



*Late in 2006, the Humane Society took on one of its greatest challenges to date—rescuing approximately 35 cats from a single home where conditions were very poor. The cats had not been fed properly, had almost no vet care or human contact, and were living in filthy conditions. They were thin, sick, flea-infested, and ranged from very friendly to almost feral.*

*It took months, but we worked diligently to find appropriate homes for all the kitties rescued from this terrible ordeal.*

*Some were friendly and easy to place. Others presented a challenge because they were so fearful.*

*This is the story of one lucky kitty's journey from being neglected to being cherished, and the wonderful family who saw behind the fear and has been more than willing to offer patience and unconditional love, which is, after all, the most any pet can hope for. --Editor*



### **Adopting a challenging cat - Primrose's story**

Every other adoptable cat was as friendly as a politician campaigning for election. Primrose, the tiny cat I'd agreed to take home trembled violently when extracted from her cage and greeted me with the enthusiasm of a prisoner facing execution. But something in this cat called me. This little cat clearly had a previous life that made trust difficult. So did I. But my life is good now, and I hoped hers could be too.

Once home, we put her in the pantry for safety. It offered a warm, quiet refuge with food, water, litter pan, and most important, a door. Primrose spent the first 10 days behind the freezer.

Love was supposed to conquer all, so I pulled her out once or twice a day for attention and petting. She wasn't interested. Some time during her 10th night in our home, she disappeared. It seemed impossible - the door was closed, with a clearance (we measured later) of 1 ¼ inches. But she was definitely gone.

Outside? I talked to neighbors for half a mile in every direction, searched the roadsides daily. Cats were seen, but no one knew whether the one they'd seen was Primrose, so we set out two humane traps. Two weeks went by, then three. No cat. I will admit here that I spent most of the third week in tears. However one-sided our relationship, I'd bonded to this little cat. I returned the traps and sadly resolved to get on with my life.

Five weeks to the day after she disappeared, I heard a brief, awful howl from between the outer and inner walls of the house. We frantically broke through the wall in three places in an unsuccessful effort to get her out. But half an hour after borrowing and baiting the live trap again - then leaving the room in darkness - an emaciated, frightened and spitting-mad Primrose stepped into the trap to eat and drink.

That was June 9. By the next day, we had made some new arrangements: a



## Primrose, Continued

large rabbit cage in the living room, partly draped with a sheet for a hiding space, insulated with a lot of newspaper and soft cloth, equipped with a small litter pan and dishes for food and water. I made a rice bag and heated it in the microwave to warm her on chilly days. We fed her kitten food, several daily meals of warmed cat food, high-calorie vitamins and talked to her constantly. Each day, I pulled her out of her cage for petting and conversation. But when I put her back in the cage, she retreated to the most remote corner and turned her back.

There were small steps forward. She loves being brushed. She's curious despite deep-seated fearfulness. She likes cat treats and she'll take an extra step to get one. But she showed no real desire to leave the safety of the cage, and when the sheet over her cage was changed, she was terrified.

We hopefully asked the contractor to close the holes we'd made in the walls and look for other cat-sized openings in the cellar – and close those too.

In late August, Primrose unexpectedly decided to leave the cage, taking up residence in the linen closet. Maybe we had actually discussed it? She's a talkative cat, meowing plaintively until she gets a vocal human answer, in what she might think is a conversational exchange. After a few weeks, she moved under the stereo. Recently she's felt braver, and started napping in the open, up on a

chair. If anyone new comes into the house, if someone calls from one room to another, if the telephone rings – a streak of tortoise-shell lightning dives back under the stereo.

Once, about a month ago, she jumped into my lap to be petted. Now this happens regularly. She's on my lap now, as I write this one-handed, purring loudly and looking up every minute or two to be sure she has my full attention. She's become an interesting little domestic tyrant, demanding attention, particular kinds of cat food, regular brushing, a human answer to every meow. She's a cat with definite personality, and (since the right kind of cat food is generally on the menu) she's become a plump little puss – too round now to squeeze under doors. She's still fearful, but she's also confident of her welcome.

She may never greet visitors with enthusiasm; she seems to be a one-person cat. But I count winning her affection as one of my proudest achievements this year, and I'm honored that her person is me.

*--Primrose's new mom is Karey Solomon, a journalist, owner of Graceful Arts fiber studio in Hector, and a very special person and pet lover. A recent Christmas card let us know that Primrose has also making friends with the other human in the house. Lucky Primrose.*

### Mark Your Calendar for these Upcoming Events!

**January: Renew your membership!!!** This is really important. We can't continue to operate our important programs without your support.

**February: Annual meeting and HSSC Open House.**

For more information, call us at 546-7710 or watch the local papers for announcements.

## The Power of Love—and Elbow Grease

On October 21, which was national Make a Difference Day, the Humane Society had the help of a group of dedicated—and very energetic—volunteers who did wonders cleaning, organizing and beautifying our clinic building.

Volunteers sorted through the blankets and sheets we use for our spay/neuter clinic, they did much-needed cleanup work outside, and they prepped and painted inside the building.

The place looks and feels fabulous, and we hope you'll stop by during our open house in February to check it out.

Thanks again to our wonderful volunteers including students from the Watkins Glen High School Interact Club and their advisor, clients of ARC, and HSSC members. We could never have done this without you!



Sandi Fucigna gets down and dirty doing yard work, while Gita Devi and John Potter prep for painting.

### The Humane Society would like to give special thanks to the Interact Club

In addition to helping us sort cans in September and clean on “Make a Difference” day, they ran a very successful donation drive to get us needed money and supplies for our clinics.

**A Huge Thank You to the Interact Club!**

## Ways you can help!!!

- Volunteer at our spay/neuter clinics on the 2nd and 4th Weds. of each month. A few hours make a difference— morning, afternoon or early evening. It takes no special skills.
- Spay and neuter your pets before they have unwanted litters. **Spread the word!!!** If you have friends or neighbors that need our services, we can help. In addition to low cost spay/neuter clinics, we have certificates that can reduce the cost of spay/neuter services at participating vets. **All of our local vets participate.**
- Volunteer!!! Fundraising is necessary to keep our programs running, but equally important are events like Earth Day that let people know we are here and can help. Give us a few hours of time.
- We have an adoption outlet for cats at the Ithaca PETsSMART store. Volunteer a few hours on weekends to play with cats and talk to potential adopters.
- Do you have room to help foster a cat or kitten awaiting adoption? We have a number of cats awaiting foster homes at our spay/neuter clinic. If you have room or can help care for those at the clinic, it would be greatly appreciated. **Better Yet!!!** Make room in your home for a cat or kitten with special needs like Primrose!!!!
- If you are interested in fostering dogs, please contact the Schuyler County Animal Shelter (management recently taken on by FOSCAS)
- We are still painting and need shelves assembled at our spay/neuter clinic. We will need help in the spring to put a memorial garden at the clinic to honor our friend Al Thurman.
- Donations of canned and dry food (cat and dog) and litter are needed. We distribute food to low income community members that need a little help to keep their companion animals home and healthy. There are many folks in our community doing what they can to feed and care for cats and dogs that have been dropped off by others not responsible enough to accept the adoption of a dog or cat as a life long commitment.
- Donate old towels and blankets, paper towels, bleach, laundry detergent, large envelopes, paper, stamps, small paper plates, carriers, humane traps, old newspaper and monetary gifts.
- Speak up when you see ignorance or cruelty. You can help educate or can report cruelty to the Schuyler County Sheriff Department.

**Can you help? 546-7710 or 387-6589**



# Santa, Santa, Everywhere



Santa in all shapes and forms helped the Humane Society celebrate this Christmas. Dawn Spencer played Santa during the Dec 15th 'Photo's with Santa' event at the Ithaca PETsMart store—posing with 46 doggie models. She was a great Santa—although we think Memphis is his own Santa suit was tough to outshine.

We also had a doggie breath reindeer show up to strut his stuff.

Luck would have it that we found a long lost picture of prior Santa, Beth Begany, and a Boa Constrictor.

Sandi and Gary Pappa of Cheasapeake Bay Retriever Rescue helped us do the same for the Dec 2nd Bells of Christmas celebration in Montour Falls, hosting photos, a pet boutique, rummage sale and food drive.



Color newsletter compliments of a member who thought these pictures shouldn't be missed..



## Wondered what we've been up to this year? Here are the highlights:

- Held **27** spay/neuter clinics where we altered **99** dogs and **592** cats. That translates into an average of **3340** fewer unwanted and homeless pets in our community.
- Found homes for **143** homeless cats from our community.
- Participated in Earth Day, Bells of Christmas, and held a pet food drive for our local food pantry. The Humane Society also distributed hundreds of pounds of pet food directly to people struggling to take care of their companion animals.
- Sponsored a pet-themed essay contest for local 4<sup>th</sup> graders.
- Did two can drives and a rummage sale to raise money for our programs.
- Volunteered at County Rabies clinics in addition to our own in October.
- **Celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. (No, we didn't make a big fuss. We really didn't have time while doing all of the above!)**

But, if you want to send a small—or large—gift to celebrate this milestone, we won't refuse...hint, hint.)

## **BRRR!!!! When Winter Strikes, Don't Forget Your Animal Companions. They Get Cold Too!!!**

Just like us, animals feel the same harsh winds, snow and freezing temperatures that we do.

Cats that go out during the winter can easily get frost bitten ears or freeze all together. Left on their own to find warmth, they may crawl into car engines where they can get hurt or killed when it starts.

Dogs, cats, horses, cows or any animal that must spend part or all of their time outside needs shelter to get away from the worst of the elements. Clean, dry bedding and an area not exposed to wind is essential.

If your companion animals are housed in a garage or basement, be sure to secure toxic winter substances like antifreeze. It has a sweet taste attractive to pets, but just one lick can be fatal. You can also protect your pet from salt and de-icing chemicals by

coating their paws with Vaseline and wiping it off when you bring them back in.

And then there are those like the ones below who enjoy the latest in winter doggie coat fashion.

Your pets are family, so let them know by keeping them warm, however you do it.





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**Please  
 Spay and Neuter  
 Your Pets**



**Memorial Donations have been made in memory of  
 the following people**

**John Yeager**  
 (former board member, lover of animals,  
 foster of animals—all of which he adopted,  
 and the best golf tournament organizer  
 we are ever likely to meet).

**We will remember his dedication to the Humane Society.**

**and companion animals**

**Tybee Island Light   Tommy Beasley   Teak   Banchee**