

Whisker Whispers

Newsletter of the

Stanford Cat Network



Night of 101 Cats!

The Stanford Cat Network art auction fundraiser "Night of 101 Cats" took place Saturday April 26th, 2003. Local artists responded generously to our request for donated artwork and a committee of three SCN members worked for months to organize the event.

The event featured an art show and silent auction showcasing prints, serigraphs, paintings, sculptures, multi-media and textiles donated by local artists. Wine, champagne, and decadent desserts were served and music was provided by harpist Verlene Schermer. Featured artist Michael Leu and his wife Rachael were in attendance to meet the guests, as were many other contributing artists. Some artists, like Cassie Gay, gave demonstrations of their artistic techniques.

The event raised \$5100 after expenses for the feral cat care and adoption programs, and the guests were seen to have a wonderful time and enjoyed great bargains on artwork. We learned a lot about the process of organizing an art show fundraiser, and if we repeat the event next year be sure it will be even better!

If you missed out on the event because you didn't receive an invitation, consider signing up for our new scnsupporters email list (details on this page). To keep costs down, we didn't mail out invitations but we tried to reach everyone by email.

Sincere thanks to all the guests who attended, we hope you had a wonderful evening! The list of participating artists and their information is still available on the event website at

<http://catnet.stanford.edu/art/> and soon we will add some photos of the evening taken by Dolores Arnold.

If you are interested finding out more about an artist whose piece you purchased or missed out on, be sure to check out the artist's website link or email us for their contact information, we would be happy to put you in touch with them.

Warmest wishes and thanks to all the participating artists, without whom the event could not have occurred. Many of the artists went well out of their way to help us organize the event as well as contributing their artwork. Make sure you support these cat-loving artists when shopping for art or gifts!

Announcing the SCN Supporters email list!

Join this email list to receive invitations to our fundraising events, parties and important announcements. This list will receive 3-4 emails per year. It is protected and secured by Stanford list technology so your email address can't be hijacked and spammed. It is not a public forum, it is a private list that only SCN board members can post messages to. To join, simply send an email from the account you want to subscribe to majordomo@lists.stanford.edu with a blank subject line and the body "subscribe scnsupporters" or if you are having difficulties, just email us and ask us to add you to the list!



Phoenix and Faith Give Hope

There was a litter of frightened feral kittens rescued after SCN volunteers heard gunshots and sounds of people taunting cats near student housing in the fall of 2001. Coincidentally, Christina and her husband Kirby were looking for little sister kittens to give their love. They fell in love and adopted two of the very spunky feral kittens, and named them Phoenix and Faith inspired by the events of 9/11 to 'commemorate their survivor spirit' - the kittens were born around that date. Here is a summary of a letter from Christina with great tips on how to get along with formerly feral kittens who might not be trusting of humans at first!

Challenges

We knew that because of their stressful history, raising and interacting with Phoenix and Faith wasn't going to be like adopting two very docile, home-raised lap cats and that we would be presented with some unique challenges. For the first 2 or 3 weeks, we used our master bedroom and bathroom as Faith and Phoenix's entire universe. They spent most of their time under the bed. When they did venture out from beneath the bed, they scampered away from us and would not allow us to touch or pet them. It took over an hour to get them into their carriers for their first vet appointment.

1 Operation Tuna Juice:

We knew it was important for them to become familiar with being handled, so we had to develop some strategies on how to be physically close to Faith and Phoenix. Similar to other animal training, we decided to use food as a tool to bond with Faith and Phoenix. For our first attempt to get them familiar with being handled, we locked all of us in the master bathroom and coated our hands with tuna fish juice. They liked the smell and taste of the tuna - unfortunately they weren't familiar with the concept of licking human fingers, so instead they bit and nibbled our fingers! But they did allow us to touch them.

2 Entice them with Deli Meat

We then began to use other tasty morsels to entice them to be touched. The turning point was offering them turkey meat from the deli. They began eating out of our hands. And although we could touch them now, they still didn't like to be picked up or petted.

3 Use of Blankets

After a few more weeks, the next step was giving them a blanket to lie on, either on the bed or the couch. We would put that same blanket on our legs at night. Since it had their smell, they would lie on it, and on us, but as far from us as possible (usually down by our feet or toes) so they wouldn't risk being touched. But at least now they were getting comfortable being in the same vicinity as us.



4 Toys and Routines

The next big breakthrough was playing "mice". By this time we had purchased many toys, but the most fun was when we threw the toy mice for them to "catch". It started to be a routine every night before bedtime. The game evolved to a very advanced version that involves a fishing pole with a mouse tied to the line. They take turns playing and even sit in front of the closet where the fishing pole is kept every night around 9:00. If we don't start to play, they talk to us to remind us.

[more next page...]

"We locked all of us in the master bathroom and coated our hands with tuna fish juice"

The Results and Rewards

Over the last year and a half, things have definitely changed. After our first five-day trip away from home, Phoenix and Faith became lap cats within hours of our return. And they now sleep with us every night and we can pet them when they "feel" like it. They are more tolerable of strangers as long as the visitors are not too loud and don't ring the doorbell. Faith is still very reluctant to be picked up, but we do it everyday to help her get used to it. Faith demands to be petted at her food bowl, so we take advantage of that and use it as a time to touch her and pick her up. Treat time is every night at 6:30. They get regular cat treats now, but there is a specific place where they sit and eat from our hands. It has become a really fun ritual. The bond that we have built

with Faith and Phoenix is strong and very special, even more special than we thought it would be, and this is due to the extra effort and patience that we and Faith and Phoenix invested in our relationship. For all of you who are reading this and raising feral cats, the strongest recommendation we can give you is to be patient and build a routine – the special relationship that you will develop will be that much sweeter.

SCN Note: Sometimes feral kittens adopted together will bond to each other instead of socializing with humans. If you adopt litter-mates together, make sure to spend lots of time every day with each kitten as Christina and Kirby did!



Photo and letter by Christina Kish,
edited by Aya Kameda

Mature Gentleman Seeks Companionship

Hello, my name is Luke! I don't remember exactly where or when I was born, it didn't seem so important to keep track of things back then. But I do know a lady says she has a nice photograph of me taken in 1989, so I suppose I must be at least 13 years old - but I'm a handsome and healthy guy. I have lived on Stanford campus all my life. I used to hang out at Green Library and then later moved to the Art Gallery. Finally I went over to Galvez Modulars, just looking for a warm place to sleep.

I liked my bachelor lifestyle living on campus and at first I never paid much attention to the big funny moneys who call themselves humans, except to make sure I stay out of their way most of the time. Over the years I learned that some humans are very nice and I even let them touch me. That was pretty nice and I don't mind saying that I adore petting now! (In fact I am a bit embarrassed to admit it, but I stick my tongue out when petted.)

Well I've been around a while and I've seen it all, and now that I'm growing mature in my years and tastes, I'm a bit weary of sleeping in the cold. And

I've been getting curious about these humans. One day when the human who brings me lunch arrived, I decided to check out the big noisy metal box - the place where all the food comes from. Well it wasn't very interesting, but I went for a little ride and got a lot of attention!

Next thing I know, someone took me to their house and didn't take me long to discover that sleeping in bed with a human is the most comfortable thing in the world! The people I am living with can't keep me forever because they are just students at Stanford, but they are kind enough to give me a home until someone special takes me home forever!

If you could be the one for me, please visit the SCN website to find out how to adopt me!



Raising a Smart Kitty

To some extent, your cat's intelligence will be influenced by his or her genes. However, a large part of her ability to solve problems and display feline intelligence will depend on her environment and mental stimulation. Cats continue to develop mentally well past kittenhood, so whether you are raising a young kitten or an adult, enriching her environment will benefit her mentally and physically. Kittens under 4 months need to be supervised carefully during any playtime. Being mentally and physically active will also help avoid behavior problems stemming from boredom.

1 Visual stimulation

Cats love to watch fast-moving objects that are prey or appear to be prey-like. If you have a nice view from your windows, provide your cat with a perch at the window sill so she can look out. Consider placing a bird feeder nearby so she can watch birds (not so close to the window as to scare the birds!). If the view from the window is not very interesting, or if your cat sees other cats outside and gets upset, try creating visual stimulation indoors. An excellent idea is a fish aquarium - covered securely of course. "Cat TV" also attracts many felines, and you can purchase special videos of wildlife to amuse your cat while you are busy.



2 Problem Solving

You can create puzzles for your cat to solve in order to reach a food reward. Try cutting up a cardboard box with various hatches, and place treats or catnip inside. Your cat can learn to turn and reach inside to get the reward. You can also purchase cat toys designed to puzzle or intrigue your cat. Beware, because your smart cat may learn to open cupboards and drawers.

3 Hunt and Find

Cats often enjoy a game of hide and seek. If you have more than one cat you may observe them playing this game with one another. Most cats also enjoy playing hide and seek or chase-me chase-you with humans. A great way to keep your kitty occupied is to hide a few little stashes of dry food or the occasional healthy treat around the house. Start out with more obvious hiding places and when your cat's proficiency increases, hide the treats better.

4 Tricks

Yes, cats can learn tricks! Teach them using treats or praise as rewards, never punish. When your cat does what you want naturally, say a command and give her a reward. Keep your tone of voice and pronouncement consistent. Be cautious about the tricks you teach a cat, it is difficult to reverse them and if you realize too late it was a bad idea to encourage certain behavior, you will regret it! Cats are very clever and will extrapolate your rewards to similar situations, always giving themselves the benefit of the doubt (well, if she gives me treats when I meow, perhaps I should try it at 3:00 am!) so be sure to keep that in mind and think ahead. You may wish to get a book on cat tricks to inspire you.

5 Interactive Play

Anticipating the moves of a laser pointer, feather wand or other human-powered or motorized toy is great fun. Be sure to spend at least 20 minutes a day playing with your cat, for exercise and bonding. You can shine a laser pointer around the house while brushing your teeth or reading a book. Cats like a schedule they can anticipate, so try to play at the same time every day. A schedule will also help your cat establish a more regular sleep cycle and she will be less likely to wake you up with nocturnal activities!

6 Nutrition

Growing brains and maintaining brains takes a full spectrum of vitamins minerals and good general condition. Feed your kitten a high quality kitten food, and your adult cat a high quality cat food. Look for premium brands that contain anti-oxidants, which can help protect the brain and tissues from aging. Avoid artificial colors and preservatives that can cause liver and kidney damage as well as contributing to premature senility. Taurine is also very important for the function of heart, eyes and brain. Consider giving your cat an anti-oxidant supplement.

7 Quality Time

Taking some time out to bond with your cat or kitten will help you learn about his needs and desires. If you're very busy, remember that a few minutes on the floor with your cat can help lift the burdens of the day. Reward yourself and your pet and remember to spend quality time together!

Recommended Reading

Think Like a Cat: How to Raise a Well-Adjusted Cat - Not a Sour Puss
by Pam Johnson-Bennett

Kitten Care & Training : An Owner's Guide to a Happy Healthy Pet by Amy Shojai

Getting Started : Clicker Training for Cats by Karen Pryor

Cats Have No Masters...Just Friends: An Investigation into the Feline Mind by Karen Anderson

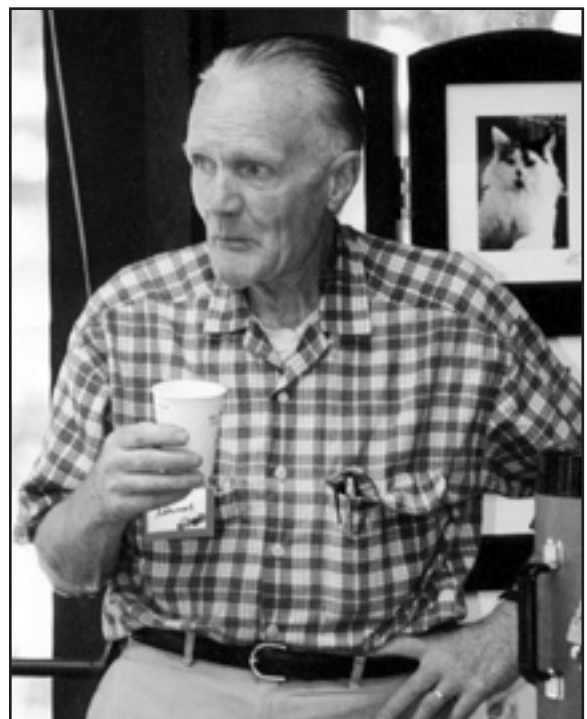


Remembering Bill

Members of the Stanford community remember Bill Holmes making his rounds morning and late afternoon, for many years, feeding the cats living in the Science and Engineering Quad. He was dedicated to providing love and care to his campus charges; and from his retirement until his recent illness, he still could be seen unfailingly arriving on his scooter twice daily at the McCullough Building to feed them.

From its organization in 1989, Bill tirelessly helped the Stanford Cat Network, setting up fundraising displays, building cat shelters and pens with his consummate carpentry skills, and feeding other Stanford cats so that their caregivers could vacation. Colleagues often recall the little house warmed by a heating lamp that Bill made to shelter a family of kittens born near his department. When they were old enough for adoption, he found homes for all of them. Such acts of generosity were very much a part of Bill's life. He was a personal friend to many on the Stanford campus, where he had been a research associate in the Center for Materials Research.

Bill passed away on April 4, 2003. The Stanford Cat Network expresses its heartfelt sympathy to his family and misses him greatly. His former colleagues and friends in CMR carry on Bill's dedicated care.



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Summer 2003

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Stanford Cat Network

The Stanford Cat Network
is a volunteer 501(3)(c)
nonprofit organization that
relies on donations for
funding. Contributions are
tax-deductible.

Can You Help?

The Stanford Cat Network needs an office and/or storage space near Stanford campus. If you can donate some dry, secure space, or if you have some connections we could follow up on, please contact us by email or phone. As a registered 501(3)(c) organization, your donations are tax deductible. If no office is available we could use a large shed or garage to store items. Ultimately we would love to have a house or small building in the area to use as an adoption and public education center.

Also, we are always in need of short and long term foster homes. If you can give a temporary home to kittens or an adult cat, please see our website under Support SCN for more information about the fostering and adoption program.

If you would like to contribute, a donation envelope is enclosed.

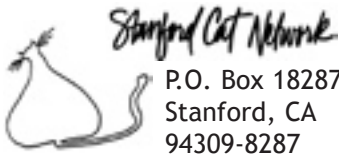
\$1 will pay for the printing and mailing of this newsletter

\$10 will vaccinate a kitten

\$35 will spay or neuter one cat

\$45 will microchip a campus cat

\$100 will help pay for emergency vet care for a sick or injured cat, pay for all the vet care for a kitten, or buy a one month supply of canned food for campus cats!



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A volunteer non-profit organization supporting a no-kill spay/neuter, lifetime care and adoption program for homeless cats at Stanford – by agreement with, but not funded by Stanford University.