-foot python when it missed the dead rat I was giving it and got my leg. Snakes often don't realize a mistake like that right away so all she thought was that she had hold of an exceptionally large food item and she needed to constrict it before she could swallow it. It took about 20 minutes (and a bottle of whiskey poured on her head) to convince her to let go! I also recently managed to get bitten by a 3-foot Caiman (South American alligator) while showing it to Kathleen's family, much to their amusement (her mother tenderly asked where I had gotten all the "fake blood").

The point is that these incidents would not have occurred if I hadn't put myself in a vulnerable position. In the wild you will never be attacked by a snake. Bites to people are in defense. I have spent a lot of time, money, and energy traveling to far-away places looking for reptiles (snakes in particular), and I wish I would be attacked sometime because it would make it much easier to find them. At this point I should probably mention that my beautiful (and sensitive) wife has received her share of bites and other injuries also. As one of the few local veterinarians willing to work with feral cats, she has been virtually mauled many times. She has even been bitten and wrapped up by one of the snakes here. It's just that she doesn't whine about it like her weeny husband. Happy now, honey? Anyway, I hope that people will remember that in almost any negative interaction with another animal, whether it's a dog bite, hitting a deer, or raccoons eating someone's corn, the creature is just trying to survive. There is never any malice or evil intent on the part of the animal. Unfortunately, those characteristics are strictly human.

Witty Kitties T-Shirts Available!

Looking for a way to support Witty Kitties but don't have time to volunteer? How about buying a T-shirt?? T-shirts can be any color you desire, but our logo is either blue or orange. The cost is \$15 for children's shirts and \$20 for adults.



We have the following shirts on hand:

- * Black long-sleeved shirts with an orange logo;
- * White long-sleeved shirts with an orange logo;
- * Black tanks with an orange logo;
- * White tanks with a blue logo; and
- * White short-sleeved T-shirts with a blue logo

Sizes: Childrens S, M, L, and Adult S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL.

We will special order any shirt you like -- in any color -- at NO added cost! Give us a call and place your order. It's that easy! (319) 848-3238.

Cold Weather Tips for Your Pet

from The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Keep your cat inside. Outdoors, cats can freeze, become lost or be stolen, injured or killed. Cats who are allowed to stray are exposed to fatal infectious diseases, including rabies.

During the winter, outdoor cats sometimes choose to sleep under the hoods of cars, where it is warmer. When the motor is started, the cat can be injured or killed in the fan belt. Before starting the engine, bang loudly on the car hood for a few seconds to give a cat a chance to escape.

Never let your dog off the leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm. Dogs frequently lose their scent in snow and ice and easily become lost. They may panic in a snowstorm and run away. More dogs are lost during the winter than during any other season.

Thoroughly wipe off your dog's legs and stomach when it comes in out of the rain, snow or ice. Salt, antifreeze or other chemicals could hurt your dog if he ingests them while licking his paws. Also, his sensitive paw pads may bleed from snow or ice encrusted on them.

Never leave your dog or cat alone in a car during cold weather. A car can act as a refrigerator in the winter, holding in the cold. The animal could freeze to death.

Antifreeze, even in very tiny doses, is a lethal poison for dogs and cats. Unfortunately, because of its sweet taste, animals are attracted to it. Be sure to thoroughly clean up any spills from your vehicle. To prevent accidental poisonings, more and more people are using animal-friendly products that contain propylene glycol rather than traditional products containing ethylene glycol. Call your veterinarian if you suspect that your companion animal has been poisoned, or the Animal Poison Control 24-hour hotline phone number (1-800-548-2423).

Never feed dog food to a cat. It does not contain enough protein, since cats require two times as much as dogs. Never feed cat food to your dog. Dogs need half the protein cats do and must have food made for their specific nutritional needs.

Make sure your companion animal has a warm place to sleep far away from all drafts and off the floor, such as in a dog or cat bed with a warm blanket or pillow in it (or in YOUR bed!).

Cat Trivia

A cat's tail held high means happiness. A twitching tail is a warning sign, and a tail tucked in close to the body is a sure sign of insecurity.

A cat has four rows of whiskers.

A cat uses its whiskers to determine if a space is too small to squeeze through. The whiskers act as feelers or antennae, helping the animal to judge the precise width of any passage.



Gifts, Memorials & Honorariums:

Do you have a family member, friend or special pet for whom you would like to provide a memorial or an honorarium? Or, would you just like to give a monetary gift? General donations, memorials or honorariums can be given for a specific person, pet or reason. **Your donation is tax deductible, and we'll publish your memorial or honorarium in a future issue. We'll also send a complimentary copy to the person you honor or the family of the person or pet you memorialize.** Just provide the necessary information below and then send this form back to us in the envelope enclosed in this issue (remember to add a stamp). Thank you! Everything you give helps us care for the animals that are already a part of our shelter and also permits us to help even more animals looking for a second chance.

Gift: \$ _____

Honorarium for: (name) _____ Person Pet

Memorial for: (name) _____ Person Pet

Send notification to: (name) _____

(City, State, Zip)



How to find Witty Kitties:

Take I-380 to the Swisher/Shueyville exit (No. 10).
Go east 1.0 mile to Club Road (becomes Curtis Bridge Rd.). Turn right.
Go 1.0 mile to Sandy Beach Rd. & turn left.
Go 1.1 miles to Roberts Ferry Rd. & turn right, then left at our 3rd driveway (3133 Roberts Ferry Rd.)

Please call (319) 848-3238 & leave a message to schedule an appointment.

Witty Kitties
3133 Roberts Ferry Rd.
Solon, IA 52333
(319) 848-3238