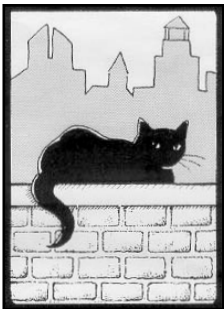


CATmatters

Every Cat Matters. Every Person Counts. Spring 2008

One Man's Curiosity - How It is Helping Cats

by Val Maloney



The Greater New Haven Cat Project, Inc. (GNHCP) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization formed in 1996 to address the problems of cat overpopulation, neglect and abuse in our area. GNHCP provides spay/neuter assistance for feral, stray and abandoned cats, and promotes responsible pet ownership through educational workshops. The organization is comprised solely of volunteers, and is funded through private donations, fundraising events and grants.

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Some people think it's a burden to feed a colony of feral cats, but not Angelo DeBenedetto; he enjoys his cats. Angelo, a New York restaurateur, does not have much spare time with his busy career and long commute. However, he finds time to feed and enjoy his feral cats in addition to caring for the cats that share his home.

Angelo has been feeding three feral colonies for almost seven years. He is no stranger to caring for cats because he has had cats all his life. He got started rescuing feral cats when a friend called him down to his workplace to see a litter of kittens that were born behind the building. Angelo knew he had to help, so he quickly found homes for two of the kittens and brought three into his own home.

To this day, he is still feeding three cats behind that building. He reached into his own pocket to have them spayed/neutered. A costly act of kindness, but he knew that spaying/neutering feral cats is the best solution to controlling the numbers and improving their lives.

Although they are mostly unsocialized cats, he is able to pet some of them. Unlike most caregivers, Angelo feeds his colonies at night – and the cats show up looking for him. To prevent feeding and attracting wildlife such as raccoons and skunks, he waits with the cats while they eat, then collects the dishes and any leftover food. He enjoys watching his ferals and he has provided them with winter shelters constructed out of wood and/or plastic storage bins.

While driving to work one afternoon,

Angelo spotted a group of cats sitting together in a neighborhood lot. Since he carries cat food in his car, he stopped to see if they were hungry, which of course, they were. He confirmed they were strays after talking with the nearby neighbors, and started feeding them every night. There were thirteen cats in his second colony and he knew he needed to prevent these cats from multiplying — he knew he needed help.

The time and expense of catching the cats and having them spayed/neutered was overwhelming. He learned from a friend about The Greater New Haven Cat Project (GNHCP) and contacted GNHCP for assistance. Angelo trapped the cats and Cheryl of GNHCP arranged the veterinary appointments for the spaying and neutering. GNHCP also provided winter shelters



Angel

for this colony to keep them warm and out of the inclement weather.

Cats are very smart and, even when they are hungry, some will not go into the trap. Since last summer one female cat has eluded Angelo and Cheryl's efforts to trap her. They have tried to tempt her with sardines and other delectable treats. Angelo is now trying a hand held net. He had to paint the net black because the cat wouldn't go near him when he was holding the net. This cat has recently had a litter of kittens and Angelo and Cheryl are anxious to get her spayed.

Sometimes new cats join the colonies. It's not known where they come from or the circumstances that caused them to be homeless. One night, a beautiful Persian cat joined one of

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Angelo's feral colonies. He assumed the cat had been lost or abandoned because the cat was wearing an old flea collar, and it's unusual to find purebred cats in feral colonies. Since the cat was friendly, he brought it home and immediately contacted GNHCP to see if they would try and find it a home. Cheryl agreed to take the cat, but was not able to pick up the cat for three days. By that time, Angelo was attached to the Persian and it became part of his family of domestic cats.

Most of the cats Angelo has rescued were feral but one cat found and adopted him. A friendly black cat showed up at his door and charmed his way into Angelo's home. Angelo later determined the cat's owner had died. What a lucky cat to have found a forever home with Angelo.

When Angelo heard of the recent controversy surrounding feral cats in his hometown, he was not alarmed. The local town council is considering an ordinance that would punish people who feed feral cats. Angelo is not concerned because he

says these are "my cats" and the town can't stop me from feeding them. He has the spay/neuter and vaccination certificates provided by GNHCP to prove they are well cared for.



Kitten Cousins: above, Issac
- below, Angela



Angelo is very appreciative of the assistance he has received from GNHCP. He especially appreciates the time and effort Cheryl has dedicated to helping him and his feral cats. In talking about Cheryl, Angelo says "She is a great person, you want to help her help the cats." He says he would do anything for Cheryl and has helped her with trapping other feral colonies.

Angelo's response to the assistance he received from GNHCP is not that unusual. By the time some caregivers reach out to us, they have tried on their own to manage the population of their colonies and are very grateful for the help we provide. Our volunteers and the caregivers have a lot in common - a giving nature and the desire to improve the lives of feral/stray and abandoned cats.

Development News:

In September 2007, GNHCP was awarded vouchers from The Department of Agriculture, APCP Program, for the vaccination and sterilization of feral cats. We were also awarded funding from the PetSmart Charities in December 2007 for a year-long spay/neuter project. Specifically, GNHCP will work with the Post Road Veterinary Clinic to provide vaccination and spay/neuter assistance for low-income residents within the Greater New Haven community. We remain grateful to funding agencies and private donors for their support of our efforts to reduce cat overpopulation and suffering in our community.

GNHCP Statistics for 2007

Spay/neuter assistance provided to the following towns: Ansonia, Bethany, Branford, Bridgeport, Cromwell, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Meriden, Milford, Naugatuck, New Haven, Northford, No. Branford, No. Haven, Orange, Oxford, Rocky Hill, Seymour, Southington, Stratford, Torrington, Wallingford, Waterbury, West Haven and Woodbridge. A total of 522 cats assisted.



Join The Greater New Haven Cat Project, Inc. at the annual...

Feral Feline Festival

Saturday, October 11, 2008
Italian-American Club, Branford, Connecticut
Music by Angelo Vessichio/Sound Alternative

Spend a Buck and Try Your Luck in the Annual GNHCP Raffle!

1st prize: **20" Magnavox Color TV with VCR & DVD** (includes warranty plus 2 year service plan)

2nd prize: **Apple 1GB iPod Nano** (includes earphones, USB 2.0 cable, Dock adapter and Quick Start guide)

3rd prize: **\$100 Gift Certificate redeemable at The Amadeus Center, Inc., New Haven, CT**

4th prize: **\$50 Gift Certificate redeemable at Home Depot**

Tickets are available for sale at the GNHCP Center, 965 State Street on Saturdays, or via mail; **\$1.00 each; \$20.00 per book**. Drawing to be held at The Greater New Haven Cat Project, Inc. on Saturday, July 26, 2008.



Volunteer Spotlight

by Valerie Maloney

It was an article about feral cats, in our 2001 Newsletter, *Catmatters*, that touched Roberta and prompted her to volunteer with The Greater New Haven Cat Project. Previously, Roberta had been volunteering for a local animal shelter and nursing home.

Roberta is a very talented graphic artist working at a local university. Her skills were exactly what we needed to support our *Catmatters* newsletter and to design promotional materials for the organization. She also supports GNHCP by responding to calls for assistance and working on our many fundraisers.

Roberta provides "direct care" at the New Haven office where she cares for the cats awaiting adoption. She especially enjoys letting all the cats out of their cages to interact with each other and her. She also feels a sense of accomplishment when the semi-feral cats let down their guard and begin to seek her affection. When she arrives at the center and realizes one of the cats is missing, she is elated because she



Roberta's three cats: Mazlow, Moochee and Dave

knows the cat has been adopted into a forever home.

A fringe benefit of having Roberta as a volunteer is that her husband, Dave, volunteers as our rascally tomcat mascot marching in the St. Patrick's Day Parade each year.

Animal welfare interests outside of the GNHCP have included chairing a town committee in Shelton, CT to build a new animal shelter and adoption center to replace the original "dog pound." She hopes to help change the attitude of the towns citizens toward rescue and adoption and not use the town shelter as a "dumping ground" for unwanted pets.

Roberta strives to make the lives of feral and homeless cats better. Although she has rescued her own cats, she jokingly explains that "there is not enough fur at my own home." Roberta was raised by parents who taught her, by example, to live a purposeful life. Volunteering is second nature to Roberta and we are very grateful, and lucky, that she volunteers with The Greater New Haven Cat Project.

Memorial Contributions

In memory of my feral feline leukemia cat - Eileen Waldron

In memory of Helvia, who lost her battle to cancer at age 17 and Tiffany, who died of renal failure at age 12 - Natalie Rawls

In memory of Maci Rea, a starving kitty rescued from Milford who passed away in October 2007 - Adrienne Rea

In memory of Nicholas - Sandy & Ben Dressler

In memory of Christine - Donna Pursley

In honor of Viola Guglielmi who saved Sugar (formerly Angie) and Smartypants (formerly Little One), whose companionship to me are also to be honored (see *Catmatters* Fall 05) - Beatrice Bixon

CATS WALK ON THEIR TOES. ANOTHER GOOD REASON NOT TO DECLAW.

GNHCP Wish List

Things to keep our Center clean and running smoothly and to keep our animals happy and healthy.

Gift cards to WAL★MART, Petco or grocery stores

First-class stamps

Paper towels

Trash bags

Simple Green

Dish soap

Revolution

Frontline

KMR Powder Formula

Catnip toys

Cat treats

Toy Mice

Donations

The Greater New Haven Cat Project, Inc. (GNHCP), begun in 1996, works to combat the cat overpopulation dilemma with a comprehensive spay/neuter program that focuses on the numerous feral colonies and abandoned cats of Connecticut. We also locate excellent, stable homes for the friendly cats and kittens that are found or abandoned in the streets and houses of the Greater New Haven area. Finally, we offer other programs such as The Tommy Fund, Barn Home Project and regular operations at our Center. If you would like to aid and abet our burgeoning mission, then please consider one of the following options for your gracious donation:

Basic Donation:

With an annual donation of \$25, you will receive copies of our newsletter, *Catmatters* twice a year.

Population Donation:

With an annual donation of \$45, you will receive a copy of our newsletter, *Catmatters*, twice yearly as well as a 10% discount on all GNHCP merchandise or tickets for a GNHCP fundraising event. Most importantly, this type of gift enables GNHCP to spay one female cat and to promote a healthy, humane approach to the cat overpopulation problem.

Gift Donation:

With a minimum donation of \$25, this gift is a great idea for a birthday or holiday for the fellow or sister cat lover in your life. The recipient will receive an acknowledgment on your behalf in addition to our newsletter, *Catmatters*, for one year.

Memorial Donation:

You can recognize a special animal or person in your life with a donation that will help other cats.

Additional Contribution:

Any additional donations received through our newsletter will help to fund our spay/neuter program, The Tommy Fund (for extraordinary veterinary expenses) or operations at our Center.

Foster Cat Sponsorship:

With a donation of \$125, you will receive our newsletter, *Catmatters*, for one year, a photo and update on your sponsored cat and a 10% discount on GNHCP merchandise or tickets for a GNHCP fundraising event.

Please sign me up for a:

Basic Donation (\$25) : _____ Population Donation (\$45) : _____ Gift Donation (\$25) : _____ Sponsor a Foster Cat (\$125): _____

Memorial Donation: \$ _____ In memory of: _____

Contribution to GNHCP: Spay/Neuter Program \$ _____ Tommy Fund \$ _____ Center expenses \$ _____

Name _____

Full Address _____

Thank you for your support of our efforts. All donations are tax deductible.



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