



*Wishing  
you a  
new year  
filled  
with love  
and  
compassion  
... from  
all of us  
at Afa!*

# ALLIANCE FOR ANIMALS



*"When we help animals, we help people."*

Donna Bishop,  
President

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full extent of the law.*

## Dear Friends,

No matter when you read this, and no matter where you are, there are feral cats in your area. They have taken over every city, town, and rural area in America. They represent the single largest overpopulation challenge. Feral cat colonies begin with unsterilized pets. As long as people continue to abandon unneutered pets, or allow them to roam freely outside, we will continue to be faced with a tragedy that will always outstrip our efforts to neuter after the fact.

Alliance for Animals takes a multi-faceted approach aimed at prevention. We promote and practice T/N/R (Trap/Neuter/Return) for humane population control and provide low-cost spay/neuter for ferals (including special packages for low or fixed-income pet owners and people with litters of kittens or puppies; we promote and provide pediatric spay/neuter so that no kitten or puppy is adopted out or given away unneutered. Pets neutered at an early age are less stressed and will never contribute to the overpopulation problem. They are also less likely to be abandoned because they will never exhibit the symptoms that often cause animals to be thrown out, such as "heat," spraying, or aggression.



We feel that by focusing on pets we can help to prevent additions to the feral cat population. We have focused this issue of our newsletter on feral cats to highlight this continuing crisis and stress that we can all help by taking care of the ferals in our own neighborhoods.

The past year was challenging for everyone. As a non-profit, we have certainly experienced the pain of the economic crisis. As foreclosures and bankruptcies mount, our services are even more desperately needed than ever, yet our resources are lower. People depend on the only affordable veterinary clinic in the Boston area, and the only no-kill shelter for cats and dogs. We know that times are hard for everyone, but we ask that if you possibly can, please remember the Alliance and the 5,000 animals we care for every year and make a donation.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts, and we wish you all happiness, health, and the best cure of all—lots of snuggling with your animals.

Warmest regards,

Donna Bishop

# Don't forget the ferals

By Diane Keighley

Like most love stories, it starts with a boy and girl. What happens next, though, becomes a nightmare: uncontrolled breeding and overpopulation of feral cats. Females having litter after litter of kittens—a minimum of one litter per year, but often two to three litters per year. Kittens having kittens—they can begin breeding as early as 4–5 months old. Males yowling, fighting, and leaving their scent all over the neighborhood. Yes, it does sound like the makings of a horror movie; however, this “nightmare on your street” can have a happy ending. By implementing simple colony management and beginning a program of trap, neuter, return (TNR), these mating behaviors, and resulting overpopulation, will subside.

Feral cats typically live together in a colony. Colonies can be found in every area of the city or the countryside. Often good-hearted people begin to feed a cat in their neighborhood or at their place of employment. Before they know it, the one cat has grown into a colony, and they have become a colony caretaker. In my experience, colony caretakers are wonderful people. They go out in all kinds of weather to provide food and water, buying the food themselves, often on a limited income. They know all of the cats in the colony, often giving them names. They know which cats are related to each other and when a new cat has taken up residence with the colony. They can also find themselves overwhelmed when they realize



they cannot keep pace with the growing number of mouths to feed; yet at the same time feel they cannot afford to have the cats spayed and neutered. Complaints from neighbors about the number of cats and their mating behaviors also puts a strain on the colony caretaker.

*Continued on page 6*

**What is a feral cat?** A feral cat may be defined as any cat too wild or unsocialized to be kept in a typical home. These cats are usually born in the wild and avoid direct human contact. Every feral and abandoned cat is the end result of irresponsible pet owners who failed to spay or neuter their cat and then allowed the cat to roam freely—*Indy Feral*

**What is the difference between a stray cat and a feral cat?** A stray cat is a domesticated cat that has been abandoned or has strayed from home and become lost. A stray cat may be skittish in your presence, but because stray cats once knew human companionship they can usually be re-socialized and rehomed. Observe the cat's appearance and behavior. A stray cat is likely to approach you, although usually not close

enough for you to touch him. If you put food down, a stray cat will likely start to eat it right away. A stray cat is often vocal, sometimes talking insistently, and may look disheveled, as if unused to dealing with conditions on the street. A stray cat may be seen at any hour of the day. A feral cat is born and raised outside with little or no human contact or is a stray that has lived outside long enough to revert to a wild state. A feral cat is silent, will not approach humans, and generally will be seen only from dusk to dawn, unless extraordinarily hungry and foraging for food. A feral cat has adapted to outdoor conditions and will often appear well groomed. If you put food down for a feral cat, he will wait until you move away from the area before approaching the food. Individual cats may vary as to lifestyle during their lives, including owned pet, stray and

feral status. Because of the vast overlap of “lifestyle and socialization continuums,” it is often difficult to define discrete populations of free-roaming cats—*Indy Feral*

**What is TNR (Trap/Neuter/Return)?** Stray and feral (wild) cats are humanely trapped, evaluated, vaccinated and sterilized by the veterinarian and then returned to their familiar habitat, often under the management of a colony caretaker who provides food, water, and shelter for the colony. Adult feral cats cannot be truly “tamed” and are most content living outside with their colony. They have a family that is important to them, as well as a routine outside, and it is inhumane to force confinement with humans on a feral cat.

# Happy Endings



## Dudley

I can't believe it has been over a year since we adopted Dudley. He's got such a great personality. He makes us laugh every day. Thank you for all the work that you do.

Without you I can only imagine what would have become of Dudley. How sad that someone could heartlessly abandon a dog as incredible as Dudley.

The Meinert Family

## Sweet Sophie

Enclosed is a photo of "Sweet Sophie," née Marylou, whom we adopted six years ago in Arlington. Words do not describe how dear she is to us, how she completes our family. We are very grateful to AfA for rescuing her and caring for her while she waited for us.

Fondly,  
Jim Grayson  
Mary Ann Grayson



## Star

Just updating you on Star. She is doing very well; she is responding when I call her, which is a big difference. She doesn't wander around the house though; she likes to be in my bedroom. She is more active since I invent toys for her; she even seems to have lost some weight. She is very spoiled and loves the attention (especially from me).

Nilsa Vicente

*Please join AfA for our annual Open House  
on Sunday, February 15, 2009  
from 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M.  
Light refreshments and fun for all.*

*Items from our wish list are most welcome and appreciated.*



## Simon

September 2007 brought us a stray named Simon. He was found roaming the Holiday Inn parking lot in Woburn, Mass. and was rescued by a caring person who brought him here to AfA.

When he first arrived he did not want anything to do with people or other cats. Although he had a voracious appetite, it was clear he was an unhappy cat; it was our hope that he would adjust and accept AfA as his transition home. The staff, of course, was very kind and patient with him, offering him treats and attention in an effort to gain his trust and win him over. Simon, however, was steadfast in his decision to remain standoffish.

MaryBeth Horan, Director of Development and Outreach, would always go to Simon's cage when she came to work and visit with him. Once they became acquainted, he would look forward to her arrival each day with great anticipation. Sadly, toward the end of February 2008 Simon began to show signs of extreme depression and slowly began to stop eating, despite MaryBeth's love and attention. Perhaps he was so sad because she never took him home with her when she left.

The month of March came and MaryBeth made the decision to take Simon home to share life with her and her two female cats. The two females, Jinglebelle (I understand she is from the south), and Mischief, did not take kindly to Simon "invading" their turf. They wanted nothing to do with him, and he them.

It was touch and go there for a while with MaryBeth thinking Simon and the girls would never accept one another. Then, after six months of living under the same roof they finally warmed up to each other, enough to curl up together on the sofa and watch TV.

Their lives are now stress free and filled with love and harmony. They are a great example and we humans should learn a lesson from them. MaryBeth saved Simon's life and we can never thank her enough for her patience and her love of animals.



## Volunteer Spotlight



2008 was an extremely challenging year for us, but with a few of our loyal and dedicated employees and volunteers, we were able to persevere.

One of our volunteers, who was instrumental in helping put together our current team, is Christine Noton. Christine also is our Executive Assistant, a demanding job at which she excels.

We want to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude and appreciation for all the hard work she has done, and continues to do, for our clinic and our animals. Her dedication and affection shows what a loving and caring person she is.

Christine has gone above and beyond, spending her own money in her efforts to maintain the order and organization

of all of our files, as well as turning a dark, dingy and long-forgotten room into a bright and cheerful office.

While we have many wonderful employees and volunteers, we felt Christine deserved the recognition for all of her tireless work and devotion in 2008. We look forward to her continued support in 2009.



## Ferals

Continued from page 3

So what can be done for the feral cats and their caretakers? The Alliance for Animals can help caretakers implement a cost effective TNR program which will keep the colony's growth stable. TNR has been proven to be the most effective and humane way of controlling the free-roaming cat population. It has been successfully implemented in many cities throughout the country and is endorsed by well-respected organizations as the best alternative to trapping and killing stray and feral cats. The Alliance has traps available for rent. We also provide low cost spay/neuter surgery with a rabies vaccination and ear tip for feral cats. Our Director, Donna Bishop, is an expert about feral cats, colony management, and TNR, and one of our newest volunteers has lots of TNR experience as well.

Please call us if you have questions or would like talk about implementing a TNR program. The Alliance for Animals also has a booklet designed to answer your questions about caring for feral cats: *Guide to Trapping, Neutering, and Caring for Feral Cats*.

A wealth of information is also available online:

*Alley Cat Allies*  
[www.alleycat.org](http://www.alleycat.org)

*Indy Feral*  
[indyferal.org/index.php?page=FAQ](http://indyferal.org/index.php?page=FAQ)

*Humane Society of the United States*  
[www.hsus.org/search.jsp?query=Feral+Cats](http://www.hsus.org/search.jsp?query=Feral+Cats)

## Our view: Let ferals be ferals

Alliance for Animals believes that feral cats and kittens are part of the colony and should be spayed/neutered and returned to their families. Due to the overpopulation crisis for abandoned domesticated cats, we do not recommend adding to the problem by trying to socialize and place feral cats or kittens. So many homes are now taken by feral cats that shelters and pounds are forced to euthanize healthy, socialized cats and kittens, while other shelters must turn them away.

At our no-kill shelter we watch the domestic kittens and cats just sit in the shelter—kittens actually having to grow up in a shelter—while the ferals are being caught and taken in. I love feral cats and have worked with them for 25 years. I learned that trying to make ferals adapt to a foreign life, instead of letting them go, was doing them a terrible disservice, one that was really only a selfish need of my own to “help.”

Year after year it is the same sad story in shelters, the cats who are desperate to sit in a lap and be loved languish in a shelter for months or are euthanized, while terrified ferals are forced to accus-

## A Prayer for all the Street Kitties

by S.L. Smith

From kittenhood you lived your life upon unforgiving streets,  
Tough existence for a cat, though you never asked for peace,  
And now all I can offer you is the needle's final peace.

Think of a world where every litter's planned,  
Where every cat is wanted in every town and land,  
Why are so many homeless? It's hard to understand.

Why every shelter in the land is full of surplus cats and strays,  
Praying for adoption within their seven days,  
Accusing us of negligence in each compelling feline gaze.

If I took you to a shelter you wouldn't stand a chance,  
When even cuddly kitties don't get a second glance;  
And you just growl and hiss and spit while they all purr and prance.  
I hope the goddess understands why I cannot offer more,  
Than a filling bowl of cat food placed outside my door,  
And a blanket in the garage so you can rest your weary paws.

You are too wild a spirit to live inside with me,  
You need my protection, but you still need to be free,  
To neuter and to nurture, that is my responsibility.

And now you're old the time has come to bring you final rest,  
That you let me pick you up at last, I feel that I am blessed,  
Though I know it's just because you're too weak to resist.

I pray that God has mercy on me and will understand,  
That for his wild creature I've done the best I can,  
And loved you from a distance, my wild street kitty friend.

For all the other kitties that live upon the street,  
I pray someone will neuter them and give them food to eat,  
And a helping hand right at the end to ease them into sleep.

tom themselves to a new environment without their families and loved ones. When you practice TNR you save two lives instead of one—the feral is neutered and returned home, and the tame cat crying for a home can have one.

It is painful for us to see cats living outdoors in cold or stormy weather, but this is the life of the “wild animal” and the only one she is comfortable with. There is no doubt that the lion captured in Africa and brought to a zoo in America may live longer than she might have in the wild, eat better, and be safe from the elements; but it is equally sure that she would much prefer to take her chances in the wild if given a choice. Her land, her family, her freedom—if only animals could be understood and respected for who they are, and not what we need them to be. Freedom is what the animal lives for.



—Donna Bishop

Please be sure to knock on the hood of your car before starting it up this winter to scare away any animals sitting on the engine to keep warm.

# *In Memory and In Honor*

In memory of Becky and Oré...from Judith Stewart

In memory of Christine Chamberlain...from Virginia Greenblatt

In memory of Arlene Danforth...from Gail Neff

In memory of beautiful Charlotte...from Holly Pearson

In memory of Charlotte...from Lyn Abissi

In memory of a true friend, Douglas Boyd...from Holly Pearson

In memory of Jordan, adopted from Alliance's Arlington shelter in 1996, died in June 2008...from Priscilla Lynn

In memory of Mr. and Mrs. Piccolo...from The Barnettts

In memory of Robinson and Lilly, two beautiful spirits...from AfA

In memory of Alyce Youngson, Joan Deviney, Christine Chamberlain, Edythe Lamb, and Dr. Elizabeth Hay, longtime members of Alliance and true animal lovers...from AfA

For Laurie Edson and family in memory of Sebastian, a very dear friend...from AfA

In memory of Felix, Tiga, Sushi, Princess, Jazzy, Rody and Romeo...from Karen Keaney

In memory of Charlotte, a good friend...from Starr Maxwell

In memory of Magic, a beloved dog...from Nancy Solomon

In memory of Casey, Whiskers, Angus and Coco Bella...from Carol and Bill Dawe

In memory of Sage, a dear friend...from Mary McCarthy, Elizabeth Breadon, Shelia Delson and Beth Caurant

In memory of Susie and Sam...from Jean O'Hara

In memory of Rugby...from Donna Bishop

In memory of Jakey-boy...from Melinda Melzar

In Honor of Carmen & Gerry, Lydia & Lou...from James and Mary Ann Grayson

In Honor of Cinda Stoner...from Karla and Bill Stoner

In Honor of Ronald Church...from the Provenzano Family

## **Social workers: Thanks, Alliance!**

Once a year, social workers at the Edith Nourse Rogers Memorial Veterans Hospital in Bedford, MA nominate individuals and organizations for the "Friends of Social Work Award" to honor work to help our nation's veterans. The Health Care for Homeless Veterans team proudly presented AfA with this year's award in May 2008.

Often, homeless veterans need hospitalization or long term treatment to deal with a crisis. But who among us could go inside a nice, warm hospital and leave our best friend outside alone in the cold? A faithful friend who has been there through thick and thin—hunger, punishing weather, loss, fear, and loneliness, a friend who has never cast blame or judgment, but only asked to be at his or her master's side?

It is an unacceptable choice, yet it is often the decision that homeless veterans with pets think they have to make. One veteran came to the hospital from the freezing cold, refusing shelter without his dog, thinking his only option was to have the dog put to sleep. Other veterans, requiring long term treatment, would lose the only relationship they have in the world if they had to give up their best friend.

Social workers know the value of the animal-human bond, and how deep that runs for homeless veterans and their pets.

When such a duo comes through the door, Alliance for Animals is a beacon of hope in a storm. When we social workers call the Alliance we can hear the bustle of "rescue angels." As busy as the Alliance staff are, they always greet us with warmth, compassion and a "can do" attitude. We see tears of joy and relief on a veteran's face when he or she learns that someone can help their pet, whether it's a surrender, a long term foster, or something else. The homeless veterans work

hard on their treatment, knowing their best friends are safe, and that they can be reunited when complex problems are resolved. One veteran said, "Knowing my dog was going to be OK is what saved my life."

Alliance for Animals is part of the solution for changing the lives of people and animals in crisis, and their willingness to help allows us to treat our veterans with the dignity and respect they have earned. When it comes to customer service, the Alliance is unsurpassed, even when the "customers" are homeless pets or vets.

Homeless Team Social Workers Shara Puglisi, LICSW, Donna Teas, and Laurel Brown-Holland, LICSW visited AfA to present Donna Bishop the award on behalf of the entire Alliance staff and to say "thank you" from the veterans, the animals, and the VA. No matter what you are

dealing with in your day, you've always made room for "one more" and your compassion and kindness touch lives far beyond what you could ever know. Thank you for being "a Friend of Social Work."





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**Please use this form for donations, renewals, or change of address**

I would like to help the Alliance for Animals. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

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 Address \_\_\_\_\_ • \$250 \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ • \$150 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ • \$50 \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_ • \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Accept my Sustainer pledge for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month.

I would like to give a gift membership to:

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*If you work for a company with a matching gift program, the value of your membership donation can be doubled or even tripled by your employer.*

Alliance for Animals • 232 Silver Street • South Boston, MA 02127-2206

**Our Wish List**

*Volunteers needed! Varied opportunities.*

**Clinic Needs**

- Distilled water
- Rubbing alcohol
- Paper towels
- Trash bags
- Laundry detergent
- Bleach (not Ultra)
- Antibacterial liquid soap
- First-class stamps
- File folders
- Copy paper
- Scotch tape refills
- Calculators
- Toilet paper
- First Aid Kits
- Heating pads
- Dishwashing liquid
- Hand sanitizer

**Shelter Needs**

- Pretty towels
- Cat and dog toys
- Chew toys
- Collars and leashes – all sizes
- Water bowls
- Radios

**Equipment Needed**

- 4 drawer locking file cabinets

**Expertise**

- Electrician and plumber help needed!