



THE MEOW MISSION
 Trap/Neuter/Return
 PROACTIVE POPULATION CONTROL
 THE HUMANE WAY

Cat Tales

Volume 5, Issue 1
 February 2016



This past October marked Meow Mission's 5-year anniversary date. In the beginning, we'd planned on only offering financial support to caretakers for spaying and neutering their colony cats. It didn't take long for us to realize folks needed trapping assistance almost as much as financial support. We did the research and training and sent out an appeal letter to buy traps. Thanks to the community's donations and a grant from the ASPCA, we purchased trapping equipment and became a full-service Trap/Neuter/Return group in the spring of 2013 allowing us to able to provide as much TNR assistance as a caretaker needs.

As you can see, 2015 was an incredibly busy year. So busy in fact, that we didn't have time to celebrate our 5-year anniversary! In 2014, we spayed/neutered and vaccinated 567 of Michiana's free-roaming cats. As word of our service spreads, we knew we'd be even busier in 2015, but how busy, we had no idea. We doubled our standing appointments at ABC Clinic and often exceeded those. It seemed that cats were coming out of the woodwork—they were everywhere!

We turn no-one away, which meant we had a two to three month long waiting list. We kept at it, though, and left no cats behind.

Luckily, we have wonderfully dedicated volunteers. Even though we all work full time, we still managed to get to all the colonies on our waiting list. We took a much needed break in

January, and are back at it in February as the weather breaks and cat love is in the air!



Year	Total # of Cats
2011	4
2012	88
2013	291
2014	567
2015	986
TOTAL	1,936

Meow Mission's New Home



As we mentioned, 2015 was an incredibly busy year. Caring for so many cats before and after surgery takes a tremendous amount of resources—food, puppy pads, laundry, cleaning products and of course time and a lot of space. We had been using a volunteer's heated workshop to house our cats overnight but our numbers became so large, it was quite a struggle to comfortably fit all the cats. We realized the workshop, as wonderful as it was, just wouldn't be sufficient for the number of cats we care for.

We reached out to the community and our prayers were answered. Our very generous friends, Don & Coco Schefmeyer, have donated the use of a house in South Bend for our new facility, Meow Manor. Here, we'll be able to comfortably care for as many cats as is needed.

Additionally, we'll have one location for all of our trapping equipment and supplies. Instead of being spread amongst multiple volunteers' homes throughout South Bend, Mishawaka and Granger, everything will be under one roof. The house is centrally located and close to ABC Clinic so it will save our volunteers' personal resources for the many trips we make caring for the cats.

This is a very important step in growing our capacity, thereby lessening the number of homeless cats in our community.

Not Your Typical Trip to the Clinic



We trap most cats on Sundays, keep them overnight, and take them to ABC Clinic for their surgeries Mondays. Sunny was on her way to ABC one morning, when all of a sudden our volunteer heard some tiny meows. Once at the clinic, it was discovered that Sunny had given birth to two kittens—all while inside the trap! Needless to say, Sunny didn't get spayed that day. She went home with our volunteer and proceeded to have three more kittens—five healthy babies! We quickly learned Sunny wasn't at all feral, simply a scared stray. We reached out to area rescues and our friends at Pet Refuge came through for us. Sunny and her healthy babies were all adopted into homes. We think trapping Sunny was her most lucky day ever.

More than 40 cats in 4 Days

This past summer was exhausting— One particular weekend, we had planned on trapping a large colony of approximately 25 cats. Steve and Grace, who you'll learn more about further in the newsletter, started trapping at 9am one Sunday morning. Within an hour, they had trapped 23 cats. The traps were going off quicker than Grace could run and cover them.

We always bring a few extra traps along as you never know if there will be any surprise guests. All our traps were used that morning and Steve had to go back for more. After another hour, the six traps he'd picked up were full again so back he went for more. This went on the better part of the day and the following day. By the time we'd finished, we'd trapped over 40 cats at one house, all within a few days.



This large amount of cats at one time exhausted all our resources. We are a small group and everyone was needed to care for this number of cats. Trapping the cats was the easy part, taking care of and transporting was quite a job! It took three volunteers and their vehicles to transport all the cats to and from the clinic and their colony.

We keep the cats overnight after surgery for recovery. Each cat gets a can of wet food after surgery and another can the following morning. If they're still hungry, we give them another can before we return them to their colony. They're kept in the traps on puppy pads which we change once they're soiled. We went through 125 cans of cat food and over 100 puppy pads in one weekend. Needless to say, you can imagine how that one colony drained our resources.



Transporting cats in traps takes a large vehicle—a van is best as even a full size SUV can only hold 8-10 traps. Only two of our volunteers have vans, so transport is something we continually struggle with which is why we created our TNR Transit Van Fund. We need to raise \$23,000 in order to purchase a cargo van to transport our cats. To date, we've raised a little under \$5,000. If you can help us with this fund, we'd be ever so grateful.





One of the many kittens we trapped that day



Kitties returning home



One of the three packed vehicles needed to transport the cats from this one colony



Cat-Van Donation Form

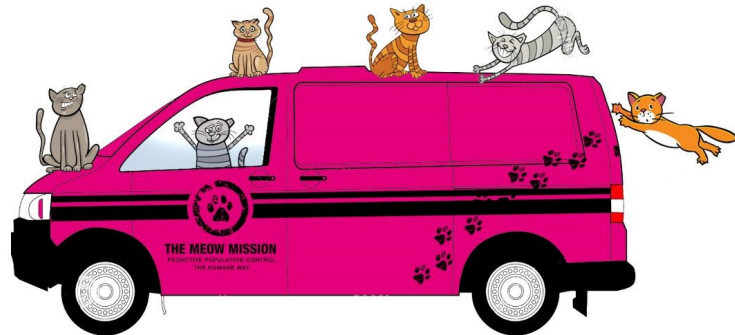
Yes! I want to help Meow Mission help more of our community cats!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Donation Amount: \$50 \$100 \$250
 \$500 \$1,000 other \$

Please mail your check or money order to:
PO Box 102, Mishawaka, IN 46546
or Donate online: www.themeowmission.org/donations



WE FIXED 50 CATS ON NATIONAL FERAL CAT DAY!

October is our busiest month. The 16th is National Feral Cat Day and we like to celebrate! We hold our annual bowling fundraiser, Alleys for Alley Cats and a special low-cost spay/neuter Clinic, "It's Hip to Snip" at ABC. This year, we fixed and vaccinated 50 of Michiana's free-roaming cats in one day! We'd like to say a special thank you to our event sponsor, Del Meyer of Weichert Realty.



Psssst... did you know
It's Hip to Snip!

\$15 Spay/Neuter
Free-roaming Cats
at ABC Clinic
October 16th
Just 50 appointments available
Call today 574-291-7729

National Feral Cat Day is October 16th and we're celebrating at ABC Clinic—we'll be offering 50 spay/neuter surgeries for free-roaming cats for just \$15 a cat. Included: Rabies vaccination, flea treatment and an eartip. You'll pay ABC \$15 and Meow Mission will pay the rest. Thank you for caring for our community cats and Happy National Feral Cat Day!

Weichert, Realtors
Jim Dunfee & Associates
DEL MEYER, ABR
BROKER ASSOCIATE

Event sponsored by the Meow Mission and Del Meyer, Weichert Realtors, Jim Dunfee & Assoc.
Del.Meyer@Comcast.net, Toll Free: 855-277-7444

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Sherbert

*our three-legged
Heartbreaker*

The end of January, County police officer named Rebecca posted a picture of a very injured cat, Sherbert, on the South Bend Lost & Found Pets page asking for help. His tail had all the fur skinned off and his foot was mangled; we believe he was caught in a car engine. He was limping and bleeding. He lives at the McDonald's on Western Avenue with his brother Midnight. They're relatively tame and would come up to the door after the restaurant closed and the staff would feed them burgers and Mcnuggets. Rebecca and some others tried to get Sherbert into carriers with no luck.

Our volunteer, Lisa, saw the post and took our drop trap out to McDonalds. She saw him and snapped the below picture. He wasn't interested in food so she wasn't able to trap him. We borrowed South Bend Animal Control's pole and net and bite gloves in case we saw him and went back Saturday. We set up regular traps with tuna, hard food, and some of Coco's special catnip. Around 10:30 Saturday evening we'd trapped two cats - but neither was Midnight or Sherbert. We took the cats to Meow Manor to settle in for the night so that we could take them to ABC Clinic on Monday. If we trap a cat we'd not planned on, we keep it and get it spayed and neutered. No cat leaves our hands unaltered.

Rebecca called around midnight and Sherbert was there but wouldn't go in the trap. The night manager was able to get very close to him, so we instructed him on how to scruff him and push him into the trap which he did successfully! Rebecca put Sherbert in the car and he got a police escort to the manor! We fed and watered him, gave him lots of pads to sit on, started him on an antibiotic and crushed up a pain pill in tuna.

We took Sherbert to Dr. Kryder first thing Monday morning. Dr. K said his foot was rotting and had to go - so he got his leg and tail amputated, they couldn't be saved. We also had him neutered and vaccinated and he went home with our volunteer, Rachel for recovery.

The original post from South Bend Lost & Found Pets got a ton of comments, that page has over 4,000 or 5,000 followers. We cross posted it on our page and it blew up with comments. Once we trapped him, we posted the below pictures and received over 500 comments. People starting donating for his care and cross posting it - in less than an hour, over 34,000 people had seen the post and it had over 200 shares! It's gone viral and Sherbert had stories about him on WSBT, Fox and the South Bend Tribune.

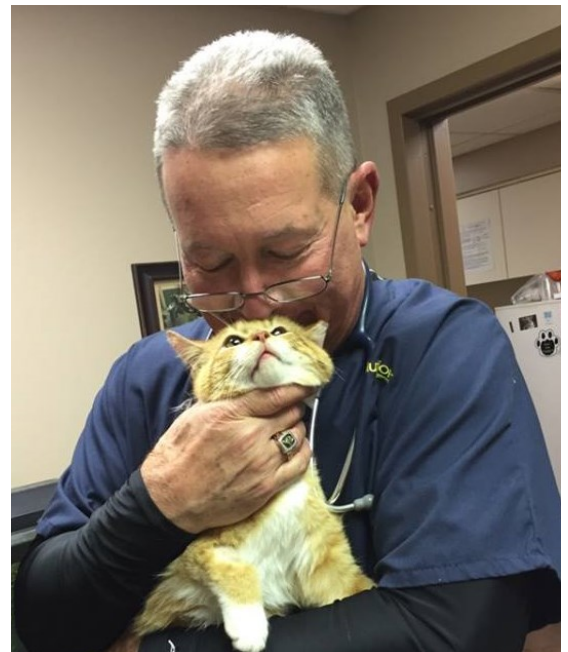
Breann, a groomer at a local Veterinary Clinic, followed Sherbert's story and wanted to adopt him. She and Sherbert had several play dates while he was recovering and he gave his seal of approval. Sherbert made a full recovery and is now a happy, healthy kitty with a new mommy to love.



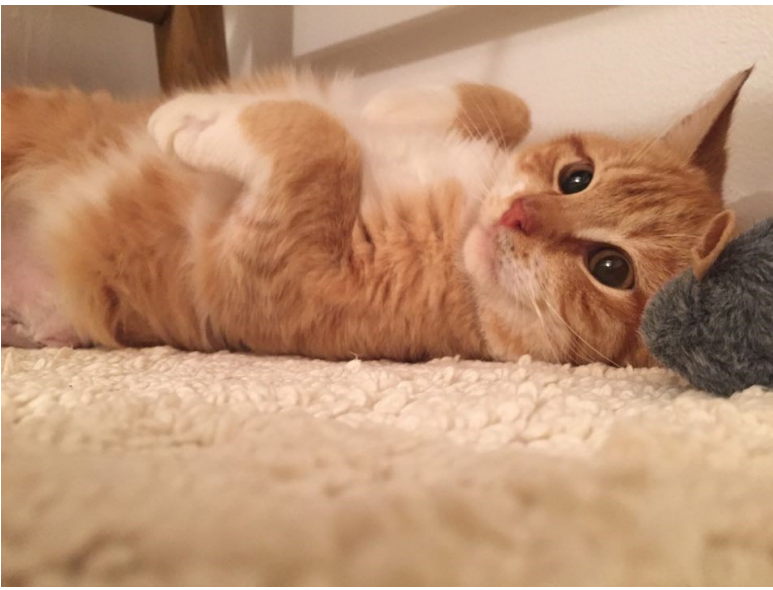
Our 1st sighting of Sherbert



We fell in love immediately



Dr. Kryder giving Sherbert a clean bill of health



Sherbert learning what it's like to be loved and cared for



Sherbert with his new mommy, Breann

Habitats for Cats

A great deal of what we do is educating proper colony care. When we first meet a caretaker, we make sure they understand that cats need more than just food - water is essential, especially in the winter when resources are limited which is why we provide heated water dishes to those who aren't able to purchase the dishes themselves.

Something we see time and time again is a lack of shelters for our community cats. Often, providing food for colonies is all caretakers can handle. There should be enough shelters for every cat in a colony to have a safe, warm, dry space. Shelters should only have straw—nothing else, especially fabric. Fabric absorbs moisture from the air and once wet will draw heat away from the animal. This can cause hypothermia. Straw is insulative, wicks away moisture, and doesn't mold. Cats can burrow into it for warmth.

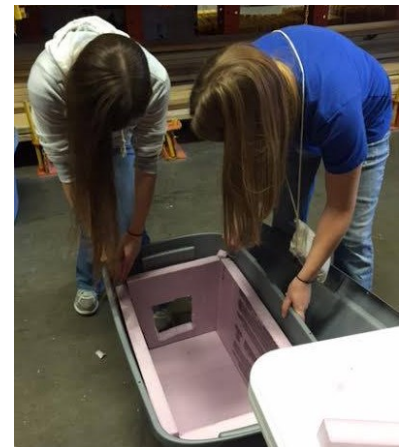
We knew we wanted to do all we could to keep our community cats warm and dry this winter but we also knew we couldn't do it alone. We held our first ever shelter build at Home Depot this past October. We showed caretakers how to take a simple rubber tote (30 gallon or larger is best) and make an outdoor shelter. The event was sponsored by our friend Del Meyer from Weichert Realty and supported building 25 shelters which were donated to in-need caretakers.



Rubber Tote Shelter Step-by-Step



The Girl Scouts Helped!



Assembling the Insides

If you'd like to donate a rubber tote or Styrofoam cooler, contact Jocelyn at jocesweet@yahoo.com.

Mishawaka's Animal Ordinance

Prior to 2016, Mishawaka's Animal Ordinance was quite outdated. Trapping—even on your own property—was prohibited and feeding outside cats could net you a fine. In June of 2015, we learned Mishawaka was revising its Animal Ordinance. On the agenda for revision was breed specific legislation for dogs and not much else. We immediately contacted Mike Compton and Dan Bilancio, the council members responsible for the revision. They were very willing to listen to us about the need for legality of Trap/Neuter/Return. Not surprisingly, none of the council was aware of TNR. They were receptive to our presentations and had lots of questions. We were happy to provide education for our elected officials who held a special meeting for the community to discuss the revisions. We had a wonderful amount of support for the meeting—that's all of us below with our TNR signs. We were absolutely thrilled when the ordinance was unanimously approved and Mayor Dave Wood put on his seal of approval! Thank you Mishawaka for becoming a TNR friendly city.



Show your support and look great with a Meow Mission T-shirt!

- \$15.99
- Sizes Small—XXL
- 5.4 oz.
- 100% preshrunk cotton
- Seamless rib at neck
- Taped shoulder-to-shoulder
- Double-needle stitching throughout

Order Online: <http://themeowmission.org/merchandise/> or mail your personal check to PO Box 192, Mishawaka, IN 46546 and indicate your size, or call 574-300-3353

Volunteer Spotlight: Grace & Steve

Grace volunteers with her dad, Steve

What do you do for Meow Mission?

We are both trappers for Meow Mission. My dad, Steve, also does transport and release of cats.

How long have you volunteered with Meow Mission?

We started volunteering in the spring of 2015.

Why did you choose to volunteer for Meow Mission?

We are very, very passionate about animals and conservation. Grace in particular is incredibly fond of cats. We have volunteered with animal shelters in the past, but wanted to find a way to stop the problem at its source—overpopulation.

What do you like about volunteering with Meow Mission?

We love being able to see the direct effects of our actions and the relief we can provide to overburdened homeowners that could easily have been us if we weren't able to get our cats fixed. Being able to lengthen the lives of cats is a reward all its own.

Why is TNR an important issue to you?

We want to give back to animals as much as they have given to us in our lives. Pet animals are the epitome of unconditional love and forgiveness. We feel as human beings it is our responsibility to clean up our "messes" (i.e. animals we domesticated being left homeless and suffering). Over the years we have had cats come to our doorstep in need of help and were touched by the experience of bonding with these forgotten animals. We are very glad we can give other disadvantaged cats a much needed boost.

What do you do when you're not volunteering?

We are both avid nature explorers. We hike, fish, and camp for fun. We also go to the Notre Dame hockey games.

What has been the most rewarding, touching, or memorable experience for you?

Definitely the house we trapped at with over thirty cats! The homeowner was very appreciative and involved in the process—always a plus.

What has been the biggest challenge for you volunteering?

The frustration of getting all but one cat at a site can be trying at times.

One that would surprise someone about us is...

We are also involved in turtle and tortoise rehabilitation as a part of Heather's (Steve's wife, Grace's mom) being a licensed rehabber for the species. We provide medical care, food, and shelter to these animals after they've found themselves beneath the wheel of a vehicle.

Why would you encourage others to volunteer with us?

Volunteering with Meow Mission has been a rewarding experience that we would recommend to anyone with a passion for cats and community service. There's a niche for everyone within the organization. There will be something that suits your fancy.

Do you have any pets?

We have one older yellow lab, six indoor cats, two outdoor stray cats that frequent our food bowls, a ball python, and all of Heather's turtles.



Spring Cleaning?

We've started collecting for our annual rummage sale, Wags to Riches, and

we're in need of rummage sale donations!



We'll pick up your gently used items!

Call or email for pick up: info@themeowmission.org, 574-286-9404

Wags to Riches V Rummage Sale

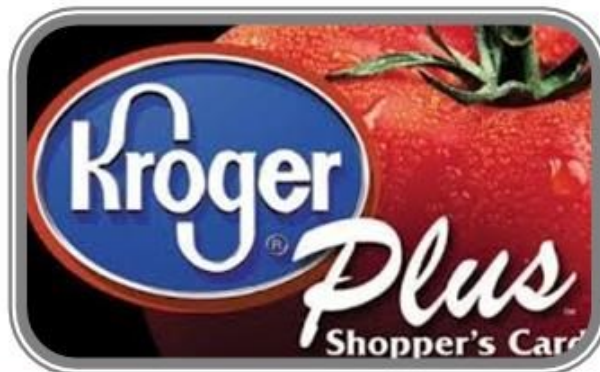


THE MEOW MISSION

Shop at Kroger?

Did you know you can help Meow Mission with your Kroger card? Simply go to <https://www.kroger.com/communityrewards> and enroll in community rewards—select Meow Mission (#53859) as your charity of choice. Kroger will donate a portion of each sale to us.

It's that simple!



www.facebook.com/TheMeowMission

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