



Island Cat Resources and Adoption
P.O. Box 1093
Alameda, CA 94501

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Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) ... Make a Lifetime Investment that Pays Off

More **ALUMNI UPDATES**
continued from page 5



They say that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. This is Mia Rosati dressed for Halloween as her new ICRA kitty **Gingerbread**, a.k.a. *Gingi*. This adorable duo of orange tabbies won third place in the Alameda Sun costume contest!! Adopted August 2008 by the Rosati Family, Alameda.

Get a Jump On Spring: Trap-Neuter-Return NOW

Cats don't take time off from having kittens during the holidays, which means that we can't afford to put off Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) projects until spring. The two unfixed cats you see in your backyard or office parking lot now could have 12 kittens in tow within one year...54 more within two years...380 more within three years...and over 2,200 in four years!! And remember that those kittens you might see romping around can start having kittens at 5-6 months of age. **Please** don't put off 'til tomorrow what you can do today to help curb the number of unwanted cats and kittens who end up on the streets or in shelters. **Spay or neuter now!**

QUICK REFERENCE for LOCAL SPAY/NEUTER PROGRAMS

**East Bay SPCA
Free Feral Program**

The Feral Fix / Feral Hotline (510) 563-4635
<http://eastbayspca.org/resources/theferalfix.cfm>

- * Referral required
- * Call ICRA at (510) 869-2584
- * Cats must be in humane traps
- * Right ear will be notched

**Fix Our Ferals
Free Spay/Neuter Clinics for Homeless Cats**

East Bay
www.fixourferals.org

- * Call the Fix Our Ferals hotline at (510) 433-9446 to reserve space
- * Drop-off/pick-up cats the same day
- * 2009 clinics: 11 Jan, 8 Mar, 17 May, 12 Jul, 13 Sep, 15 Nov

**East Bay SPCA
Low Cost Spay/Neuter for Low Income Households**

- * Appointment required
- * Call ICRA at (510) 869-2584
- * ICRA provides funding for low cost spay/ neuter through private individual donations

The ICRA *Cat*alyst

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Winter 2008

www.icraeastbay.org

(510) 869-2584

ICRA's Garden Cat Initiative

... Good for the Soul and the Landscape

My Garden Kitties

by Gretchen Whittier

When I moved to Oakland seven years ago, I not only awoke to many neighborhood cat fights, but I pretty consistently found cats and kittens who had been hit by cars, dead in the road. I knew something humane needed to be done, so I bought my first Have-a-Heart trap and called ICRA for assistance. I trapped some kittens early enough to socialize them and get them adopted. The older, more feral cats — who weren't so easily socialized — were healthy and being fed, so I returned them to the neighborhood.

At first, I would only see those cats every so often. Then one showed up more frequently in my yard and I fed him and left water. Eventually, with no more territorial tomcats in the neighborhood, they all decided it was safe to settle down and chose my yard to call home. First it was CookiePuss who moved in to sun himself on the deck. Then came Mr. Scraggles, who likes to sleep on the fence. Mama joined CookiePuss, and then came Scribbles, who liked to scramble around in the gravel. Finally there was Vinyl, who still acts as if she's been here the longest. Yes, I now have five garden kitties as pets — which may seem like a lot, but taking care of these five sure beats finding more kittens in the street.



CookiePuss made the first move into the garden.

These cats are as much a part of my family as are my two indoor cats. They all greet me when I come home and they love me unconditionally as long as I have food — isn't that the definition of a pet! When they hear my car, they greet me on the sidewalk -- tails in the air and rubbing cheeks with each other (*hard to believe they used to fight*). When I walk toward them, they run down the path, showing me the way to their food bowls. In the mornings, they wait for me on the back steps. As



CookiePuss and crew highlight the path to the food bowls ... and add stunning beauty and depth to this outdoor retreat.

I walk down the gravel path, Mama and Scribbles always run ahead and wait at their bowls. CookiePuss and Scraggles walk beside me, making sure I don't go off course, and Vinyl runs alongside the path through the garden to reach the bowls just as I do.

With a lot of patience, I am now able to pet them while they are eating, and CookiePuss even purrs! At first they wouldn't come out from under the deck until I was back in the house, and they sometimes hissed if I got too close. But they never bit or scratched — they just kept their distance. I started earning their trust slowly. Instead of walking away after putting out food, I would sit a comfortable distance from the bowls and watch them

Story continued on page 4

Statistics – Not Just Numbers... Spay or Neuter NOW!

In the summer of 2006 ICRA was contacted to help with the humane trapping and spaying/neutering of a feral mother cat and her four adolescent kittens on a quiet street in central Alameda. We stepped in quickly, but the homeowner, in whose backyard the cats lived, proved less than cooperative. She continued to feed but did nothing to benefit the health of the cats. None were spayed or neutered.

Flash forward to January 2008. The next-door neighbor contacted us, desperate because her backyard was now overrun with cats! She didn't mind feeding them but knew they had to be stopped from reproducing. In the 18 months since first hearing of the mother cat and her kittens, the numbers had grown — a lot!

With the neighbor's help, we began a daily trapping project which continues to this day. We are thrilled to report that only two cats are unaltered. But here are the shocking numbers: 28 adult cats and adolescents were trapped, vaccinated, and spayed/neutered. Also, the feeder and an ICRA volunteer bottle-raised three litters of two to three-week-old kittens, totaling 15. Because these little ones were caught before growing to fear humans, they all have been adopted. The startling numbers remain: 43 cats and kittens resulted from one person's neglect in only 18 months, with unknown others dying of disease or being hit by cars.

This story is just one example of WHY WE PREACH THE SPAY/NEUTER MESSAGE. Don't let this happen in your backyard. If you or someone you know feeds one or two cats, **now** is the time to **get them fixed!** Call ICRA for low cost spay/neuter referrals. Be a part of the solution, not the problem.

Layout Editor - Mary Sper

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Tel: (510) 869-2584

Island Cat Resources and Adoption (ICRA) is a 501(c)3 all volunteer non-profit humane organization. ICRA's federal Tax Exempt number is 94-3225519. All contributions, donations, and gifts are tax-deductible. ICRA does not sell, share, or rent names, addresses, or mailing lists to any other organizations or affiliates.

Visit us Online
www.icraeastbay.org

Web Administrators
Rena Fourkas and Heather Hanly

Visit our Adoption Sites
Saturdays (except holidays) at PETCO in Alameda Towne Centre from 11am-4pm.

First Saturday of the month at Petfood Express on Blanding Way in Alameda from Noon-3pm.

For more information e-mail ICRA at info@icraeastbay.org or call (510) 869-2584.

Our Mission: We are dedicated to reducing the suffering of abandoned and feral (wild) cats and to empowering the local community to aid them in their plight. We provide low-cost spay/neuter, vaccines, and medical treatment to all of our cats, and resources for people willing and able to help themselves. We provide foster care for tame or socialized cats until they can be placed into quality, permanent homes through our adoption program. We return feral or unsocialized cats back to their colonies if in a safe, managed environment. We strive to educate the public about responsible treatment of animals and the need for spay/neuter to reduce the number of unwanted kittens.

Please Help Us Do More... **BECAUSE THEY DESERVE a CHANCE**

Individual donors are the lifeblood of our organization. Without you ICRA would be unable to help as many cats as we do through our spay-neuter and foster programs. As stewards of every hard-earned dollar you donate to our all-volunteer organization, we work very hard to ensure that 92 cents of it goes directly to the cats and kittens who need our help to lead the quality lives they deserve. We are fortunate to have a number of veterinary partners who are willing to work with us to provide rescue (discount) rates to minimize costs as much as possible without compromising the quality of care. However, as we experienced this year, unexpected spikes in the number of rescues and fosters who require expensive, non-routine, specialized treatment or surgeries force us to make difficult decisions about what we can and cannot do based upon the flow of donations we receive. That said, our primary concern is always to do what is best for the cats even if it means cutting back the overall scope of our programs. With quality of life considerations at the forefront, we do what we can to give every cat chances they otherwise would not have had. The hard luck cases that follow are representative of those which would have ended unhappily without your generosity this year. Please consider helping us offset the costs of their surgeries by donating in honor of a friend or family member as a holiday gift this year.

Colette, a sweetheart of a senior cat with an adoption pending at the time of her diagnosis, underwent surgery to remove her left ear canal (Total Ear Canal Ablation) and prevent the return of squamous cell carcinoma, which was at least a 95 percent possibility without surgery. The procedure went well except for nerve trauma that prevents her from blinking her left eye. In time this should heal, but for now she requires ointment every eight hours to replace tears. The cost of Colette's diagnostics and surgery was just over \$4,800 due to their complexity. Her new guardians (a single mom and her 11-year-old daughter) sent us a check for \$1000 toward her bill, and they plan to tell their family and friends to make donations to ICRA in their name in lieu of Christmas gifts.



Colette is very lucky to have found such a caring and compassionate new home.

Chip Bio# 2751B was born with a genetic defect in both hind legs that prevents the knee caps from aligning properly, therefore making them easily prone to dislocation. We knew we had to help Chip or he would have had to be euthanized to spare him constant and excruciating pain. He is recovering from surgery to correct the knee cap in the worse of the two legs, and he's endured multiple casts, including the huge one he sports in this photo. Chip's surgery was approximately \$2,300, and it will be several more weeks before we know whether the procedure was a complete success. Despite the hand he was dealt at such a young age, Chip is an easy-going and affectionate little guy. Rescued as a feral kitten in the Fruitvale District of Oakland, Chip was very shy to start but has become much more comfortable with people, due in large part to interaction with veterinarians and foster people who help him daily. It is so amazing now to see him knead his front paws, purr like a motor, and lean his head back into his foster mom's arms. A real sweetie! We are happy to discuss Chip's condition with you in more detail if you have room in your heart for this handsome boy. We estimate he was born in May 2008.



This cast was Chip's third and largest following surgery. Even he was surprised when his first 'test ride' in this cast sent him into a 180-degree spin that wiped out his water and food bowls with one swing.

Story continued on page 4

Donations In Memory Of

- ✦ Ashleigh Cocks from Auban Ann & Bartlett Jackson
- ✦ Ashleigh Cocks from the DeGoff Family
- ✦ Ashleigh Cocks from Eleanor Moore
- ✦ Ashleigh Cocks from Kathleen Bell Nelson
- ✦ Ashleigh Cocks from Anian Pettit Tunney
- ✦ Ashleigh Cocks from Helen Pidduck
- ✦ Ashleigh Cocks from Edith M. Swayne
- ✦ Ashleigh Cocks from James & Lucretia Wiekling
- ✦ Betty Grice from Howard & Susan Manipis
- ✦ Bucket from Steve & Mimi Wall
- ✦ Celia Wood, Pat Wood's late mother, from Beverly Chamberlain
- ✦ Celia Wood from Walter & Katherine Downs
- ✦ Celia Wood from Takako & Takeshi Endo
- ✦ Celia Wood from Patricia Hussey & Maureen Giardino
- ✦ Celia Wood from Loretta Green
- ✦ Celia Wood from Lexie Ng
- ✦ Chris Bieber from Lawrence & Linda Bieber
- ✦ Grace and Mary Rose from Georgianne Messina
- ✦ Hannah, Bentley, and Roosevelt – You'll always be with us in our hearts, from Roxanne Chicoine & Jennifer Howard
- ✦ Nemo from Karin Seritis
- ✦ Nick, Elaine Farge's cat, from Sandra Berger
- ✦ Reka from Billy & Julie Weese
- ✦ Riley Damele from Mary Sper
- ✦ Smokey from Michael Smith
- ✦ Sophie Gardner from Mary Sper
- ✦ Margitta Gardner's Sophie – an elegant, long-lived sweetie of a cat, from Sandy Sher
- ✦ Spike from Elaine Libbey
- ✦ Spud from Andy & Cindy Goldsmith
- ✦ Our beloved Winston from Laurel McNeil Wong
- ✦ Zinzi – for black & white cats – Adopt one today, from Ann Blake

Donations In Honor Of

- ✦ Bodhi from Kathleen Rolinson
- ✦ DeAnne Jarvis from L.W. & A.L. McGeorge
- ✦ DeAnne Jarvis from Leigh Zander
- ✦ Heather Hanly from Loyce & George Robinson
- ✦ Mama Cat and Tom Cat from Jasmine Gonzalez
- ✦ Percy Alejos's birthday from Jean Tom
- ✦ Pie, Elmore, Trich and four others we share from James & Manuelita Hinds
- ✦ Wellington from Nancy Neal
- ✦ All cats needing loving homes from Sandra Ramois
- ✦ Reuniting lost and found pets to their owners from Dorene Neth

Donations In Thanks To

- ✦ All your good work from Candice & Ronald Murphy
- ✦ Gail & Sandy from William & Joanne Post

ICRA WISH LIST

- **FOOD:** Dry and canned KMR kitten formula (unopened)
- **TREATMENT/MEDS:** Frontline or Revolution
- **CAT SUPPLIES:** Cat Litter (clay, pine, wheat, or corn) New cat toys (no fur, please!)
- **MISCELLANEOUS SUPPLIES:** Pet store gift cards, Paper towels
- **OFFICE SUPPLIES:** Postage stamps Envelopes (6 1/2" x 3 5/8" and #10 size)
- **ADOPTIONS! FOSTER HOMES!! YOUR SUPPORT!!!**

Coming in May 2009!!!

ICRA's Annual Champagne Silent Auction

Join Us to Celebrate
15 Years
of
Helping Abandoned &
Feral Cats
Watch for our flyer in March!

HELPING CATS MADE EASY

One Click Can Save Lives
Find details on these and other ways to help in the "Support Us" section of our website at www.icraeastbay.org



Secure online donation with a credit or debit card via our website.



Search the Web or shop and 1 cent will be donated to ICRA every time! Use the menu to select Island Cat Resources & Adoption before every search.



At MyJewelrySource.com, 10% of the purchase price will be donated to ICRA. Please mention "ICRA 10% donation" in the Comments section of the order form.

Use the amazon.com and barnesandnoble.com search boxes on our website and ICRA will receive a percentage of your purchase cost.

Donate supplies to ICRA when you shop online at **Pet Food Express** and receive a 20% discount (free shipping!).



Another way to raise money by surfing the web or shopping online.



Shop for apparel, gifts, stickers, and more and a small contribution goes to ICRA.

Rewards of Adopting a Special Needs Cat

It all started so innocently. I wasn't exactly looking to add any new furry ones to my household of two adult cats. Having lost my dog of 17 years, I needed time to heal. But, the invitation to help socialize kittens at Gail Churchill's house was too great to pass up. Sounds like pretty easy duty until you learn about the difficult start that some of these kittens have. My "Flower Pot Kitties" are shining examples.

Iris and Rose were named "Flower Pot Kitties" because they were born in a flower pot, moved away from their mother by unknowing neighbors at two hours of age and, as a result, needed bottle feeding during their early days. After weaning, they joined the ranks of other kittens being socialized. Hours were spent bonding with Iris and Rose, watching them play, eat, and sleep ... just like normal kittens. While Rose thrived, Iris was much slower to develop. The reason would soon be known.

In time, Iris was taken to the veterinarian because she was coughing after eating. There were concerns she may have ingested some plastic, but a cardiac consultation revealed a severe and continuous heart murmur - a *ventricular septal defect* and a *congenital pulmonic stenosis*. The plain English version: Iris has small holes in her atrium. As I had been considering adopting Iris, I was upset and concerned. What did this mean? How would she survive a spay surgery? What treatment would she need? How long would she live? Could she live a normal life? These questions rolled around while I tried to understand what this would mean for Iris and me. The first hurdle was getting her weight up so she could be spayed.



ICRA volunteer and guardian Denise Cahalan with beauties Iris and Rose.

To make a long story short, after a period of fostering to see how all four kitties would do in my home, Iris and Rose are thriving. Rose is my full figured girl. Iris has put on weight, had her second echocardiogram with no change, and is doing very well. The veterinarian has advised me to "treat her like a cat" and let her enjoy herself, and she should live a normal life. She has virtually no restrictions (dietary, physical activity... ok, yes ... she gets on kitchen counters, too). I have, however, been advised to be very careful in protecting Iris from any infection. She will need another echocardiogram in another two years, something I will worry about when the time gets closer.

This is the first time I have adopted a "special needs" cat who may have some future health risks. Each day with her is even more precious when one considers her tough start and what she has been through. You would never know it. She is a little purr queen. Her little chirps when she enters a room warm my heart. She has given me far more than I can ever give her.

BECAUSE THEY DESERVE a CHANCE continued from page 2

Rudy Bio# 2693 HH



Bobby, Rudy, and Molly were born with a disorder called *agenesis of the eyelid*, which means that their upper eyelids either developed incompletely or not at all. As a result, the hairs above their eyes rubbed them constantly. All three had cryosurgery to remove the hair above the eye at a total cost of over \$4,200. Bobby had surgery three times, Rudy twice, and Molly once. Molly recently found a wonderful home! Bobby and Rudy are ready for adoption and deserve the same chance their sister had. Bobby will need eye ointment every day for life, but Rudy will require more minimal care. We estimate that Bobby and Rudy were born in April 2008.

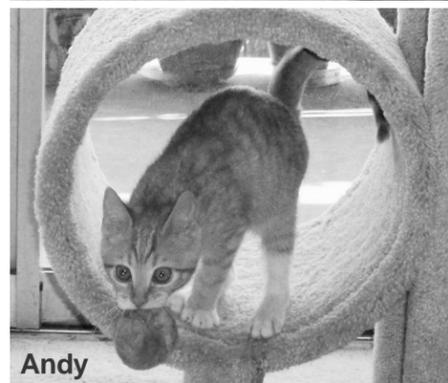
A gift for ICRA is a gift for LIFE. For every Colette, Chip, Bobby, Rudy and Molly in our program, there are many more cats out there just like them. Without you, our faithful supporters, ICRA cannot extend a hand to help them or the local communities struggling to curb cat overpopulation in their own backyards. With you, stray and feral cats have a voice and the chance they deserve. **THANK YOU ALL!**

More ALUMNI UPDATES

continued from page 5



Pele



Andy

"Munch and Olivia are now **Andy and Pele**. After the loss of our beloved Cleo our house was empty and so quiet. Now it is filled with the pitter-patter of eight little paws and shouts of "No!" and "Stop that!" (we have discussed changing their names to No and Stop That, but we're pretty certain it's just a phase). Just what we needed! Andy is a little purring machine, ready to torment his sister and when he tires of that he will take a running jump onto the nearest lap, look up at you with his innocent face, and then fall into an exhausted sleep. Pele is a bit more shy, but she is coming around and goes out of her way to at least be in the same room we are in. Small steps. So, plants have been moved and new screen doors on the sliding glass panels have been added. Family and friends are getting bored with all the antics we tell them about. And we are sooooo grateful for ICRA. Thanks for all the work you do. Andy and Pele are a delight." Adopted June 2008 by Stan Lewandowski & Rich Cutwell, Alameda.

Bobby Bio# 2692HH



Where Your Donations Go

"ICRA is a group of dedicated volunteers, and they'll put the funds to good use!!"

"ICRA helps the cats who need help the most and are least likely to get help. They cover a wide area and do wonderful work with ferals, older cats, and special needs cats."

"Island Cat truly puts the animal's best interests forward. Their adoption screening procedures are the most thorough and thoughtful. They can be counted on time and time again to lend their expertise and time. They are a devoted, solid organization with big hearts and little egos."

"My dear friend has volunteered with ICRA and has often talked about their incredible work to care for feral and stray cats...those who certainly would be euthanized or killed if simply left, and their spay-neuter program is immensely important to limiting the feral cat population."

"The dedicated volunteers spend hours a day caring for foster cats and kittens. They are also one of the most productive TNR programs in our area. Thanks to all of those incredible people many cats are being given a chance to survive."

"ICRA helped me get the growing stray and abandoned cat population in my neighborhood under manageable conditions. Every cat is now spayed or neutered and living peacefully together on my property with two square meals a day and plenty of warm, soft beds to sleep in. Without ICRA, this wouldn't have been possible."

All comments were extracted from votes cast for ICRA during the recent "America's Favorite Shelter" campaign at <http://www.care2.com/animalsheltercontest>. Thanks to all who voiced their support for ICRA!!

"Amazing group that includes spay/neuter, support, education, fostering, and adoption with a wonderfully caring attitude."

"...lots of 'cat first' attitude."

"ICRA does important work in the East Bay, doing both TNR and adoptions to help end the suffering of homeless cats. Other groups focus on the ferals primarily, and ICRA fills an important gap, caring for the tame homeless cats."

"ICRA's volunteers genuinely care a lot about animals and the community we all live in. They are dedicated to long-term solutions, and truly want to make the world a better place."

"Wonderful services for homeless cats -- finding homes, facilitating and financing medical, guiding people, and empowering a widening group of volunteers."

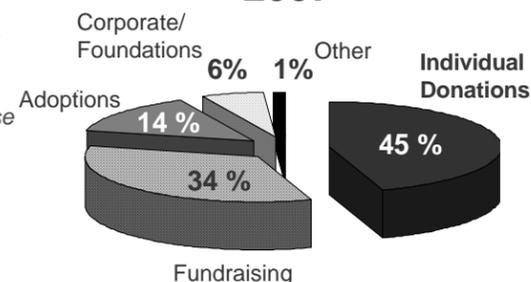
"ICRA has helped countless cats get spayed or neutered and adopted into loving forever homes. Everyone who works with ICRA is a VOLUNTEER, so every penny goes to caring for these cats."

"They try to solve the problem vs. just throwing money at the symptoms of pet overpopulation."

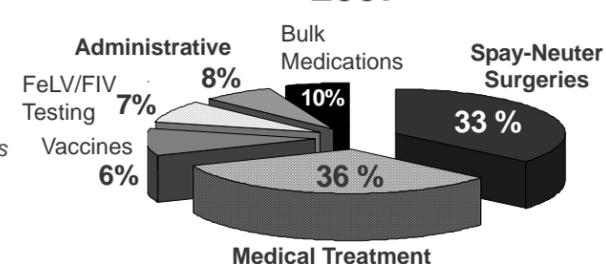
"ICRA really cares about the animals they foster. They are thorough in screening and give the utmost care in providing the adopter with the right animal companion(s)."

"Each time I saw an animal in need, every shelter and rescue group was too busy to help. ICRA has always gone above and beyond to help out each time."

ICRA Revenues 2007



ICRA Expenses 2007



Did You Know?

\$10 will provide feline distemper vaccinations for four cats

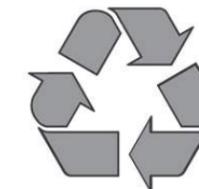
\$25 will pay for neuter surgery for one male cat

\$50 will pay for spay surgery for one female cat

\$140 will pay for two humane traps for feral cat Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) projects

"Until he extends his circle of compassion to include all living things, man will not himself find peace."

- Albert Schweitzer, French philosopher and physician (1875-1965)



Turn your rinsed recyclable plastic soda & water bottles and aluminum cans into **CASH for the CATS!!**

Drop them off with our Petco Adoption Site staff on Saturdays 11-4.

My Garden Kitties

continued from page 1

– eventually they would come out and eat. Once they were comfortable with me being around, I moved a little closer, and then even closer. Eventually I was sitting close enough to have my hand by the bowl while they ate. With a little more work, I managed to move my hand up and onto their heads and backs. Now they expect me to pet them at feeding time. When I have the food container, they even rub up against my legs.

I absolutely love to look out into my garden and see cats napping in the sun. They complete my garden. I even built a little rain house for them under the palm tree and they all snuggle in there together so closely I can't tell where one cat ends and another begins. They may be semi-feral and they may never make great indoor pets, but I can't imagine looking into the backyard while doing dishes and not seeing CookiePuss staring back at me with those big green eyes and giving me those long heavy blinks. They are my garden cats...my pets...and if I ever move from this house, they will be go right along with me.



Scribbles catches some sun from his vantage point under the deck.

Why a Garden Cat and Not an Indoor Cat?

Very often when our volunteers do Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) projects they come across situations that simply are not safe for returning cats after their spay/neuter surgeries. Places like truck yards, freeway underpasses, sewage pipes, yards with aggressive dogs, etc. We often take these cats into our homes with great hopes that we will be able to socialize them and turn them into wonderful purring lap cats and then find homes for them through our adoption program. Unfortunately, this doesn't always happen. Some of these cats never become comfortable with being indoors or with being around people. We refer to them as semi-feral — they aren't aggressive, just shy. What these cats need is a nice garden to live out their playful lives. A place where they can run around without being scared and chase their tails and falling leaves. **A safe place to just be a cat.**

Every Garden Cat's Wish List

SAFE YARD. Free of pesticides and free of other pets that may not want them in their area.

SHELTER. Protection from the rain with warm bedding – a cat or dog house, a porch or even a child's play house will do.

REGULAR FEEDER. Best to feed daily and not leave out too much food that will attract unwanted critters – which means if you are heading out of town for a few days, have a pet-sitter or a neighbor take over the feeding responsibilities.

BOWL OF FRESH WATER. Best to change out the water daily to keep the mosquitoes away.

HIDING PLACES. Under decks, behind established bushes, or logs.

A HOME!! A home that will love them like family, treat them like family, and plan to take them along like family when and if they move, or will find another safe yard and family for them. (We have great advice on how to do either. Please e-mail us!)



One example of a stylish garden cat house shelter built from recycled scrap redwood and a headboard, all found on the side of the road.

Got Stress?? Cats Might Be the Cure

We know that cats make us *feel* better. We respond to their soft fur, their smooth paws gently resting on our arms, and their soothing purrs. They provide a brand of unconditional companionship and support we can't get from our human brethren and, better yet, they don't judge, they don't snipe, and they don't talk back. What could be better than that? **Well, there is a growing body of scientific evidence that suggests cat guardianship might be good for your heart as well as your soul.**

Within the past few months *Cornell Cat Watch*, *Cat Fancy* magazine, and the American Association of Retired People (AARP) all highlighted a 10-year scientific study by the University of Minnesota Zeeat Qureshi Stroke Research Center yielding evidence that living with cats may relieve stress and anxiety and, therefore, lower the risk of having a heart attack or developing other cardiovascular diseases by one third. According to the study, which examined 4,435 people between 30-75 years of age, those who never lived with cats had a 40% greater risk of dying from heart attacks and a 30% greater risk of dying from other cardiovascular diseases than those with cats. A study by the State University of New York examined 48 stockbrokers with high blood pressure over a six-month period and found that the group given a cat or dog (in addition to medication) had significantly lower resting blood pressures than the group given only medication. Also, the pet group showed 50% lower rise in blood pressure than the non-pet group during stressful events.

Cat guardianship isn't for everyone and nothing is a cure-all. But even the possibility that living with a cat has tangible health benefits is yet another great reason to consider opening your hearts to one of these magnificent little creatures. While more studies are needed to understand just how and why cats may improve cardiovascular health, what's the harm in doing some experimenting in the comfort of your own home? ICRA has many four-legged scientists who are ready and willing to help! **Check our website to find the purrfect prescription for your heart.**

ALUMNI UPDATES

Always a reader favorite, please enjoy these candid action (and, ahem, inaction) shots and updates sent from some of our cherished adopters. With over 2,130 adoptions to date, we know there are many more kitty stories and antics out there, so please keep them coming! It's one way to remind us all - through the good and the bad - that we are doing the right thing.



"Augustus (top) is settling in very well. He seems very happy here! We are enjoying him so much, and his big sister, Macy, is getting used to him more and more. Thank you so much for everything! I think your organization is wonderful and I have already referred a friend to your website." Adopted June 2008 by Jeff Elliss & David Laliberte, San Francisco.



"I thought I'd let you know that everyone's doing well since the adoption ... [Grace] (front) and Norman are getting along very well. They like to chase each other around and play a lot, and after the energy is lost they'll sleep together, too. Grace just recently learned how to jump onto the bird cage, but fortunately she's too small to cause any disasters. Well, thank you so much for allowing me to take this precious kitten into my home. Best of luck to everyone at ICRA and keep doing such great work." Adopted July 2008 by Kate Engel, Oakland.



Here are two very happy, big boys! T.S. Eliot's (bottom) new guardian reports: "I just placed my vote [for Help Island Cat Resources and Adoption (ICRA) become America's Favorite Animal Shelter!] but also wanted to let you know that T.S. Eliot is doing great and has become fast friends with Tigger. Thanks so much." Adopted July 2006 by LJ Roberts, Oakland.



"My husband and I fell in love with the little boy kitten, Bosco, that Maya trapped a month ago. He's very tame, lets me catch him, sleeps on my lap, and gets along with our 1.5-year-old former feral Sweet Lips. He's living upstairs with her now. Only hitch is I have to feed him in another room as she would eat all of his kitten food, which she clearly doesn't need." Adopted September 2008 by Eleanor Smith, Oakland.



"Osito is doing well ... He is adjusting well and loves to follow me around. It is so cute." Adopted November 2008 by Stephanie Matsuoka, Alameda.



"I wanted to thank you once again for a wonderful experience with adopting our cat Minnie. Minnie is a wonderful cat, and Ana and I enjoy living with her. Even people who have known cat allergies are OK in her presence when they visit us. So, we really feel like we lucked out with Minnie and ICRA." Adopted June 2008 by Dinko Lakic & Ana Stojanovska, Oakland.



Some of our fosters are with us long enough to learn a trade. Here's a photo of Rusty two weeks after his adoption. We have it on good authority that he pretty much runs a motorcycle shop near Laney College. According to his guardian, Rusty has staked out this chair as his own. It positions him almost directly in the path of visitors walking between the front and back workshops via the living space in his new work-live warehouse. He even has the dirt on his white fur so that he looks like one of the mechanics. Adopted June 2008 by Tyler Carson, Oakland.



"Each of my ICRA kitties has their own personality. Brady is a loving kitty who sticks to me like glue and talks to me all the time...Precious is a little tubby, adorable kitty. She LOVES to be brushed and follows me around in the mornings until I sit on the couch for her grooming. This happens every time I sit down, actually. She likes to lie on the couch with me when I watch TV and is always ready for a chase with Brady when he's acting like the clown that he is. Molly is still as sweet as she looks. She also loves to be brushed and waits patiently until Precious has done squirming and rolling about so she can jump up for her turn. Molly looks right into my eyes with such love that I can actually feel what she's saying. She's the one who prompted me to write you that memo asking if I could adopt my fosters...Ramey is still my feisty girl...She LOVES to play and keeps the others on their toes as they never know when she is likely to pounce. They are such wonderful company and I just love them all to pieces. I wish I could take more of the kitties who are looking for a nice, loving home as I know there are so many. It breaks my heart to see how many abandoned pets are surfacing from the foreclosures going on around the country. How could they leave a family member behind like that to fend for itself? I just don't understand." Adopted between February 2004 and August 2005 by Ella Jones, Union City.

More **ALUMNI UPDATES** on pages 6 and 8