



Newsletter

What's New, Pussycat?

September 2017



Dio on wheels! (RIP DIO)

Bottle Babies!

Sleepless Nights and Busy Days for a Special Group of Foster Families

One of Cat's Cradle's newest foster moms, Barbi Cole, and her entire family (including husband Michael, daughter Dylan, and son Mikey) have come to learn firsthand how rewarding, though exhausting, it is to become that "special breed of cat" (pun absolutely intended!) who is a bottle baby foster.



Dylan feeding Twinkie

What are bottle babies? Neonatal kittens, not yet ready to be weaned from their mothers, whose mothers have either been killed, or who have abandoned them or been separated from them (sometimes by well-meaning finders who don't realize that the mother has just gone to get food for herself and will be back.) They may not have their eyes open, they may be unable to care for themselves in any way, so they are totally dependent on human caretakers - - they need to be kept warm and clean, bottle fed 24/7 on a strict schedule and their weight monitored, and stimulated to pee and poop, unless a nursing mother surrogate can be found. Cat's Cradle has a small group of individuals and families willing to take on this demanding, yet incredibly rewarding, commitment. Cat's Cradle and our licensed vet tech Christy Tabor provide formula, warming pads, bottles, nipples, scales, and other supplies, as well as vetting care and all important guidance and support for bottle baby fosters. We want you to hear from just a few of these special caretakers themselves about the experience.

Barbi Cole: Anyone who is a parent of toddlers can understand what we go through on a daily basis. Getting up in the middle of the night, constantly wiping faces and bottoms, making sure your child has everything they need to feel secure, grow, and learn. Fostering orphan kittens is just like parenting toddlers, only it's on a kitten-sized scale. Kittens can also be quite fussy or stubborn at times and don't always want to cooperate with you. You need to be committed and patient.

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Bottle Babies (Continued)

Barbi Cole: Our first two bottle babies are now thriving, but they were in very rough shape when we got them. We called them “The Floof Girls” because their hair was so fluffy when we dried them off after their first bath! Althaea is the smaller kitten with more white on her and Gypsi is the mostly gray one. They have grown SO much! Before we got them, we didn't think that they would be so small that they could just walk right through the bars of a pet crate. I had the crate all set up for them when they arrived and wanted it up off the floor a bit so they wouldn't catch any drafts. I thought it was a "perfect" nursery. After putting them both inside, we took a few minutes to watch them. Gypsi (the more active of the two) stepped up to the bars and wobbled straight through---luckily, into my waiting hands! So, we had to figure out something to make sure the girls stayed safe inside the nursery. My husband, Michael, came up with the idea to use pieces of cardboard around the inside of the crate so they could no



Barbi with Twinkie

longer escape...and it worked great while they were that small. For Twinkie, our newborn foster (her mother literally gave birth to her and walked away and didn't come back so we got her when she was a day old), who just turned one week old, I bought a clear plastic storage tub with high sides. So the kittens are teaching me!



Sue Gast: For me, the biggest challenge is being emotionally prepared to hope for the best but be prepared for the worse and overcoming fear of the huge responsibility! They are so tiny and fragile, so I want to make sure they are fed properly and kept clean and warm to prevent any issues such as pneumonia or dehydration. But it's so encouraging to see them thrive, gain weight, grow stronger and develop their little personalities. I like to see them cross hurdles—to graduate from a syringe with a miracle nipple, then to bottles, then to regular kitten food, then to reaching the one-pound mark!



Floof Girls

Lindy Suster, our TNR Coordinator, has had a crash course in the world of bottle baby care over the past few months. Her beloved Dio, whom some of you may have met at our 2017 Spring Fling, unfortunately passed away due to an inherent developmental abnormality. Lindy talks about what it takes to care for a bottle baby this way: “You need patience. They may get fussy and messy but to see them look at you like you are their whole world is indescribable. A strong heart is needed too, because sometimes they don't make it even with the best care and love. You just have to know that they were loved their whole little lives.”

In Memory Of.....In Honor Of....

What better way to honor or remember a loved one, a beloved pet, a friend's birthday or other special event than to SAVE A LIFE? You can make your donation online in memory or honor of by simply going to www.catscradleva.org by clicking on the donate button. Enter the information on the person being honored or memorialized, along with an address to send an acknowledgement card, and we will take care of the rest. New for Fall 2017, if you donate \$150 or more for an honor or memory gift, you can opt to have a picture of your loved one featured on our Facebook page on a day you choose!



It is so easy to save lives ALL year round! Visit www.catscradleva.org and you can sign up to become a Pet Pal. Simply choose recurring billing and we will charge your credit card monthly for the amount that you choose. You can cancel, increase or decrease your donation at anytime. Our Pet Pals receive all our newsletters and a special holiday thank you gift, along with a year end summary of donations for tax purposes. We hope you join our wonderful family of Pet Pals...don't delay, sign up today!

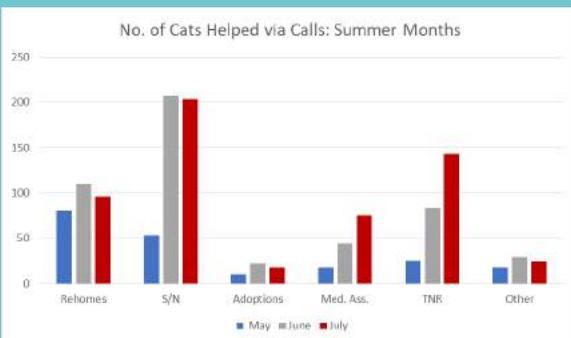
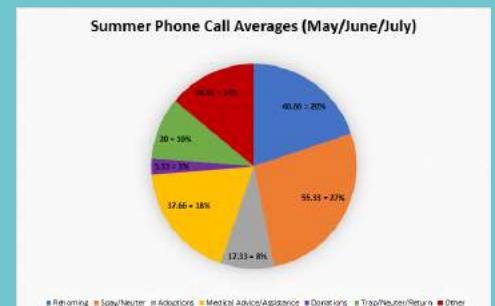
A DAY IN THE

Summertime Challenge is not only the name we give our annual matching fundraising challenge - - it's also a description of life at Cat's Cradle in the summer months - as the weather heats up, kittens are born right and left! More kittens means more for us to do in nearly every area of service. So what does a typical day in the life of Cat's Cradle look like in the summer?

We receive about 80 phone calls each week at our downtown center - - whew! They come from people seeking all sorts of help: wanting medical advice or financial assistance for special feline medical procedures, seeking Trap/Neuter/Return services, making adoption inquiries, asking for spay/neuter assistance, or looking to rehome cats that they own or cats they have found. Sometimes it's a combination of these things. Cat owners call seeking counseling, maybe concerning a behavioral problem or how to administer a medication. We also get calls from people who need short-term supplies of food, litter, bottle baby supplies, or the loan of traps. Sometimes we invite callers to come by for supplies or to demonstrate a technique they will need to know, such as how to administer eye drops.



Take a quick look at how we have helped our community in the last few months, broken down into a few of the most common "cat-egories". Let's start with rehomes: this is one of the primary ways we serve the community, and it's often heartbreaking to volunteers who answer phones when they realize how many of these calls we receive. So many of these calls in the summer come from people who have found mama cats and kittens, or abandoned kittens and who want to help them, but can't keep them. We work hard to help these folks by offering vetting and rehoming assistance if they will provide a safe place for the mama and kittens short-term, until they can all be altered, which then makes them candidates for rehoming. We also field many calls from cat owners who need rehoming help. While we always try to help people retain their pets, it isn't possible in all cases. Remember that people rehome cats for all kinds of reasons, from moving away to developing an unexpected allergy, and any time a person truly cannot keep a cat, Cat's Cradle makes a concerted effort to



find that cat a new home. Each and every one of those cats' finders or owners has to first complete our specialized rehoming form so that we can make individual, photo-inclusive listings for each cat or kitten and share them online. In May, we helped 80 rehome cats, 110 in June, and 96 in July. A second vital service that we provide is spay/neuter assistance, collaborating with low-cost area clinics to ensure responsible cat ownership for all. The single best means of combatting feline homelessness and overpopulation is altering cats, but many struggle to afford the procedure. That's why we have a specific spay/neuter fund and we encourage people to make restricted donations to that fund to allow us to help as many people as we can. In May we fielded 22 S/N calls to make appointments for 53 cats, in June we received 29 calls and booked surgeries for a whopping 207 of them, and in July, with 85 calls, we helped to alter 203. That averages out to about 45 spay/neuter inquiries per month with corresponding surgeries for about 155 – just think about how many litters of unwanted, homeless kittens that will prevent!

LIFE.....

Meanwhile, our one and only full-time employee, vet tech extraordinaire Christy Tabor, is incredibly busy in the spring and summer months, vetting cats and kittens pulled from municipal area shelters overflowing with them during this season. (Many people find orphaned babies during these months, and you can read more about how we help with those in this newsletter as well!) Once Christy ensures that they have a clean bill of health, some of these kitties are transferred to one of our amazing foster homes to await adoption, while other eligible kittens 2-4 months old are transported to Brandywine Valley SPCA in Pennsylvania, where kittens are far less common (primarily due to less frequent heat cycles) and in much higher demand. Organizing these large-scale transports is a huge logistical and practical undertaking, but well-worth it: a van full of kittens (numbering about 20-60 per transport) who might have struggled to find homes here in the Shenandoah Valley typically get adopted within hours of their arrival in Pennsylvania!

Further afield, our intrepid Trap/Neuter/Return coordinator, Lindy Suster, is also busiest in summer since she must respond to those calls we receive about feral cat colonies and other TNR needs constantly - - kittens, kittens, kittens! She sets humane traps, brings cats in for surgeries, and returns them, completely unharmed, to their outdoor homes. Lindy's goal is to trap every cat and kitten at each site, so that the colony is stabilized, instead of trapping just a few at a time, which likely leads to only more kittens.

And at PetSmart in Harrisonburg, where some of our adoptable cats are housed, our fabulous volunteers are fastidiously cleaning cages, keeping detailed records of and playing with resident kitties, and readying to facilitate adoptions during our weekend events. Those will be populated by cats whose loving foster parents make time to bring them in for showcasing, and whose kitty biographies provide potential adopters with the

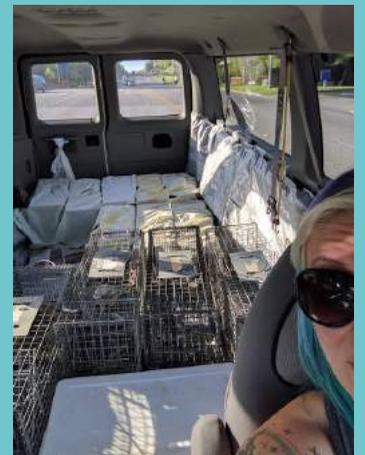


Lindy getting a trap ready!



kinds of essential details on that make an educated choice possible – that's one of many reasons why we make so many love matches finding cats forever homes.

All the while, using whatever means we can, we are working to spread the word about our lifesaving programs and to encourage new donors



Lindy with the Cat's Cradle van all loaded!

and supporters to join our mission - - volunteering, donating funds or supplies, fostering, answering phones - -there is always more to be done!

As you can see, it takes a village to keep Cat's Cradle functioning smoothly through the summer months, performing all of these wildly varied services to so many people and cats. There is no time of year more vital to our mission.

Meet Our New Staff!

Two of Cat's Cradle's super volunteers have joined the staff to divide the duties formerly encompassed within the Adoption and Volunteer Coordinator position. Jennifer Ybarra is now the Adoption and Outreach Coordinator and Patty Hardy is now the Volunteer and Community Services Coordinator. So how will the duties be divided up? Here's the basic structure, so you'll have a sense of who does what and where to go with questions about a particular program:

Jennifer Ybarra - - photography and bio postings for online adoptable cats, coordination and oversight of adoption events, receipt, screening and processing of online applications, coordinating transports for adopter pickups; social media and website postings and updates; other outreach events; rehoming postings; Downtown Center counseling and operations 2 1/2 days each week; merchandising; primary contact for questions on our adoption and rehoming programs.



Patty Hardy - - receipt and processing of all volunteer applications, scheduling and coordination of volunteer orientation sessions, updating of volunteer contact and duties/skills information, volunteer scheduling for Petsmart and Downtown Center; oversight of cleaning and animal care at Petsmart; purchasing supplies for all locations; updating of operations information and logs for spay/neuter and medical assistance programs, primary contact for questions on spay/neuter, TNR, and medical assistance programs.

Meet Jennifer Ybarra - Adoption and Outreach Coordinator

Q: What do you enjoy most about working at Cat's Cradle?

A: Being around like-minded, sensitive, passionate people who care so much about helping animals. It feels great to see how you are actively making a difference. Cat's Cradle really empowers everyone to take part in saving lives.

Q: Tell us a memorable story from your time as a volunteer with Cat's Cradle.

A: While photographing cats, I crouched down to get sweet Henry (who is still in our care with the wonderful Ingrid Moran). As soon as I opened his kennel and let him out, he climbed up in my lap, then up my chest, and wrapped each paw around each side of my neck. He gave me a real hug! Here is this cat who had been through so much, was ill, had been transported here and there before he ended up at the shelter, and yet he was so loving and so trusting that he did this with a stranger. It is a moment like that where you can see directly, in the embrace of one cat, how what you are a part of makes such a huge difference in individual lives.

Meet Patty Hardy – Volunteer and Community Services Coordinator

Q: What led you to make the jump from volunteer to staff member at Cat's Cradle?

A: I felt that in a staff position I could offer consistency and have a role in shaping the direction for the future of Cat's Cradle.

Q: What do you like most about working for Cat's Cradle? What's the hardest thing?

A: Knowing that I can, and do, have an impact on the welfare of cats and their owners. I can be a face for Cat's Cradle in demonstrating to our community that there ARE people who care! The hardest thing is knowing that we cannot help all the animals in need.

Meet Matt Heineck – Cleaning and Animal Care Coordinator (Intake Center)

Matt is a math major at JMU and has an Associates of Arts and Sciences from Blue Ridge Community College. Matt has had a love for cats since before he can remember and they have always been a part of his life. All of the cats he's had have been rescues or re-homes so Cat's Cradle was the next step in caring for the animals he holds so close to his heart. In his free time, Matt likes to do Live-Action Roleplay and Medieval Combat Reenactment as well as sing with his friends.



Letter from the Executive Director

With your help, we EXCEEDED THE \$50,000 SUMMERTIME CHALLENGE MATCH!!! As we go to press last minute donations are still coming in, but we are already over \$69,000!!! THANK YOU from all of our board members, staff and volunteers – we literally cannot save lives without your help and you stepped up!

There is so much news to share - - we have new staff! Please welcome Jennifer Ybarra and Patty Hardy, both previously volunteers for Cat’s Cradle, and Matt Heineck (stories inside). I want to say a special thank you to the board members and volunteers who took on shifts at the Downtown Center and/or additional volunteer responsibilities for our adoption and community services programs while we assessed and restructured the position previously held by Matt Chan. You were all a huge help in making sure that Cat’s Cradle’s vital work continued throughout the summer (see the story inside about a typical Day in the Life of Cat’s Cradle in the summer - - amazing!)

We also welcome four new board members - -Chase Martin, Susan Hagen, Susan Bennett, and Michael Hickman. You can read about our new and returning board members on the “About Us” (Leadership) page of our website at www.catscradleva.org.



Jennifer Kirkland

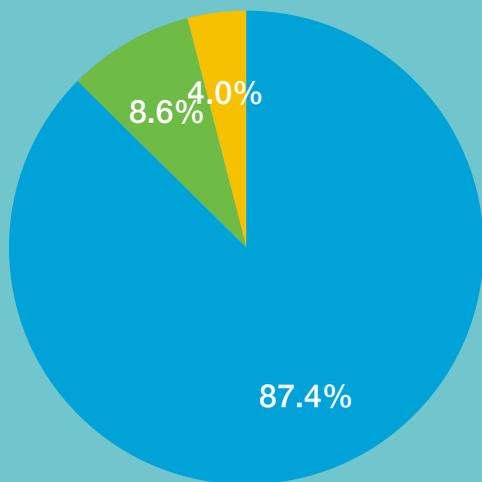
Thanks to all of our new board members for joining the team!

I am very proud to announce our final breakdown of expenses for the 2016 calendar year. Once again, Cat’s Cradle demonstrates that it is among the best charities in use of donor dollars for direct program expenses. 87.4% of all donated funds went directly for our spay/neuter, adoption/transport, or pet retention programs. Only 4% went for general management and only 8.6% went for fundraising. Quite simply, these numbers are a direct reflection of our dedicated volunteer base and our committed, ongoing donors who value the difference we make for cats in the Valley.

And what is on the horizon? We are excited to announce that we will be moving back to the Keezell Building at 122 S. Main Street in Harrisonburg this fall!!! We do not yet have an exact moving date, but expect to be back on S. Main sometime in October or November, where the plan is for us to have two floor to ceiling kitty rooms so that we can once again have adoptable animals to show and play with onsite. Our amazing space designer, Sherri

Heishman, will be working her magic to create a special space for clients, staff, volunteers, and visitors to experience as we work together to put compassion into action.

2016 Breakdown of Expenses



- Program Expenses
- Fundraising Expenses
- General Management Expenses

Happy Fall, and thanks to each of you for being a vital part of our mission.

Jennifer Kirkland
Executive Director



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Don't miss how you can become a Pet
Pal on Page 3!

Can you find Twinkie?

Little Twinkie the bottle baby is cuddling
with her stuffed animal "mommy."
Follow us on all of our social media
outlets to see cute pictures just like this!



540-433-1135

www.catscradleva.org ⁸