

Witty Kitties, Inc. Newsletter

A Special-Needs Shelter for Cats & Critters * Vol., X, Issue 1 * Late Winter 2013

C'Malley Scorcese Lillian Valentine Lokey Pogo

WITTY KITTIES MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 2000, Witty Kitties provides quality care and shelter to cats with specific chronic medical needs within the five-state area we serve. Our organization is committed to collaborating with local humane organizations in rescue work and low-cost spay-neuter services. We provide rescue, care and appropriate housing for a variety of reptiles, as well. As part of our overall service to the community, Witty Kitties works to educate the public regarding proper care of these companion animals and, ideally, to find permanent, quality homes for them.

GREY TIMES by Jenni Doll, DVM

Website URL: WittyKitties.org

It is 2:48 AM, and the wind is just howling outside. It started in the early evening, but is relentless. I couldn't sleep, partially because of it, and partially because Jakey, the big black Lab, likes getting up and off the bed too much. I'm thinking about all the deaths we have had here the past several weeks. I'm down and don't know if I'm a doctor or the Grimm Reaper. I begin thinking about new alternatives to the term "shelter" in our name. Hospice? It is true we have put down many animals, and others have gone on their own.

Lest people reconsider bringing an animal here, I have to admit many had some strikes against them -- Felv, FIV, advanced age, injuries. Even so, I can't get over loosing Bambina the Chihuahua; Nigel, our pelican who was mentioned at the very end of my last article; Dimples the pig; Ellington, Brando, Meowza, Missy O'Malley, Matilda ("Matty"), Naomi, and Buddy and Sadie (who lived with me since the summer).

The wind keeps howling, and it occurs to me to check on the possum we have at the moment. He was picked up in lowa City, possibly injured and extremely thin. When certain wildlife come here, I simply provide supportive care, and try to figure out if there are any particular issues that need to be addressed. This guy has frost bite on his ears and toes. I wonder if he just became debilitated due to too little food and the cold. Once they hit a certain point, they just seem to go downhill. But this little guy is eating more and more. He still shivers a lot when cold so has lots of blankets and towels. I can't find any reason why he shouldn't do well, but never pursue medical issues (i.e. draw blood and try to compare to normal values, which are really are hard to come by as possums

usually are not studied in this way. I go downstairs because I'm worried the wind has blown the cover off his cage. Sure enough I can see through the window it has. In just shorts, a jacket, and rubber boots, I race out to put a large beach towel on top of him. He almost looks relieved. I make a mental note to swap the nice towel for one of our crappy ones in the morning.

I think of how I really do try to go out of my way to keep the animals comfy, but worry about my failings. Just a few days ago, Nigel the pelican died on his own. He was an amazing bird. This summer he came at a fraction of his optimal weight, heavily parasitized, weak, and with a severe brachial plexus injury (major nerve damage to wing) which would never heal. The poor wing had dragged so much it was infected. But thank\$ to pound\$ and pound\$ of fi\$h and med\$ (did I mention the fish was expen\$ive?), he eventually doubled his weight and became strong enough to hold his wing just off the ground. Feathers grew in and he thrived. Unable to find anywhere to take him in the Midwest, we housed him in the winter. He wasn't thrilled, but he seemed happy with a high perch we gave him to allow him to look out the window. Sadly, his biggest handicap was that if he fell on his back he couldn't get up. He did it periodically outside, but was usually seen quickly since he was in sight out in the vard. During the summer he was outside and frequently in sight. But in his winter house that he was in when this happened, he could go all day without being found. We dealt with him at least in the morning and night. But the last two times he did it, it appeared he struggled constantly, hurting the skin on his back. He was exhausted each time, but the last time seemed to do him in. He didn't try as hard to take a bite of my face when I picked him

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DID YOU KNOW?

You could see this issue in living color if you subscribed to an email copy of the newsletter! Let us know your wishes at staff@wittykitties.org.

up (he had bloodied my lip a few times with that hook he had at the end of his bill). For two days he was alert and reactive with normal mental status, but weak. After spending Sunday outside in the sun, he died later after being put into his house.

I've got great videos of Nigel in my front yard eating pet Koi from my pond during a time when we were having trouble keeping up with his appetite. I also favor the videos of him snapping repeatedly at my face while cleaning his winter house. Pelicans are my favorite birds of all, so he could do no wrong. I will miss him despite knowing he would likely end up in Florida (hoped he would) in a sanctuary.

So the year 2013 has been a pretty bad one. One of the most painful losses was Venus, our three-legged "Greeter Kitty". She was such a wonderful, loyal, girl. It was 2000 when I found her in the garbage at the gas station by the freeway, formerly a BP. She was a pregnant "teen" and had plenty of scratches and wounds. I still lived at my old house, and it was before Witty Kitties was formally formed. She was adopted eventually, but returned for reasons I don't remember. I then took her to the lowa Shelter to be adopted. She developed an upper respiratory infection that she was having trouble kicking, so she came back to me.

While this was happening, I met Ulvar, the "feral" cat I trapped a few miles down the road. He is the other main greeter, and is a beautiful chocolate, tan, and white boy with perpetually protruding third eyelids, which make him look at bit sleepy at all times. Ulvar proved to be a big lover who was adopted out shortly after I provided his routine medical work. Unfortunately (or not), he, too, was returned due to the other cats of the home freaking out. He ran off for a few days, but the woman called me as soon as she saw him again. He let me pick him right up.

So these two kitties moved to my house. By then, the present shelter was running and well established. I just felt like keeping them for myself, since adoptions weren't going well. Funny thing is they both decided to leave the house through the doggie door of our house, and make their way across the pasture to Witty Kitties. For a while, I worried about the roads, and would alternately put them into the shelter, but only until they made it obvious they didn't like being locked up. It wasn't long before they became our first outdoor Witty Kitties.

At any given time, you could see them nuzzled together in a bed. They ate together, toured the woods together, and ran out to meet the cars as they pulled up. You get the picture.

Finally, I have to mention my boy, LeMans. He was my original spokes-kitty. He loved riding with me in the van, fostering kitties, and being the No. 1 kitty cat for a long

time. He was in a ditch near Kalona when a good Samaritan picked him up and brought him to my van while I was working on his neighbor's cats. Poor guy was a mere 4 pounds despite being an adult, and completely congested in his nose.

Ended up that through the years LeMans needed to have his frontal sinuses flushed three times over the first couple years. I have fond memories of him wearing a white bandage on his head to hold the indwelling catheters in place. I called him Sister Mary Mans because he looked like the older nuns I remember from Catholic school as a kid

LeMans was also born with a funny foot. The radiograph showed it was merely a misshapen limb, and not an injury. He limped, but used the funny foot to poke at you when he needed attention.

LeMans went back and forth between Witty Kitties and my house after my van burned up. I could always tell where he wanted to be because he would run in his gimpy way back and forth through the pasture. He loved the canned food at the shelter, so he seemed to want to be there more.

Eventually a bad case of stomatitis required his teeth be removed. This gave him a big relief from the pain he was living with constantly while the disease progressed. He still loved his dry food, anyway. His last several months were spent living at my house. He was at least 14, and entitled to eat canned food or deli turkey any time he wanted, provided we had it. His favorite spot was by the heater in the bathroom, but it wasn't unusual to see him on the kitchen table waiting as you got the hint he was hungry.

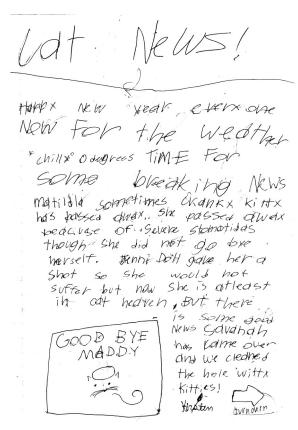
But eventually a variety of issues developed. He was losing lots of weight, eating frequently, but little. When a really bad URI hit him, meds didn't seem to be helpful. I did as I've become accustomed to doing, calmly got my "stuff", held him close, and put him down. It is always surreal doing this. One minute you are connected to an animal who is living and aware of your presence, the next he is gone. It never gets easy, just more acceptable.

But though I get sad about all of these deaths, I know they were all either FIV or FeLV positive, or very old, or both, and that they had it better than too many cats in the world. I feel like the Grim Reaper, but remind myself of their underlying issues. So, what do I do to lift my spirits? Something that really cheers me up are looking at the many cartoons and stories Kirsten puts together. The girl needs to publish these. I find them stashed everywhere on whatever type of paper she was closest to when she got her urge to draw. So I, her very biased and proud mother, will share just a few of them. She includes ongoing cartoons, newsletters from the "cat club", updates on

individual cats, and even a few quotes or two from her favorite cats. Wish we could have a newsletter dedicated to just them! They cheer me up just thinking about them.

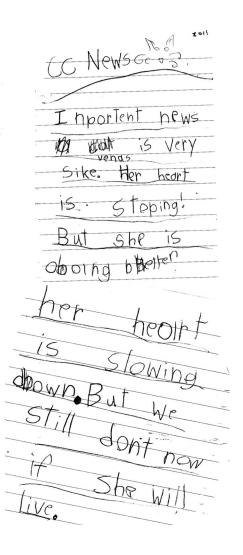


KIRSTEN'S CORNER









EAGLE SCOUT PROJECT

by Trish Wasek

Michael Chace (center) researched, designed, and organized the construction of two very large cat trees for Witty Kitties. Michael is from Troop 216 in North Liberty. He and his crew, (I to r) Daniel Smith, Steve Smith, Ryan Pals, Jesse Chace, Jackie Chace, and Katie Chace, brought the pre-cut wood, carpet, and lots of nails and staples to Witty Kitties one Saturday morning in January. They assembled the two cat trees while the kitties patiently waited. As soon as they were done, Zowie and Manny hopped up and started exploring (look closely)! Thanks, Michael, for doing such a fabulous job on your Eagle Scout project -- the kitties are looking forward to climbing and scratching for years to come!



EXOTIC CORNER

by Torben Platt

Greetings from Exotic Corner!

This is the time of year when my cold-blooded cohorts and I really get cabin fever. We've been cooped up inside for



months now, unable to bask (or at least deliver mail comfortably) in the warmth of the sun. It could be worse, I guess. As I write this, my sister in Portland, Maine is digging out from about three feet of snow. I told Lex this, but he seemed nonplussed and reacted as he usually does, by trying to bite my arm off. Hopefully, an early Spring is on the way, and we can coax him out to his outdoor pen in couple of months.

Sully and Mr. T (our 2 Sulcatta tortoises) are eager to get outside, too, where they can eat grass and, in Mr. T's case, chase chickens to his heart's content. The turtles, lizards, and caimans, will also be moving out for the warmer months. Ben, the black bear, probably prefers cold temps to real hot ones, but he could definitely stand to lose a few pounds, so maybe coming out of his den to do something besides eat would be good for him, also. His "pen pals" (the coyotes) are flitting about the enclosure no matter what the weather. We have a new dog, Jake, who runs outside barking at any time of day or night, which, of course, sets off a vammering and howling from them, that, unfortunately for our long-suffering neighbors, has to be heard to be believed. It's a long winter for all the other animals that spend it outside like the emus, pigs, chickens, and ducks, so they will be happier come Spring, also. Jenni and I will be happier, too. Toting buckets of warm water (our hundreds of dollars in heated hoses did not pay off) and food to the various pens in the dark through the snow and ice quickly loses its charm. It's not easy doing it in the daylight, through the mud, either, but at least it's an improvement. There were several times this winter, when laying on my back, sliding towards Ben's cage while looking up into the dark night after having fallen carrying a once-full bucket of water, that I really considered staying there and letting the falling snow cover my already partially-frozen body. My snake bitten finger hurt, my back hurt, I would just have to deliver mail for nine hours if I did get up, why bother? But alas, each time, I eventually did rise clumsily to my feet. That's true dedication. And now? Spring is coming. Yes, I will still slip and fall, but it will be into mud rather than ice and that should be softer. And soon, we'll be able to use the hoses instead of the buckets. Life is good!

Torben

MEMORIES OF VENUS

by Kathleen Schoon

Jenni euthanized Venus (our three-legged "greeter" garage kitty) about a week before I managed to tell our volunteers. I received notice of Venus' death only moments after I had sent out an email update with other sad news, and I just couldn't bring myself to report this death so soon afterwards. It has been a very sad new year so far at Witty Kitties.

Venus lived many of her nine lives with us. Her most favorite human on this planet was Tim VanLoh, who, along with Jenni, saved her life many times. She just finally ran out of lives to save.

Several years ago, Venus was shot by persons unknown and Tim found her in a pool of blood, dying. He alerted Jenni and Torben right away, even though it was late at night. Jenni was able to save Venus' life, but that is when she lost her front leg. Jenni tried to make her a house kitty during her recovery, but Venus would have none of that. She was back in the shelter garage a couple days after surgery, navigating on three legs as though she had always done so.

About a year and a half ago, Venus developed congestive heart failure. Tim discovered this new problem when he

found Venus having difficulty breathing one day. She was on life imperative medication every day since then. Tim always made certain that she was getting that important medication, and probably saved another one of her lives when she needed to have her medication increased several months ago. Tim even came up with the idea of using a daily pillbox so



Venus loved hanging out on top of Witty Kitties' volunteer Tim VanLoh's

we could be certain she had received both doses each day.

The fact that Venus lived as long as she did with congestive heart failure and three legs is due in large part to her favorite guy, Tim. And, of course, the expert medical attention Jenni provided. In the end, Venus suffered a sudden thrombus (blood clot) and was unable to move her rear legs. Jenni found Venus early on a Sunday morning, cried long and hard before sending her off, and then waited at the shelter until Tim arrived to let him know what happened.

Tim said that he will miss Venus watching for him as he drives by Witty Kitties. He will miss Venus sitting on his car waiting for him when he is visiting. He said, "This is a wound that will never heal."

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD SNUGGLES GETS ADOPTED!

by Trish Wasek

It's pretty hard to adopt out a senior cat, and a blind senior kitty seemed next to impossible. But Snuggles' name described her personality perfectly, so we figured there was always hope.

Last November we received an email from Colleen Bowers of Oxford about Snuggles, and we were pretty excited. Colleen's first email read, in part:



Snuggles' new family: mom Colleen Bowers with (l to r) Lucy, Brenna, and Sydney, holding Snuggles

"I would assume that a blind kitty would need static. safe. and calm environment. If I am approved, I plan on having Snuggles live in my bedroom with my other bedroom kitty, Laney. Laney came to through Safe Haven because she had failed out of two previous fos-

ters due to urinating issues. Since I have had her she has been an angel. She was bullied by my other kitties, which is why she is by herself. I think she would love to have a friend that is not mean to her!"

When we received Colleen's application and saw that she had been volunteering at Safe Haven in Iowa County for seven years, we were <u>really</u> excited! She knew the challenges of caring for a senior cat, and was touched by Snuggles' story (she had to be given up after many years with her previous owner). Still, more often than you'd think, someone goes home with a different cat than the one they were originally interested in. Would Snuggles steal the hearts of Colleen and her kids in person?

We were holding our breath when Colleen and her kids came to meet Snuggles. She didn't disappoint – they fell in love with her! Everyone had to take a turn holding her. Snuggles went from lap to lap, curling up in each. It is amazing to watch how trusting she is, given her blindness. Colleen and the kids took Snuggles home the following weekend. Here's our most recent update:

"Snuggles is still doing great! She either sleeps on my neck when I am sleeping (holy claustrophobic!) or else is right beside me. Recently I had to move Tigger into my bedroom with Snuggles and Laney, so I now have three "live-in-the-bedroom-only" cats. Tigger is in love with Snuggles! Laney will dart away from Tigger and keep her

distance, but with Snuggles not being able to see, she is not afraid of her new friend (not that Tigger would hurt a fly). He even sleeps curled up right next to her! Snuggles is just such a good kitty! I really can't say how happy I am that Snuggles is in our life."



Snuggles

VOLUNTEER CORNER CATS CAN TEACH, TOO

by Jeri McGillicuddy

Growing up on a farm in northern lowa, I have always been a lover of cats. As a little girl, my favorite activity was to play with my cats in the barn. I have had several cats that have been a part of my family since I moved to Cedar Rapids. And I currently have a nine-year-old tabby cat named Gracie that we adopted from the animal shelter as a kitten.

After retiring in 2010 from many years of teaching elementary students, I was looking for a totally different experience. In January of 2012, a wonderful opportunity came into my life. My friend Lora had been encouraging me to visit Witty Kitties for months. Finally I decided to see what she was talking about, and after one visit I was hooked. Now I am a regular Wednesday morning volunteer, and sometimes on Monday, too. When teaching third grade students I found that not only could I teach my students, but I could learn from my students as well. And as a volunteer at Witty Kitties, I found I could learn a lot about life from the cats, too. Here are some of the important life lessons I have learned from my furry friends at Witty Kitties.

When the opportunity to have fun comes along, pounce on it. Take every opportunity you can to have a good time. You can have fun even if no one else wants to play. Angelina Ballerina has more fun just batting toys across the floor, and she really loves to play with the pink wand if someone will wiggle it for her. Butters, Chuck, Zowie, and Bridgette are always ready to pounce, even if woken from a nice nap. Many times I've seen little paws

reach under the door to catch my broom as I'm trying to sweep.



Jeri with Stewart & Chuck

Reaching out to others pays off. On my first visit to Witty Kitties I was mopping in room 2 ½. Suddenly I felt the soft touch of Stuart's paw on my arm. He made me feel so welcome that day, and now I always make sure that I take time to give Stuart some extra TLC. All I have to do is stand near Garfield and

C.J. and they start purring. They know that they will get some attention and love from that purr.

If you get a chance to meet new friends, race for that opportunity. Andy, Smokey, and Manny are all experts at this. They can sneak through a door so fast that you barely see them. Meeting new faces can be interesting and usually enjoyable.

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. If you have ever gone to Witty Kitties around 8:00 AM, you will find about 50 hungry faces staring at you as you walk in. Many of these faces are also greeting you with some loud meows. Somehow the kitties know that to be healthy and have a good day you need to start with a good, nutritious breakfast. After that, a little playtime and then a nice nap is good.

Be accepting of friends in all shapes and sizes and from different backgrounds. When a new kitty arrives at Witty Kitties, in most cases within a few days everyone in the room has become friends. Disabilities in some cats are usually totally accepted and overlooked. After a few weeks you will see them all snuggled together for a nap. I've even seen Scorcese washing Daisy's face. Somehow these cats don't see their differences in size, shape, color, or background, and are totally willing to live in a small space together.

If you are a cat lover, you are a good person. This lesson I learned from the people I work with at Witty Kitties. All of the staff and volunteers are so dedicated to making a safe and comfortable environment for the cats. Cleaning litter boxes is certainly not a desirable activity, yet everyone gladly performs this job without complaining. We have all had our hearts broken at times when we lose one of our furry friends, but we all keep coming back because we

know we are needed by the remaining kitties. I look forward to every time I can come to Witty Kitties and help, because I receive just as much love back from the cats as I give to them.

As you can see we are never too old to learn. Learning comes to us in a variety of ways and from a variety of places. Please give Witty Kitties a chance to teach you, too.

JAZZY, THE THREE-PAW DE-CLAW

by Trish Wasek

Yep, you read that right. Three-paw declaw. That's because Jazzy was born without his left rear paw. A human, supposedly someone who loved him, did the damage to the rest of his paws. (If you didn't know, declawing a cat is the equivalent of amputating a human finger back to the first knuckle).

So, Jazzy's life started out on the wrong foot, so to speak. © To make matters worse, Jazzy's human either dumped him in the country or was so careless as to let a declawed (i.e., defenseless) cat escape.



Jazzy was discovered in March, 2011 by Laurie Even and her daughter, Michelle, of Jessup, in Michelle's backyard shed. Jazzy was skinny, matted, dirty, and so hungry he didn't even mind that his first meal was dog food, all that they had at the time.

Sadly, both Laurie and Michelle are allergic to cats. But Jazzy was growing on them. After a couple weeks of feeding him outdoors, they set up litter boxes and blankets in the shed so he'd have a warm place to stay at night. They contacted local vets and humane societies; no one claimed him. Over the summer and fall, Jazzy became an outdoor fixture, always showing up at feeding time, purring, rubbing up against them, kneading, giving kisses.

By winter, Laurie and Michelle still hadn't been able to find a new home for Jazzy, and it was getting really cold. Laurie decided she couldn't let him stay in the shed when it was so cold, so she brought him indoors and suffered through the sneezes. In January, 2012, the *Jessup Citizen Herald* published a long article about Jazzy, in hopes that the publicity would finally result in a loving new home.

Here Jazzy's history gets a little murky. Apparently he did go from Laurie's house to a new home. No one knows how or why, but last fall Jazzy was found as a stray AGAIN. Fortunately, he was turned in to Waverly Pet Rescue, a great rescue group and supporter of Witty Kitties. Unfortunately, during his last homeless adventure he must have been bitten by an FIV+ stray, because now he tested positive for FIV.

There is some good news, though. Since Jazzy was an adult with a fully-developed immune system when he contracted the virus, the odds are he'll live a good, long life. He's now safely settled in at Witty Kitties, waiting and hoping that his dream of a <u>forever</u> home will finally come true!

MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

In memory of our fat cat **Gigi** (a smaller version of witty kitty Valentine), who unexpectedly passed away on Dec 23, by Julia Venzke and Jamie Ward, Cedar Rapids, IA.

In memory of **Margot E. Martens**, mother of Barbara Martens, by Erick & Robyn Peters.

In honor of John Brandon, by Diana Harris, Iowa City, IA.

In memory of **Indy**, registered therapy dog, by Janelle Fredrick, Chaska, MN.

In memory of **Ferdinand**, a very special dog, by Marge McGowan, North Liberty, IA.

In honor of **Squirt**, and special cats like her, by Sarah Larson, Iowa City, IA.

In memory of **Sue Khan**, a beautiful lady, by Virginia Sorensen, Marion, IA.

In honor of **Chester and Millie**, and in memory of our uncle, **Kingsley**, by Margalea Warner, Coralville, and David Crombie, Arlington, Va.

In memory of all the special witty kitties who left for the Bridge in 2012, and in celebration of those who found their forever homes, by Gary and Karen Schroeder, Brooklyn, IA.

In honor of Molly, Josie, Emma, Tess, and Missy, pets of Roger & Joanne Rayborn, by Jim and Peg Kubczak, Mount Vernon, IA.

In memory of **Betty Pittman**, by Sharon Butterworth, Muscatine, IA.

In loving memory of our babies who have left us for the Rainbow Bridge: Max, Fluff, Kibby, Oliver, Crummy, Drizzy, Anya, Maggie, Petey, Cassie, Ike, Tuffy, and my heartsong, Murphy. We love you all & miss you so much, by Lisa McKirgan, Cedar Rapids, IA.

In honor of my son Daniel's first kitten, **Little Miss Trollecat**, by Deb Peterson, N. Liberty, IA.

In memory of **Blaze**, our feline peace-keeper for 19 years, by Glorine Berry, Iowa City, IA.

In honor of Joan Flynn, Tom & Susan Flynn Labidee, Michelle & Donnie Hungerford & Christie & Pete Simone. Thank you for all of your support. Love, Kathleen & Chris Schoon.

In memory of Nigel, the pelican, & all of the animals at Witty Kitties who have gone over the Rainbow Bridge this year. You were all special & loved by many. By Dona Pearce, Muscatine, IA.

In memory of my dear doggy **Tucker**, the sweetest, kindest, & most loyal dog I could ever wish for. I have loved every dog I have ever had, but he was my very special boy. By Dona Pearce, Muscatine, IA.

Judy Patterson donated in memory of **Rick Van Meter**, husband of her good friend Darlene Van Meter

In Loving Memory of Venus

A cat who brought happiness every time, day and certainly also night, often starting as she would dash out through the cat door or from under the garage door to nicely and eagerly greet visitors.

Venus, your kind voice and benevolent presence will be ineffably missed by those fortunate enough to have known you.

On behalf of all of "the gang" at Witty Kitties
Tim Van Loh

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR (& PREZ)

Dona Pearce

For those of you who read the Witty Kitties newsletter in color on our website, I hope you've noticed the new look on the front page with the change in layout, and the color and graphic on the masthead. It's a new year, and your editor thought it was time to shake things up a bit and keep it interesting. Of course, the new graphic and masthead, plus the front page layout, are new to the black & white version, too, but the color version is, I think, neat!

For those of you who have computers (or access to one), you may want to check out the newsletter online. It's added to the Witty Kitties website each time it's published by our very able webmaster, Trish Wasek. Some of the photos really come to life when you see them in color. If you're interested in receiving an e-newsletter, just call or email Witty Kitties: (319) 848-3238 or email staff @wittykitties.org.

Witty Kitties, Inc. 3133 Roberts Ferry Rd. Solon, IA 52333

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Gifting Witty Kitties

Want to honor or memorialize a family member, friend or beloved pet? Want to give a monetary gift to Witty Kitties? Just fill out the information below and send your check in the envelope provided in this issue. Your donation is tax deductible, and we'll publish your memorial or honorarium in a future issue. We'll also send a complimentary copy of the newsletter 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 in the complex of the person or pet you memorialize.

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