

# StreetTAILS

Fall  
2008

official newsletter of the feral cat coalition of oregon

## From our Humble Beginnings to our New Home!

by Karen Kraus

This is an exciting time for the Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon as we embark on a new chapter. At the beginning of October we moved our Portland operation into a new facility in North Portland which includes a free-standing spay/neuter clinic. This is our first major step toward helping more feral cats and getting us closer to our goal of spaying/neutering 10,000 cats per year.

As we look forward to helping more cats in need of our vital services, it's truly amazing to look back to see how far we have come from our humble beginnings. Our program was established in March 1995 as the Feral Cat Coalition of Portland. The founders, a group of seven veterinarians, had a vision of creating a spay/neuter program targeted at animals who typically receive no veterinary care – feral cats. They made their vision a reality with the first spay/neuter clinic held on June 25, 1995. We fixed 16 cats and it took us an entire day! In our first year we proudly spayed/neutered 259 feral cats.

For nearly three years we held monthly spay/neuter clinics at various Portland area veterinary hospitals, always on Sundays when they were closed. We had great success serving the Portland metro area with this system.

By 1997 the program had grown to care for more than 700 cats per year and had close to 200 volunteers. Finding a veterinary hospital to host the clinic each month was becoming a challenge, and hauling supplies to each clinic, in a trailer towed behind the president's Honda, was growing even more challenging. It was time for a new system.

In June 1997 we received a grant to purchase and fully equip the mobile veterinary hospital we use today. Our mobile hospital was the first of its kind in North America and remains the only mobile hospital serving exclusively feral cats.

With the arrival of our mobile hospital, we officially changed the name of the organization to the Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon (FCCO) to reflect our dedication to caring for cats throughout the state. We have now been on the road for 10 years and have helped feral cats in 21 communities in Oregon from Hood River to Coquille, as well as Vancouver and Longview, WA. For feral



*This kitten never produced feral offspring.*

## Story from the Streets

### *The Domino Effect*

This spring, I erased the sign on my forehead that read: *If you are hungry, homeless, helpless, hopeless, see this woman. She will help.* I was done with deadbeats and derelicts, orphans of all stripes, adorable or otherwise — or so I thought. Something must have gotten lost in translation.

I spent this summer caring for 12 feral cats. I didn't bring these kittens into the world or to the apartment building in which I live. Their mama was abandoned along with a mortgage and a home, collateral damage in Oregon's plummeting housing market. The papas were local toms. Before soaring rents pushed me into Clackamas County, I was a city dweller, someone accustomed to the idea that social responsibility included sorting your recycling from your garbage, scooping up after your dog, and spaying or neutering your cat. These were a given. The domino effect was also a given: "neighborhood pet" or stray, feeding it was tantamount to encouraging it to breed.

When the first kittens raced across the drive, I laughed at their little tails raised like pennants, shook my head at the cat food on my downstairs neighbor's porch, and returned to working. Next time I looked up from my computer, I was living above an empty apartment, two litters of kittens,

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*Domino continued page 2*



## President's Corner *by Kris Ellingsen, DVM*

*What I think of when I think of feral cats*



*Dr. Ellingsen*

I always have pictured the frightened, scrawny, hungry-eyed and wary waif lurking in the bushes or around a dumpster. And

I've seen them at these sites, too. But my eyes were opened to the idea of where feral cats come from while on a weekend winery tour in the Yakima Valley. As a number of us were biking and chatting along a rural road on a lovely, sunny early fall morning, out of a cornfield leapt two tiny, goopy-eyed, mewling kittens. These were no strangers to humans – they knew where food came from. Sick and starving, they eagerly allowed us to scoop them into our arms to safety. To make a long story short, my family became the foster family to these six-week-old waifs, who were bright-eyed and rambunctious after just a few days' care.

I imagine these kittens were dumped there, as the only farmhouse and barn we could see were too far away for these youngsters to have traveled from. I imagine that if, by sheer luck, had they made it to a barn or survived where they were for a few more months, they would, as a male and female can, propagate the next generation of stray or feral cats. Repeat. While these kittens were stray and not truly feral, they are what we must see as "pre-feral"... those cats that become feral due to their circumstances and whose ultimate offspring are feral. And I imagine how this happens in so many places because humans neglect

their responsibility by not caring for their pet or barn cats.

It's not as if I didn't know these scenarios – I spay and neuter cats from these circumstances every week. But this was an in-my-face reminder of how heartless people can be. These kittens would surely have died to predators, starvation, motor vehicles or the elements. For me it was also an educational opportunity. Not just to my daughter, who was thrilled to hear we would be the ones to take the kittens home, but also to my friends and fellow cyclists. Of course everyone thought they were darling. But I immediately looked to the underlying problem, and to the solution that is simple for me to see and enable as a veterinarian, connected to a feral cat organization, and who works for a cat clinic and cat shelter. It just makes me wonder why more people don't get it. Spay and neuter and be responsible for pet cats!

I guess that's why FCCO does what it does, and why we supporters and volunteers must keep doing what we do. By the time this newsletter reaches you, FCCO will have celebrated National Feral Cat Day by holding a special spay/neuter clinic. While we continue to do all we can to help the feral cats already in need, we need to look beyond the obvious to prevention and educate the public as to why altering of pet cats reduces the potential feral cat populations. Just as FCCO's new facility will enable us to help more cats, growing awareness of our organization can garner more support, both volunteer and financial, to educate the public. Please be that voice for feral cats and FCCO! I am so proud of what we do, and you should be, too.

## Domino *continued from page 1*

and a pregnant mama cat left behind for the second time. In short order, I learned that Clackamas County has no facility for cats; shelters euthanize feral cats and kittens; and facilities expect a fee: \$25 per feline. I am a writer. We don't make much money. By the time I'd exhausted all leads for placing the kittens, I had a dozen mewling mouths to feed. And, of course, I was feeding them; I won't watch an animal starve. Friends began to shake their heads at me. My landlord was shaking his finger: "I know you do not want to part with



*These cats, like Domino, were offspring of a cat abandoned when her caregiver moved.*

them, but I have to set some limits." I was shaking with righteous indignation: "I have EVERY desire to part with these cats; no one will take them."

In my short tenure as a cat lady, I learned that Clackamas County — indeed the tri-county area — is overrun, and no wonder. Of the six feral cats I sexed, five are female. Imagine the domino effect. But this story has a happy ending. Three kitties are barn cats. One is a mouser for a family with kids who hope this fluffy creature will let them tame her. The third litter was fostered along with their mama. I kept the runt. Out of a dozen cats, half will be pets and none will be breeding, thanks to FCCO. Two cats still await homes. One could be a pet if she's placed soon. Black with two white dots, I call her Domino.

*Dina Rozelle Barnett, Milwaukie*



## Go Green!

No, we're not talking about the Ducks. The move to our new location provides FCCO the opportunity to help so many more cats and caregivers, but it also brings added responsibilities and expenses. To address these issues, FCCO formed a volunteer committee to incorporate sustainable practices into our clinics and administrative processes. **The Green Team** is brainstorming and researching practices that will lessen our footprint and reduce waste and expenses. More recycling, less garbage, less energy usage, and other ideas will help us use our resources more efficiently.

If you are interested in donating commonly needed supplies from our Wish List, please consider purchasing recycled, recyclable, and unbleached products whenever possible. While we're making life better for feral cats, we can make it better for everyone else, too!

## WISH LIST

- 1-inch masking tape
- 30-gallon garbage bags
- AA batteries
- Duct tape
- HE Laundry detergent
- Office desk chairs
- Office supply store gift cards
- Paper towels: roll and tri-fold
- Postage stamps
- Reusable rubber gloves
- Storables gift cards

You may notice that some items are always on our Wish List. Donations offset our need to purchase products, which means more funds for spaying and neutering cats. The gift cards are a special request to set up our new space. If you can help with any of the Wish List items, please call FCCO at 503-797-2606, email [info@feralcats.com](mailto:info@feralcats.com), or bring them to the next clinic in your area. Whenever possible, please remember that we want to use green, eco-friendly products.

## Making the Move Possible

For a small grass-roots organization like FCCO, a \$90,000 new facility budget seemed monumental. However, when our Board agreed this past spring that we need to do more to help feral cats and their caregivers, it didn't take long for people to step up and offer support. In April, \$40,000 was raised for the project at the Furball. Since then, gifts for the new facility came from Jerry and Louise Owsley, who donated \$7,000 in memory of Ellen Savitts; Sandi and Ralph Miller, who donated \$10,000; the entire FCCO Board of Directors; and other anonymous donors also made substantial contributions. We are



*Volunteers line up to move FCCO to our new home.*

very grateful for the support of all these people.

Recently, one of our long-time volunteers was so inspired reading about our new facility that she challenged FCCO volunteers to donate \$5,000 which she would then match. Many thanks to all of our volunteers who have already donated. As of this printing we are still \$2,000 shy of the volunteer match target.

If we meet the volunteer challenge goal we will be just \$10,000 away from our total project budget! We are humbled by the generous support we have received thus far and are confident that we will succeed. If you can, please consider making an additional gift to help us complete our move to our new home.

In addition to all the incredible contributions mentioned above, we also had the fortune of working with wonderful contractors, many of whom were able to donate or provide their services at a discounted rate. We owe a debt of gratitude to the following: DeKorte Electric, Inc.; Andy Kraus, AIA; McCarthy Manufacturing, Inc.; Therma-Glass; Michael Woltersdorf; and Woodburn Construction Co. Finally, thank you to our moving and cleaning volunteers!

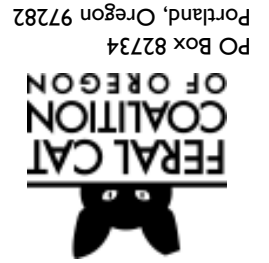
## New Home *continued from page 1*

cats in many cities, FCCO remains the only service available for them.

While we have helped more than 34,000 cats, sadly it isn't enough. We need to help more cats. Requests for help far exceed our clinic space, so last year we scheduled more clinics in Portland, where we have the greatest amount of resources. For the first time, we will spay/neuter close to 4,000 cats in a year!

Our new facility will mean we can hold more spay/neuter clinics, and we won't have to rely solely on the mobile hospital for our surgeries. This will greatly reduce the wear and tear on it and extend its life so we can continue to be there for cats with no other options. We plan to spay/neuter 5,000 cats next year, and we will grow to help even more cats in the future. To make this new vision a reality, we will need your ongoing support.

Our donors and volunteers are some of the most compassionate and generous people around. We can all be proud of what we have accomplished. Together we have built a program like none other. Thank you for your support and dedication to helping these once forgotten feral felines.



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## TNR Clinic & Event Schedule

Our 2009 clinic schedule will be on our website soon. The schedule for the remainder of 2008 is below.

October 16 - National Feral Cat Day

October 24 - Portland: 503-797-2606

October 26 - Corvallis: 541-754-8381

November 2 - Longview: 360-673-7300

November 7, 9, 14, & 16 - Portland: 503-797-2606

December 7, 12, 14 & 19 - Portland: 503-797-2606

October 26 - *Cat Walk* Tam O'Shanter Park, Kelso, WA

A benefit for FCCO clinics in Cowlitz County. Dress up as a cat or your other favorite costume and enter contests such as "Cat Woman" and "Best Tom Cat." Prizes, refreshments, entertainment and more. For more information contact Cindy Johnson at crj\_50@yahoo.com.

May 2, 2009 - Save the date for the 11th Annual Furball!

**General Message Line: 503-797-2606**

[www.feralcats.com](http://www.feralcats.com)

Are you receiving our **WebTails** via email? If not, send your email address to [info@feralcats.com](mailto:info@feralcats.com) to receive current events.

## Coalition Contacts

### Board Officers

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**Moving!** *Remember to send us your new address when you move!*

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