Murray Wants YOU, and only you!

Some cats appear old when they’re not. Murray was one of them when I first met him in February 2018. He was lying in a box on top of a dirty blanket in a dark cellar. I shined my flashlight on him for a better look. He raised up slightly, responding positively when I patted the top of his mite infested head. I sensed that he was hoping that I was not there to oust him from his sheltered spot back out into the wintry night. Murray was weakened from the combination of an advanced skin mite infestation and two nasty abscesses, one on his chest and the other on his shoulder. He appeared to be missing his left eye, but we would later learn from the vet that the eye was there but badly damaged from infection. We estimate he was born in 2013.

Murray was the classic unneutered Oakland street stray who, in the course of surviving on the street, had been battered in cat fights, picked up an upper respiratory infection that damaged his eye beyond repair, contracted Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), and added insult to injury with skin mites, sometimes referred to as mange. He needed dental work to boot.

Over the next few months, we worked with partner vets to rehabilitate Murray. He ate up the attention, almost literally, with love bites, hoarse meows, and cherishing every bit of food – which included convincing us that he always needed a little bit more than was initially served. He remains food motivated so much so that I believe he could be taught to do tricks, despite his apparent couch potato prowess.

Several pounds later and his luxurious long-haired coat grown in, Murray is ready for a permanent home. Not just any home. Due to some jealousy, he’d prefer not to share human affection with any other four-legged beasts. Could you be Murray’s new guardian?

– Merry B.
Charlie spent his first years as a street cat on his own, but he left that chaos behind and has come to love life where it’s safe and quiet! When rescued, he had a leg wound that was seriously infected. It took many visits to the vet over a two-month period for the wound to heal. Charlie is a low maintenance guy, preferring to find a safe, comfortable corner to curl up in all day. He likes being petted and is very relaxed when held, but he will do best in a quiet home with a patient person committed to spending time to coax him out of his shell for good. His street life challenges have made it hard for Charlie to warm up to new people, but once he falls in love with you it’s for keeps! Favorite pastimes include gentle chin scratches and sitting on trusted humans’ laps. Charlie’s fine with other cat-friendly cats and calm dogs. He is FIV+. We estimate he was born in 2014 or 2015.

Kitty Health Corner:
Do You Know About FIV?

1) FIV stands for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus. FIV typically causes a weakening of the cat’s immune system, making them more prone to infections such as upper respiratory infections and dental disease.

2) FIV is not transmissible to humans or dogs. It is a species-specific virus that only affects cats.

3) FIV is not easily transmitted from one cat to another. The primary means by which an FIV+ cat transmits the disease to another cat is through deep bite wounds where the blood of the infected cat mixes with the blood of the bitten cat. These kinds of fights are much less common when cats are spayed/neutered. Casual, non-aggressive contact does not appear to be an efficient way to spread the virus. As a result, cats in households with stable social structures where housemates do not fight are at little risk of acquiring FIV infections.

4) FIV+ cats can live normal lives, both in quality and duration. With good care, it’s not uncommon to find FIV+ cats over 10-15 years of age.

5) FIV+ cats do, however, require special considerations to monitor them for infections and dental issues. The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) recommends the following:
   • FIV+ cats should see a vet twice a year for a physical exam and at least annually for some lab work, i.e., a complete blood count, chemistry panel, and urinalysis.
   • Seek immediate care when an FIV+ cat is abnormally weak or uncomfortable.
   • Always spay or neuter FIV+ cats, keep them indoors, and minimize their exposure to infectious diseases, for example, avoiding raw food diets.

Marzipan is FIV+. We estimate he was born in 2015.

Please get acquainted with a few of our young, adoption-ready FIV+ cats.

Charlie, Marzipan and Murray are featured in this newsletter.

They all have many years of love, spirit and companionship to offer a caring forever home.

All we ask is that you protect and cherish them as much as we do – LOVE is the best drug of all for keeping them happy and healthy!
SUE CIRICLIO  With great sadness we say goodbye to a generous ICRA supporter who passed away unexpectedly on August 19, 2018.

She will be remembered for her kindness, generosity, and passion for animals, especially horses and cats. She was an artist, photographer, teacher, and writer.

Sue adopted two ICRA cats, Emzy (f. Whimsy) and Gracie (f. Ruby). The two girls and their brother, Bohdi, were her beloved companions for the last years of her life. She wrote an article for this newsletter about adopting Gracie in 2015.

Sue lived a full and rich life, and will be missed by many friends, neighbors, and her California College of the Arts students. We are honored she engaged with us, adopted, and supported us.

We are forever grateful.
On Becoming: A Cat Person

OK, I'll admit it: I didn't always like cats. In fact, I used to hate them. After all, they're aloof and unfriendly, right? Wrong. That's the telltale sign of somebody who's never met a cat.

But all that changed 40 years ago, when I fell in love with a woman who had a cat, a pretty little tuxedo female named K.C., short for kitty cat.

For the first six months we lived together, I refused to let poor K.C. into our bedroom. But one day she decided enough was enough, and she proceeded to seduce me.

Wham! It didn’t take her 24 hours to have me wrapped around her little paw. By the time my girlfriend and I broke up a few months later K.C. and I were so tight, she offered to give her to me. I declined because I knew K.C. would be happier with her, but the damage had been done: I was hooked. Moral: There’s no zealot like a converted sinner.

Two weeks after I moved into my new place, there was a knock on the door. Standing on the front step were four little kids from the elementary school across the street, holding a tiny gray tabby kitten they found abandoned on their schoolyard.

“Mister, did you lose this kitty?” they asked.
“No,” I said, “but I’ll take her.”

I named her Eliza Doolittle because the first thing she said to me was, “Aaoowwww!” We were together for almost 17 years, and she was the love of my life. I’d look into her eyes, and I knew what she was thinking, and she knew what I was thinking. It was the most intimate relationship I’ve ever had in my life.

Because she was an outdoors kitty before she met me, I let her come and go as she pleased. She guarded her territory ruthlessly against any other cats who had the temerity to enter – except for two kittens who lived a few doors down the street. For some reason they brought out the mothering instincts in her, and she groomed them and protected them until their family moved away and took the kittens with them.

In the evening, Eliza could hear my car coming when I was still blocks away. She’d dash across the backyard, jump into my bedroom window, and race the length of the apartment to the front door, where she’d be waiting for me when I walked in.

But one day while I was petting her, I felt a lump. It was a pellet from a pellet gun. She had been shot. And she carried it with her until the day she died at the age of 17. (cont’d pg 7)
**Alumni Mews**

**BLUE** Our cats NEVER get up on the table, right? Here’s handsome Blue riding high in his new digs in Seattle by way of San Francisco. You’ve come a long way, buddy! Adopted February 2015 by Jacqueline O., Seattle.

**CHARLES (f. Charlie)** There’s nothing quite like a good snuggle with an accommodating chin. Charles is very lucky to be the fourth ICRA kitty over the past 14 years to find a loving home with Andrew and David. Please don’t tell the others that David told us, “P.S. Charlie is the best :D” Adopted June 2017 by Andrew B. and David Y., San Francisco.

**CHARLIE (f. Charlotte)** Welcoming a human hand into the furry belly zone must mean that Charlie is putting her shy days in the rearview mirror with a loving, patient family who took a chance on her. They write, “[Charlie’s] been doing so well with us! … We love Charlie so much! We even built some shelves so she could have high places to climb and hang out. Thanks for bringing her to us.” Adopted July 2017 by Kate A. & Tom G., Richmond.

**DASH** Is this bonding or polite indifference to the dog’s obvious intrusion into the sacred feline lounging sphere? Although he’ll never admit it, Dash is warming up to his new “brother,” who holds deep respect for the sharp claws Dash could bring to the negotiating table. Adopted September 2018 by Anna L., Oakland.

**GUS (f. Teddy)** Need more convincing about FIV+ cats? Ask Gus and his family. “After one year with our sweet boy, Gus, we can confidently say he is the silliest, smartest, best kitty in the whole wide world. He loves playing fetch, learning new tricks, and snuggling with us every night. While an FIV+ confirmation was intimidating at first, it offered a tremendous learning experience for us. We knew instantly that Gus belonged in our family when we met, and we look forward to the lifetime of joy we will share with him.” Adopted October 2017 by Kelsey M. & Jeff A., Oakland.

**HAPPY** Having transformed into a lap cat, bringing his reluctant human along for the ride, “Hap” appears to be moving on to higher pursuits here. Why lounge about on all of that boring floor space when on top an armoire will do? Hap’s mom writes: “I love him so much and feel so fortunate to be his person. Thank you for letting him be my forever boy. We are a perfect fit.” Adopted July 2018 by Wendy E., Alameda.

**JETHRO** What’s cooler than a former street cat with looks, an attitude to match, and his own line of schwag? His person reports: “I am crazy about Jethro! You might remember he wasn’t good with other cats and was super shy? He has come far. He is fine with our other two cats (ICRA brothers), and we’ve had a couple of fosters in the last three years as well.” Adopted October 2010 by Stephanie T., Oakland.

**LITTLE GRAY + SPOT** (Spot f. Dennis) Sticking together, these two cuties have totally captured their family’s heart… AND their orange chair. Diminished access to furniture aside, their people happily report: “Thank you so much for bringing them into our lives – we love them so much and couldn’t imagine life without them…Thank you for all that you do…” Adopted May 2018 by Sean & Kendall O., Palo Alto.

We reserve the right to use your photos and comments to update the community of our work. Thank you for sharing your images, families, and stories of your ICRA kitties with all of us!

(continued page 7)
Along Came Frankie

I had kept a 3-cat household for many years, but in 2015 my sweet Larry left this life. Since Lizzy and Lyle continued to keep me company, I decided that a 2-cat household was prudent. I was getting older and hoped my cats wouldn’t outlive me.

Lyle was a Flame Point Siamese with a long, crooked tail, and he dealt with thyroid disease for a couple of years. Last year something else overtook him and he was too far gone before the vet could see us. I was devastated.

I was down to one kitty, Lizzy. She’s a full-figured girl with lots of love to give, but a void persisted. Larry’s unconditional love and Lyle’s devotion were gone. I held out for months but decided in January that it was time to add another cat.

Since my friend Peggy volunteers at Island Cat Resources and Adoption I searched their website. Peggy would probably know the inside story on any cat on the site. And there I found him! A Flame Point Siamese! Lyle’s doppelganger!

I know what you are thinking – it’s dangerous to look for the reincarnation of your long-lost pet. I knew that, too, but I had to meet him. Peggy vouched for his good nature, and he was in a good foster home with lots of other cats.

When I went to meet him he was nervous and not eager to make new friends. I learned that he was stressed around that many cats, some of whom didn’t like him. But the match felt right. And I picked out his name: Frankie – for Frank Sinatra and his blue eyes. Only Frankie’s Siamese blue eyes are just slightly crossed.

The day his foster mom was to bring him over I slipped and fell on my deck. A short hospital stay and recuperative complications would delay our reunion another two weeks.

We were concerned about how Lizzy would take to him, but she is pretty easy going as long as you stay off her cat tree. So, Frankie got his very own with a window view. They are quite comfortable with each other.

Frankie now sleeps with me every night. When the chill of early morning arrives, he often snuggles under the covers, waking me with his little meow. He loves looking out at the squirrels and the blue jays I feed on the deck. He gets that unpredictable shot of energy that sends him racing up and down the stairs like he has seen a ghost, so I know he is getting his exercise. He will let me spend hours rubbing his tummy while he blisses out.

He is not the reincarnation of Lyle - he is his own man. And the void is filled with kitty love. – Claire C.

Adopt: Baxter

This handsome tabby is a very outgoing little guy. Typical interactions with his equally adorable brother, Mr. Purrkins (see page 8), include racing, romping, jumping, and tumbling like only youngsters can before collapsing into a kitten pile for battery recharge. Baxter needs another kitty in his home to channel all of that energy and to help refine his sense of feline etiquette as he grows into adulthood with you. He would do well with gentle children over 6 and possibly a calm, cat-friendly dog. We estimate Baxter was born in March 2018.

A Ball of Fun for the Family
I never wanted it to end. I happily spent a fortune on medical bills, but her time finally ran out. It was a long time before I could even think about adopting another cat.

But eight months later I got a call from my vet’s office. A tiny gray female fluffball, only a few days old, had been rescued off the street. Would I be interested in adopting her? Of course I would. I named her Nelly, and she was as sweet as a cat can possibly be. But it became quickly obvious that she needed a playmate, so I adopted another rescue kitten and named her Phoebe.

But one thing did give her pleasure: She loved to sleep with her head nestled in the palm of my hand, like a pillow. And I never moved that hand all night for 15 years, not even when my hand got numb. I thought I owed her that. When I finally had to put her to sleep I cried many bitter tears.

Of course I would. I named her Nelly, and she was as sweet as a cat can possibly be. But it became quickly obvious that she needed a playmate, so I adopted another rescue kitten and named her Phoebe.

They got along extremely well. They both needed each other. But one night I let them out for one of their jaunts, and Phoebe returned an hour later but Nelly didn’t.

I searched all over the neighborhood for hours until I finally collapsed in bed around 5 a.m. A few hours later my neighbor knocked on my door and said, “I think you’d better look at this.”

It was Nelly. She was dead. The best I can figure out is that she got chased by some dogs, got stuck under a fence trying to get away, and died of fright.

So now it was just Phoebe and me. Hers was not a happy life. I don’t know what happened before I got her, but it must have been really bad. She was frightened of everyone and everything except me, and she spent most of her time hiding under the bed.

But one thing did give her pleasure: She loved to sleep with her head nestled in the palm of my hand, like a pillow. And I never moved that hand all night for 15 years, not even when my hand got numb. I thought I owed her that. When I finally had to put her to sleep I cried many bitter tears.

A few months later I decided it was time for a new kitten. No, better yet, two kittens. So I called ICRA and adopted a pair of females who were rescued from the streets of West Oakland. I named them Sally and Pepe, and we’ve been together for six years.

But I never, ever let them go outside. I had to sign an adoption agreement with ICRA that I would keep indoors, and I’m so glad I did. It’s for their own safety, but the unexpected payoff has been my peace of mind.

I discovered that letting your cats outside is like hitting your head against the wall: It feels so good when you stop.

In retrospect, I’m kicking myself for letting Eliza, Nelly and Phoebe out. I love Sally and Pepe a lot, as I have loved all of Eliza’s successors. But I still think of Eliza every day, and I still miss her. She was my first love, and my best.

– Martin S.
Adopt: Mr. Purrkins

This sweet little tabby needs a calm household (as far as the humans go) where his little personality will shine. He may be a bit shy to start in a new environment, but with just a little love and attention you’ll reap a wonderful long-term companion. Mr. Purrkins loves to be held – his most excellent purrs will tell you so. But don’t let his quiet and gentle nature fool you because he’s a bundle of energy when it comes to play time. He needs another kitty companion in his life but probably would not do well with young children or dogs. His brother Baxter would be great (see page 6). We estimate Mr. Purrkins was born in March 2018.