



The Feline Network

A Kindhearted Approach to Feline Overpopulation

P.O. Box 526, San Luis Obispo, CA 93406

(805) 549-9228

www.felinenetwork.org

Winter 2023

Rainbow Finds Her Joy



"These are definitely better working conditions."

Who says animals aren't self-aware beings with hopes and dreams and plans of their own? Rainbow has been on her journey of self-discovery for a while, ever since "something happened" and she found herself alone and lost in a flooded world near Arroyo Grande. Her first stop was Woods Humane Society... however it seems that things at the shelter did not fit with her goals. She made it clear that she was not content and did not fit in well with the conformity of shelter life. Nor did she envision a life as a house pet... too con-

straining, too limiting, being held by a human? YUCK! She was given references for a job as a barn cat and was sent to a halfway house/foster home to await placement.

She took a position at a ranch in the hills behind Morro Bay. She realized early on that this was a job for a feline with more

experience and, most importantly, **bigger claws**... There were not enough places to hide, with insufficient underbrush and very few trees!!! She was simply not comfortable leaving the safety of her building, and she went on strike for better working conditions.

Rainbow returned to the halfway house/foster home and was given training on operating cat doors and coming when called. Soon she earned yard privileges during daytime hours. She blossomed. She gained strength and dexterity, perfected fence leaping, tree climbing, stampeding across the yard, jumping when startled by a frog, dashing about with wind-blown leaves, scamp-ering along fence rails... and dozing in a patch of sun. She doesn't really approve of hunting per se; bird watching, butterfly counting, meditations upon bugs, greeting the (very mellow) family dog... these are her preferred activities.

Every evening a human brings some food to the shed, calls Rainbow and she comes inside, enjoys her meal, and even consents to being petted (a little). In the morning, the human brings breakfast and opens the cat door, and the fun begins all over again. The dashes up the tree, the leaps, the pure delight of frolicking in her own space, a quiet yard that feels safe and where she is not under a lot of pressure to live up to someone else's expectations. Rainbow has found her joy.

If anyone is interested in Rainbow, please call Ellen at (820) 346-8559.

By Ellen Nelson

The Kitten Garden

We are well into kitten season here on the Central Coast, and kitten season means one thing: Adopt-a-Pets! This year we were lucky enough to find a little gem of a location. Hope Merkle has been graciously hosting them at the beautiful Los Osos Valley Nursery, and we are so grateful she has!

Adopt-A-Pets are positively pleasant since moving to LOVN. No more busy sidewalks. No more dangerous parking lots. Things are much quieter and less busy at the nursery so the cats and kittens are calmer. As a result they show better, which means increased adoptions! The volunteers are more relaxed amongst the succulents, fruit trees, native milkweed, and butterflies. Potential adopters seem to love shopping for plants or pottery before picking out their new forever family member.

Hope and her staff love our "kitten days" and are the first to bring some fresh catnip or donate a fuzzy bed to our little foundlings. Even the resident pets, Quby the dog and Bones the buff tabby, tolerate our temporary encroachment on their personal paradise.



Hope Merkel

(Continued on page 6)

Season's Greetings from the FN Board

This has been an exceptionally busy year for us. We have TNR'd (trap/neuter/return) large numbers of stray cats (and rescued many litters of kittens), despite our trappers' heroic efforts over many years to keep those numbers down. Yet we have to keep at it, as TNR is the most effective way to control cat overpopulation.

Two dedicated South County trappers had to retire from trapping this year, and we urgently need new trappers to perform this essential task. Trappers find the work rewarding for many reasons. Carol Brookshire said, "I feel like I'm doing something important, something that helps the cats and gives them a chance to have a decent life. You also meet a lot of really good people who are helpful and care about cats." Christine Collie said she likes the challenge of catching an elusive mama cat: "When you get a mama spayed and rescue a litter, you feel you are making a difference. Multiply that by many mamas and there is a great sense of satisfaction." Another reason, according to Elaine Genasci, is being appreciated, "when a person you are trapping for tells you they don't know what they would have done without you." If you are interested in joining our TNR program and helping with our humane work of controlling cat overpopulation, please call Lynette (805) 556-0717 for more information.

We also are in need of additional foster homes. Since we do not have a shelter, our foster network is vitally important in providing temporary housing and care for the cats and kittens we rescue. If you would like to foster, please call Kristin in SLO (805) 550-9064 or Lynette in South County (805) 556-0717.

We sincerely thank you for your support throughout the year. None of our work would be possible without you. We wish you and yours a happy Holiday Season and a joyous New Year.

Catamorphosis: The Ric and Laurel Phenomenon



"I have a shoulder to lean on."

Board of Directors

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Ira Alpert, Christine Collie,
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and Darrell Sisk

Newsletter Editor: Ann Garrett

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Debra Holt

Layout Design: Kathy Schwanitz

We are holding periodic Adopt-a-Cats. Please visit our website at www.felinenetwork.org, our Facebook page, Petfinders and Craigslist for information and to see our kittens and cats.

Since joining Feline Network in 2019, Ric Miller and Laurel Mitchell have worked magic with cats running the gamut from tiny feral kittens to raggedy, rough-and-tumble seniors. Capable of caring for nearly any feline, they fill an essential (and *tough-to-fill*) niche in our organization. They foster cats with very challenging behavioral issues, such as overstimulation biting and scratching, fearful hiding, anxious nighttime yowling, nervous peeing/markings, and more. Not only do they solve the problem (seemingly without actually trying to 'fix' the problem), but every cat that enters into their care emerges happier and more *whole* than when they arrived. The transformations are incredible. How do they do it?

Ric and Laurel have no timeline in mind for a cat's turnaround, and they do not set expectations for how the cat 'should' be. They embrace and accept cats exactly as they are. Instead of trying to change them, they adapt their approach, and sometimes their schedules and even their home to accommodate their feline charges' needs. Ric and Laurel's fosters have every opportunity to feel sheltered and safe and to unwind the coils of prior fearful experiences. In this safe environment, cats begin to display desirable behaviors like spending more time with people, seeking a lap to sit on, playing independently with their toys, and positively engaging with other cats. Ric and Laurel are intuitive and work within the context of an individual cat's 'language.' Kristin Perl, their foster coordinator, is convinced there is a distinctly feline component within their genetic code. A couple of examples come to mind.

When Beegee, a semi-feral brown tabby kitten, wanted to hide under the bed for three weeks, only emerging when the room was empty, you would sometimes find Ric on the floor parallel to the bed with his computer, not engaging Beegee directly, but being there for the moment she would finally decide to come out to sniff his elbow.

And for a cat like Moonshine with hyper-overstimulation behaviors of attacking and aggressive biting, Laurel seemingly sacrificed her arm (by making it go as limp as possible) to show him that his attack would not have a positive or negative consequence and would be about as fruitful as attacking the microwave. When a behavior ceases to produce an outcome, there is no reason to continue the behavior. Moonie succumbed to the self-actualizing effects of Ric and Laurel's home, let go of his attack behaviors, found his forever person, and is now 'living the good life' in Santa Barbara.

Ric and Laurel display unwavering patience, persistence, and forgiveness in their work with cats (and use a lot of Band-Aids and Neosporin). Because these transformations take time, sometimes months, they form tight bonds with their fosters. It is incredibly rewarding to send a transformed sweetheart off to its forever home, and it can be extremely hard to say goodbye. Ric and Laurel's solution to a bittersweet sendoff? Immediately bring in another cat or litter of kittens in need of TLC!

By Kristin Perl



"Seems safe, I think I'll nap."

We Couldn't Do It Without You!

PROVIDERS OF DISCOUNTED SPAY/NEUTER SERVICES AND/OR MEDICAL CARE FOR OUR FOSTERS

AND COMMUNITY CATS: Animal Hospital of San Luis Obispo, Atascadero Pet Center, Cat & Exotic Care of the Central Coast, Coast Veterinary Clinic, Five Cities Veterinary Hospital, Laguna Veterinary Care, Los Osos Pet Hospital, Pismo Beach Veterinary Clinic, VCA South County Veterinary Hospital, Veterinary Ophthalmology Services, Woods Humane Society

FOSTER HOMES

Laurie Aguilar, Kim & Gerrit Berg & family, Sara Bettencourt & Olivia White, Hannah Bilicska, Roxanne Bohn, Jill Cooper & family, Patti & Mike Davis & Jaide, Stephanie Davis & Warren, Savannah DeBaetz, Annie Dreizler, Paula Farrar, Elaine Genasci & Dan Andoetoe, Misty Gin, Deannie Greenelsh & family, Judith Hasting, Jackie Heimel, Tammy & Joe Herz, Christine & Randal Husk, Nichole Johnson & Lilly Ferra, Valarie Koos, Danielle & Amalia Lamoreux, Darcy & Bruce Lazar, Shelley Massa & Watson Gooch, Laurel Mitchell & Ric Miller, Ellen Nelson, Sandy Olinger, Scotty Osburn, Kristin & Patrick Perl, Lee Peterson, Gay & Dave Richards, Jennifer & Jeremy Salinas, Lisa Schott & Ron Leverett, Kathy Schwanitz, Benita Smith, Julie Smith & Family, Anna & Norm Stewart, Melanie & Jayden Von Burg, Pamela Werth & Kevin McCracken, Sarah Windler.

FERAL CAT FEEDERS

Mindy Brooks & Paul, Nancy Cardoza, Donna Cettolin, Tad Cordry, Elizabeth Doukas, Mike Davis & granddaughter Jaide, Annie Dreizler, Raye Fleming, Marilyn Forselles, Elaine Genasci, Cheryl Heppell, Jennifer Hilty, Amy Kendrick & Barbara, Alex Kramer, Gerri Lacalle, Keri Lewis, Julie London, Lori Manning, Brenda Morris, Beverly Pierson, Beth & John Ralston, Lynn Reiss, Liz Scruggs, Heather Shireman, Jill Stavros, Charmaine Taylor, Marcela Toledo, Jeff & Carol Trueblood, Mikie Vavroch, Pamela Werth, Jennifer & John Wilson, Joanne Young

TRAPPERS

Carol Brookshire, Linda Cohen, Elaine Genasci, Chris LaBossiere, Jill Stavros, Pamela Werth

NEWSLETTER MAILINGS

Iris Alexandra, Vicky & Craig Johnsen, Judy Michener, Buzzy and April Stokes

PURCHASING & DELIVERING CAT FOOD

Raul Castillo

POSTING OUR CATS/KITTENS FOR ADOPTION

Elaine Genasci, Darcy Lazar, Emily Barry

OTHERS

Animals in Need Fund & Nipomo Dog and Cat Hospital, collaborating with Feline Network to provide low-cost spays and neuters for hundreds of cats and kittens in the South County

Sonja Bernard, providing home-grown catnip to our foster homes.

Roxanne Bohn, overseeing several foster homes and helping with their medical needs

Lori Brief-Chavez, holding pet food drives in her community and collecting food, toys and monetary donations

Linda Cohen, collecting and distributing food to feral cat feeders

Lynette Crane, coordinating rescues, foster homes and spay/neuter in the South County as well as answering several of our phone lines.



Malia Hennings is in the 8th grade at Judkins Middle School. This summer she had a yard sale and lemonade stand and raised \$137 for the Feline Network.

Mike Davis, picking up cat food from retail stores, storing it and distributing it to feral cat feeders

Annie Dreizler, rescuing, fostering and rehabilitating feral cats and picking up food from our South County donation barrels and distributing it to feral cat feeders

Elaine Genasci, maintaining and updating our Facebook page, overseeing several foster homes, spay/neuter coordination and entering the intake and adoption information into our database

Misty Gin of the Pet House in Los Osos, displaying a donation barrel, posting our kittens for adoption and doing a fundraiser in her store

Malia Hennings, holding a yard sale and lemonade stand and donating the proceeds to Feline Network

Christine Husk, picking up and sorting Feline Network mail

Lemos Feed & Pet Supply, providing litter at a discounted price and displaying our food donation barrels in their stores

John Michener/Mediaspring, hosting website

Ellen Nelson, fostering and finding suitable placement for feral cats

Kristin Perl, recruiting and overseeing foster homes, fundraising (both online and through garage sales) and screening potential adopters and referring them to foster homes

Pismo Beach Self-Storage, storing our South County supplies

Gay Richards, checking our feral cat line and coordinating trapping

Karen Richards, registering microchip

numbers and helping us locate owners of lost cats

Kathy Schwanitz, online ordering of our cat food as well as numerous other supplies, and newsletter layout.

Shelby and Karl, website editing and design and sponsoring our database.

Pastor Jason Sisk & United Church of Christ, providing a room for our board meetings

Laura Sisk, bookkeeping services

Sue Smith, use of her shed for storing our South County supplies

Anna Stewart, vaccinating and overseeing medical needs of many foster cats and kittens in the South County and fostering many of our most at-risk kitten litters

Charmaine & Steve Taylor, transporting supplies between the South County and SLO

Jenni Torres, making beautiful blankets for our cats

Pamela Werth, overseeing several foster homes and caring for many of our neonatal kitties, especially those that are at risk, and transporting supplies to South County

HEARTFELT THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

November 2021 thru October 2022

We especially thank our Very Generous Donors

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HEARTFELT THANKS

Golden Paws

(Continued from page 4)

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Lee Peterson
Terry Pierce
Katherin Pignatelli
Richard Pili

(Continued on page 7)

TO HONOR AND REMEMBER

In Loving Memory of

Juliet Franzen, "who introduced us to Feline Network," by Cindi Dunham. "She was a remarkable woman and friend to animals."

Don Hartley, by Debra Kraft.

Bill Hornung, "my brother," by Marilyn Hornung.

Michael James Lewis, "my friend," by Yvonne Ashton, "and honoring his widow, and fellow cat lover, Nora Lewis of Nipomo."

Dr. Nancy Underwood, by Caroline Wakefield and Elisabeth Ganiron.

Sharon Zegars, by Janice & Bob Contons.

Angus Holt, by Carolee & Emilee Hunt.

Axel, "a Yorkie with a big heart," by Rose Miller. "His 'parents' and 'auntie' will miss him."

Dora, by Karen & Rick Lewis.

Ginger, by Bob & Chris Gosney. "You do the work of angels."

Junior, by Debra Holt.

"Beloved kitty of April Stokes adopted more than 20 years ago from Feline Network."

Kiara, Kali & Kaila, by Chris Dexter.

Little Cat, by Nicole McLeod, "who had a very special place and a well-loved life with Jessica and Ray."

Monroe, "the best girl ever," by Jodie & Ryan McLean.

Moxie, by Gretchen Gonyer.

Tiger, by Shelley Massa & Watson Gooch.

In Honor of

Jill Cooper, by Charlotte Meade.

Elaine Genasci, by Maxine Colin, "for her tenacity at TNR'ing over 100 cats."

Elaine Genasci, Kristin Perl & Lynette Crane, by Sharon & John Dobson, "in honor of Elaine's TNR, Kristin's fostering & Lynette's superpowers."

Ollie Cat, by Lynn Weigel.

Pandora, by Judy Saltzman, "17-yr-old blind, grey Persian from Feline Network, still happy!"



Angus Buffett Holt

In Appreciation of

Christine Collie, by Patty Gabrisch. "Thank you so much for all of your support while I was looking out for Hoover (aka Libra)."

Donna Herbst & Tammy Herz, by Alison McLamore, "who took in the sweet, stray orange teenager today."

Linda Cohen, Lynette Crane & FN, by Rita Johnson. "Thank you for taking care of my cat and putting Mr. Gray to sleep humanely. Lynette and Linda are wonderful people in talking to me."

Linda Cohen & FN, by Nora Lewis. "Thanks for all the good work that you do. Special thanks to Linda."

Elaine Genasci & FN, by Cindy & George Hansen, "for Elaine's herculean work and all the FN volunteers."

Elaine Genasci, Ron & FN, by Gay Groomes.

The Feline Network

by Nancy Cullen. "I love what you do and the newsletter reporting what you do!"

by Cindi Dunham. "Thank you to all you amazing volunteers! Your efforts, exploits and compassion continue to impress! I share your newsletter with my friends and neighbors."

by Donna Herbst. "Thank you so much for helping me by taking in a little female young cat that was a stray at our home. Tammy took her in and I know you will find a home for this beautiful kitty. Thanks to all."

by Joanie James & Linda Ewing. "Thanks for all your help. You are greatly appreciated and do wonderful work."

by Jackie Johnson, "for everything you do for our feline friends! I lost two this summer and yet two new ones appeared immediately – the Feline Goddess moves quickly!!"

by Sharon Kamm & Critters too! "All kitties doing well. Blessings to all for the unbelievable dedication to our furry friends. Thank you from all the ones you have rescued. You guys have one tough job – and you are still smiling."

by Nancy Malk. "Keep up your great work. This donation is to honor all volunteers in your organization."

by Ruth McClain. "Thank you for your great work. We adore our sibling kittens Gigi and Kiki from Julie's foster home."

by Jodie, Ryan & McLean Roofing & our Siamese Boy Maximus. "Thank you so much for all that you do for the cats and kittens in our area."

by Elana Peters. "Blessings for you and your staff in rescuing these precious creatures."

The Kitten Garden

(Continued from page 1)

We want to send a HUGE thank you to Hope and all the staff at Los Osos Valley Nursery. Your generosity and helpfulness have made a difference in the lives of dozens of Feline Network cats and kittens. We could not ask for a more lovely location or more wonderful people to spend the day with!

You can visit Los Osos Valley Nursery located at 301 Los Osos Valley Road in Los Osos from 10:00am - 5:00pm daily. Feline Network Adopt-A-Pets are typically held the first and third Saturdays of the month, and they will be held sporadically throughout the holiday season. For more information please contact LOVN or Feline Network.



"I could teach you a thing or two about gardens," says Bones, the nursery cat.

HEARTFELT THANKS

Silver Paws

(Continued from page 5)

Norma Jean Pintel
Kailyn Pope
Becky Price
Shirley Pruet
Frances & Michael Ratty
Ken Rebhan & Rosa Macedo
Kathy Redmond
Diane Reinert & Mark Dragna
Lynn Reiss
Rosemary Remacle
Mike & Patty Rice
Mary Ellen Rico
Bill & Kathy Riedemann
Sarah Ritter
Karen Roberts, MD
Connie Rodgers
Judy Rosenquist
Samerjai & Clarence Roth

Johna Ruz
Sandra Sanders
Susan & Dana Saperstein
Marilyn & Gary Sarina & Family
Gary & Darlene Sawyer
Liz Scruggs
Michael & Jackie Seagrave
Dan Sedley
Alice Sennett
Linda Shotwell
Jolene Silva
Lori Singleton
Darlene & Graham Slack
Ellen Sletten
Michael & Leslie Smalley
Terry & Sue Solomon
Roberta Soules
Carol Spoeneman
Linda St John
Carol Staib
Marilee Statom
Else & Lee Statom

Chris & Patricia Stayner
Karna & James Stitt
Barbara & Ron Sutton
Lucinda Swendson
Dennis & Lynda Takahashi
Jilda Tate
Sheila Taylor
Gloria Telecky
Alyce Thorp & Bob Mayberry
Rick Tibben
Mikie Vavroch
Shane Verplanck
Cynthia Vest
Heidi Via
Paul Waldron
Mary Walker
Lynn Weigel
Judith & Wayne Welch
Lori Wertz
Stella Wheeler
Mary Whitson
Annette & Terrence Whittaker

Elizabeth Wineman
Karen Wise
James & Sandra Wolfe
Pamella Wood
Jill Zamek
Cara & Charles Zwarg

In-Kind Donors of food and items for our foster homes and merchandise for our yard sale fundraiser

Monte Allen
Debbie Barlow
Jolynn Knight-Crow
Stephanie Morriss
Tim Scott
Julie Sele
Ashley Smothers
Karen Waugaman
Nancy Woodard

Facebook Donations

We are very grateful to those of you who have donated via our Facebook page. Donations made on Facebook are processed by Network for Good, a third-party non-profit organization, and the funds are transferred to us periodically. We're not provided with the names of individual donors and you receive tax receipts directly from NFG. To our many supporters who so kindly donated to us on Facebook this past year, please accept our sincerest thanks for your generosity.

Donations may be made through our website at <http://www.felinenetwork.org> and on our Facebook page.

Helping Cats at a Homeless Campsite

Employees for the City of SLO were working to eradicate a bamboo species growing along the creek off of Hwy 101 and LOVR, and they noticed several adult cats with litters of kittens living at a homeless encampment in the area.

Elaine Genasci went to the site and was introduced to a few homeless people, who told her some of the cats were tame pets and others were feral. With help from a homeless woman named Dana, she set traps and within a week trapped five feral cats, four of which were females with litters of kittens. The adults were fixed and returned to the creek area, where they are cared for by the homeless. The four litters of kittens were placed in foster care. Dana has a tame female cat and three kittens, which were fixed and, at her request, returned to her.

Dana told Elaine there were at least two other homeless men living in the creek area that had a few more tame cats with litters of kittens. When Elaine tried to talk to the men they were not interested in getting their cats spayed, nor were they willing to give up the kittens. Elaine knew Pamela Werth volunteers helping the homeless and has more experience interacting with them, so she asked if she would step in.



The eight siblings enjoy a meal in their foster home.

To accomplish this, Pamela said she just kept going down to the creek area "because you never know when they will give their consent." On one visit she noticed that one of the kittens had an infestation of roundworms, "So I went down there and treated their cats with flea and de-worming medications. I thought if I helped their animals they might trust me enough to let me take some of them."

The men ultimately relented and she took 10 kittens into foster care, two orange littermates and a litter of eight black kittens. The black kittens are some of the most loving kittens Pamela has ever fostered. "They were loved by their person, John, and it shows," she said. Some of these kittens may still be available for adoption. Please call Pamela (805) 541-6111 if you are interested.

Pamela volunteers at "Shower the People," a nonprofit that provides portable showers for the homeless, and the SLO Food Bank. At those locations she also provides people with cat food that has been donated to FN as well as flea treatment if requested.



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For the Love of Animals

By Anna Stewart

I have been an animal lover and passionate about medicine all my life. When it came time to think about a career, I started with a Veterinary Aid course and volunteered at the San Diego Humane Society. I fell in love with helping animals! For the next 12 years I worked in veterinary medicine, working my way up to passing the State Boards and becoming a licensed Animal Health Technician (like an RN for animals). I spent several years working at the largest surgical referral animal hospital in San Diego.



My husband's job brought us to the Central Coast, and I put my veterinary career on hold. I met volunteer Annie Dreizler through our kids' school 20 years ago. She was excited to find out about my veterinary background and connected me with Feline Network. I was so happy to be helping animals again! I am most passionate about critical care animals that need my help, especially tiny kittens. I love volunteering for Feline Network and love that each volunteer has their own niche and, by working together, we make a difference in the lives of so many cats and kittens in our community.

We have come to rely on Anna over the years both for her expertise and for always being willing to help the cats. She specializes in bottle babies and helps even the most at-risk kittens survive, some as young as a day old. She passes them on to other foster homes when they are stable. She is especially adept at handling medical issues related to diarrhea and upper respiratory infections, which we encounter often. Anna also triages litters of kittens when they first come in and assists other foster homes with vaccinations and health needs. And she can handle feral cats, which is no small task! She medicates and cares for their needs after surgical procedures. Anna is an invaluable member of our FN family.

Anna holding Feisty (found almost dead of pneumonia at 5 weeks old) and Raggedy Andy (rescued at 2 days old with trauma wounds).