



## *It's Raining Kittens*

By Gail E. Foreman, Ph.D.

Around this time of year, along with spring showers, overflowing streams, and oceans of daylilies, another seasonal flood inundates communities: the torrent of kittens from unspayed cats, especially from the thousands of feral cats roaming our rural and residential areas.

Some facts are in order: 34% of U.S. households own at least one cat, an estimated 77.6 million cats. Most cat owners vaccinate, spay/neuter, and keep their pets safe and inside—all well and good. But a minimum 1.5 feral cats exists for every owned cat—over 111.6 million. Feral cats are those without homes, without owners, lost or abandoned cats or those born to homeless mothers. 86% of owned cats are spayed/neutered; 97% of feral cats are not.

More than 104,000 homeless cats live in Westchester and Putnam Counties. They form groups, called colonies, and defend territories based around shelter, water, and food resources. A few lucky colonies have caretakers, volunteers who, through their compassion and with their own funds, feed the cats, trap them to be spayed or neutered, and release them back into the colony. Other colonies, those without caretakers, fend for themselves, finding what food they can, dying off when disease runs through their population, and breeding...breeding...breeding. In a recent study of trapped female cats, 72% were either in heat, pregnant, or had kittens—over triple the rate for owned cats.

### **The results of all this uncontrolled breeding?**

The sheltering community becomes overwhelmed by the number of unwanted cats. Caring shelter workers, measured across the country, suffer from stress when euthanasia is the only option simply because not enough homes exist to go around. Unvaccinated cats can pose a health threat, especially in rabies endemic areas, such as New York. Uncontrolled feral-cat populations prey on and threaten bird populations. Millions in taxpayer money is spent annually on coping with the surplus of animals.

### **So what can we do about it?**

When I say “we,” I mean the communities, those with the means and ability to solve this issue. Three alter-

natives exist: Ignore the problem; Trap-Euthanize/Eliminate; or Trap-Spay/Neuter-Release.

We can ignore the problem, which is pretty much what happens in most places. More facts for you to digest: Female cats start cycling at 4-6 months old, and each female has an average of 2.1 litters per year with an average of 4.25 kittens. Two uncontrolled breeding cats—plus all their kittens—and all their kittens’ kittens—if none are ever neutered or spayed and assuming 100% survival rate—add up to a whopping 80,000 cats in ten years. If left unchecked, a feral colony soon exceeds the carrying capacity of the habitat and food resources. Then natural population control takes over in the form of starvation and disease.

### **Why Trap-Euthanize/Eliminate doesn't work.**

When we remove a feral-cat colony but leave the habitat unchanged, reproductively intact cats from surrounding colonies move in to take advantage of the food and shelter, and the cycle starts all over again. This is known as “the vacuum effect.” Though removing feral cats may result in a short-term benefit to a neighborhood, eventually, the problem returns...larger than ever.

### **Why Trap-Spay/Neuter-Release works.**

As I said earlier, cats in colonies maintain and defend territories from cats not in the colony. Only a certain number of spaces, or “niches,” determined by food and other resources, exist within each territory. Colony members expel newcomers or surplus young when all the niches are filled. In reproductively active colonies, these ejected cats wander about until they find a vacant niche in another area...form their own satellite colony, and begin breeding. In spayed/neutered colonies, the population soon stabilizes. Results: Feral and stray cat population reduction for the community as a whole. Lower euthanasia rates. Fewer complaints to animal control. Mobilization of volunteer work force (more caretakers.) Cost savings to towns, counties, and caretakers. Caretaker cooperation with communities. Improved public relations for animal control and shelters. Healthy, managed colonies; reduction of noise and odor; and fewer dying kittens.

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## Wags & Whiskers Walk-a-thon

RAISES \$44,000 FOR THE SPCA'S ANIMAL RESCUE PROGRAMS!

Hundreds of people and their canine companions turned out for the 2nd Annual Wags & Whiskers Walk-a-thon and Pet Fair held at FDR Park on April 28th. Once again, emcee Murray Weinstock treated the crowd to renditions of his *Dog Tunes*, members from the Port Chester Obedience Training Club demonstrated their agility and frisbee catching talents, and a Westchester County Police canine unit performed a staged narcotics detection search.

Photographer Liza Margulies' photos from the event can be viewed at [www.pbase.com/snootydog/2007walkathon](http://www.pbase.com/snootydog/2007walkathon). All proceeds will benefit the SPCA.

Our deepest gratitude to the event sponsors and participants for making the day such a great success!

### AND THE FIRST PLACE PLEDGE WINNER IS....

For the second year in a row, the top Walk-a-thon sponsor pledge collector is Patty Elser of New Rochelle with a grand total of \$2,880! Patty won the Walk-a-thon Grand Prize of four tickets to a Yankees home game with a \$100 gift certificate donated by Carl and Deb Mehne.



Patty Elser

### How does Patty do it?

"I have a lot of friends who work with animals and I also work at a doggie day care so I'll usually ask the customers to contribute as we have about 40 dogs each day that stay with us," Patty said.

A Junior at Mercy College, Patty is studying criminal justice, with the hopes of going into Humane Law Enforcement after graduation. An avid animal lover, Patty is owned by 2 Shiba Inu, a Bichon mix and a black Lab mix (pictured above). Way to go Patty!



The team from Austin's Underground Fence: Alicia, Anthony, Lourdes, Ashley and Alexis.



Paul, Cathy, Victoria, and Will Shaffer with dogs, Jake and Riley cut the ribbon to officially begin the walk-a-thon.



Lorri and Cathleen Gallagher of Yorktown with Daisy and Joey.

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A complete list of sponsors is available at [www.spc914.org](http://www.spc914.org).



## SPCA Launches Pet Bereavement Group

Last month the SPCA of Westchester launched a Pet Bereavement Group that is open to anyone who has lost a pet, including cats, dogs, horses, birds or any animals of any kind.

The group, “Justin’s Club” is named in memory of “Justin,” a grey tiger-striped cat, who recently died of cancer, at the age of 8. “Justin,” a beloved pet of SPCA volunteer Mary Prenon, was adopted from the SPCA when he was just 10 weeks old. Despite two months of intense chemotherapy, Justin eventually succumbed to his abdominal cancer.

“I was devastated by his death, and searched the county for a pet bereavement group,” Prenon said. “The only groups available were in Manhattan, and so I approached the SPCA to start a local group here in Westchester.”

Laura Oliver, L.C.S.W. is donating her time to lead the

SPCA’s bereavement group. Oliver, who has offices in New York City and Chappaqua, is a licensed master social worker by the New York State Education Department, and is certified by the Academy of Certified Social Workers for Private Practice. She holds an M.S. and B.S. from Columbia University, and is a member of the National Association of Social Workers.

“We believe there is a real need for this service in Westchester, and we are happy to be able to provide this to the local community,” said Gail Foreman, Ph.D, Executive Director of the SPCA. “We are very grateful to Laura for donating her time to make this happen.”


The next meeting of Justin’s Club is Monday, July 16th at 7:00 p.m. Anyone interested in attending must pre-register by calling 941-2896, ext. 22. A \$10 donation to the SPCA is suggested.


### Honor your best friends with Memory Stones in the SPCA Memorial Garden



A Memory Stone to honor a cherished pet will help support the many programs of the SPCA. All stones will be displayed in our new Memorial Garden. This beautiful area, created and landscaped by volunteers, is a constant reminder of how much we care for our animal companions and value the love they add to our lives. Please call (914) 941-2896 ext. 19 or email [Shannon\\_SPCA@msn.com](mailto:Shannon_SPCA@msn.com).

## SPECIAL THANKS

 Deepest thanks to County Animal Clinic in Yonkers for spaying/neutering 15 SPCA dogs and cats through their DVM Internship program at no charge to the SPCA! Through the on-going program, licensed veterinarians spend a year with specialists at County Animal Clinic in order to prepare for further training in an advanced veterinary specialist field. We’re grateful for their generous support which ensures that every animal adopted from our shelter is spayed/neutered before leaving for their new homes.

 Instead of asking for birthday gifts, Hudson Groner (pictured at right with executive director Gail Foreman) of Bedford asked his friends and family to make a donation to the SPCA in honor of his 7th birthday! Hudson’s contributions totaled \$300 for the SPCA animals!





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### Does it really work?

Yes! In hundreds of communities, dozens of case-studies and pilot programs bear out the success of Trap-Spay/Neuter-Release. And in enlightened areas (including some of our neighboring states), voucher programs, funded through a variety of means, exist at the state, county, or local level to carry out these vital services.

New York has a voucher program, through the spay/neuter license plate. However, it assists only in the spaying/neutering of owned animals for people on public assistance. A wonderful program, and badly needed, but recall that 86% of owned cats are already spayed/neutered, while 97% of ferals are not. The issue in cats is not with those who have homes, even low-income homes. And no help is currently available, at any level of government.

Meanwhile...cats breed...kittens die...and a few caring individuals Trap-Spay/Neuter-Release. A few vet clinics, like the SPCA's Simpson Clinic, offer low-cost

spay/neuter for feral cats. But the numbers we can help or take in through our shelter are limited. Alone, we can't even begin to stem the tide of spring and summer kittens. Those cats not fortunate enough to be in the minority, die. In one of the most educated parts of the country, where animal cruelty is a crime, our inability and/or refusal to address the feral-cat issue in a humane way reflects poorly on our communities.

### **FERAL-CAT SPAY/NEUTER FUND**

Save the lives of hundreds of cats and kittens by spaying/neutering one feral cat. The SPCA has set up a fund for this vital service. You can contribute by sending your donation to the SPCA and marking it "Feral-Cat Fund," or through our web-site [www.sPCA914.org](http://www.sPCA914.org).

## *Farewell to Betty and Woody*

One of the SPCA's very first Golden Outreach pet therapy teams, Betty Goodman of Katonah and Cairn Terrier dog, Woody, are retiring after 17 dedicated years. This dynamic duo made weekly visits to Four Winds Hospital in Katonah bringing joy and distraction to hundreds of children in need. For the first 3 years, Betty volunteered with an SPCA shelter dog until Woody came into her life and she knew that he was the perfect dog for pet therapy. It's because of volunteers like these that Golden Outreach has been able to touch thousands of patients in healthcare facilities over the years. We thank you!



## *SPCA Volunteer Receives Award*

Karen Reilly of Mamaroneck, who founded the SPCA's Train to Adopt program, was honored by The Volunteer Center of the United Way for her outstanding contribution to our community. As the 2007 Adult Volunteer Spirit Award recipient, Karen was feted at a breakfast at the Doral Arrowwood County Club on April 27th. Applauded for her determination and courage to overcome many obstacles, Karen's dedication has provided more opportunities and a better life for SPCA shelter dogs.





# Looking for love...

Photos by Animal Portraits, Somers 2007

The SPCA of Westchester has a large selection of homeless dogs and cats, each waiting for a second chance. Come by the shelter or visit some of our adoptable animals on-line at: [www.SPCA914.org](http://www.SPCA914.org).

CINNAMON



**Cinnamon** is a super affectionate 7-year-old Torti girl. She loves to be held and comes running for attention. They don't come any nicer than this kitty who is waiting patiently to "sweeten" the right home.

BARN CATS



**Barn Cats:** The SPCA has several semi-feral cats that will make good barn cats. Their ages range from young to adult, they can be handled and will make excellent mousers.

PATCH



**Patch** is a bit shy when going into new situations, but he's really a loving purr ball! At 4-years-old, Patch enjoys chilling out by the window and is seeking a home with another cat to play and hang out with.

HARRY



**Harry** is an energetic neutered male who knows how to sit and walks reasonably well on a leash. Harry would fit in with an active, outdoors-oriented family with at least one other dog. We're not sure how Harry interacts with cats. Because of his size and energy level we recommend an adult-only household or a family with older children.

GINGER



**Ginger** just wants the pleasure of your company! She is a bright, responsive dog who is moderately active and walks well on a leash. Around 3-years-old, we're not sure how Ginger interacts with other dogs or cats. OK with kids 12 and older.

HOLLY



**Holly** is a 10-month-old spayed Doberman mix with a high energy level who enjoys learning new things and interacting with people. She has responded well to basic training and will need a family who will continue to practice basic obedience training with her.

The SPCA would love to see photos of your animals, especially dogs and cats adopted from the shelter. You can put your pet's picture on our website by visiting [www.sPCA914.org](http://www.sPCA914.org) and clicking on photo gallery.



# Bilbo's Buzzzzzzzz



*Dear Bilbo,  
With kitten season coming on, I want a kitten. But should I get one or two?*

*Just Wondering in Jefferson Valley*

Dear Just Wondering,

You should always have a main cat and a back-up cat. That way, if your main cat is engaged in some important business, like finishing off that turkey carcass on the kitchen counter, your lap won't get cold.

In all seriousness, we cats are, for the most part, gregarious creatures...we enjoy having companions, especially when we're young. In the wild, we live in colonies and interact with other cats daily. Cats brought up alone are more likely to develop annoying behaviors and become aggressive, or conversely, shy. By having a brother or sister to romp and play with, we learn social skills, cat manners, and can expend our energy on a play-mate rather than your curtains and furniture. You like someone to snuggle up to at night, so why shouldn't we?

Three is my favorite number. Then I always have someone to pick on, play with, groom or groom me, sleep next to, or chase around the house. Remember: A cat who knows he's a cat is happier and a better companion than one who is convinced he's a human.

*Bilbo out.*

Email questions to Bilbo at:  
executivedirector@sPCA914.org

## Support the SPCA's Humane Education Program

The SPCA has a special fund set up to sustain our Humane Education program. A contribution to the Janet Greenspan Memorial Outreach Fund is an investment in helping to raise a kinder generation of children who will learn to speak out for animals and for others who cannot speak for themselves. Humane Education teaches responsibility, helps children make the right moral choices and helps promote good citizenship, values Janet Greenspan espoused both during her lifetime and through the Fund. Please call (914) 941-2896 ext. 19 to learn more about contributions to the Greenspan Fund.

## REINING CATS & DOGS

For the Month of July, **Reining Cats & Dogs** of Mt. Kisco, will donate 15% of their proceeds to the SPCA when you have your pet groomed, purchase supplies (excluding food) or enroll your dog in daycare.

Call today for your appointment and support the shelter at the same time!

**Reining Cats & Dogs**  
200 E. Main St.  
Mt. Kisco, NY 10549  
(914) 666-2121

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**SPCA OF WESTCHESTER Hours:**  
Monday thru Saturday: 10am to 4pm  
Sunday: 1pm to 4pm  
www.sPCA914.org