



Witty Kitties, Inc. Newsletter

A Shelter for Special Needs Cats & Exotic Reptiles * Vol. XII, Issue 1 * Winter 2015



Cinnamon Toast

Snickers

Beau

Stuart

Hank

Jazzy

WITTY KITTIES, INC. 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.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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I AM TOO SMILING!

Ferdinand is our newest FeLV+ resident, a handsome cream-colored Manx with gorgeous blue eyes. He's a happy, friendly guy who was just a little sleepy during his photo shoot!

Eating Crow By Jenni Doll, DVM

I did a stupid thing today. I saved an animal (I believe I did). I did it in a way that made me say something I've heard my son, Joseph, say more than a few times: "Mom! What the is wrong with you? You wanna get killed just for an animal?"

Before you start thinking Joseph isn't caring and compassionate, I have to tell you that when he has said those words, he has been absolutely right, maybe 90% of the time. I have a way of compartmentalizing too well when I see a hurt animal, so much so that nothing else exists.



Today **I am** saying "What the is wrong with me!?" The scene is this:

It is February 3, a bitterly cold day. If you check the calendar you will recall we just had that huge dumping of snow two days ago and the trees, fences, and houses are still heavily covered with the stuff. It is actually quite pretty. I was driving Kirsten to school in time for her 7:30 AM tech club meeting. I take the back road, Sandy Beach Rd, which is very curvy and hilly. As a responsible driver I drove slower than usual, didn't stare at how beautiful the trees looked, or play with the radio. I just drove.

Shortly after getting on the section that has many curves and then dips down to the actual beach, Sandy Beach, I saw a crow sitting in the middle of the road. I slowed down assuming it would fly away as I drove by it. It flapped its wings as we passed. I looked in the rear view mirror and realized it hadn't flown away and was sitting there again.

Suddenly my brain was set in hurt-animal-tunnel-vision mode. I immediately backed up, which actually was difficult because the windows were frosting up. I think it was all the breathing being done by me, Kirsten, and the three big dogs who HAVE to come on these rides each Tuesday.

So I backed up to the bird. It hopped quickly into the ditch, and crowed. I ran into the ditch and sank almost waste deep into the snow, stumbled, and got the crow as it got tangled in some weeds. I grabbed it, turned around, fell all the way this time, and crawled out of the ditch. It is when

(Continued on page 2)

I first looked up at the car that I saw what a dumb thing it was that I had done. First, I was parked in the **center** of an icy road near a hill and I left my door open. The open door allowed Mumma dog to get out. She was standing dead center in the oncoming traffic lane.

I trotted over, yelling at Mumma, "Go Home! Go Home!" which is my way telling the dogs to get in the car. She did, then I did. As I pulled away, without putting on my seatbelt, a school bus drove past us from the opposite direction.

So, I now feel sick to my stomach at the fact that I had done something so utterly stupid.

But wait! There's more.

I drove with one hand while holding the crow with the other. Wanting to put my seatbelt on, I asked Kirsten to hold the crow. "Just hold his wings down. His claws are scratchy but your coat will keep him from hurting you." No sooner did I say this when the crow bit her. "He bit me!" she said, and wanted me to take him back asap. As I reached out, he took hold of my finger, the fleshy part of the tip of my right index finger, and held on like a vice.

"He's biting you!" Kirsten cried. "I'm OK. It's OK." I said, all the while amazed at how much it really hurt. By now I had my seatbelt on and kept driving, while the crow continued to stay clamped down on the skin of my finger.

As I drove I apologized to Kirsten and I gave thanks that he wasn't still clamped down on K's finger instead of mine.

When it became apparent he was not letting go anytime soon, I got to thinking about something most people don't think of. How much do I really need **that** part of my body? I mean, I knew the worst he could do was take the large piece of skin he was biting down on, but it was the index finger on my dominant hand, a hand I use for surgery. I knew the answer, because I had asked myself the same question before, when I was bit by the timber rattlesnake several years ago. Back then I wondered, "Could I live



In spite of being bitten by a crow, Kirsten Platt (l) tells all her friends what a great place Witty Kitties is. One of her friends, Annika Kruse, surprised us shortly before Christmas with a box of presents for the shelter.

without my **entire** right index finger?" The answer was "Yeah, I suppose I could."

The reason I know this is because while doing surgeries I will sometimes wonder weird things like that. I've decided if I **had** to choose not to have a finger on my right hand, the three I couldn't live without are thumb, middle and ring fingers. I feel morbid, but that is what I've decided. Theoretical questions are popular if my brain wanders.

But I digress. Despite trying to pull my finger away, the crow only bit further. I finally slowed the car way down (stop? No, I'm too stupid, remember?). I quickly pried his beak open with my left hand, only to have him clamp down on the skin of my knuckle this time, making it bleed. Then, mercifully, he stopped and sat quietly.

The rest of the drive to school was uneventful.

When we got there, I wrapped the crow up tightly in one of the many blankets I have in the car and slid the bundle into the five gallon pail I had on the floor of the passenger side. Can't remember why **THAT** was there but I'm sure I had an important reason for it. I said my goodbyes to Kirsten, and drove off.

At this point the feeling set in that I am a horribly careless mother (you're all thinking it, come on now) who needs to keep her sensible "mothering brain" (yes, I have one) functioning, despite her other, **LESS IMPORTANT**, passions. I felt horrible!

(Continued on page 7)

A Girl and Her Kitten: Another Love Story

by Amy Holcomb

The first time I saw Lucky was on a Saturday morning in the early fall of 2009 when Cynthia and I arrived to do chores at Witty Kitties. Witty Kitties volunteer Jeanie Link was cradling him with a hot water bottle, trying to warm him up. She said he had just been rescued from a hoarding situation, and Dr. Doll had given him a couple baths. I could see that he was in pretty bad shape. He was a very skinny gray and white young kitten with matted eyes and a snotty nose. I looked at him for a bit and of course hoped he would be okay, and then I went about my business of cleaning a room.

I didn't give much or maybe any thought to that kitten the following week. Cynthia and I were having a rough time dealing with the death of her beloved cat Howie, who had died several weeks before. Cynthia was so sad all the time about Howie. She was having a hard time in school, and she cried a lot. The next Saturday at Witty Kitties I was glad to see that the kitten was still alive. He still had matted eyes and a runny nose but he was active and meowed for attention when anyone walked by. I petted him a bit and noticed how very skinny he was.

The days went on, and Cynthia continued to grieve for Howie, and I was at a loss as to how to help her feel better. A few weeks after that kitten arrived at Witty Kitties, Dr. Doll sent some of the volunteers an e-mail asking one of us to please adopt him because her daughter was starting to take an interest in him. Without giving it much thought, I asked Cynthia if she wanted to adopt him. I knew that Howie could never be replaced, but I thought the distraction of a kitten would help her heal. I also told myself that Cynthia had never had a kitten and every girl should have a kitten at least once in her life. Of course, Cynthia wanted to adopt him (I doubt any girl has ever turned down the opportunity to adopt a kitten!).

Cynthia was so excited to go to Witty Kitties the next Saturday. She took that kitten out of his cage and played with him and admired him. She couldn't wait to take him home. She was trying to think of the perfect name for him. She thought long and hard and finally came up with the name Lucky. I was excited to have a kitten, but I was also worried about the havoc he might bring to our home. Our dog Fluffy goes berserk when a new cat arrives, barking and carrying on like a maniac.

We brought Lucky home on Halloween. We put him in

the extra bedroom to help him adjust to our house and to help our cats adjust to him (and to hide him from Fluffy). When we brought Lucky home he was still a sorry looking kitten, despite his wonderful care at Witty Kitties. He still had a runny nose and runny eyes, he had lice eggs stuck to his long fur, and he had diarrhea. He had also been treated for worms, fleas, and ear mites. And he was so boney! I noticed, though, that he had big feet and long legs. He didn't seem to know he was in bad shape. He played and ate and wanted out of that bedroom.

I was reluctant to let him out because I was afraid Fluffy would hurt him. We have a baby gate in the hallway to give the cats space from Fluffy, so when we did let Lucky out of the bedroom the baby gate separated them. Fluffy

barked wildly at him whenever he saw him on the other side of the gate. Lucky didn't seem to notice, though, and it didn't take long before he could climb over that gate. He would not be contained! He would climb the gate and go running through the living room with Fluffy barking at him and chasing him, and with Cynthia and me running after them, both of us screaming at Fluffy to stop. Lucky was oblivious to all the ruckus. He just ran around exploring, ignoring us all, even that dog that was hot on his heels. It took weeks for Fluffy to get used to Lucky.

I eventually discovered that Fluffy meant no harm to Lucky. He just wanted to look at him and figure him out.

We both quickly fell madly in love with this kitten. He was Cynthia's kitten, though, and he knew it. We know that Lucky has a little bit of Howie in him. Even though I was the main cat caretaker, Lucky knew his place was with Cynthia, just as Howie did. He went to bed with her at night until I went to bed, and then I took him out for the night so Fluffy could sleep with Cynthia. Every morning, he begged to get into her room, just as Howie did. He would jump in her bed and purr and knead, purr and knead. Lucky quickly learned his name, and he came running whenever she called him, just like Howie. We still missed Howie (and still do!), but Lucky helped us both heal. Just as I thought, it was hard to be sad with this funny, adventurous kitten in our home.

We also learned more about Lucky's rescue. Mary Blount from the Iowa Humane Alliance was checking on the welfare of some cats, and she found him lying in the grass, barely alive. She asked the owner if she could take him.

(Continued on page 6)



LOTS OF AWESOME WITTY KITTIES SUPPORTERS DESERVE OUR THANKS—YOU GUYS ROCK!



The Solon High School girls basketball teams visited us last fall to meet the kitties and other animals. They took photos, created a display, and collected donations for us at three of their home games. Go Lady Spartans!

Back Row (l to r): Julia DeValk, Bryce Hinkel, Madi Shafer, Shelby Gunnells, Lexi Stebral, Josie Durr, Dani Carter, Kristina Shelman, Dakota Doyle.

Front Row (l to r): Lynsey Gradert, Hannah Bluder, Nichole Oberthien, Alli Prybil, Emma Moss, Ali Herdiska, Krysten Ulin



Daisy Girl Scout Troop 5176 was fired up after meeting our kitties and they worked their little hearts out. They made and sold baked goods at a local mall and told customers all about Witty Kitties. They wore their Witty Kitties t-shirts with pride! They also made dozens of wand toys and blankets. Pictured are Megan, Maryssa, Halle, Michelle, and Ellie. Not pictured are Brenna, Charlotte, Cosette, Finnely, Mia, and Neveyah. The kitties send meows and purrs of thanks!



Peterson Pet Hospital in Cedar Rapids selected Witty Kitties as a recipient of holiday donations from its clients. Alicia, Annie, Sara Lynn, Paula, Kim, and Sarah H. dropped off several boxes of supplies and goodies while loving up the kitties. Thank you so much for thinking of us!

A CHRISTMAS GIFT

by Alex Wheeler

My mother, Vicki, has always said that we would never have a cat in the house. But after volunteering with me at Witty Kitties for a year and a half, she surprised me on Christmas day with a package full of cat supplies. At first I thought it was for Witty Kitties. Then everyone burst into tears because I realized I was finally going to have my own pet and it was going to be my favorite cat from Witty Kitties.



Dude, formerly known as Ruff, has made a big impact on our lives. When we first brought him home, he was very curious of his surroundings. He adapted quickly to living with our dog, Hershey. They are both very laid back, so they were able to get along pretty quickly. At first we felt like we always had to keep an eye on him because we had never had a cat before and we wanted to make sure he didn't get into anything he shouldn't.

My father, Terry, has never been fond of the idea of stray cats coming into the yard, but after spending some time with Dude, he loves him. Dude now even curls up on his lap and they relax together.

We have learned so much more about cats because we have him in our lives. He makes me feel better when I've had a hard day and he lets me hug and play with him when I'm happy. Dude has given me and my parents an overall happier life and we wouldn't trade him for anything in the world. He is a part of our family now and forever.

The Paw Project Comes to Iowa

by Trish Wasek

Did you know that declawing is not like getting a manicure or trimming your fingernails? **Declawing is amputation.** Sorry to be blunt, but there it is.

Declawing is the equivalent of removing the tips of your fingers down to the first knuckle. It can result in lameness, arthritis, and other long-term complications. Behavioral changes, including biting and litter box avoidance, may occur. Although the practice is common in the U.S., it is actually illegal in many countries. Great Britain's Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons goes so far as to declare declawing "unnecessary mutilation."

Many veterinarians routinely offer declawing to clients who bring in kittens or cats for spaying or neutering, with no further explanation of the actual procedure. This practice prompted Dr. Jenni Doll to write the following on DVM360.com:

I've been interested in the Paw Project, started by Jennifer Conrad, DVM, and have started asking people who declawed their cats whether they knew exactly what the procedure involved. Of the 18 I've asked so far, none had any idea, and most were disturbed and not sure they would have gone through with the surgery had they known. As veterinarians we are obligated to disclose exactly what we are doing to someone's pet. So, to all you veterinarians

who like to list on invoices what clients are getting for their money, are you brave enough to include "amputation of distal phalanx" and make sure your clients are aware of what that is? If not, I think your bottom line is the dollar. Maybe it will take clients suing for misrepresentation to catch your attention.

Why are we raising this issue? Well, as if she didn't already have enough to do, Jenni Doll recently signed on as the Iowa Director of the Paw Project. The Paw Project is a non-profit organization that educates the public about the painful effects of feline declawing and offers guidance towards abolishing the practice of declawing in the U.S. and Canada. Since 2003, the Paw Project has led successful campaigns to ban declawing of domestic cats in eight California cities, including Los Angeles and San Francisco. The movement has spread to over a dozen states and several provinces in Canada. A bill was recently introduced in the New York state legislature to ban declawing throughout the entire state.



So let's begin! Please join us for a showing of the documentary film, The Paw Project, the story of how Dr. Jennifer Conrad began this grassroots movement to protect felines, both large and small, from the cruelty of declawing.

Jenni Doll and Nicole Kogan, of Oxford Veterinary Clinic, will conduct a discussion and question/answer session after the film.



CHIPOTLE GETS A SPONSOR!!

One of our newer residents, Chipotle (aka Chip Ahoy!), is still working on adjusting to life indoors. An FIV+ street cat who was fed for a couple of years by Chipotle restaurant employees, he doesn't really love the hand that feeds him.

But he's sooooo cute and we're very, very patient!

Chip is being sponsored by Andrea Keech. Andrea, Tucker, Tillie, and Shadow would also like to honor the entire staff of All Pets Veterinary Clinic in Iowa City.



(A Girl and Her Kitten, Continued from page 3)

She was told "He's not going to make it," and she let her take him. Mary said she picked him up and put him in her pocket and took him to Dr. Doll at Witty Kitties. Dr. Doll said "He's not going to make it," but thanks to her expert care and the care of the Witty Kitties volunteers, he did make it.

Lucky was on antibiotics for months after we brought him home due to a continued upper respiratory infection and diarrhea. It took both of us of us to give him his



medicine. We had to wrap him up in a towel (we called it a kitty burrito) to give him his meds. He didn't seem to notice that he was still sickly. He grew and grew and played and played. In December of that year, I trapped a feral kitten in our yard. She was Lucky's age, and we decided to keep her so he could have a kitten play mate. Our old cats weren't so fond of this annoying kitten. We had so much fun watching Lucky and his new friend Lilly. They climbed the curtains, wrestled, batted balls back and forth to each other, and cuddled up together for naps. And then it was time to put up the Christmas tree. Oh, how Lucky loved to climb that tree!

While Cynthia still missed Howie, she loved Lucky so much, and she would go to him if she was feeling sad or needed a friend, and he was always there for her, purring and purring at his favorite girl. She even took pictures of his big feet, and if she was feeling stressed at school, she would look at these pictures to help her feel better. The pictures made her laugh.

When he was several months old and finally seemed healthy, we noticed that when he was very active or overheated, he would pant, which isn't normal for a cat. He was checked by our veterinarian and by Dr. Doll, and neither could find a cause for the panting so we had him examined by a specialist. She told us that panting in cats can be a sign of heart disease, and that she needed to do an echo-cardiogram. She said if he had heart disease the prognosis was not good. We left him there for his test.

I spent a long day at work with a sick feeling in my stomach, waiting for the doctor to call me with the results. I

wondered how I would tell Cynthia that her beloved kitten had the same disease that caused Howie's death. Finally at 5:30 I heard from her. I was so relieved to hear that his heart was fine, and she couldn't find a cause for the panting. She told us to not let him get over exerted or overheated.

Lucky's health has been fine ever since. He now weighs 16 pounds! He is very lean. He has huge feet, long legs, and big head. He is the most handsome cat we have ever seen. He is a long haired gray cat with a white blaze that starts between his eyes and carries down to his chest, belly, legs, and feet. He has a pink nose, gorgeous long white whiskers, and a white tip on his tail. We often look at him with pride, as if we are personally responsible for his fine looks and wonderful personality.

There has surely never been a more admired cat in the world than Lucky. We both adore him. He is laid back, athletic, playful, and affectionate. The most spoken words in our house are "Look at Lucky." We both often stop what we are doing to just look at him. We think everything he does is amazing, whether he is sitting in a box (he sits in lots of boxes!), sitting up like a person, laying on his back all stretched out in his yoga pose, or laying on the back of the toilet with his head resting on the toilet paper. He has no idea how great he is, no matter how many times we tell him. He gets along with our other five cats, and he doesn't even seem to mind Fluffy.

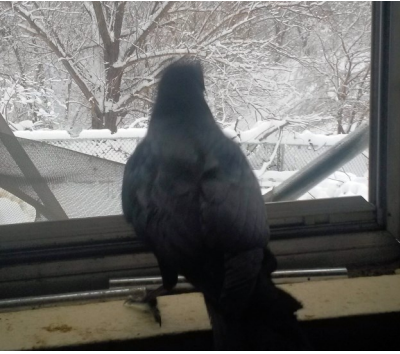
When new cats come to our house, we send Lucky into their room to help them feel more comfortable. He doesn't mind hang-



ing out with them, and they seem to like this big gentle guy. He is 5 years old now and of course has lost some of that kitten playfulness, but he is still active and likes to play. He chases strings, bouncing foam balls, and the laser pointer. He lets the other boys attack him and patiently wrestles with them until he tires of the game and gently pushes them away with his big feet. He also loves to run! There is not a more beautiful sight than watching him gallop down the hall with his tail held high and his ears back, flying over the baby gate and racing into the living room. He is some cat! He got his name because he was lucky that he was rescued and lucky that he survived, but Cynthia and I are the lucky ones to have him in our lives. He rescued a sad girl who was grieving for her beloved cat and made the world all right again.

(Eating Crow, Continued from page 2)

The feeling lingered at the grocery store, the gas station, and on the drive to Sandy Beach, where I let the dogs run. I felt I had failed miserably and was thankful things turned out okay in the end.



So, I resolved to keep in mind the fact that this sudden tunnel visioning happens to me, and that I need to be more realistic about my actions and expectations. I am not hopeless.

It has been a very long time since I felt I was reckless while trying to deal with a road-injured animal.

As I finished the drive home I think I proved myself capable. A male cardinal was sitting alone on the road in my lane not far from where the crow had been. I checked my rearview mirror to be sure no one was driving behind me, slowed down as I approached it andthe bird flew away.

Such an everyday idea for most people will always have to be a conscious effort for me: "Animals don't come before the safety of two children's mother." Obvious? Duh. But I'm afraid I tend to make things harder than they need to be.

Incidentally, the crow has no obvious injuries. I hope he was stunned by a car and just needs some time. He now sits in the bathroom of our old house with a heaping pile of canned and dried cat food and shelled corn, and some water. No more fingers for him. He has no idea how much he cost me physically and emotionally.

Ed. Note: Turns out the crow had a slightly injured wing. As we went to press, he was still hanging out in Jenni's old bathroom, eating well, enjoying the views, and looking forward to his release.

Every little bit helps. Visit wittykitties.org to donate via PayPal.



Memorials and Honorariums

*In memory of **Jim Porter**, by Brad and Chris Maras, N Liberty.*

*In honor of my friend **Linda Hug** and her "zoo," including Brittney the cat, Finnegin the bunny, Kiwi the parrot, Benjamin the chinchilla, the finches, the fish, the snails, and Amber the attack dwarf hamster. Oh, and the guinea pigs. Love from Margalea & Millie, Coralville.*

*In honor of **Fred, Goldie, and Buddy Cat**, by Amy McBeth, N Liberty.*

*In memory of **Nellie**, for 14 years the loving pet of Will and Heather Evans, by Jeff Monk, Kent, WA.*

*In memory of **Polaris**, loving kitty of Maram & Joe Hannon, whose mom and litter mates Jenni Doll helped me rescue 14 years ago, by Laurie Crawford, Cedar Rapids.*

*In memory of those we have lost this year, **Ellie, Peanut, and Donut**. We could not have asked for three better cats, by Amy Parker & Matt Schikore, Iowa City.*

*In honor of my parents, **Carole and Gabe DiLorenzo**, by Andrea Kilkeny, Bloomfield, NJ.*

*In honor of **Nancy Fultz**, by her mother, Judy Nudson, Topeka, KS.*

*In memory of cat mom **Linda Prueter**, whose fur babies finally found new homes! By Lisa & Bill McKirgan, Cedar Rapids.*

*In honor of **Shirley Fite**, by Peggy Fite, Cedar Rapids.*

*In memory of **Biskit**, beloved cat of Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong, by Jeff Portman and Gail Standig-Portman, Iowa City.*

*In memory of **Biskit**, a beloved cat of Sue Weinberg & Robert Armstrong, by Irene Weinberg, Ottumwa.*



*In memory of **Biskit**, a beautiful kitty with a heart of gold who snuggled his way into our home and our hearts. He will be missed. By Sue Weinberg, Coralville.*

*In honor of my sisters **Melissa and Kate**, by Berni Doll, Richmond, MN.*

*In honor of **Roger & Joanne Rayborn**, by Jim & Peg Kubczak, CR.*

*In honor of **Pamela Read and Jeff Shander**, lovers of kitties, by Susan Read.*

*In honor of **Eleanor Louise & Millie**, by David Crombie, Arlington, VA.*

*In memory of witty kitty **Angelina Ballerina** (Angela), by her rescuers, the Vincent Decker family, Vinton.*

*Happy New Year to **Maggy Tomova**, by Cynthia Wyels.*

*In honor of **Geronimo** and in memory of **Pitch**, witty kitties both, by Larry & Mona Daniels-Murray, Lenexa, KS.*

*In honor of **Russ Masters**, who was a great cat lover, by Bob & Bodil Platt, San Rafael, CA.*

Witty Kitties, Inc.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EATING CROW	1
A GIRL AND HER KITTEN	3
WITTY KITTIES SUPPORTERS	4
A CHRISTMAS GIFT	4



THE PAW PROJECT COMES TO IOWA	5
CHIPOTLE GETS A SPONSOR!	5
MEMORIALS AND HONORARIUMS	7

Donating to Witty Kitties

Want to honor or memorialize a family member, friend, or beloved pet? You will help support the work we do at Witty Kitties! Just complete this form and mail your check to Witty Kitties, Inc., 3133 Roberts Ferry Rd, Solon, IA 52333.

Your donation is tax deductible. We'll publish your memorial or honorarium in the next issue and send a copy of the newsletter to the person or family you are honoring or memorializing.

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Winter, 2015