

Whisker Whispers

Newsletter of the

Stanford Cat Network



Welcome to the second edition of Whisker Whispers, the annual newsletter of the Stanford Cat Network. We hope you will enjoy this collection of educational articles and heart-warming stories!

About Our Program

The Stanford Cat Network is a nonprofit organization dedicated to caring for the homeless cats who live on Stanford University property. The Network is comprised of Stanford staff, students, faculty and community volunteers.

By agreement with the University, the Stanford Cat Network is responsible for the care of all free-roaming cats on campus. A registry of the Stanford cats and established feeding stations and schedules enable caregivers to monitor the health and well-being of the cats and identify hungry newcomers, before they are assimilated into the Campus population and reproduce.

Unsocialized cats are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and released back into their Campus territory, where they are fed and monitored daily by Network volunteers. Every effort is made to find the owners of stray tame cats. Unclaimed tame strays and any kittens are boarded or fostered, until adoptive homes are found. No cats are euthanized, except as warranted by a veterinarian to relieve suffering.

Studies have proven that trap-spay/neuter-vaccinate-release is the single most successful method of stabilizing and maintaining healthy feral cat colonies with the least possible cost to local governments and residents, while providing the best life for the animals themselves.

Please visit our website at <http://catnet.stanford.edu> for more details and resources!

Do Not Abandon, Do Not Adopt Campaigns

Due to the transitory nature of University life, students are generally not in a good position to take on the 20 year responsibility of caring for a cat. The Network encourages students to carefully consider the long-term commitment required before adopting a pet, and as a rule SCN does not adopt cats to students.

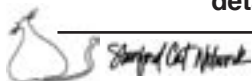
Pets are frequently left behind as their owners move away and do not make arrangements for the animal they took responsibility for. Many people assume their animals will survive when they move away and leave them behind. Often they believe that their cat will be able to hunt and support herself, or that someone else will find her and care for her.

Contrary to popular belief, domestic animals do not automatically return to their "natural" instincts and cannot fend for themselves. Humans have bred domestic companion animals and they have become dependent upon us for survival. Many abandoned cats die from starvation, disease, abuse, or as food to a predator.

Informing the Stanford community and public on these issues is of principal importance to the Network. Counselling and care by example are provided by Network volunteers.

Services Provided by SCN:

- Confidential pet-related support
- Feeding, monitoring, spay/neuter, vaccinations and emergency vet care for all homeless cats on campus
- Pet behavior consultation and advice
- Lost and Found Pet listings, advice and help looking for lost pets on campus
- Assistance to Stanford community members who need to find a new home for their pet
- Humane education program
- Adoption program for tame or tamable cats and kittens



The Career Cat

George was abandoned on convocation weekend in the late spring of 2001. Apparently, some graduating student no longer wanted him and had not thought ahead to make plans for a new home. Perhaps the owner hoped someone else would rescue their pet and find him a home, or maybe they mistakenly thought he could take care of himself outside, hunting for food. Lucky for George, he found a Stanford Cat Network feeding station where he met a volunteer putting food out for the feral cats.

“George is doing great and we are so pleased with him! He never ceases to amaze us with his calm and sweet demeanor.”

George ravenously ate some food, and then wound his way around the feeder’s ankles and asked for attention. He was scooped up and transported to a local veterinary clinic, and after a week with no owner to claim him, George was put up for adoption. Since he is a very handsome and friendly cat, we did not anticipate having George for long! He was extremely outgoing and friendly, got along well with other animals, and seemed to take everything in his stride. But as the summer wore on, and the rescued kittens came in, no one had interest in an adult cat.



George on the Job!

Not until September did George’s chance come along. An unusual request turned out to be a dream career for George. Kelli Danielsen is in charge of puppy

socialization with Guide Dogs for the Blind, a non-profit organization that provides guide dogs for visually impaired people. Kelli’s job is to make sure the puppies entering the guide dog training program have been exposed to a wide variety of situations and learn how to act appropriately. Most of us have seen guide dog puppies wearing their little green jackets as they walk in malls and public places with their foster families.

One situation that is always tempting to a puppy is to bark at or chase a cat, and that would not be safe behavior for a guide dog. So the puppies need to get used to being around cats in a controlled environment, like the Guide Dog campus. For this job a very outgoing, calm and friendly cat would be a necessity – a brave cat who would tolerate puppies sniffing and playing with him. The cat would also need to be friendly to the volunteers and supporters who come in and out of the offices throughout the day. When Kelli contacted us in search of such a cat, we knew we had the perfect candidate in George! Not only did he possess all the necessary personality traits, but he also boasted a Stanford education, although his major was undeclared.

Kelli went through our adoption screening process as any other potential adopter would, and during her meetings with George she brought her young and active Boston Terrier to see George’s reaction. George passed the test and was adopted as the puppy socialization cat for Guide Dogs for the Blind. On the San Rafael campus, George enjoys comfy quarters in a large office suite with plenty of attention from Kelli and the puppy socialization volunteers throughout the day. He doesn’t mind at all his daytime canine visitors, who sniff him and follow him all over until they lose interest in him. And he gets to do his part in bringing freedom and happiness to the lives of the visually impaired by helping in the Guide Dog training process. What a career! 🐾

Guide Dogs for the Blind is a nonprofit, charitable organization with a mission to provide Guide Dogs and training in their use to visually impaired people throughout the United States and Canada. Our dogs and services are free to those we serve, thanks to the generosity of donors and support of volunteers. We are devoted to promoting the human/animal bond.

This Is My Life By Bubba Pierre

So I can't quite tell you how I found myself in the situation I did, but I can tell you it wasn't a good one to be in. I was wandering the Stanford Campus, hanging out mainly in the French Quarter, hadn't eaten in ages, my ribs were showing and I had been in one too many cat fights that I somehow managed to lose (it's tough to win when you are weak and starving you know!) I wasn't a pretty sight and I wasn't enjoying life too much, to say the least. I just couldn't figure out what it was I had done to deserve this life. I'd been good. I'd been nice. I was a handsome fella in my days gone by. "Why me???", I asked myself as a stranger approached...



I thought maybe I was going to get lucky and this person might give me a morsel of food product, something, anything would have been fine with me. Instead, I found myself scooped up and taken away in this little cage like thing and I have to admit I was thinking to myself "just when I thought it couldn't get ANY worse!" I bounced around in the crate, tried communicating with my most sympathetic cry to no avail, and finally landed at a strange place where there were TONS of fellows like me all kept in small cubicles. It was like out of a SciFi novel or something!

The upside to this strange place (which I later heard referred to as "Doctor Mell's") was that I got to eat! And my space, although small, was kept clean! I wouldn't go as far to call it heaven or anything but for a kid from the streets like me it definitely was a step up in life.

People would come by daily. They'd say nice things about me. Many would pick me up and pet me and I'd do my damned-

est to put on a good show for them, purring, rubbing, whatever they wanted I did it! I heard many of them say, "this one is perfect if it wasn't for the FIV!", and back in the cage I'd go. Now, I was a Stanford graduate and all, but I had no clue what this FIV stuff was. One by one I would see my neighbors leave with people never to be seen again, and I questioned when it would be my time.

It seemed like a long time had gone by. I was feeling a lot better. The folks that I saw daily were pretty darn nice, and then this guy came in and I could tell he "fell" for me. I don't know. We had some sort of bond from the moment we met. Once again I heard the dread "FIV" mentioned, knowing that it meant I wouldn't be seeing this fellow again. But instead, I heard him say something like, "well, that's perfect, I've got AIDS."

FIV? AIDS? What these people were talking about I hadn't a clue. But next thing you know I was back in one of those cage like things, bouncing around, and taken to this "new" place, with this new fella. It was heaven right off the bat. There was a big soft couch and I jumped right on it and immediately took a nap (since I didn't know when I'd get the chance to do such a thing again I HAD to take advantage of it!)

When I woke up the fella was still there. And so was I. "Another dream??" I asked myself. Well, as it turns out, it wasn't a dream at all. Now I am fat and happy, living in the great place with this cool guy that I have a great time playing with and driving crazy, and for that he feeds me DAILY! and pets me and loves me. It is a strange thing, but I love it.

I still have to wonder who that first person was that scooped me up from Stanford. If I could, I would thank her. And I still have no clue what this FIV thing is. All I can tell you for sure is that I am back to my handsome self (that's what ALL the visitors say), feel great, have lots of love goin' on in my life and couldn't be happier.



The facts on Feline Immune-deficiency Virus speak for themselves:

FACT:

FIV cats most often live long, healthy, and relatively normal lives with no symptoms at all.

FACT:

FIV is a cat-only disease and cannot be spread to humans or other non-felines.

FACT:

The Feline Immune-deficiency Virus is a slow virus that affects a cat's immune system over a period of years.

FACT:

FIV is not easily passed between cats. It cannot be spread casually – like in litter boxes, water and food bowls, or when snuggling and playing. It is rarely spread from a mother to her kittens.

FACT:

The virus can be spread through blood transfusions, badly infected gums, or serious, penetrating bite wounds. (Bite wounds of this kind are extremely rare, except in free-roaming, unneutered tomcats.)

FACT:

A neutered cat, in a home, is extremely unlikely to infect other cats, if properly introduced.

FACT:

Many vets are not educated about FIV since the virus was only discovered 15 years ago.

FACT::

FIV-positive cats should be kept as healthy as possible. Keep them indoors and free from stress, feed them a high-quality diet, and treat any secondary problems as soon as they arise.

Frankenstein

Early this spring, a call came in on the Stanford Cat Network helpline reporting an injured cat. The caller was a campus resident who has been feeding a feral cat in her yard. Recently she noticed a deep gash on the cats' neck and realized he needed veterinary attention.



Frankenstein unimpressed with his visit to the vet.

Two SCN volunteers responded immediately, and were able to catch the cat with their nets, safari style. They quickly transported the fearful feline to a local veterinarian, where the staff works closely with the Stanford Cat Network and is accustomed to handling feral cats.

After sedating the cat, the veterinarian was able to examine the injury. He found that the wound completely encircled the neck, was infected and contained maggots. Under general anaesthetic, the vet cleaned out the wound and removed the dead tissue from the area. Deep within the wound, he found a leather collar - the cause of the cat's pain and injury. Someone had placed a collar on this cat while he was younger, and as he grew the collar dug deeper into his neck - restricting his air passage and eventually causing this terrible wound.

After the collar was removed and the wound cleaned, the area was stitched up and antibiotic injections given. Although the cat was on the road to recovery, he certainly looked strange with his shaven neck and the row of neat stitches encircling his head. In fact, he looked like he'd had his head sewn on and was dubbed "Frankenstein" by the clinic staff. Frankie for short! After a 2 week recovery period, Frankie was released back to his campus territory where he is fed and monitored daily by Network volunteers.

Without veterinary help, Frankenstein would have gradually succumbed to the wound as it grew deeper and affected his airways and vital arteries. What a terrible fate could have awaited him! This near tragedy illustrates the importance of caution when placing collars on cats. Not only can the collar grow into the neck and cause

injury or discomfort, it can get caught on something and choke the cat. Loose collars are just as dangerous as tight collars because they can get caught on something or the cat could get the collar into his mouth or under his arm. To avoid causing such suffering, remember these points:

Feral or Semi-feral cats:


Never place a collar on an unsocialized cat. Feral or semi-feral cats can be identified using a microchip ID and an ear notch.

Pet cats:

Unidentified cats are held for a very short time at shelters, so it is vital that your cat carries ID in case he is lost. Microchips provide safe and permanent ID and we highly recommend them, but they are not visible to people who may find your cat. It is a good idea to also keep a collar and ID tag on your pet cat, but remember:

1. Always use a break-away collar.
2. Use the smallest tag available, or embroider the phone number right on the collar. Make sure the numbers are visible and do not fade or wash away.
3. Check the fit of the collar every few weeks, you should be able to fit 2 fingers between the collar and your cat's neck. Not too tight, not too loose.
4. Do not place collars on young kittens. Kittens can be micro-chipped at any age.

Two types of break-away collars are commercially available, the elastic stretch type and the break-away buckle type. The elastic type should yield only enough

to allow the collar to slip over the cat's head if he becomes caught. If you chose the safety release buckle, test the snap to ensure it will come apart easily enough to release your cat, but not so easily that the collar will always come off. There is also a safety collar known as "Slip-Purrz" which are beaded safety collars, their coiled construction means they slip off when caught. Slip-Purrz are available at www.frogprince.bigstep.com/ 



"He certainly looked strange with his shaven neck and the row of neat stitches encircling his head. In fact, he looked like he'd had his head sewn on and was dubbed "Frankenstein" by the clinic staff.."

Climbers for Cats!

Everyone knows that cats love to climb and scratch with their claws! They also love to perch up high and survey their domain. What many people don't realize is that by providing their cat(s) with their own "furniture", they can not only help avoid such socialization as furniture scratching, they can have a positive impact on their cats' happiness! Many cats who feel insecure on the floor near the feet of humans will be much friendlier and outgoing when they are perched up high, closer to our arm level. Cat trees and climbers also provide wonderful exercise.

There are many styles of cat furniture available at pet stores, but often they can be very expensive. For those of you with a smaller budget and handy with a few simple tools, making your own cat tree is a fun weekend activity! Your cat will love you for it - once the noise of the saw and hammer has gone, that is! In this article, I will describe how to build a very simple cat tree. For more advanced designs, go to http://www.amby.com/cat_site/ or simply examine some commercial furniture and improvise!

MATERIALS:

1 post 4' in length, either 4X4 lumber or 6" diameter fence post (cedar or redwood is nice)
1 2'X2' square of 1" thick plywood
1 16" X 16" square of 3/4" thick plywood
2 1/4" x 3-1/2" lag bolts
2 flat washers (to fit the bolts)
4 1-1/2" wood screws
1 3" nail

double-sided carpet tape

Exacto knife, drill, hammer

30 3/4" wide-head nails (roofing nails)

3' X 5' scrap of carpet

1' X 4' carpet OR 200' untreated sisal rope for the post

Tip: Have wood cut to size at lumber store if you don't have a saw!

DIRECTIONS:

Drill holes in the base for the bolts. Find the center of the square and mark it with an "X". Drill 2 1/4" holes, each 1" from the "x" on opposite sides of the "x".

Cut a piece of carpet to 2' 8" square. Using an exacto knife, remove a 4" diameter circle from the center of the carpet for the post to attach through. Apply double-sided carpet tape to the edges of the wooden base and center it on your carpet square, with tape side down. Using the knife, cut away the square of carpet from each corner of the wood (Fig 1). Fold under the edges of the remaining flaps and then fold the flaps

over onto the bottom of the base. Secure the flaps to the bottom of the base using the roofing nails (Fig 2).

Hold the post against the carpeted side of the base and use the 3" nail to secure it in place from the bottom. Drill through the existing holes in the base into the post, then use the lag bolts to secure the base to the post. You can recess the bolt heads by drilling with a special drill bit so they will not touch your floor.

Stand the tree upright on its base and secure the 16" square of lighter plywood to the top of the post using the 4 wood screws. Flip the tree upside down to carpet the perch. Cut a 24" square of carpet and follow the same procedure described for carpeting the base.

Now, you may leave the post bare or cover it as you wish. If you are covering it, turn the tree on its side. Lay a strip of double-sided carpet tape down the length of the post on one side. For carpet, stick one edge of the 1' X 4' carpet piece to the tape and roll the carpet around the post. Turn the other edge under and crease it, then secure the edge every 6" with the roofing nails. Pound them in well so they are sunk into the carpet. Make sure the edges of the carpet are not accessible for scratching, check at the top and bottom where the post joins the base or perch. You may want to melt the edges before you carpet the post.

For a sisal wrapped post, decide where to start the wrapping and secure the rope to the post with a roofing nail. Wrap tightly around the post, the tape will help keep the rope in place as you wrap. Every foot or so and at the end, add a roofing nail to secure the rope. As with the carpet, pound the nails hard into the post so they are sunk deep into the rope.

Give the tree a final check over to make sure there are no protrusions, unravelling carpet, etc. Place the tree near a window or favorite hangout of your cat, and rub it in catnip if desired. Remember to check the tree frequently for signs of wear and unravelling!

Fig. 1

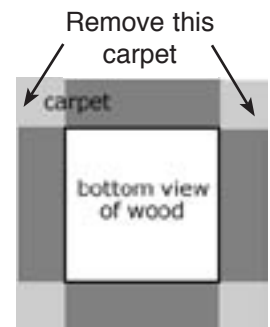
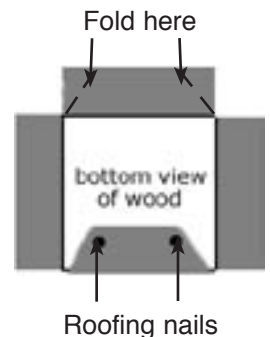


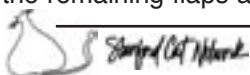
Fig. 2



Cautionary notes for building your own or purchasing a tree:

1. Examine your finished product for sharp edges, protruding nails, etc. Don't use staples to attach carpet.
2. If you carpet your tree ensure all the edges are melted or turned under so they cannot unravel - cats will chew and swallow the nylon strings which can cut them internally!
3. Make sure the base is heavy enough to be stable, your cat will run up the tree and leap off vigorously!
4. Construct the tree in a garage or area away from your cat. Curious kitty could be hurt or swallow a screw, etc. Likewise, clean up carefully when finished!

Questions? Email catnet@for sythe.stanford.edu



Stanford Cat Network

Whisker Whispers

Spring 2002

MAILING ADDRESS:

P.O. Box 18287
Stanford, CA
94309-8287

HELPLINE:

(650) 566-8287

E-MAIL:

catnet@
forsythe.stanford.edu

WEBSITE:

catnet.stanford.edu

All material © 2002
Stanford Cat Network

The Stanford Cat Network
is a volunteer, non-profit
organization that relies
on donations for funding.
Contributions are tax-
deductible.

Adoption Program is a Continued Success

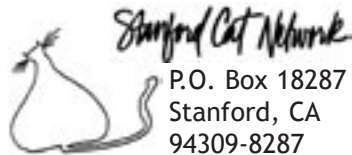
During the year 2001, the Stanford Cat Network found homes for over 60 cats. That is about 3 times the number adopted during previous years, and the success was due in most part to increased exposure to a wider community through our online adoptions and our partnership with Petfinder.org.

We keep all tame or tamable cats for as long as it takes to find them a loving, permanent home. To this end, we carefully screen potential adopters to ensure the best match for each cat. Since we don't have a shelter, cats are boarded at a vet clinic or kept in foster homes while they await adoption. Foster homes are difficult to find and boarding is very costly, so the adoption program is one of our major expenses. However, it is also one of the most satisfying endeavours as we see once neglected and abandoned pets flourish in their new homes.

We stay in close contact with our adopters, and usually receive regular updates by email or letter. We like to share these heart-warming stories, so we established the "Happy Tails" gallery on our website featuring photos and stories of adopted cats. If you have a story or photos of a cat you adopted from the Stanford Cat Network, please email or mail it to us, we'd love to hear from you!

SPAY OR NEUTER YOUR PET TODAY!

Call 1-800-248-SPAY to find
affordable services in your area.
Monday-Friday from 9 am to 4:
30 pm, EST



P.O. Box 18287
Stanford, CA
94309-8287

A volunteer non-profit organization supporting a no-kill spay/neuter, feeding and adoption program for homeless cats at Stanford – by agreement with, but not funded by Stanford University.