

The A.C.A.T. Tale



Helping Cats and Their People

The Invisible Among Us

Without a doubt, human beings are feral cats' greatest threat. To remain invisible most emerge only in the dark of night or early dawn. Ironically, the same is true of their caregivers--their only danger is other people. Feral cat caregivers make up an intentionally invisible and secret society, unknown to all but a few trusted colleagues. Stories of alienation and ridicule as well as financial hardship are common. Accounts of being threatened, accosted and frightened also exist. To preserve anonymity, names of the caregivers included here have been altered.

"My family thinks I'm crazy for doing this, and friends often scoff at it too," says Alice Gregory. "It's just better not to tell anyone." In 1998 when she began, Gregory spent about \$100 a month on food for the ferals. Today, she spends about \$1200 per month. Gregory has had to cut back on the amount and type of food she feeds because costs are soaring. Suzanne Mackenzie echoes what we hear from Gregory. "For 10 years I fed every day, but with the increasing cost of food and gas I now feed only every other day." Mackenzie spends at least \$750 a month on cat food, and pays for spaying and neutering and other vet bills.

Like many caretakers, Mackenzie feeds only at night, leaving food on the pavement rather than in bowls to prevent any telltale signs that feral cats live there. If discovered, the cats often face harassment, poisoning, or a trip to a shelter—certain death. At one business the cats were concealed well out of sight, but a customer complained about seeing an empty cat bowl left out by a "novice". Mackenzie was barred from feeding the 40-50

cats there. All of them were trapped and killed.

Unfortunately, few resources exist to help reduce the costs borne by caregivers. When possible, many rescue groups help with the cost of food and vet care. But this is just a drop in the bucket. "I had to take a second mortgage to help pay my bills," Laurie DeGrassio admitted. This dedication, and its effect on personal lives, seems ridiculous or even peculiar to most people. Yet, without their care, the explosive population of feral cats would go unchecked, and countless cats would suffer from broken bones, illness, and slow starvation. Whether they care for many colonies or a handful of local cats, good caretakers make sure they spay and neuter the cats, get them vet care when needed, and work with groups and individuals to find homes for the adoptable cats.

Not everyone who cares for feral cats looks beyond their own backyards or neighborhoods. Felicia Valdez and Mike Lawrence feed medicate and sterilize cats brought to them by neighbors or living in areas near their houses. Like many caretakers, Valdez and Lawrence barely make enough to take care of themselves. They are, by definition, "low income", yet their generosity belies their economic status. And countless other people feed one or two strays in the own backyards. "Whether you take care of one or 100, each act of kindness is important to each and every one of the cats," according to Gregory.

While sporadic, caregivers do occasionally face direct verbal and physical threats. Nonetheless, their

concern is not for their own safety but for the cats'. "While feeding at a colony living at a motel scheduled for renovation, the building caretakers threatened to kill me. They seemed high on drugs, and said they were going to kill the cats and make me watch, and then kill me." Several cats did permanently disappear.

"Sometimes I take a friend with me, because many of the cats are in really bad areas," says DiGrassio. Mackenzie throws the food out her car window onto the ground, rather than stopping and leaving her car. "I usually feed really late at night, and I don't want to risk getting hurt." In one instance, a psychologist who had some ferals in back of his practice was physically violent, showing her into the street to prevent her from feeding. Caregivers say that most owners welcome the cats because they keep the mice population in check, but this is not always the case. Rose Seligman cares for colonies in the valley area. She faces constant verbal threats from employees at an adjacent business. "I have the permission of the owner to enter his back area but the people at the other store harass and threaten me."

These people share a common bond. They give more of themselves than they would ever ask of others or of society. They face many hardships and sometimes danger, but this doesn't deter them from helping one of our most needy populations. Their reason? Because no one else will.



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Feral cats are descendants of pets who were cruelly abandoned or who were irresponsibly allowed to roam. They were never handled by people as kittens and are not socialized. When they mate, their kittens begin a cycle of reproduction that only ends when they are trapped and sterilized. Estimates using accepted formulas suggest that at least 70,000-80,000 feral cats live in Albuquerque. The ONLY way to solve the problem is to provide sufficient resources for sterilization programs.



Many sources of information exist about feral cats and how to help them. A few are www.alleycat.org, www.indyferal.org, and www.neighborhoodcats.org

~by Cynthia Richards

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A.C.A.T. is a registered 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Your donations and memberships are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.



COME OUT AND SUPPORT THE CATS!!!

Enchanted Cat Club presents 2008 Annual
T.I.C.A. Howl-O-Ween Cat Show

Mark your calendar to join us again at The International Cat Association (T.I.C.A.) Howl-O-Ween Cat Show, sponsored by the local Enchanted Cat Club.

The show will be held on **October 25-26** in the **School Arts Building** at Expo **New Mexico (State Fairgrounds)**. Hours on Saturday are 10-5 and Sunday are 9-4.

All the proceeds from the show are given to rescue groups to support their efforts for homeless cats. A.C.A.T. will show cats and kittens for adoption at the show and will also have our ever-popular **gift table for your shopping needs.**

Hundreds of purebred cats and kittens will compete for championship ribbons, and breeders will be available to answer your questions about various cat breeds or cat health and behavior problems.

Shopping is always a highlight of the show and there will be plenty of vendors with items to thrill cats and their people! If you need gifts for your cat-loving friends, or a special gift for yourself, this is the place to stop and shop!

A.C.A.T

Mission Statement

- ◆ To provide a safe haven in the form of foster homes for stray, orphaned, abused and neglected cats and kittens in the Albuquerque metropolitan area.
- ◆ To provide veterinary care to the cats and kittens who come into our program and to ensure that all cats and kittens who are adopted through our organization are spayed or neutered before adoption.
- ◆ To relocate cats and kittens into permanent, loving homes through our adoption program.
- ◆ To educate the public regarding the necessity of spay/neuter and responsible pet ownership, and to provide counseling and advice regarding cat behavioral and care issues.
- ◆ To welcome all volunteers into A.C.A.T., where respect and support are extended to all.
- ◆ To limit-neuter-return of feral cats in our community.
- ◆ To provide low-cost spay and neuter.

PLEASE HELP A.C.A.T.
CONTINUE TO BE THE PREMIER
CAT RESCUE ORGANIZATION IN
ALBUQUERQUE



We need folks who are willing to open their hearts and wallets. A.C.A.T. can only rescue and find loving homes for cats if we have foster parents. Foster parents are fundamental to our existence. We support our fosters in lots of ways and can tell you about it if you call us or come by the adoption clinics.

We also are desperately in need of funds. The economy has hit us **HARD**, as it has the other rescue groups and most likely your family as well. But, we have had to start cutting down on accepting cats who need advanced medical and surgical care and rehabilitation—one of our hallmark qualities – because of lack of funds.

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So, if you can help, please do. We, and the kitties, send you love.

All the photos featured in this issue are feral cats helped by www.allycats.org.

2008 Raffle was a Winner!!

Thanks to all of you who bought and sold tickets, and donated prizes!! You helped make our annual raffle a great success...the kitties sure won out this year!! The grand prize winners were Kevin and Cynthia Angevine, and second and third prizes were won, respectively, by Anne Marie Diemert and Judy Nay. Congratulations to them and all our lucky winners!!

Many, many thanks go out to our sponsors and prize donors who were so generous to A.C.A.T. Prizes were donated by Lezlie Williams Art Studio...Changes Hair Studio...Fran Lackey Mary Kay Consultant... Sweet Tomatoes on San Mateo...Cedar Crest Fitness...Patrick Bartolotto Magic Shows...Pet Sitting by Kimberly...Uptown Cat Hospital/TLC Pet Hospital...Barnes & Noble in Coronado Mall...Brilliant Salon... Savoy's...The Flower Company...Zea's Rotisserie and Grill...Marcello's Chop House...Bravo Italian Restaurant...Regal Movie Theatres...Desert Rose Day Spa...3 Dog Bakery...Hinkle Family Fun Center...AbFaDa Portrait Studio...Trader Joe's...Old Town Cat House...Santiago's...Dion's...Betty's Day Spa...Tom's Photos...Albuquerque Cat Clinic...Pueblo Loft...LaSalita's...First Financial Credit Union...Scalo's Northern Italian Grill...Joan who made beautiful cat fetish wreath... Miyanna Waters-Lackey...Michael Rudall...See's Candies



Corporate Sponsors

Enormous thanks to our generous sponsors. We encourage you to support them!

DIRECT SUPPORT FOR OUR CATS

Albuquerque Cat Clinic
 Best Friends Pet Cremation Services
 Canyon Crossroads Animal Hospital
 Dr. Jeff Nichol, D.V.M.
 Northview Animal Hospital
 PetSmart (Wyoming & Academy)
 Pharmica
 Uptown Cat Hospital
 VCA Veterinary Care Hospital on Montgomery
 VETCO on Menaul
 VETCO of Valencia County

OTHER BUSINESSES AND FOUNDATION

SUPPORT

A Full House Estates
 ABQ Mini Storage

Barnes & Noble Booksellers-Coronado
 Enchanted Cat Club
 Fast Signs on Menaul
 Gap, Inc. Giving Campaign
 New Mexico Charities
 PetSmart Charities
 PetSmart (Academy & Wyoming)
 SpeedZone Print & Copy
 Tom's Photo and Ink
 The Flower Company
 The International Cat Association (TICA)
 The Mechanic
 United Way of Central New Mexico



We have new hours at PetSmart to better accommodate adopters. Please stop by or tell your friends about us!

A.C.A.T. is at PetSmart on Wyoming and Academy

Friday 4pm~8pm

Saturday
 10am~6pm

Sunday 12pm~4pm

Our regular features—A.C.A.T. Heartbeat, Donors and Members, Dr. Nichols' column, rescue story, Adoption Options—will be back in our Winter issue. Look for that to be in your mailbox right around Thanksgiving!

Your support by donations, memberships, helping & attending fundraisers, and volunteering helps the kitties in Albuquerque.



And they are tax deductible!

CHRISTMAS IN SEPTEMBER!!!!



That's right...its time to plan ahead!! A.C.A.T. will once again be doing Holiday gift wrapping at Barnes & Noble in Coronado Mall on weekends from Thanksgiving to Christmas. We always need "wrappers" in order to make this very important fund raiser for the cats a success! Wrapping shifts need two people and the shift hours are 9-1, 1-5, and 5-9 on Saturday and Sunday. So think about helping wrap (even if you are awful at it), bring a friend along, and reach out this Holiday season. Those interested, please give us a call at (323.2228) and leave your contact information. We'll get right back to you as we are ready to fill in the schedule right now!!

Be sure to mark this on your calendar and shop at Barnes & Noble when A.C.A.T. is there to wrap your gifts. Happy Shopping!! The kitties say "Thank Mew Very Much"!

**Albuquerque
Cat Action Team**



Helping Cats and Their People

Albuquerque Cat Action Team
PO Box 51683
Albuquerque, NM 87181-1683

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

WWW.ALBCAT.COM

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
ALBUQUERQUE, NM
PERMIT 511

COME VISIT A.C.A.T.
AT THE TICA
HOWL-O-WEEN SHOW

SATURDAY, OCT 25
10:00 - 5:00

SUNDAY, OCT 26
9:00 - 4:00

DETAILS INSIDE!!!!

- ◆ Dues payable annually in advance of or at the annual meeting
- ◆ The Board of Directors shall receive applications for membership made to it in writing
- ◆ At any meeting of the general membership the privilege of the floor shall be extended to any member in good standing
- ◆ In the conduct of A.C.A.T. business, all members shall abide by A.C.A.T. policies and standards

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____

HOME PHONE: _____

WORK PHONE: _____

CELL PHONE: _____

DATE: _____

_____ Please check here if you would also like information on volunteering or fostering for A.C.A.T.

I have checked the appropriate category above and enclosed payment to A.C.A.T. (checks only, please).

_____	_____	_____
Guardian Angel (\$1000 or more)	Sponsor or Family (\$50)	Individual (\$30)
Star (\$500)	Student, Seniors, Low Income (\$10)	Active Volunteers (\$10)
Hero (\$250)	_____	_____
Friend (\$100)	_____	_____

Yes, I would like to become a member of A.C.A.T. in the following category:

505-323-2228 (323-ACAT)

A.C.A.T. (Albuquerque Cat Action Team) - P.O. Box 51683 - Albuquerque, NM 87181-1683