

Expanding Horizons and Creating a Humane Future

Getting young people interested and
actively involved in caring for pets

Plus

- How Dogs and Cats View Humans
- A Ray of Hope for Cats with Hyperthyroidism
- Positive Reinforcement: The Better Alternative for Dog Training

Something to Chew On

Dear Friends,

In this time of divisiveness, when it appears as though we have abandoned the pursuit of common ground and our suspicions of one another are at an all-time high, it may seem unhelpful for both the CEO and the Chairperson of a nonprofit organization to perpetuate discord and choose sides. Many see Our Companions as an oasis from controversy. Why would we risk alienating any of our constituents, especially when we are so deeply dependent upon them for support?

Recent events, however, have made it abundantly clear that we can no longer hide our persuasions. Therefore, we would like to take this opportunity to admit what many have long suspected.

We are both cat people.

Recently, our biases emerged during this summer's "Feed the Beasts Wish List Competition." In this rivalry, the community was asked to donate goods to the Sanctuary for either cats or dogs. The species that received the most donations would be deemed the **Summer's Superior Species at the Sanctuary**. The spirit of the competition was playful, and thanks to the generosity of so many, the effort was hugely successful, as nearly \$5,000 worth of goods was donated for the homeless pets at our facility.

Unfortunately, the good-natured competition was sullied by the leadership of Our Companions (i.e., us). In a last-minute scramble, we both desperately (and shamelessly) went on a buying spree, inflating the cat totals in an attempt to tip the scales. We even succumbed to some cat trash talk, at one point

taunting Jon Phillips, the Sanctuary Director and avowed dog person, with the phrase, "cats rule, dogs drool."

It was in vain anyway; the canines prevailed.

While we love dogs deeply, and our promise "to do the right thing for animals" is extended equally to cats and dogs, if we had to personally pick one species over another, what can we say? We align with the feline (of course, you would never know this by watching Susan fawn over her beloved dog Jason or given her vanity license plate, "MUTMOM").

Anyway, given our love of cats, we are so excited that the Kats and Kids program, launched in 2017, has grown so much in popularity over the past year. The lead article of this edition of Our Companions News, entitled "Expanding Horizons and Creating a Humane Future," highlights the Kats and Kids program, which educates children about compassion, while helping to make homeless cats more adoptable.

Beyond the Sanctuary, our adoption and pet retention programs, our feral cat assistance initiatives, our affordable spay and neuter program, and our specialized behavioral training courses for dogs, humane education is a critical component of our mission and a big part of how we are addressing pet homelessness and suffering. In this magazine, we hope you enjoy learning more about this program as well as the many other ways in which we are helping cats, and dogs, at Our Companions. Thank you for your commitment to our work. Have a happy autumn!

Sincerely,



Susan B. Linker,
Chief Executive Officer
and Founder



Maria das Neves,
Board Chair

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**Our
Companions**
Animal Rescue & Sanctuary

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Expanding Horizons and Creating a Humane Future

By Lindsey Pellino, Sanctuary Feline Volunteer Manager



Chances are, if you are reading this article, you are an animal lover. Maybe you have a pet that you spoil beyond their wildest dreams; or maybe you love nothing more than walking dogs at the Sanctuary because you can't have any at your apartment. Chances are this passion for animals started early on – for many of us, in our childhood. The love we had for our first pet became the spark that ignited our lifelong passion for helping animals. That's why it's so critical to get young people interested and actively involved in caring for pets. Encouraging this early bond with pets can foster in kids a life-long commitment to improving the lives of all animals.

Volunteering

For a class assignment, Jake Brown wrote a paragraph about why cats make the best pets. He helps to take care of his family's cat, Munson. With his mother Liz, and his father Brian, and his sister Megan, he participated in the Kats and Kids program at the Our Companions' Sanctuary. Kats for Kids is a volunteer program where current volunteers bring their children with them to spend time with the cats. For a long time, there was an adult age requirement for volunteers, like with most animal rescues, for the safety of the children and of the animals. With the success of the "pilot" Kats and Kids in the summer of 2017, the program has expanded to include more youngsters and teens. The cats at the Sanctuary have the benefit of being socialized with a broad range of age groups, which enhances their adoptability. It also provides valuable information to the OC staff, who are often asked if certain cats are good with children. Now we actually have some data.

"The best part is getting to play and spend time with them," says Jake. "I enjoy helping them get adopted, like when the shy ones get more used to people."

"Our pets had passed away and we were traumatized," says Liz. "So we decided to volunteer to hang out with cats – and now we've got the bug and ended up adopting again."

The Sanctuary focuses on rescuing and reha-



(L) Hawk getting some snuggles from Jake. (R) Jake and his sister Megan helping to socialize Forrest and Jenny.



Jake helping Buster learn the benefits of being a lapcat.

bilitating a wide range of special-needs cats: friendly strays with medical issues, cats found abandoned in locked apartments, cats with complex behavior issues, kittens born at the Sanctuary, senior cats who are terminally ill, cats with missing limbs, blind cats, cats with cerebellar hypoplasia, cats with FIV, the list goes on and on. Our adult volunteers assist with playtime, cuddling, grooming, cleaning,

feeding, and medicating. The young volunteers in the Kats and Kids program can participate in almost all the same activities.

"I wish more people knew that cats have all different personalities," says Jake. "They get a bad rap, but they can be as playful as dogs and maybe more." His tip for other kids is "to be gentle with animals and not scare them."

Continued next page



It's kitten paradise! Nora, helping to socialize many different litters of kittens, as part of the Kats and Kids program.

For his birthday, Jake doesn't ask his friends and family for presents. He asks for supplies like cat food, paper towels, and cat toys, and donates the bundle to Our Companions. His compassion is spreading, according to Liz. "Some of his friends are doing that now too, asking for canned goods for food banks or doing fundraising for children's hospitals."

Tate McNamar knows the importance of the written word. At age 11, she joined the Kats and Kids program and fell in love with kittens. She was so enamored that she decided to write a persuasive essay entitled, "The Benefits of Cat Ownership," to convince her parents to allow her to adopt. She cited several scholarly articles to prove her thesis and ultimately it worked. She is now the proud "cat mom" of Pedey.

"I hadn't been really used to cats, I'd always known dogs better," says Tate. "My mom had cats growing up, so I really wanted to learn what they're all about." Learning about animals benefits both pets and people. Dr. Mary Renck Jalongo of Indiana University of Pennsylvania has performed studies assessing the stress levels of kids who read aloud to various groups. Reading to dogs caused them to be the most relaxed.



(L) Older kittens need love too! Paul enjoys snuggling up to senior Arthur. (R) Taking a cat nap with Marty relaxes the cat as well as the human.

In addition to improving literacy, being around animals can teach children all sorts of life skills. They learn how to nurture and care for someone other than themselves. It can also improve their relationship with younger siblings. Being responsible for an animal makes kids feel important and boosts their confidence. Tate is glad she took the time to learn more about cats. "My advice is to be calm and let them get used to you."



(L) Brave Tate gives Pedey a much needed nail trim, with her mom's supervision. (R) Pedey all grown up, but still a mama's boy.

Paul Stansel spends time with cats at the Sanctuary who have behavioral issues. They often require a great deal of patience – for example, they may tolerate (or even enjoy) the company of a human, but are not as interested in being petted – at least not at first. Volunteers of all ages learn about the different, and sometimes surprising, ways we interact with the cats to best suit their needs. "My advice to other teens volunteering with cats is to have patience," says Paul. "Some cats take time to get to know you, some don't. Most people probably don't think about how much they're helping cats just by spending time with them."

Barnaby is a cat at the Sanctuary who initially came to us with a little bit of a feisty streak. He was sweet as can be, but if you petted him just one too many times, he might swat or try to nip.

Thanks to volunteers like Paul, Barnaby is more secure and trusting, preferring now to relax on laps and play with feather toys than to strike out.

Win-Win

All the kids and teens in the program have expressed an interest in continuing to help animals as they get older, whether through volunteering, working in the animal welfare field, fostering animals, or adopting a pet. The next generation of animal advocates is here.

Nora Brown understands the importance of the program. "We all help the cats become socialized and happy," she says. "We help shy and timid cats become confident and adoption-ready. I definitely want to keep volunteering in the future, and I would like to look into fostering animals until they find a forever home."

By nurturing your kid's passion for animals, you create a lifelong animal lover – and it's not just the pets who benefit – the kids themselves gain a lot from interacting with animals. They learn empathy, patience, and how to help those in need in their community. Just in case your kid isn't a cat lover, Nora has some words of wisdom to help convert you: "Just because one cat is cranky and mean, it doesn't mean every single cat is terrible. I wish more people would be open to volunteering, because then they would meet a sweet, loving cat, and maybe they would change their opinion."

Expanding kids' horizons, helping animals, and creating a world that's better for both pets and people; that's definitely a win-win-win scenario.

Is Your Child Interested in Volunteering?

If your child is at least 10 years old and interested in volunteering in the cat program with their parent/legal guardian, contact Lindsey at lindsey@ourcompanions.org for more information.

Aesthetic Surgical Procedures – Time to Think Twice

By Tammy Wunsch



Although practices and attitudes toward the appearance of our companion animals have evolved over the years, it is still common practice to mutilate pets by docking, cropping, declawing, and devocalizing. Recent trends in pet debasing involve piercing and tattooing. Most of the older practices such as ear cropping were historically done at the pet owner's discretion for the sake of appearance or adherence to generally-accepted breed standards.

Since a good number of these elective surgical procedures have been practiced for many years, the general populace has just accepted them as normal. But when you really look into what goes into these surgical procedures and the reason for doing so, it certainly raises serious and valid concerns about whether such practices should be permitted.

Docking is the intentional removal of all or part of a dog's tail. Originally, docking was thought to prevent rabies, strengthen the back, increase the animal's speed, and prevent injuries when ratting, fighting, and baiting. Today, these procedures are done purely for aesthetic reasons rather than health concerns and are unnecessarily painful for the dog.

There are two methods for docking a dog's tail. The first involves constricting the blood supply to the tail for a few days until the tail falls off. The second involves surgical removal of the tail with scissors or a scalpel. Docking has been restricted since 2013 and can only be performed by a veterinarian on certain dog breeds.

Cropping is the intentional removal of the external visible flap of a dog's ear. The dog's ears can then be taped so that they are pointy. Historically, cropping was viewed as a method to keep working dogs' ears clean and healthy. Today it is done to make the dog look more alert and formidable. Thankfully it is now illegal in many countries and deemed unnecessary by most veterinarians, although it is not uncommon to see dogs today that have suffered ear cropping procedures. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association,

nine states regulate, restrict, or prohibit ear cropping on animals.

Declawing is often misunderstood. Many think it's simply the surgical removal of a cat's claws (often front, sometimes both front and rear). In reality, it is equivalent in a human to having the tip your finger amputated down to the knuckle. Cats' claws are attached to the last bone in their toes and this procedure is done purely for the convenience of the pet owner and has no benefit to the cat. Furthermore, declawing can be an extremely painful procedure from which your cat may never recover. There's also a mental and emotional health component at stake. Claws are a source of pride for every cat. When you take that away from them, you shake their confidence and their self-esteem. Many pet owners say that their cat's personality changed after declawing.

Cat owners and veterinarians often claim that more cats will be euthanized or relinquished to shelters if they are not declawed. The Paw Project is a nonprofit organization with a mission to educate the public about the painful and crippling effects of feline declawing. Ironically, the organization has found that declawed cats who lose their homes do so most likely because they were declawed. Indeed, they contend that declawed cats are disproportionately abandoned to shelters and may be euthanized more often because of the behavioral and physical problems that they exhibit as a result of being declawed.

Scratching is a normal, natural and necessary behavior for a cat's physical and mental health. Simple and humane alternatives to declawing include providing the cat with a scratching post, providing regular nail trims, and utilizing synthetic nail caps.

Devocalizing is also known as debarking, ventriculocordectomy or vocal cordectomy, is a major, invasive surgical procedure performed on both dogs and cats. Tissue is removed from the animal's vocal cords to permanently reduce or eliminate the volume of its vocalizations. There are currently six states where devocalization is prohibited unless medically necessary.



Doberman with an undocked tail and natural ears.

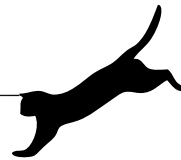
Piercing is typically performed on pets' ears, however, it sometimes involves nose rings, lip rings, and piercing through skin on the pets' bodies. A dog's ears have a lot of blood flowing through them and can bleed profusely with even the slightest nick. Dogs and cats also will not know how to care for their piercing. They scratch themselves, run and roll around, and play roughly – all activities where a piercing can get caught and pulled out painfully.

Tattooing is a cruel and inhumane practice. The animal derives no physical benefit from the tattoo. Parents would not give their babies tattoos and should not be allowed to abuse their animals in this manner either. In some cases, small tattoos have been used, much like branding, for the purpose of identification, but most veterinarians are against the practice.

Unless medically necessary, the above procedures – and any invasive procedure which does not benefit the animal – should be made illegal. We hope you will share this information with others in an effort to educate people on the proper, humane care of animals. Additionally, please support legislative initiatives to ban these types of activities.

How Dogs and Cats View Humans

By Jessica Beganski



Cats and dogs, our most beloved pets, are exceptional in the animal kingdom in that they evolved alongside humans and adapted to us like no other animals have. This unique evolutionary path resulted in traits that have facilitated their place in our hearts, minds and homes. We love our pets; but how do cats and dogs view us? As one of them? As larger, slower versions of themselves? Do they love us in return?

A quick history of cat and dog evolution

Dogs and cats became domesticated as much by their own need for survival as human choice. According to two Duke University researchers, Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods, in their book, *The Genius of Dogs*, it is most likely that the dog's wolf ancestors approached us – probably while scavenging around garbage dumps on the edge of human settlements.

"The wolves that were bold but aggressive would have been killed by humans; and only the ones that were bold and friendly would have been tolerated. Far from the survival of the leanest and meanest, the success of dogs comes down to survival of the friendliest," according to Hare and Woods.

Similarly, it is believed that the ancestors of domestic cats were also attracted to humans by mice living in human dwellings and possibly to our trash. Researchers who have studied the origins of the domestic cat explain, "Both of these food sources would have encouraged wildcats to adapt to living with people; in the lingo of evolutionary biology, natural selection favored those wildcats that were able to cohabitate with humans and thereby gain access to trash and mice." (*The Taming of the Cat*, Driscoll, Clutton-Brock, Kitchener, and O'Brien)

However, due to competition among cats for food and territory, natural selection would have also favored cats who could fend for themselves. In order to survive, cats would have had to maintain their hunting and survival skills independent of humans.

Two key distinctions exist between cats and dogs that likely have had significant impact on their particular adaptation. Cats evolved from a solitary ancestor, the North African wildcat, while the dog evolved from a social pack animal, the wolf. Furthermore, the process of domestication of cats has been much, much shorter and more recent than that of the dog.

Do cats and dogs understand us?

Friendliness caused strange things to happen in the dog's wild ancestor. Not only did dogs start looking different than wolves, dog psychology changed. Dogs developed the ability to read human gestures – an ability that is singular in the animal kingdom and much more like that of a human infant.

Dogs also developed other senses that are tied to the human-canine connection – smell, for example. When researchers at Emory University used the latest brain imaging technology to study how dogs react to the smells of humans and other dogs, they concluded that dogs react more favorably to humans than to other dogs. Interestingly, they found that a particular dog owner's scent "actually sparked activation in the 'reward center' of (the dog's) brains. Of all the wafting smells to take in, dogs actually prioritized the hint of their humans over anything or anyone else."

John Bradshaw is a cat behavior expert at the University of Bristol and author of *Cat Sense*. After observing pet cats for several years, he has concluded that cats don't really understand us the way dogs do. While dogs view humans as something special, researchers have yet to discover anything about cat behavior that suggests they view us as anything other than a cat. Putting their tails up in the air, rubbing around our legs, and sitting beside us and grooming us are exactly what cats do to each other. Cats are also less likely to understand our facial and physical cues.



Do cats and dogs love us?

Oxytocin is often called the "love hormone" because it is associated with feelings of trust, love and bonding. Neuroscientist Dr. Paul Zak conducted a study of a small group of cats and dogs to test their levels of oxytocin before and after playing with their owners.

The results show the "love hormone" increased by an average of 57.2% in dogs and by 12% in cats – with only 50% of cats registering a change in oxytocin levels at all.

According to Dr. Zak's research, "The dog level of 57.2% is a very powerful response. It shows these dogs really care about their owners." Cats produced less of the hormone, but it's difficult to assess exactly why or what the relevance of this really is. It could be because cats are territorial, so, when they are pulled out of their familiar environment for a study such as the one Dr. Zak performed, the results may not be as relevant.

Taking all of this with a grain of salt, it's interesting and entertaining to think about how our pets have evolved and adapted to their lives with us, and why they behave in the ways they do. We know how special our pets are, whether they are feline or canine, and regardless of how they perform in human-controlled testing environments.

Move Over, Van Gogh – It's for the Animals!

Who would have supposed that paintings created by our own Sanctuary animals would be the hottest new trend in art?

It's true! At a recent Sanctuary event, held Saturday, September 22, dozens of animal lovers came to view and bid on original works of art created over the summer by our Sanctuary's animal artists-in-residence. These pieces were created using special nontoxic paints designed for children's use, and boasted elements of abstract, realism and expressionism. By the time the show was over, every piece had sold!

The event also gave OC an opportunity to show off the latest additions to the Sanctuary, and a great time was had by all. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who attended; it was a beautiful autumn day and we couldn't imagine a more creative and fun way to support and honor our talented animal friends.





The Perfect Day Trip

The autumn season is a time for road trips, brisk walks and cozy companionship. We can offer all of these and more at our beautiful Sanctuary in Ashford. Come enjoy a walk along our trails, visit our gardens and Remembrance Wall, and give some love to the adorable pets awaiting their forever homes. The animals always benefit from the socialization, and we suspect you will enjoy being showered with adoration and warm snuggles. We're open to the public every Saturday from 1 p.m. until 3 p.m.

We've had a very exciting year -- our campus now has three new rescue cottages: (Chris's Cottage, Love Shack and Jane's Place). While there, if you like, you can learn more about volunteer opportunities and some of the many ways you can become involved in the meaningful work we do.

We guarantee you will love spending time at our peaceful and welcoming retreat, where injured and traumatized animals are given a second chance. Our no-kill promise means you can leave feeling good about your visit and the work we do. Come see where the magic happens - the animals will be waiting for you!

Our Companions Animal Sanctuary, 46 Floeting Road, Ashford, CT 06278





Our Companions Recognized for Being a Good Investment

Charity Navigator, America's largest independent evaluator of nonprofit organizations, has awarded us a four star rating (99.63 out of 100).

How did we achieve this?

- By applying 84% of our donations directly toward animal care;
- By spending merely 3 cents to raise a dollar, far below the national average of 20 cents;
- And by never taking out a loan or incurring any debt.

With nearly 100% of our funding coming from charitable donations, everything we do is made possible by you. As such, we are committed to stretching the donated dollar; we owe it to you for making Our Companions possible.



And now, we need your support more than ever.

Between the Sanctuary expansion and the tremendous growth of our critical programs and services, this year our operating budget increased by 20%.

To ensure we have the resources to continue providing life-saving programs that help animals and their caregivers in Connecticut and beyond, please consider making a generous gift today by visiting ourcompanions.org/donate, or by sending a check to:

Our Companions Animal Rescue, P.O. Box 956, Manchester, CT 06045

If you'd like to make a gift of stock or donate directly from your IRA (if you are 70 ½ or older), please contact us at 860.242.9999 Ext. 301 to learn how.

Thank you for helping us to fulfill our promise to do the right thing for animals.





Today's Actions Help Tomorrow's Animals

Planned giving does not require a large income or vast estate – only a thoughtful intention to make a difference in the lives of animals who have nowhere else to turn. It's something every one of us can do, and thereby play a part in ensuring that Our Companions continues its work for years to come.

By including Our Companions Animal Rescue in your estate plan, you will become a member of our *Forever Home Society*, helping us to fulfill our promise to always do the right thing for animals regardless of the challenge or cost.

Below, is a current listing of the members of our *Forever Home Society*. We hope you will consider making a meaningful commitment to the animals and adding your name to this list of philanthropic animal lovers.



Anonymous	Mr. Charles and Mrs. Nancy Curtiss	Ms. P. Hanmer
Ms. Elizabeth Aaronsohn	Ms. Christina (Tina) Davies	Mr. Bob and Mrs. Susan Hart
Ms. Mary Jean Agostini	Ms. June E. Day	Ms. Harriet Hersh
Mr. Doug and Mrs. Linda Andersen	Ms. Mary June Day	Ms. Jane Hewitt
Mrs. Janet Bailey	Ms. Heather Dennis and	Ms. Kim Hoffman
Dr. George and Mrs. Jennifer Barrows	Mr. Kevin Gillespie	Ms. Kathie Hunter
Mrs. Deborah Batten	Ms. Claudette Douglas	Ms. Lisa Ireland *
Ms. Lisa Marie Bigelow	Ms. Christine Durrer *	Ms. Sandra Jacobus
Ms. Laurie Brennan and	Ms. Karen A. Ellsworth	Mr. Randall and Mrs. Marie Joyner
Ms. Connie Calderaro	Ms. Karen Ericson	Ms. Kathleen Kennedy
Ms. Joan Oppelt Brodeur	Ms. Barbara J. Erskine	Ms. Dottie Kern
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Ms. Lana Burchman	Ms. Anna Maria Fornino	Ms. Jean Koepke
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Ms. Donna Canalis	Ms. Valerie Friedman	Ms. Estelle Langlois
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Ms. Pam Connelly	Mr. Joseph Popovitch	Mr. Neil and Mrs. Janice Levett
Mr. James and Mrs. Jessica Couzens	Mr. David Gregorski	Mr. Mitchell and Mrs. Susan Linker
Mrs. Carol Covello	Ms. Leslie Haber	Ms. Anne Llewellyn
Mr. Harry and Mrs. Joan Curry	Ms. Jamila Hadj-Salem	Ms. Mary Mansfield

If you have already included Our Companions in your estate plans, please let us know so we can welcome you as a member of the *Forever Home Society*. To learn more, please contact Susan Linker at (860) 242-9999, ext. 301 or email SusanL@OurCompanions.org.



Forever Home Society Member Feature

Lynda Thornton

Forever Home Society Member since 2013

"I've been a volunteer with Our Companions for over nine years and have seen first-hand how conscientious they are with their monies. It's really quite amazing how they have grown over the past few years, seeing how much has been accomplished and they haven't accumulated any debt. The emphasis is always to put the animals first. I've seen dogs come through that have needed extensive medical care and rehabilitation. They don't hesitate to spend where it is needed most, which is something I appreciate. I feel quite comfortable having Our Companions in my estate plans knowing that the animals will be the beneficiaries!"

Right: Lynda with her dogs Greta and Ellie.



Mr. Robert and Mrs. Susan Mason

Ms. Mari Merwin

Ms. Linda Mester

Ms. Jacqueline Mickiewicz

Ms. Olevine (Lois) Morin

Mr. Jaroslaw and

Mrs. Elizabeth Nyczak

Mr. Len Oberg and in memory of

Mrs. Diane Oberg

Mr. Roger and Mrs. Barbara Orsie

Ms. Lida Orzeck

Ms. Nancy Parker

Ms. Erminia Pascucci

Ms. Sherri Pasquale-Cassidy

Mr. William and

Mrs. Eleanor Peters *

Mr. Henry Petrofsky

Ms. Doris Phillips

Mr. Neil and Mrs. Kathy Pierson

Ms. Patricia Plourde

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Mr. Cyprian Martin

Mr. Robert and

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Mr. Tom and Mrs. Rita Weidman

Mr. Alfred and Mrs. Helen Wilke

Mr. Edward and

Mrs. Kathleen Young

Dr. Gordon and

Mrs. Kim Zimmermann

* Deceased

Legal Language and Tax ID If you wish to name Our Companions in your will or estate plans, we should be named as: Our Companions Domestic Animal Sanctuary, DBA Our Companions Animal Rescue • Legal Address: P.O. Box 956 Manchester, CT 06045 • Tax ID number: 41-2047734



To the Animals! (clink!)

Rising Pint brews up a great time while raising thousands for animals in need.

By Jennifer Barrows

Talk about following your passion. Brett Hollander and Heather Schold followed theirs and have tripped upon a truly winning combination: sharing their love of craft beer with others, while raising money for causes they believe in. Now who can't get behind that?

Each year in May, East Hartford's Rentschler Field is transformed into a beer-lover's Nirvana. Some 80 artisan brewers have an opportunity to showcase their talents to appreciative attendees from all over the region as they revel in a street party-like atmosphere. Brett and Heather and the entire Rising Pint team have created an unforgettable annual experience that celebrates community and great beer.

"We made this event about the artisan brewers so they'd want to be involved," says Brett. We also saw it as an important means of raising money for local charities whose work is meaningful to us."

In 2019, its ninth year, Rising Pint will take place on May 11. Brett and Heather hope the event will continue to grow in popularity with every year, which seems highly probable, since America's love for craft-brewed beer shows no signs of abating.

Since May can be an iffy month, weather-wise, the Rising Pint team takes precautions against rain or unseasonably cool conditions: the event is housed entirely under the upper deck of the stadium, keeping everyone and everything protected – so the prospect of rain should not deter anyone from attending.

The way it works is that attendees may sample as many beers as they can responsibly drink, while enjoying a wide array of mouth-watering culinary offerings from local restaurants and food trucks. Local bands take to the stage to provide entertainment, and a local trivia company helps create some friendly competition and added enjoyment for all.

A few years ago, Brett suggested to Heather that they add a local animal rescue organization to their mix of charitable beneficiaries.



(L to R) Event organizers Heather Schold and Brett Hollander with Thomas Tansil from Folds of Honor.

"Heather loved the idea," says Brett. "I showed her all the info about Our Companions and she thought it sounded great. I had been a contributor to OC for a few years. I knew the organization did great things and that we could trust them to do the right thing with the donations."

"Rising Pint is a complete blast," says Our Companions CEO Susan Linker. "Heather and Brett really go all-out, enhancing the offerings with every year and getting the broader community engaged. The event provides attendees a chance to learn about some great craft brews and sample local culinary fare – all for great causes."

The Rising Pint brewfest has captured the hearts of thousands of artisan beer lovers; and it certainly has captured our hearts here at Our Companions. In 2016 and 2017, OC received a total of \$30,000 in donations from this event. That is a lot of barley and hops. We also realize it represents a great deal of hard work in the



form of planning, coordination, and community participation. On behalf of the animals, thank you all!

So, where will you be May 11, 2019?

For more information about Rising Pint, visit www.risingpint.com.



Imagine a syringe filled with a magical potion to cure your cat's disease. Would you choose this one-time injection as opposed to a lifelong dependency on daily medication that only manages symptoms, with possible harmful side effects? How about this painless injection, similar to a vaccine, as an alternative to surgery?

Assuming you answered 'yes' to these questions, would you make the same decision if the liquid in the syringe contained radioactive iodine? The mere sound of the word 'radioactive' is enough to make a pet owner bristle with second thoughts. But while it isn't exactly magic, a single dose of Radioiodine (I-131) injected under the skin is a proven full-blown cure for Feline Hyperthyroidism (FHT), and has been a successful treatment for over 20 years.

Feline hyperthyroidism, a potentially fatal disorder if left untreated, is the most common endocrine disease typically affecting cats over eight years of age. Seen in both sexes and all breeds, hyperthyroidism occurs when one or both thyroid glands in the cat's neck enlarge and produce an excess of thyroid hormones. In most cases, this enlargement is caused by a benign (non-cancerous) tumor called an adenoma. Cancerous thyroid tumors are extremely rare and found in only two percent of cases.

Signs and Symptoms

The classic signs of hyperthyroidism — weight loss despite an increased appetite, and excessive thirst with greater urine volume — may be subtle in the early stages making them difficult to detect. An increase in thyroid hormone also affects the heart, kidneys and digestive system which become over-stimulated and must work much harder, therefore myriad other symptoms can also appear such as behavioral changes,

hyperactivity, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle wasting, increased shedding or greasy matted coat condition — even cardiac issues.

Diagnoses

To reach a diagnosis, your veterinarian will perform a physical examination which includes palpation of the two thyroid glands in the neck area, to check for enlargement. Heart rate, respiratory rate and blood pressure are measured, and muscle mass is assessed. Blood tests are conducted specifically for thyroid function levels as well as general blood screening for other abnormalities.

Treatment

Four options are available to treat hyperthyroidism: daily medication, surgery, nutritional management, and radioiodine therapy, each with the goal to restore normal thyroid function without causing a drop to below-normal levels (hypothyroidism).

- Medication: anti-thyroid drugs are used to control the disease by pilling (one to three times daily), or by transdermal gel applications to the skin. The potential for adverse side effects is common, and treatment is life-long — not a cure. Initial expenses are low and no hospitalization is required, however frequent monitoring and blood testing increase long-term costs.
- Surgery: a thyroidectomy removes all or part of the thyroid gland and can be curative. General anesthesia is required, increasing the risk of complications especially in older cats with underlying heart or kidney disease.
- Nutritional Management: a prescription iodine-restricted diet may help control the disease and eliminate the need for daily

medications. Ongoing research into long-term health effects is currently being evaluated. Cats on this diet are not allowed any other form of food or treats, and cannot be hunters. In multi-cat households, segregated feeding is required.

- Radioiodine Therapy: commonly called I-131, radioiodine is considered the treatment of choice for most hyperthyroid cats — it is safe and effective providing a 98-99% cure without any dangerous side effects. Many facilities even report successful treatment in cats over 20 years of age. A small amount of radioactive iodine is injected under the skin and absorbed only by the overactive thyroid tissue. Amazingly, abnormal tissue is destroyed while surrounding tissues remain unharmed. Most cases are completely cured with a one-time injection. Hospitalization is required for approximately five to seven days in a specialized facility. During home aftercare, specific isolation and detailed protocol requirements must be followed for several weeks.

Cats with hyperthyroidism often suffer from secondary medical issues as well, so it is important to consult with your veterinarian before deciding which therapy route would be most beneficial. Recognizing signs of hyperthyroidism and early treatment help provide a brighter future for our feline friends whether or not you choose the magic shot.

Adopt Tabby!



Beautiful Tabby has hyperthyroidism but that doesn't slow her down. She enjoys interactive play, being brushed, and being with her people day or night. A simple, quiet life where she can be your one and only would suit her perfectly. For more information on this lovely 11-year-old girl, please contact Donna at **860-242-9999 x 302** or **Donna@ourcompanions.org**



Technically Speaking is written by Certified Veterinary Technician, Lyn T. Garson, to address basic information on animal health issues and how they needn't be barriers to adopting a great pet.

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of *Technically Speaking*, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.



Like all domesticated animals, the cats of today retain many of the survival features that allowed them to thrive when they were once in the wild. However, the domesticated cat has yet to develop furniture-friendly claws or employable skills – unless of course they are a blue-collar cat (see “Working for a Living: Blue-Collar Cats Earn Their Keep” from our Winter 2018 issue). Unable to use their physical tools to the degree that nature intended, many cats experience boredom that can lead to behavioral issues or health problems. From personal experience, I can quickly tell when my cat P is bored; the batting paws from under the bed are a telltale sign! Thus, I and other feline caregivers need to be creative in giving our cats the stimulation they require to keep them happy and well-adjusted. I asked Karen Aseltine, Our Companions’ Feline Behavior Manager for some advice on the subject.

Feline Superpowers

Cats did not evolve solely to lounge in the sun or walk all over your keyboard when you are writing articles for *Our Companions News* magazine. Rather, cats evolved to hunt, and are still built for that purpose. Cats’ eyes help them see 186 degrees and six times better than humans in dim light. Their ears enable them to hear frequencies far beyond that of humans. Cats also smell things that we cannot begin to detect. When sprinting, they can reach an impressive 31 miles per hour, and when jumping, they can leap a distance five times their body length!

So what does all of this mean? Your feline has talents they may be unable to use in your home, due to the different circumstances associated

with an indoor, controlled environment, especially space constraints. Because cats did not evolve to live indoors, they are stuck with these hunting instincts and physical talents that they cannot fully express (unless you regularly invite critters into your home which we don’t recommend). This can make them more prone to acting in undesirable ways (e.g., scratching and breaking things). Thus, enrichment feeding is important for neutralizing bad habits before they form, maintaining a healthy kitty, and protecting your valuables from being swatted off the nightstand.

Appealing to Instincts

Enrichment feeding can help prevent behavioral problems while providing an avenue for your cat’s excess energy, it involves the use of food puzzles, games, or hidden treats that provide stimulation and satisfy cats’ natural hunting instincts. One good way to start enrichment feeding is by purchasing or making a puzzle feeder that requires your cat to manipulate it in order for the feeder to issue a treat. Similarly, you can choose to hide treats around your home, but be sure to place them in or near spots your cat frequents. You can also engage in interactive play with your cat using a favorite toy and then rewarding them with food.

Letting cats forage and work for food in these ways promotes natural behaviors and allows them to use the tools and talents nature gave them. By using these methods, you will help your feline companion use their talents in positive and meaningful ways: puzzling and hunting their way to their treats before returning to that cozy spot on your keyboard!



Karen Aseltine is the Feline Behavior Manager and Caregiver at the Our Companions Sanctuary. Karen is a Certified Cat Behavior Counselor and serves as one of our resident “kitty psychologists.” She receives questions every day about cat behavior. This column will highlight the most commonly asked questions.

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of *The Scoop*, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org.

Doc & Phoebe's Interactive Indoor Hunting Cat Feeder



All dogs come with challenges when they join a family. Trudy, our greyhound, enjoyed counter-surfing, but we were able to change that habit with gentle redirection and trust-building. However, other dogs display more destructive or fear-aggressive behaviors that require more time and effort to address once they are in a new home. Given the stress on the family that often comes with handling destructive or misbehaving dogs, owners often search for a quick fix. Enter Board and Train, a method that sounds good on paper but is more problematic than it may appear at first glance.

What is it?

Board and Train, commonly referred to as “doggie boot camp” is a method used by correction-based trainers who often house the dogs in kennels and only provide them with attention when teaching commands. Practitioners of Board and Train promise solutions that would make any struggling dog owner take notice, but the reality is that a dog's problems won't change after spending a few nights or even a few weeks at a Board and Train facility.

Once a dog returns from Board and Train, the dog will easily take up its old behaviors because the family has not changed its ways of interacting with the dog. A couple of 30-minute training sessions are not enough to change your home dynamics, or to develop lasting change. Likewise, techniques used during Board and Train can cause dogs undue stress, the effects of which may persist for a very long time and may make the dog more aggressive than before.

In circumstances where the dog's behavioral issue is rooted in fear, correction-based training



is not only ineffective, but can make a fearful dog more fearful. Sometimes a fearful dog's aggression will actually increase because they feel they have no other choice but to bite when corrected.

Owners investing in Board and Train end up paying for a method that is at best ineffective, and at worst, exacerbates the problem.

What's the Alternative?

A better avenue for supporting the needs of fearful and aggressive dogs is through reward-based training (or positive reinforcement training). Some positive reinforcement trainers actually practice this method in a home boarding setting, perhaps while the owners are on vacation. Once the pet and the human have returned home, the trainer helps to reinforce the newly learned skills through training sessions in the home. Pet owners should not be dismayed

if change is slow to come. Lasting change can take time, but reward-based training is a positive experience that can be enjoyed on an ongoing or periodic basis. It's also something a pet can benefit from at almost any time of life, since it gives them an opportunity to learn a new skill and bond with their owner.

Ideally, when experiencing behavioral problems or when you're seeking training in general, Marie suggests you find an experienced positive reinforcement trainer to discuss the issue and determine what may be the best course of action. Dog training builds good foundational skills and behaviors, and provides methods to help create lasting change.

If you think you and your dog could benefit from reward-based dog training, please contact Our Companions to schedule a free behavioral evaluation with one of our trainers. During the evaluation we will discuss your concerns and goals and offer a treatment plan that will benefit both you and your dog. We offer low-cost classes at our Valerie Friedman Program Center in Manchester, Connecticut. Classes range from beginner level to an assortment of fun and advanced level classes.

For more information, email Info@OurCompanions.org or call 860-242-9999.



Our Companions Canine Operations Director, Marie Joyner, receives questions every day about dogs and their behavioral issues. Marie's Den answers some of the more commonly asked questions.

To submit a question for consideration in a future edition of Marie's Den, call us at 860-242-9999, ext. 301, or e-mail editor@ourcompanions.org



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Visit our OurCompanions.org for full job descriptions and volunteer requirements.

