

## A Pawsitive Ending

### A Place in the Heart (and Home) for Benny

by Jennifer Barrows

How do you mend a broken heart? When you are missing the unconditional love of a companion animal, sometimes it helps to reach out to another animal in need. That's what Mary Baker decided to do when, over the course of about a year, she lost all three of her beloved aging feline companions. When the time came, adopting a kitten to replace her dearly departed feline friends was out of the question.



"When the time was right, I wanted to give a home to a cat who probably otherwise would not stand much of a chance," said Mary. An older cat was exactly what Mary's family needed.

Mary used PetFinder.com to identify some potential pets available through Our Companions. When she called to inquire about a particular pair of older cats, she learned they had been placed already.

Another cat, Benny, she learned, was available and before she knew it, Mary and her daughter Sarah (age 21, and a music major at Western), were on their way to Bloomfield to meet Our Companions Volunteer Andrea, and Benny and his current family.

"Andrea arranged the meeting and we were all together in Bloomfield in no time – it was just meant to be," recalls Mary. The situation was that Benny's human companions were no longer able to care for him – at 14, he had lived his entire life with this young man whose girlfriend of a couple of years was allergic to Benny. The girlfriend had done all she could to try to tolerate the allergies—trying medication, getting shots, etc, but the situation turned out to be intolerable. They felt that their only choices were to find him a good home or have him euthanized.

Mary did not know quite what to expect when she met with Benny and his human companions. "Your first inclination is to make some judgment about the situation," said Mary. "I mean, what kind of people could give up a pet they've had for 14 years?"

But Mary was heartened to learn that, indeed Benny had been well cared for in his home, and it was the young man's girlfriend, allergies notwithstanding, who took Benny to his regular vet check-ups and helped care for him. "These were not uncaring, unfeeling people – they made an effort to help ensure that Benny found a good home. They made sure I had all Benny's toys and told me what he likes to eat. It was not what I expected."

At first, Benny was understandably confused and upset by the change. Mary explains that he spent two and a half days in the cellar upon his arrival at the Baker house. This was disconcerting, since the family initially didn't know if he had escaped to the outside. When Mary went down to do some laundry on the second day, she caught a fleeting glimpse of Benny before he re-merged from the shadows – but at least she knew he was okay. At another point, when he reappeared, Mary was able to sneak up on him and bring him upstairs. He's since grown to be a warm and interactive part of the family.

Benny is a big kitty and enjoys sleeping on the biggest bed in the house. He also has his own “apartment,” a hiding place where no one can get to him, and some remarkably beautiful views out to a large back yard. He has lovely green eyes and loves to be petted. “He’s such a good cat,” said Mary. “There’s no biting, no scratching. He sleeps probably twenty hours a day, and then spends his waking hours bouncing off the furniture and being curious.”

Mary credits Our Companions’ volunteers, Andrea and Kim, for making this adoption seamless. “They were just terrific,” she says. “Because we were so overjoyed by Benny and the whole experience with Our Companions, I decided to make a donation as a gesture of our gratitude. The Web site makes it so easy to donate. I went online, and poof, in seconds, I had made a contribution – and I even convinced my mother to make a donation.” Together they gave a total of \$350 – a warm and generous offering that will help provide much needed aid to other homeless pets.



Mary was touched by the fact that Our Companions Chief Executive Officer Susan Linker sent her a handwritten note of thanks in response. “It was so moving – I certainly didn’t expect that she would take the time to do that! During a subsequent phone conversation, I told Susan that Andrea and Kim turned this around for Benny. They both are very dedicated volunteers and deserve recognition,” she said.

We thank Mary and her family for their kind and loving spirit that made such a positive difference for this older cat. We know that our dedicated volunteers help make these miraculous connections possible, but truly, without someone like Mary willing to open her home to an aging, unwanted (and unfortunately, often undesirable) animal, these kinds of pets stand little chance. So from the bottom of our collective Our Companions hearts, we thank you for your compassion and wish you and Benny a wonderful life together.