

Training to the Rescue

Troubled Dogs Find Success through Training

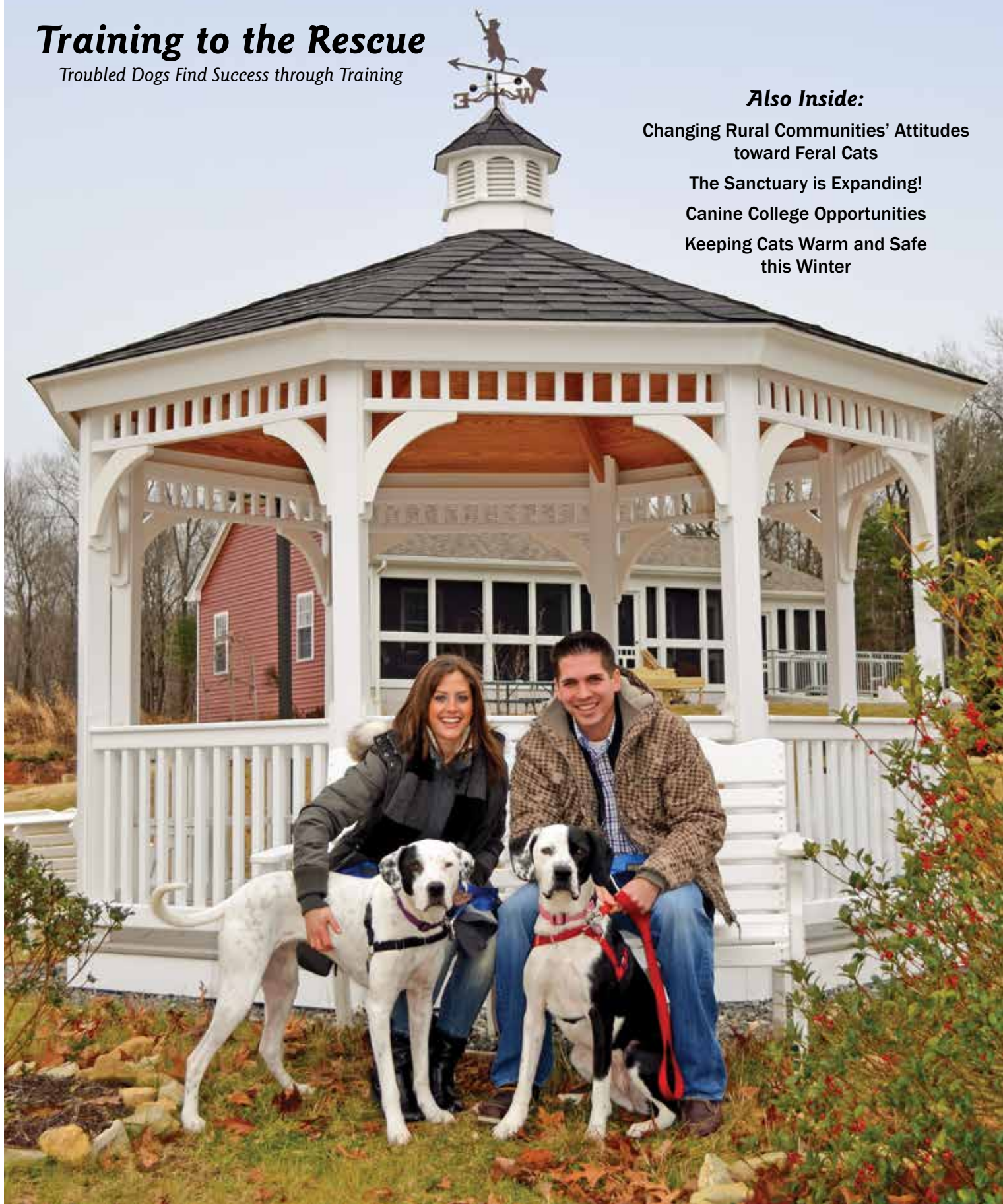
Also Inside:

**Changing Rural Communities' Attitudes
toward Feral Cats**

The Sanctuary is Expanding!

Canine College Opportunities

**Keeping Cats Warm and Safe
this Winter**



Something to Chew On

2013 – A Year Like No Other for OC

We know there will be many milestones in the years to come for Our Companions and that, when you consider our 10-year master plan, our journey has just begun. But no matter what the future has in store, we will always look back on 2013 as having been a pivotal year for Our Companions.

To start, in late 2012 we opened the first rescue cottage at the sanctuary. For that reason alone, 2013 was a year unlike any other for OC in that it was our first full year of housing homeless animals.

Also in late 2012, we launched Phase-Two of our capital campaign to build two more cottages, a campaign that lasted through the spring of 2013.

Additionally, in January of last year, we opened the Valerie Friedman Program Center in Manchester, CT, a 6,000 sq. foot space for our training, rescue and adoption programs, as well as our administrative offices – transforming our ability to serve the public.

And finally, with Phase-Two fundraising complete, we concluded the construction of two additional cottages at the sanctuary, doubling our capacity to house homeless animals.

While most of these initiatives began in 2012 or earlier, they all culminated in 2013!

Over the years, we often talked about how, even without a facility, we were making a huge impact

in the community; how, through our visionary programs and the terrific work of our dedicated staff and tireless volunteers, we were saving and changing so many lives. And we would ask you to imagine all we could accomplish when a proper facility was actually a reality.

Because of your financial support, your ambassadorship, your volunteerism and your belief in our mission, we no longer need to ask you to *imagine* what we are capable of doing for animals.

We thank you for making all of this possible – for making 2013 the year we can all be proud of.

Sincerely,



Valerie Friedman,
Board Chair



Susan Linker,
Chief Executive Officer



P.O. Box 956, Manchester, CT 06045-0956 • 860-242-9999 • OurCompanions.org

About Our Companions News

Our Companions News is published three times per year by *Our Companions Animal Rescue*, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.

Our Companions Animal Rescue is a leader in the movement to end the unnecessary euthanasia of pets in Connecticut.

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They're Only Cats

Changing Rural Communities' Attitudes toward Feral Cats



by Mary deManbey

According to the Humane Society of the United States, American households boast 82 million domestic cats, yet only 88% of those cats have been sterilized. With 50-82 million stray or feral cats already living in the U.S., there is the potential for reproducing at a rate much higher than current spay/neuter rates. In rural communities, the proliferation of feral cats is even more of a potential problem, as attitudes toward stray cats are influenced by a culture that says let them be and let nature take its course. It's survival of the fittest. After all, "they're only cats," as some residents have been known to say.

It's not that farmers and country residents don't love their animals. They often have indoor cats as pets. But many rural residents have also grown up in a culture that perceives stray and feral cats as part of a natural order. Cats are welcome in their barns because they keep the mice population down, or people mistakenly believe they can survive on their own outside because they are wild animals by nature. Rural residents might not see these cats as needing help to survive, or that they have the same feelings and need for care that their indoor pets might have.

Laura Jordan, Our Companions' Director of Feline Operations at the Ashford sanctuary, wants to change these attitudes and inspire TNR (trap-neuter-return) volunteers to help educate and assist rural residents to care for their feral cats. When she received a grant from PetSmart Charities allowing her to spay and neuter feral cats, she went to work instituting a TNR program in her hometown of Ashford. The road wasn't easy as she was met with initial resistance from the town's residents

"Rural residents do care about their animals, there's something in them that loves nature and the earth, and animals. Often it's just that they don't know what to do. I'm there to tell them that outdoor cats have the same emotions; they suffer, they experience stress just like their house cats. I try to let them know that if they can alleviate their (feral cats') suffering, then I think they have a moral obligation to do so, and I can show them how to do it."

A Happy Ending

Laura says she lets them know that they aren't alone in trying to help these cats, and that can make all the difference. She recalls how one woman contacted her, concerned that her hus-

band was planning on shooting a feral cat who had wandered into their yard. The woman didn't know how to handle the situation. "I told her that I would provide a perfect solution and that guns are not required or needed." Laura was able to trap and sterilize the cat and help the woman provide the cat with a warm shelter in a discrete location out of her husband's way. A few months later, following a snow storm, Laura stopped in to see the woman. She noticed that the backyard had been plowed.

"The woman's husband plowed the yard so that their feral cat wouldn't have to walk in the snow to get to her shelter on their porch. She said how much they both loved the cat, now that there's no fear of her having litters of kittens – they pamper her and love having her around.

"It's a process for these people to realize there is a better way," she says. "They feel very proud of themselves; it's a "feel good" moment for them. They tell their friends and then they talk about it, and people start to learn. That's my goal. I want the word to spread."

Challenges

Laura says one of the biggest challenges is that the feral cats are out of sight. "In the suburbs, you have feral cats who wander in neighborhoods, and there is usually someone there who will feed them and care for them. In rural communities, farms are spread out, they are much more isolated."

Another challenge can be the animal control officials or town managers. "Animal Control Officers in rural communities are often part-time, by themselves, and just not able to answer every call. She says there are little to no tax dollars to help cats (the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's Animal Control Division doesn't consider outdoor cats a government responsibility, while there is funding for stray dog rescue).

Getting support from a town's Animal Control Officer or dog warden is essential. The dog warden in Ashford was overwhelmed with calls about cats, but once she understood that she would be receiving services from Our Companions, she became an active participant.

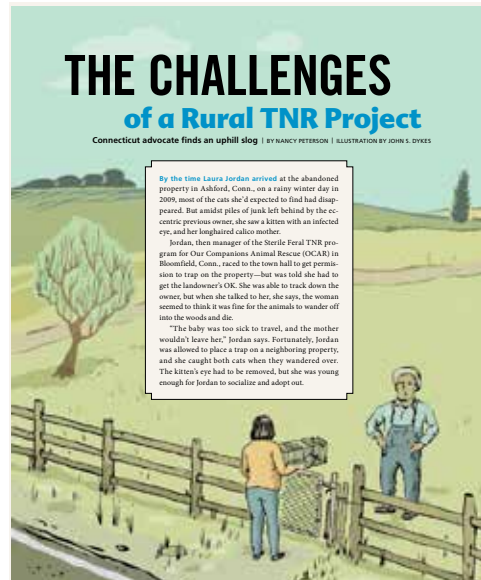
Laura believes that through these kinds of grassroots efforts, cultural attitudes can be altered. Changing a whole culture is not going to happen overnight, she observes, but it's a



Laura Jordan with a humane feral cat trap.

start. She recently has been asked to join the town's management council to set protocols for rescuing animals during disasters and emergencies. "Before this program, animals weren't on their radar.

"We're not only helping cats but reaching an entire community to let them know that cats deserve to be treated humanely and with respect, and that we can alleviate their suffering very easily."



For more information about Laura's experience with feral cats in rural communities, read this in-depth feature article that appeared in *Animal Sheltering Magazine*, a publication of The Humane Society of the United States: www.animalssheltering.org/resources/magazine/nov-dec-2013/asm-novdec-2013/the-challenge-of-a-rural-tnr



Behavior is one of the leading causes of pet homelessness. When owners can't change or tolerate unwanted dog behaviors such as aggression, bad manners or resource guarding, one solution is to surrender the dog to a shelter. Behavior typically only worsens in a shelter's high-stress environment. Dogs with behavioral issues may find another home only to lose it; or, they may never find another home, and eventually be euthanized.

Behavior training helps dogs to remain in their existing homes or improves their chances for a lasting adoption. Our Companions offers a unique and highly successful program that saves dogs' lives by addressing behavioral issues. Since the organization's founding, behavior training has been an integral part of Our Companions' mission. Now with the establishment of the Valerie Friedman Program Center in Manchester, Our Companions can reach even more dogs and their owners.

The Bonded Siblings

When Cookie and Soco broke through their electric fence and attacked a puppy, their owners were distraught. Despite living in Danielle and Rob's loving home since they were 4-months old, Cookie and Soco showed increasingly aggressive behavior with each other, as well as other pets and people. Danielle and Rob had plans to start a family and wondered whether to keep the dogs or to re-home one or both dogs.

After the attack, the town's Animal Control Officer referred Danielle and Rob to Our Companions. Deanna Nickels, Our Companions Canine College Director, remembers that there was no perfect solution. "Cookie and Soco have a complicated relationship. As bonded siblings, they would have to be placed together if the owners had wanted to re-home them," an option Danielle and Rob were seriously considering.

Locating another home for two large dogs with aggression issues would be difficult. However keeping and training them would also be a challenge. After requesting the documents to begin the re-homing process, the couple ultimately decided to keep Cookie and Soco. "We had a hard time filling out the paperwork. We just could not do it," recalls Danielle.

The Exuberant Lab

Brian and Nicole had just started to think about bringing another dog into their lives when Marie Joyner, OC's Director of Canine Operations, called. She told the couple, who was still recov-



Finn, flaunting one of his many adorable expressions.



Danielle and Rob enjoy an afternoon at the sanctuary with their dogs Cookie and Soco.

ering from the loss of their Labrador Retriever, about a Lab-mix named Finn who had recently come to the sanctuary.

Finn was a young dog who had not been in his ideal home. The family had four young children and Finn was shy, unaccustomed to having many people and much activity around. After he growled at one of the children and snapped at the owner, the family thought Finn was vicious and feared he would have to be euthanized. Their veterinarian suggested they call Our Companions.

Finn moved into the sanctuary where trainers immediately began to work with him. After one month, Brian and Nicole met him in the familiar

and home-like setting of one of the rescue cottages. Brian recalls, "We sat down on one of the sofas and Finn hopped up right next to us. He was awesome! We couldn't believe this was a dog that could have been euthanized for his behavior."

Success - One Dog at a Time

Marie Joyner created the training program with an emphasis on building a strong human-dog bond, rather than obedience. Our Companions offers two eight-week classes: Family Companions 1 and Family Companions 2. Through attention games, impulse control activities, and practicing manners and polite behavior, dogs learn to trust their humans



Deanna Nickels, Canine College Coordinator, works with Bodhi on the "down" command.



James & Kathleen with their dog Bella on graduation day.



Christina & Matt with their dog Pete.



Sarah and Duke play tug at the end of class.

and look to them for direction, all while learning important skills for peaceful co-existence.

Classes are small, led by one trainer and an assistant, to ensure that everyone receives personalized attention. Dogs work at their own level – even dogs that aren't suited for typical obedience training classes are welcome. All dogs are initially kept separate in small exercise pens or receive attention outside the main room, as needed. Since training is fundamental to a dog's future success in their new home, every dog that spends time at the sanctuary receives training.

Furthermore, adopters from Our Companions can enroll in training after the adoption, for a reduced rate. Brian and Nicole immediately enrolled Finn, first in Family Companions 1 and then Family Companions 2.

Finn, who was once considered dangerous by his previous owner, has recently passed his Canine Good Citizen test and his owners are considering training him as a therapy dog. Brian and Nicole couldn't be happier and attribute his success not only to the training program but also the adoption process. "Meeting Finn at the sanctuary made such a difference. We were able to see exactly how he was. And the adoption process was so thorough."

Sibling Success

Cookie was the first of the bonded siblings to attend training at Our Companions. Of the two, Cookie was more withdrawn and in need of confidence. She was always with Soco so she never

really had a chance to build a relationship with her owners. After Cookie successfully completed the first level of training, Danielle and Rob brought Soco to Family Companions 1 and 2.

Trainers also helped Danielle and Rob to create new rules at home. To eliminate the potential for pack behavior which had caused the original attack, Danielle and Rob now exercise the dogs separately.

It's Not Just Training, It's Therapy

Training is equally important for the human companions. According to Cookie and Soco's owner, Danielle, "It was like group therapy. You look around the room and see that you are not alone. Other people have dogs with similar issues and we would encourage each other to not give up." It wasn't a smooth ride for Danielle and Rob. While in training, Cookie and Soco got into a fight at their house and their resolve was tested. But Danielle and Rob relied on what they learned from class and found support and encouragement in the trainers at Our Companions "We almost gave up hope," Danielle said.

Admirably, Danielle and Rob did not give up. Although Cookie and Soco are still reactive dogs, their owners have learned to manage them. "Our lives are much calmer now," says Danielle. "We accepted the dogs for who they are. People give up on their dogs because they don't have the skills. Now we have the knowledge and know what to do."



Donors Extraordinaire: Brian Mullen and Steve Shura by Jennifer Barrows

Brian Mullen and Steve Shura are avid bowlers and first learned about Our Companions during a monthly bowling-related fundraising event at a Hartford bar called “Chez.” The bar owner’s mother suggested that the proceeds from one of their future events go to an organization she was involved with – Our Companions.

You might say it was love at first encounter – or first strike! For since then, Brian and Steve have come up with unique and creative ideas for events that serve not only to raise money, but to introduce Our Companions to their friends. Reverberations from their efforts to help bolster OC’s visibility will likely be felt for many years to come.

“What I think is really interesting, is that when you introduce others to an organization you care about, you aren’t really aware of what will result in the seed you’re planting,” says Brian. “They may turn out to be a regular donor or a volunteer – you just don’t know.”

Steve adds, “Exactly. For example, my dentist and his wife donated a few years ago after we told them about OC, and to my knowledge, they are still donating.”

Brian and Steve know how to have fun *and* make a difference. Besides their involvement in their local bowling league, Steve is co-director of the largest gay and lesbian sporting event in New England, where 200 bowlers from across the country come to snowy Connecticut in the dead of winter to compete and raise money for charity. The first year that they donated proceeds to OC, they presented a check for \$7,000; the second year, for \$5,000.

When asked what most interested them about OC, Steve replies, “For me, the first thing that drew me to the organization was their no-kill policy. That was really important to both of us.”

“We also were very struck by how appreciative this organization is. We have held several fundraisers, collecting anywhere from one thousand to seven thousand dollars at a time,



Idina (kitten), Steve Shura, India (dog), Brian Mullen, Taye (kitten).

and while that is significant, we certainly realize it’s not a huge amount compared to some other donations. And yet, you’d never know it – they treat us as if our donation is just as important. It’s also amazing to us that they would want to feature us in the magazine!”

Last summer Brian and Steve moved into a new home in Bloomfield – a major life change that for many couples would be stressful and energy-sapping. For them, however, the move seems to have been *energizing* – for as they settled into their beautiful new space, OC was not far from their minds.

“Our new home is very special to us and we wanted to share the joy of this place by having friends over for a housewarming party,” explains Brian. “In lieu of gifts, we asked for donations to Our Companions. We collected around \$1400! Susan and Mitch Linker came and spoke a bit about the organization. As a result, there are some 50 additional people who know about OC.”

But that isn’t all. At Thanksgiving, their local bowling league of approximately 70 individuals donated supplies to the sanctuary. They filled up a car with cat food, dog food, cleaning products, trash bags and many other supplies that were on the sanctuary’s wish list, and delivered the bounty to a delighted sanctuary staff.

With still more joy to spread, Brian and Steve opened their hearts last fall to two OC rescue kittens, Idina and Taye, now 6 months old.

“We weren’t originally thinking of kittens, let alone two of them,” says Brian. “We thought we were looking for an adult cat, but they stole our hearts.” The kittens are happily keeping company with India, an eleven year-old boxer/pit bull mix rescued six years ago.

“Brian and Steve are nothing short of inspiring,” says Susan Linker. “There are literally thousands of worthy causes they could support, but they have chosen to support OC so generously and in so many creative ways. This endorsement of our mission and their interest in sharing OC with others means the world to us.”



Leave a Legacy for the Animals, Join the Forever Home Society

Making a charitable bequest is one of the easiest ways you can make a lasting impact on Our Companions Animal Rescue and leave a legacy to help animals for years to come.

By including Our Companions in your estate plans, you will become a member of our *Forever Home Society*, helping us fulfill our promise to help thousands of abused and neglected animals who have no other place to turn.

Below is a current listing of the Our Companions *Forever Home Society* members – we hope you will consider adding your name to this list.

Anonymous	Ms. Estelle Langlois
Ms. Mary Jean Agostini	Ms. Mary Mansfield
Mrs. Janet Bailey	Mr. Robert and Mrs. Susan Mason
Dr. George and Mrs. Jennifer Barrows	Mr. Roger and Mrs. Barbara Orsie
Mrs. Deborah Batten	Ms. Lida Orzeck
Mr. James and Mrs. Jessica Couzens	Ms. Nancy Parker
Mr. Harry and Mrs. Joan Curry	Mr. Neil and Mrs. Kathy Pierson
Ms. Mary June Day	Ms. Barbara Prine and Mr. Cyprian Martin
Ms. Heather Dennis and Mr. Kevin Gillespie	Mr. Robert and Mrs. Judith W.M. Prohaska
Ms. Christine Durrer	Ms. Barbara Ruben and Ms. June Roy
Ms. Paula Fischer	Ms. Lorraine Semnoski
Mr. Marvin Fried	Mr. Charles and Mrs. Chris Shivery
Ms. Valerie Friedman	Ms. Joanne Singer
Ms. Lyn Garson and Ms. Tara Martin	Ms. Joyce Snyder
Mr. Bob and Mrs. Susan Hart	Mr. Michael and Mrs. Patricia Starace
Ms. Kim Hoffman	Mr. Patrick and Mrs. Kathleen Sullivan
Ms. Kathy Hucks	Ms. Lynda Thornton
Ms. Kathie Hunter	Mr. Tom and Mrs. Rita Weidman
Ms. Lisa Ireland *	Dr. Gordon and Mrs. Kim Zimmermann
Ms. Dottie Kern	*Deceased
Mrs. Gretchen LaBau	



If you have already included Our Companions in your estate plans, please let us know so we can welcome you as a member of the *Forever Home Society*.

To learn more, please contact Susan Linker at 860-242-9999, ext 301 or email SusanL@OurCompanions.org.

If you wish to name Our Companions in your will or estate plan, we should be named as:

Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary
Legal Address: P.O. Box 956, Manchester, CT 06045

Tax ID number: 41-2047734

Your Financial Support Makes It All Possible

We believe the most vulnerable animals among us deserve compassion and care.

At our sanctuary, we've created a little place in our corner of the world where homeless cats and dogs can recover and rehabilitate in tranquility and comfort. Nurtured by our loving staff and volunteers in a serene, home-like setting, animals at the sanctuary depart their sad pasts and learn what life is like without fear, abuse, or neglect. Sometimes they recover quickly. For some, it takes longer, but they are never discarded or forgotten. To the contrary, they are cherished.

With our Valerie Friedman Program and

Adoption Center in Manchester, CT, and our expanded housing at the Ashford sanctuary, the possibilities of what we can accomplish to help animals in need today, while also addressing the root causes of pet homelessness, are limitless.

All of our programs and services are funded entirely through the generosity of the public. To ensure we're always able to answer the call for the animals who need us most, we need your help. On behalf of these animals and so many others who have found a second chance at Our Companions, I hope you will consider making a generous gift to support our work for the animals.

Here's how you can make a tax deductible contribution to the animals:

Online: Please visit us at www.ourcompanions.org/giving

By check: Please make checks payable to Our Companions Animal Rescue and mail to Our Companions Animal Rescue, P.O. Box 956, Manchester, CT 06045-0956

Gifts of stock: To make a gift of stock, please contact Susan Linker at 860-242-9999 ext. 301

Workplace Giving:* To make a recurring gift via payroll deduction, contact your employer and see if your company offers this opportunity.

*Contact your HR department to see if your company has a matching gift program. This is a great way to maximize and leverage your support!



The Ashford sanctuary's feline rescue cottage and canine cottages - image by Ian Green Photography©.



Monthly Adoption Events are held at the Manchester Program Center.



We're so grateful to Hoffman Auto Group for sponsoring our monthly events!



Peek found a home!



The events are not just fun and games... well, that's not true. Frisbee enjoys the sport he was named for!



Volunteer Kristy with Bella.



Even busy adoption events leave room for important grooming.



BeBe the bunny found a home!

Meet Our Eligible Adoptees!

We always have a steady supply of companion animals in need of forever homes, and what better way to utilize our beautiful new program space than to showcase these furry bundles of love for the public to enjoy?

Please plan to join us (and tell your friends!) at our monthly Pet Adoption Events to be held at the Valerie Friedman Program Center, 34 Sanrico Drive, in Manchester. All participating pets have been fully vetted, are spayed/neutered and current on vaccines. If you are considering adopting a new friend, please stop by and meet these wonderful animals.

Below are the dates for 2014; all events run from 10am until noon. We hope to see you there!

- January 18th
- February 8th
- March 15th
- April 12th
- May 17th
- June 21st
- July 19th
- August 16th
- September 20th
- October 18th
- November 15th
- December 13th

Visit OurCompanions.org to find out more details and learn about our special monthly adoption promotions.



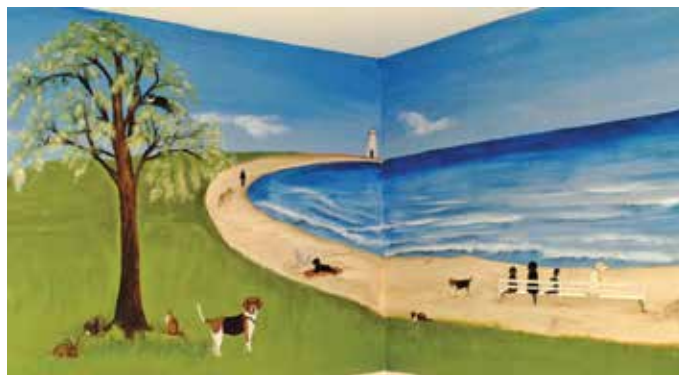
Piccolo meets her new adopter - love at first sniff!

Immortalize Your Pet on OC's Mural!

Local artist and long-time volunteer Dina Marie Pratt (PaintedByDina.com) has joined forces with Our Companions Animal Rescue to create a grand-scale mural project that will raise funds to benefit homeless pets.

The mural will be installed at our Valerie Friedman Program Center in Manchester for visitors to enjoy. Dina is generously donating 30% of every portrait fee to OC.

Imagine your pet's image, painted on a room-sized mural! Along with the mural likeness, you will receive an 8x10 print.



For more information, email dina@paintedbydina.com or call 860-834-1778.



Enhance Your Art Collection and Help the Animals!

Sweeping vistas, dramatic canyons, majestic natural wonders...professional photographer and longtime OC volunteer Ian Green captures these and other expressions of nature through his lens, with no artifice or digital enhancement, and the results are exquisite.

Selections of Ian's work are currently on exhibit at the Valerie Friedman Program Center in Manchester and for a limited time, 50% of all proceeds from sales will go to Our Companions. Ian's photographic collection, in its entirety, can be viewed online at www.greenstudiosusa.com.

Ian travels the world with his Nikon, yet much of his work of late utilizes as its backdrop the charming hamlets of New England, the sweeping shores of Cape Cod and the bold landscapes of the national parks of the west.

"I try to capture nature and other interesting scenes as I see them," says Ian. "My motto is, 'You see what I saw.'"

Ian's images are not only breathtaking, but they have a quality of authenticity and immediacy about them – as if you are standing right there yourself, taking in all that beautiful light and shadow – not to mention color!

Both Ian and his wife, Kim, have volunteered with Our Companions for seven years. The Greens have also contributed financially to the Capital Campaign to construct rescue cottages at the sanctuary in Ashford and have named one of the rooms after their beloved cat Foxy.

Customers should enter the coupon code "ourcompanions" when making a purchase. For more information, email ian@greenstudiosusa.com.

Does Your Pet Have that "Special Something??"

You know your pet is irresistible – we think so too! So why not immortalize that adorableness by having his/her portrait done? A portrait is something you can enjoy for years to come, and who knows? Your pet may be celebrity material!

Join us for what has become a favorite OC tradition. Paulette Mertes is hosting the 8th annual Love Your Pet photo contest fundraiser. Throughout the month of February, Paulette will photograph your precious pet, donating all proceeds from the sitting to Our Companions.

Once photographed, all pets become eligible for inclusion in the calendar, and the voting begins. Photos will be posted on the Our Companions website beginning in the spring. Your votes (\$1 per vote) will determine which fabulous felines and prized pooches are included in the calendar. The pet with the most votes wins the coveted cover photo!

Get all the details at www.pmertes.com. Then put your favorite pet in the running by calling 860-521-9700 for an appointment. Don't delay – appointments are already being booked, and available slots are limited. Last year's Cover Pet was Casey. Could your dog or cat be the 2014 Our Companions Calendar Cover Pet?



Please note that the studio has changed locations. Visit Paulette in her new studio at 2074 Park Rd in Hartford (Plaza 2074, located directly above O'Porto restaurant).

The Sanctuary is Expanding!

On Saturday, October 26, 2013, donors from across the state and beyond gathered to celebrate the completion of "Phase-Two" construction at our Ashford sanctuary. This expansion will enable the sanctuary to more than double its capacity to house rescued animals. The two new cottages are named the Henree House and the Chelsea House.

The Henree House is named in honor of Lida Orzeck's beloved standard poodle. Lida's gift was part of an extraordinary joint commitment with her business partner Gale Epstein and Lida's sister, OC Board Chair Valerie Friedman.

The Chelsea House is named in loving memory of Chelsea the golden retriever. Chelsea, who sadly crossed the rainbow bridge five years ago, belonged to long-time OC board member Chris Shivery and her husband Chuck.

The event also included the unveiling of a **Remembrance Wall**, created on a piece of the wall from the factory farm that originally stood on the same land as today's animal sanctuary. Funded generously by Neil and Annie Hornish, the Remembrance Wall not only historically documents the condition of the land when Our Companions received it in 2002, but also provides information and education about the realities and impact of factory farming in our country. Learn more about the Remembrance Wall on page 11.

The event included the reunion of some special canine friends – some of the first dogs given refuge at the sanctuary when it initially opened. These sanctuary alumni were the perfect friends to welcome the new guests taking up temporary residence in the two brand new Canine Cottages as they await their forever homes.



It was a windy, chilly day but that didn't stop our dedicated donors from joining the celebration.



Steve and Sue Petke with Dudley, a sanctuary alumnus.



Our Companions Canine Operations Director, Marie Joyner, shares a cuddle with alumni guest Tinka.



These two new canine cottages will make up the total of 8 canine cottages when the project is completed.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to those who generously contributed to the second phase of our capital campaign.

Donors to "Phase-Two"

\$225,000

Gale Epstein, Valerie Friedman and Lida Orzeck

\$100,000

Chris and Chuck Shivery

\$50,000-\$99,999

Lisa Ireland*

\$25,000-\$49,999

Nancy and Ron Compton
Linda and Robert Forrester
Newman's Own Foundation
Elizabeth Reed

\$10,000-\$24,999

Anonymous
Jennifer Carter
Kathy and Brad Hoffman
Neil and Annie Hornish
Lyn and Paul Johnson
Barbara Ruben and June Roy
Kathy and Patrick Sullivan
United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
Rita and Tom Weidman

*Deceased

A Stirring Transformation Brings about a Place for Reflection

By Jennifer Barrows

From factory farm to animal sanctuary – the contrast is extreme. Extremely wonderful, in the eyes of a few dedicated, talented volunteers who conceptualized and brought to fruition the stunning and poignant Remembrance Wall at the Ashford sanctuary.

The Remembrance Wall was built upon a section of concrete slab that comprised the foundation of the original factory farm that once occupied the land. It recounts the history of the land and includes an educational segment explaining the implications of factory farming.

“It’s no small irony that the same site where previously hundreds of thousands of laying hens were exploited and tortured is now a place of sanctuary, love and rehabilitation for animals,” remarked Susan Linker, OC Chief Executive Officer, at a recent dedication event.

Julie Stankiewicz had been volunteering with OC for a while when she expressed an interest in helping to alleviate the suffering of farm animals. “Whereas people become very upset when a dog or cat is abused, some species of animals are abused as a matter of course and it is considered acceptable,” said Julie. “Some practices also have a negative effect on human health and the environment, but not many people realize this.”

Julie spoke to Susan Linker, who had long wanted to do something to acknowledge and honor the animals who had suffered at the factory farm that had previously occupied the site. The two decided that a Remembrance Wall would be a moving tribute to these animals, and Julie set to work on its overall content and design, enlisting the help of artist Paula Fisher, who rendered beautiful painted images of chickens on a section of the wall containing inspirational quotes. It was determined that the wall also would contain information to enable consumers to make more compassionate decisions that will positively impact farm animals.

“I wanted the information to be empowering,” said Julie. “I believed it was important for the wall to have positive energy, just as the sanctuary does. I didn’t want it to be a traumatic experience for visitors, but rather to give honor to the hens who lost their lives.”



A crowd gathers at the Remembrance Wall to celebrate the completion of “Phase-Two.”

When Julie first started her research, she found the information depicting the lives of farm animals to be very depressing and she wasn’t sure she could handle the project. Once she made the commitment, however, she became energized by the idea of helping these animals.

“I think a lot of people would feel the same way,” she noted. “The problems caused by factory farms can seem too overwhelming and upsetting to even think about. But I would encourage anyone else who is concerned about the current system to become involved and not be afraid of the issue. There’s so much you can do that can make a difference.”

While Julie and Paula brought forth their conceptual plans and artwork, OC volunteer and graphic designer, Mandy Wieting, provided her expertise in determining the layout of the wall – how it would all flow cohesively and compellingly.

Meanwhile, Susan approached long-time OC supporters Annie and Neil Hornish to ascertain their interest in funding the project, since it addressed a subject near and dear to their hearts. The Hornishes jumped at the chance, as it was a natural extension of their many years of animal welfare work, which has included establishing a nonprofit organization – the Compassionate Living Project – focused on humane education, and animal welfare and rights. They had been involved in the Ashford factory farm-to-sanctuary transformation since the very beginning, having approached Susan before the original farm was demolished to find out if they might procure some factory farm battery cages that they could use for educational purposes. They cut more than 60 cages out of the facility, which they distributed around the

country to like-minded organizations committed to educating the public about the atrocities of factory farming, including The Humane Society of the United States.

“It was an incredible opportunity,” recalls Neil. “Even those in the animal protection movement have no idea, really, how awful the conditions are in a factory farm. Many of these individuals have seen photos, but not until you experience a cage in person can you truly begin to imagine how these animals must feel living in such conditions.”

Annie reflects, “When we heard about the Remembrance Wall project, what impressed us was the land use – it went from being used for the worst of purposes to the best of purposes – a place of love, hope and understanding – it took a 180-degree turn.”

According to the Hornishes, there are currently some 4 million birds in Connecticut alone suffering in these sorts of conditions. Neil and Annie are hopeful that there will be significant changes happening in the future, thanks to humane education and a growing awareness in consumers. That hope may become a reality all the sooner, thanks to everyone involved in bringing about the Remembrance Wall, a labor of love that so powerfully honors the past, promotes reflection, and inspires action toward a more compassionate future.

Resources:

www.CompassionateLivingProject.org
www.humanesociety.org



What! We're low on supplies!?!?



Oh, and Johnny said he'd like more tennis balls. For some reason his keep getting chewed up.

Please Help! Sanctuary in Need of Supplies

Providing our animal guests with an enriching home-like environment at the sanctuary takes a great deal of effort, time, and, as you might expect, supplies! We are always running out of something. We sure could use your help. If you are interested in donating supplies, via on-line purchase, check out our Amazon wish list (information is below). The money you help us save on supplies allows us to provide care for even more animals. Thank you in advance for your generosity!

Everyday Supply List:

Supermarket gift cards

Canned cat food

Paper towels

Unscented liquid laundry detergent for high efficiency washing machine

Dryer sheets, unscented

Dishwasher detergent

Bleach

Large heavy-duty trash bags (55 gallon)

Tall kitchen trash bags (13 gallon)

To learn how to get these supplies to the sanctuary, email Laura@OurCompanions.org or call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 318.

Our Amazon Wish List

Please visit ourcompanions.org/pages/getinvolved_otherways.htm or go to the Our Companions website, click on Getting Involved, and then Other Ways to Help. Amazon will ship the items directly to the sanctuary. Please take a look – there are many affordable items that we can use right away! Please email us at info@ourcompanions.org if you've purchased an item on our Amazon Wish List, so that we can send you an acknowledgement for tax purposes.

Urgent! Feral Cats Need Your Help!

To survive the bitter cold of winter, feral cats* need all the help they can get. Our supply shelves are running dangerously low and those kind souls who feed and care for the feral cat colonies are struggling.

Please consider making a cat food donation to Our Companions to support our feral cat food program. Either canned or dry cat food will be accepted in any amount, as long as the food is unopened and not expired.

Would you consider hosting a feral cat food drive at your workplace, church or civic group? If interested, please contact Caroline Gaetano at 860-242-9999, ext. 306.

It's been a long, hard winter and it's not over yet. You can make a huge difference. Please make a donation today. Learn more about how you can help feral cats at www.OurCompanions.org. If you prefer to make a cash donation to support our work for feral cats via our Fur-Get-Me-Not fund, you may do so online – simply click the "Donate" button on the top right of our homepage, fill out the information, and in the "Reference" box, type "Fur-Get-Me-Not fund."

**A feral cat is a cat who has reverted to some degree to a wild state. Ferals originate from abandoned domestic cats. In most cases, feral cats are not completely wild because they still depend on people for their food source. All food distributed through the food drive will be offered only to cats who have been trapped, neutered and vaccinated, and have committed human caretakers.*





Cats:

Duke

Adopted Jan. 2013, by Julie in East Windsor
Duke is doing well. He loves to be petted, I think, even more than he loves to eat. He is so sweet and loving and I just adore him. My sister sent me a laser flashlight and Duke loves it. He sounds like a herd of cattle running after it. I feel so blessed to have him in my life. I sincerely have never had a nicer cat.



Luna

Adopted April 2013 by Mary, a repeat OC Cat Adopter
Luna is pictured here celebrating her 8th birthday!



Dunkin

Adopted February 2013, by Lynn in Rhode Island
He is a beautiful kitty and we are so happy to have him as a part of our family.

Beth (now Kaycee) and Vicky (now Molly)

Adopted by Penny in Marlborough

The girls are doing great. Molly is into everything, but I love her energy. Kaycee is as sweet as ever. She's my calm baby. Molly is the one who always puts a smile on everyone's face. She is just too cute! They both are...

I'm so happy I found them. They make me smile everyday and everyone who has met them wants to take them home with them... not happening. :-)



Gracie

Adopted Last Summer by Alyssa

She has been such a wonderful addition to our family, she is just the sweetest cat I have ever had - I am so in love with her! She is getting along well with Catticus (although he still ignores her most of the time) and is healthy and happy. She follows me all around the house and likes to sit on my lap - not quite as affectionate with my husband but once in a while she will jump on his lap as well and "make biscuits." People tell us she is lucky to have found such a good home but I think we are the lucky ones!



Dogs:

Lucas

Adopted August 2013 by Lynda in Ashford
Lucas is such an awesome boy. He fits in here as though having lived here his whole life. He and Katie are already best buds. They even share and swap off Nylabones - yes, Mr. Resource Guarder himself shares his most prized possessions! He loves his walks around the lake, his rides in the car, and sniffing around the yard. He is wonderful with my grandkids and they all adore him.



Hank (now Finn)

Adopted by Brian and Nicole in Bloomfield

Finn is doing phenomenally well, he recently achieved his Canine Good Citizen designation, and will soon begin training to become a certified Therapy Dog! Finn is a terrific addition to our family, and our older cat (Killian) is unquestionably in love with him. Finn also goes to doggie day camp 2-3 times a week and has a total blast with the other dogs.



Dudley

Adopted by Steve and Suzanne in Bloomfield

Dudley is doing great! Steve and I are so blessed and honored to have Dudley as part of our household. I know that the Our Companions staff and volunteers took excellent care of Dudley while he was at the Our Companions rescue cottage in Ashford to help ready him for his forever home. While Dudley came to us healthy (i.e., neutered and ears attended to, etc.) and with some manners, he still was a scrawny little boy and needed to work on some additional manners. I am pleased to say that Dudley has bloomed into a beautiful boy and lovely companion.

Steve, Dudley and I successfully completed Family Companions I and Family Companions II training. Dudley just missed passing his Canine Good Citizen test, but we will try again. Eventually (when we are little more mature), we hope to complete Therapy Dog training. In the meantime, Dudley is welcome to visit his 98 year-old grandpa at an assisted living facility. You should see the smile on Grandpa's face when Dudley visits. It's the highlight of Grandpa's week.





Canine College Opportunities

Recently I sat down with Marie to learn more about Canine College, the lynchpin of Our Companions' dog training programs.

What is important for volunteers to know about the Canine College program?

At Our Companions, our philosophy is to keep dogs in their existing homes whenever possible. Our classes teach pet owners how to address common problems through techniques that are positive and rewarding. Volunteers interested in helping with the Canine College program should have a desire to work with people as well as with animals. You may think you're working only with dogs, but you're also educating their human companions.

How do you become a volunteer?

First, interested volunteers attend the general Our Companions orientation session. Then they spend a significant amount of time watching and/or attending classes with their own dog to understand our training approach and the value of positive reinforcement. Next, volunteers participate in a series of sessions on topics such as dogs' body language, how they communicate, and why positive reinforcement is effective. When volunteers graduate from this part of the program, they become assistants and help individual clients in class.

Volunteers are also groomed to become teachers. Through their training process, they learn how best to convey instruction to human companions, through visual, oral and written means. Classes are team-taught, meaning volunteers are partnered with someone else until they become comfortable in the class setting. Each Canine College class is limited to eight



OC volunteer Carol spends time with Amber and Maggie, the twin beagles.

dogs to keep the class manageable and allow instructors to provide individualized attention.

Everyone progresses at their own pace through this program, so it can take time before a volunteer is ready to teach the Canine College course. We want to ensure that our instructors feel at ease when they begin leading classes and working with clients. Complementing the program are regular meetings where the Canine College instructors review the latest dog training literature and trends.

We have a strong, solid core of volunteers that has been with us for many years, and we hold

classes at a variety of times to accommodate different schedules. The group has good camaraderie and we love sharing tips and tricks gained after years of working with pet owners and their canine companions.

What are the benefits?

What I've heard from our volunteers is that one class isn't enough! We've had several volunteers who continued going to other classes because they love helping people and their dogs. A few of the classes we currently offer include Family Companion I and II, the Walking Club, and Trick Training. We also plan to add more classes in the future.

Active Canine College volunteers also have the opportunity to help with behavioral training and support for dogs at the sanctuary. Their involvement in Canine College gives volunteers the opportunity to come in contact with dogs at various stages in their development journey, which keeps the experience fresh and interesting.



Our Companions Canine Operations Director, Marie Joyner, receives questions every day about dogs and their behavioral issues. Marie's Den answers some of the more commonly asked questions.

Marie's Den

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of Marie's Den, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.



Feline Feeding Frenzy

Pet food commercials portray an idyllic scene. Devoted pet owner prepares Fluffy's favorite tasty meal. Fluffy awakens from peaceful slumber, bounding in slow motion toward dinner, presented on a beautiful fine china plate or perhaps in a sparkling, glass fluted saucer. Meanwhile, proud pet owner tilts her head, grinning lovingly. These commercials sell an abundance of gourmet cat food, but what happens when Fluffy's appetite declines either temporarily, or during a prolonged medical condition?

Although there is no perfect recipe for persuading cats to eat, the single thing to keep in mind is to never give up. Try anything and everything. Do whatever it takes to ensure continuous eating. Cats who stop eating completely, even for only a few days, are at risk for hepatic lipidosis (fatty liver) – a life-threatening condition.

Raising the Bowl

When eating or drinking, cats normally stand on all fours with their head and neck dropped down toward the floor. In this posture their mouth is lower than their stomach which is a frequent cause of vomiting undigested food. In cats with kidney disease this eating position may also trigger acid reflux and decreased appetite. Raising food and water bowls approximately six inches creates less physical stress on their body, promotes better overall health, and often increases eating and drinking. Pedestal bowls and elevated stands made specifically for this purpose are available online or in pet stores. Make your own pedestals by flipping an empty same-sized bowl upside down and taping it securely beneath food and water bowls to raise them.

Flat and Wide

Cats generally do not like their whiskers to

contact the bowl's edges while they are eating or drinking, so flat plates or wide shallow bowls are best, particularly for older or sick cats. Glass, metal, or ceramic bowls work well and should be cleaned daily even when feeding dry food. Avoid plastic since it commonly causes allergic skin conditions on the chin and around the mouth which can further deter eating.

Location, Location, Location

Sick or elderly cats often prefer food to be located in a different spot than usual. They may refuse eating in one location but chow down the very same meal in another. Delivering food near your cat's sleeping area, especially immediately after they awake is a good enticement. Sometimes it helps switching a food plate to one side or another of the water bowl, as studies have shown cats tend to have personal eating side preferences. In multiple pet households it is a good idea to feed away from others for quiet uninterrupted meals and also to accurately monitor intake. Some convalescing cats will surprise you by eating foods they otherwise would not touch, so even if your cat doesn't normally like dry food, leave some nearby for overnight snacking.

Tempting Temperature

Most cats prefer meals served warm or at room temperature. Avoid offering food directly from the refrigerator. Mixing in warm water or microwaving for a few seconds makes the food smell stronger and encourages eating. After microwaving, stir the food then check for safe heat distribution by poking your finger throughout.

What's for Dinner?

Food shaped as morsels, shreds, and slices may be preferred by healthy cats, but soft

paté-style is generally the best option when they are sick – the mushier the better. Add lots of warm water to make an easily digestible slurry. Pouring off gravy from other style foods and mixing in with paté works well too. Squash large chunks with a fork or try processing in a blender for smoother consistency. Paté-style food rolled into miniature "meatballs" can be fed by hand to entice eating. Sometimes just sitting with your cat at mealtime helps. To lure reluctant cats into eating, try placing a small amount of soft food on your finger and let them lick it off. Veterinary prescription diet A/D® is often used for nutritional support while sick or injured cats recover. When nothing else is working, you could also try baby food, such as puréed chicken. Be sure to read ingredients carefully and do not feed anything containing onions or garlic – these are toxic to cats.

Top it Off

Special treats can be used to make food more appetizing, since the aroma of cat treats tends to be strong and may arouse interest in an otherwise uninterested cat. Grind up crunchy treats with the back of a spoon, or use a mortar and pestle. Then, combine the granules with soft food and also sprinkle some on top. Freeze dried snacks, butter, or whipped cream can also be used as toppers.

Medication Complications

Don't be alarmed if your cat suddenly refuses eating certain meals they had enjoyed at an earlier time while they were sick. Some cats associate a particular food with being sick and will develop an aversion to that food, never eating it again. The same holds true for medications. Distasteful medications can cause cats to develop an aversion. For some cats, Pill Pockets® are very effective.

Kitty Diner

Remember the most important thing when a cat is sick or injured is for them to continue eating. Consider yourself the owner of a kitty diner. Your main goal is to keep them coming back for more – even if that means pulling out the fine china or a sparkling, glass fluted saucer.



Technically Speaking is written by Certified Veterinary Technician, Lyn T. Garson, to address basic information on animal health issues and how they needn't be barriers to adopting a great pet.

Technically Speaking

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of *Technically Speaking*, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.



Keeping those Cool Cats Warm and Safe this Winter

It's no secret, I've got ferals. Doesn't everyone? With nothing but mild winters since I moved into my new place, caring for my outdoor felines was relatively easy. That was until last winter, when I faced a foot-and-a-half of snow. I distinctly remember looking out my window and seeing a big buff-colored fluff ball attempting to cross the yard to reach my feeding station . . . and failing. It was heartbreaking and I wondered how many other feral cats out there were stuck, freezing and starving. I quickly pushed that depressing thought from my mind and broke out the shovel to create a maze of cat paths all over the yard. Never fear, Uncle Buff lives on.

With unfavorable snow conditions in the forecast for 2014, I'm going to be a little more prepared this year and I hope you will too! Here are some tips and guidelines to make this winter as pleasant as possible for your feral cats. I should mention that I assume your ferals are already spayed/neutered. If they are not, please reach out to Our Companions and we can help. Just because it's winter, it doesn't mean you should wait. Do. Not. Wait.

There are three main challenges for cats in the winter: shelter, food/water and seasonal dangers.

Give Me Shelter!

Cats need a place that is warm, dry and protected. There are many templates for shelters available online that you can use to build your own. I don't recommend "winging it" since there are many important things to consider such as insulation, door size, shelter size, etc. Not the handy type? Thankfully Our Companions is blessed with feral cat shelter craftsman, Jerry Gryczewski, and even has some pre-built shelters available for those in need.

Your shelters should be filled with straw (not hay), and replaced periodically. Yes, apparently there is a difference. It's not recommended to use blankets, towels or folded newspapers because they absorb body heat. Depending on the number of cats in your colony, you'll want an appropriate sized shelter. Since cats will cuddle together to stay warm, your shelter should be able to house a few cats (assuming you have a few cats), but be careful not to make it too large because it's harder to keep warm. Another tip is to line the shelter's walls and floor with Mylar since it reflects back body heat and is safe for felines to lie on. Your shelter should be tucked away in a discreet, low traffic area where cats will feel safe, but also should be located in close proximity to the feeding station in case of monstrous amounts of snow (i.e., Uncle Buff and the winter of 2013).

Feed Me!

Cats need extra calories in the winter in order to maintain energy levels. Whatever quantities you are used to feeding during other seasons, increase it for winter. I personally like to provide wet food, dry food and water, but keeping the water and wet food from freezing is always an issue. It's recommended to pay close attention to the containers you use, since they can determine how quickly the contents freeze. Thicker plastic is better than thin plastic or ceramic and deeper is better than wider. Fill water bowls with warm water and if you have the means, try out a solar powered bowl, heating pad disk (Snuggle Safe) or electric heated bowl (if you have electric outlets near the feed site). Another tip is to spray insulation foam on the underside of plastic feeding dishes. Do NOT put water bowls inside the cat shelter since water is easily spilled and can instantly turn your



warm shelter into an ice box. The most interesting tip I read, but have not yet tried, is to add a pinch of sugar to the water. Apparently water with a pinch of sugar doesn't freeze as quickly and provides an energy boost for the cats. Most importantly, feed your cats on a regular schedule so that they know when to expect food and it isn't sitting around with time to freeze.

Protect Me from Harm!

As if winters weren't hard enough, the season brings many dangers to the unsuspecting feline. Without a warm spot in sight, cats often curl up on car tires and can even make their way up into the engine. Tap your hood and do a quick walk-around to make sure your vehicle is cat-free before you start it and drive off. Make sure you don't leave antifreeze lying around. Cats can't seem to resist this toxic and deadly concoction. Salt and ice melting products are also toxic. Spend a few extra dollars and get the kind that is safe to use around animals. Don't forget to shovel out the cat shelter and clear paths for your cats so that they are not trapped without food and water. Uncle Buff thanks you.

If you need assistance with feral cat neutering, food or shelters, please contact Our Companions.

"Not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission...to be of service to them wherever they require it."

- St. Francis of Assisi

Resources:

www.humanesociety.org/issues/feral_cats/tips/caring_feral_cats_winter.html

www.alleycat.org/winterweather



Andrea Dobras is an Our Companions board member and one of our animal welfare professionals. She specializes in the placement of cats with FIV. In this regular feature, she helps others with the most complex cat conundrums.

The Scoop

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of The Scoop, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.




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"Johnny Come Lately Hopes to Be First with You"

Johnny: Single Black Male Lab Retriever (SBMLR), ageless, lovable, will adore being the object of your affections and attentions, especially if they involve tennis balls, long walks, and hugs. This sweet boy longs to find out what it would be like to come first for someone, after many years of being ignored. Could I be first with you?



"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"

Lucy: Single Black Female Mixbreed Dog (SBFMD), 1 y.o., a bit shy but will shine with attention, games, exercise, and play. Enjoys the company of other dogs, long walks on the beach, sitting by a fireplace, and giving and receiving lots of hugs. You can bring out that inner sparkle with your caring and patient attention, and in return this romantic lass will give you a lifetime of love.



"Downton Abbey Aristocrat Wants to Inherit You"

Fiona: Single Calico Female Feline (SCFF), 3 y.o., with fabulous qualities to love (especially my adorable teddy bear body), who would thrive as a fixture on a sofa at Downton Abbey. Loves napping, playing with string toys, treats, ear scratches, laps and more treats (of course). Prefers a single-cat household (this lady is an aristocrat after all) with plenty of pampering, and yes, even (possibly) exercise (yawn).

