



# Witty Kitties, Inc. Newsletter

A Special-Needs Shelter

Winter 2008

## Witty Kitties Mission Statement

Founded in 2000, Witty Kitties provides quality care and shelter to cats with specific chronic medical needs within the five-state area we serve. Our organization is committed to providing low-cost medical care and spay/neuter services for local shelters, rural cat colonies and individuals with multiple cats. We provide rescue, care and appropriate housing for a variety of reptiles, as well.

As part of our overall service to the community, Witty Kitties works to educate the public regarding proper care of these companion animals and, ideally, to find permanent, quality homes for them.



**WEBSITE ADDRESS**  
[www.wittykitties.org](http://www.wittykitties.org)

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## NEW LOGO!

*The new and sassy Witty Kitties logo comes to us courtesy of Christi Becker, sister of Jenni Doll. It better represents all of the critters housed at Witty Kitties. While cats are our main focus, especially those with compromised immune systems, other animals with special needs find their way to our front door and our hearts. Thanks, Christi, for your fabulous design!*

## IRONIC

by Jenni Doll, DVM

I'm not even sure if I remember it correctly, but I think the last line in my article in the fall newsletter said, "And that's the end of the story, or something close to that." When I saw it on the draft, I remember thinking, "Huh, is that what I said? I thought I wrote it differently, like, 'That's the gist of the story, or something.' Oh, well, I've told enough of that goat story to put everyone to sleep. So, that's the story. Done." I then had that weird feeling, just for a moment, that it was NOT going to be the end of the story, and by stating so I was jinxing myself, and preparing for a long ordeal ahead. I can't be the only one who does this, right? I mean, whenever I anticipate something will go a certain way, I try to remind myself of the "what ifs." Most people may think I do this too much. But if I then think, "What's the worst thing, or almost worst thing, that could happen? Maybe that will happen. If so, that'd be ok, right? Ok, so then if it doesn't, that's great, right?" I'm still talking to myself, mind you.

When I try to explain this thinking to people they say I'm pessimistic. I'm not, though. I'm not expecting the bad, and all the horrible outcomes. I'm preparing myself for it, in case. I see a huge difference. If you expect the bad and figure out how you'd handle and survive it, then, IF it comes, it isn't so bad.

So, anyway — if any of you read my article to the end, you'll recall how I went on and on about poor Russell, the goat. You know who he is. He is one of the several defective animals we have because Torben met a pretty lady. Isn't that how it always happens?

Anyway, when we left off, we were weeks into his recovery from having his deformed carpus (wrist) broken and straightened and he was fighting off a bad infection there. He also worked his way to the fence, got his opposite back leg stuck, and rubbed the skin off the lower end of his leg, and 'foot.' He and his brother, as you'll recall, don't have hooves on the back legs, just really leathery stumps with thin skin due to a fire. So, the leg sloughed all the skin off days later and he then had two weight-bearing legs that got infected.

Poor Russell. My poor family. SINCE the last newsletter, I have spent most evenings continuing the bandage changes, antibiotics, turning him, getting my temples or my chin hit by his horns as he whipped his head back, making an effort to help get him up and moved.

But, the point of that story wasn't just to tell another tale about another task I took on, but about the endless questions going on in one's mind when one chooses to do something that may seem hopeless, but won't give up. I think I mentioned how easy it is to forget all the other responsibilities in one's life to center on one. Also, how it is easy to not see when we've taken things too far.

I think the actual last line of my article said, "And that's the point of this story". I was hoping to show that black and white decisions are few, and that people who see that way are lucky in that respect. We all know that isn't real life, though, for most of us.

(continued. . .)

Every time I convinced myself it was time to euthanize poor Russell, I just never felt the gut feeling I usually get when needing to put another animal down. I'd see that big dumb face munching away, looking at me and expecting his food. Eating right on through another painful injection. Stopping for just a second to cry, if at all. He has been a real trooper. In the past, after working on an animal so long (remember Peanut?), then ending it always had a deep down "done" feeling for me. I haven't had that with Russell yet.

My belief that he might still be made to walk again was evident the night I got a quick hour or two away from other chores to put him under and run 5 pins into his front leg joint to re-stabilize it now that the infection had finally cleared. I wanted to take away any need for him to use the back leg when standing him up because despite all I did with that front leg, he never complained as much as when I had to clean or re-bandage the back one. It had been so sensitive he wouldn't move the leg because bending it meant tension on the lower ligaments. I decided one last big effort would be to solidify the front so he could at least get up in a sling to avoid nerve damage on the back leg as he always worked his way to the same side, leaving it rigid.

So, a month later, he stays in a sling pulled up several inches off the ground to take pressure off his rear leg. He is finally starting to army-crawl. He is calmer as he is able to stay sternal (up on his chest) without falling over frequently. He is finally showing his first real sign of improvement since late summer.

"Well, Jenni, what about planning for the worst? Where is your weird mind game thingy of getting ready for it?" Well, I do. I see a realistic future of this not panning out, but as long as I have a tiny little hint of hope, AND he keeps acting as he has since day one, I'll just go through the motions, I guess.

So, 'the end of the story' was nowhere near that. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't be surprised if I'm still writing about STILL working on him in yet the NEXT newsletter. IF that happened, I could handle it.

#### **UPDATE FROM JENNI**

The afternoon before leaving for Florida, I euthanized Russell. He was nibbling on my hair as I gave him his injection. It took very slowly, so I was able to hold his big dumb head in my hands, and scratch him around his ears and horns the way he loved. He always had the most enduring look on his face when staring at you, not the "creepy look" some goats give when they are ready to butt you.

Seems my vision of the wonderful folks willing to care for him while I was gone forced me to consider the realistic expectations, and to envision what is the earliest day this guy will be able to get ALL the way up on his own AND walk without assistance? The very many months ahead were too many for me, and I can't tell you what Russell would say, as he just wanted food, scratching and stuff to nibble on, especially hats, jackets and hair. What a sport.

Now, this really is the end of Russell's story.

It has been a really sad time since coming home. The fox got out and killed the tamest of our ducks and chickens, including Peepns', the little duck who preceded Chickie. She was found on the road by a neighbor as a baby four or five years ago. She imprinted on me and went everywhere with me. She even went on trips with us, and followed us everywhere. She finally figured out she was a duck when I put another duck that was imprinted on a man from Iowa City with her. They somehow figured it out. She was so goofy-looking with a crooked neck. Baby K and I got a kick out of digging worms for her. Seems so many little pieces of my heart keep getting nicked away little by little.

#### **WORMIE KITTEN**

*by Jenni Doll, DVM*

Anyone not familiar with the C&W Rustic Hollow Shelter in Nashua should pay it a visit. The main caretakers are Carmen and Wanda. I've known them maybe 8 years now and we have an ongoing joke. It goes something like this:

Carmen: Jenni we're sending you a horrendously injured cat, and we wonder if you can fix him.

Jenni: Let's see him. OhMyGosh, You're Kidding! Boy oh boy, I don't know....

Carmen: He is wonderful and loving....

Jenni: I'll try...

I've seen three amazing kitties go through that scenario, all living at least long enough to fully recover from the procedure(s) I did, and to make many people fall in love with them.

Bradley was a stray with both back legs broken, one at the knee, and the other below it. Both were open fractures, and he had been walking on the broken ends of his tibias, packing dirt and whatnot up the center of them. He was so infected, and stinky. Yet, as is often the case, he had a loving personality and he thanked Carmen and Wanda constantly for their food, warmth, and safety. He must have forgotten about those back legs of his. Well, I have had cats with identical injuries, and each time, I have euthanized them. But in Bradley's case, I could see why that wasn't possible for Carmen and Wanda. He just did not care! So, I did the best I could to provide suitable ends to his legs that would be blunt enough to prevent poking sharply into the tissue below it. I then had to remove so much infected skin that I didn't think there would be enough to cover the bone and muscle "padding." But, eventually, it worked. I worried about healing of the incisions, as he dragged his end quite a bit, likely because "walking" hurt. But, eventually, he went home a new man.

And, to make a story short (for once in my life!) he is in charge of an entire building, and has his own article in the shelter newsletter. He is an unbelievably fat, long-haired, black cat who greets folks as they enter the new building on the property. He is so happy and loved, you can't help but smile when you meet him. I can't wipe the dumb smile off my face right now!

Then, there was (yes, was) Trameel. He had been at the shelter a short while before I met him. Again, my first thought when meeting him was not that I should try saving him. He was actually bad enough that I wasn't shy about mentioning my thoughts on euthanasia. But, again, Carmen and Wanda (and Kim, the dotting helper) seemed to know what I didn't yet know. He was just too cool a cat to ignore.

Trameel had severe weakness in both rear legs, and was incontinent (poop and pee as I recall). I suspect it was due to a tail avulsion. This is a common injury in cats who get their tail yanked so hard (by a person, or under a car tire while they're running) that the nerves and ligaments of the tail pull hard enough on the spinal cord that injury occurs. Sometimes it resolves, but if not, the urinary and bowel incontinence leads to life-threatening problems. The bladder loses its ability to tell itself to relax the sphincter. So, despite a full bladder and muscles in the bladder trying to squeeze it empty, the door just doesn't open. When the pressure builds to a critical point, it empties, but never entirely. The urine gets stagnant, and infected, leading to kidney failure. Trameel smelled like he wasn't far from this. The repeated dribbling of the infected urine caused scaling of his perineum and legs. On the bright side, he never felt a thing. He had no sensation to his skin back there, so the frequent washings they provided never bothered him. But the infection was getting to him.

So, I've done the brief anatomy lesson. Now, let me be frank. His rear end looked like a bloody kitchen sponge with oozing tracts erupting from its surface. The constant scalding and infection scarred and deformed him to the point where he no longer has his "boy parts". Urine was seeping from some open wounds from around the area. I essentially had to find what I could and make him as normal as possible. I'd LOVE to give the details to the story of the surgery as it was pretty amazing, but I may be grossing some out. Just imagine cutting into that wet sponge, and you can get my drift.

Amazingly, again, Trameel did great. Unfortunately, he had to have help urinating, but he now had one place he did it from, and it was much neater. He was on a schedule of antibiotics for preventing infection as he was still prone to infections, but he ended up putting on enough weight that I didn't recognize him months later. He was just one of the many tabbies running around. Sadly, we bought him just two more years or so of life. I never look back for dates, as that just sucks me back in so I'd never get to the end of this story. But, I was proud that yet another almost impossible case did so well, and made so many people happy, and gave Trameel better months in the end than he had been enduring before.

Hot Rod was called "wormie kitten" by us, not for the reasons many may think, but because it suited his appearance. Hot Rod had similar problems as Trameel, but his were congenital, or else had occurred very shortly after birth. Besides the incontinence, his useless back legs were deformed, rigid, and dragged through whatever he wanted to cruise through. Hot Rod was a

tiny little orange kitten when I first saw him, and only 8 weeks when he came here for his big reconstruction. What a personality this little guy had! Some sort of knowing look in his eyes made you feel like he was studying your face or something. He used his front legs to scoot anywhere he wanted, not knowing his rear end was a complete catastrophe. The constant dragging, urine scalding, multiple daily cleaning by staff, had removed a significant amount of skin. Again, there was no normal anatomy to think of, and should I mention the smell...?

Anyway, little Hot Rod underwent bilateral rear leg amputations, skin grafts, urethrostomy, etc.....at the age of two months, and woke up and started gobbling down his canned food only hours later, purring as he went. It was unbelievable! Though I do believe he had sensation of his rear legs, he never let on that he hurt. That little guy raced up the back of a couch and down the other side the NIGHT of surgery! (I had just left him in a box in the living room thinking he'd stay put like anyone else would).

The only times he complained was when having his bladder squeezed to empty it. Due to scarring after surgery I had to heavily sedate him twice more to widen his urethra, and make it exit in such a way that it wouldn't drag, if you know what I mean. To remedy the latter, I started putting his bum in old socks. I had so many unmatched ones it seemed perfect. Every time he soiled one I threw it in the wash and stuck another on. Pretty soon, very nice people were giving me socks, thanks to a note in the C&W newsletter.

Most wonderful of all, though, was Hot Rod's companionship with a little chick that had literally been dumped into the open window of my van one night. Chickie and he were inseparable. They slept together in the bath tub at night, and ran around free in the house during the day. On days I worked, they went in the van with me. Chickie would have been easy pickings for those cats of mine who like to go birding, but living with Hot Rod gave Chickie the big tough face attack that scared all the cats away. I laughed so hard when I'd see Hot Rod and Chickie on opposite sides of the room. When Chickie would discover this she'd run straight for him, and just before reaching him she'd leap up and peck him between the eyes. Then a big, rough battle would ensue, looking almost like Hot Rod would finally take Chickie apart, and then it'd end in a big love hug with licking and purring.

Little Kirsten (our daughter), as young as she is, still thinks about and talks about "Wormie Kitten" and how he looked like a little grub. Yet, I don't think she remembers other images or events as well from last summer. They had been at our house about a month and made quite an impact.

Hot Rod and Chickie are both gone now, and I still get choked up about it. Such tiny little specimens of what seem almost perfect in their imperfections sink in and stay. When they get taken away, it is that much harder.

*(continued. . .)*



Hot Rod and Chickie, Trameel and Bradley are examples of wonderful animals I'd never have met and worked with in a million years if I were still in an everyday pet practice. I've learned a tremendous amount medically, and have examples to draw upon when wondering whether putting out that extra effort is worth it.

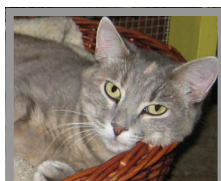
Thanks, Carmen and Wanda, for sending those impossible cases. Can't wait for the next one.

### HAPPY ENDINGS ALL AROUND

by Nancy Fultz & Trish Wasek

#### The Grace & Newby Exchange

The Cedar Valley Humane Society (CVHS) had a sweet little kitten who was FeLV+, and they asked if Witty Kitties could take it. In exchange, CVHS took one of Witty Kitties' few 'normal' cats, Jasmine. Jasmine had shown up at the door of the WK shelter two years ago, scrawny and hungry. She had no medical problems and she was such a good eater that she was soon back to a normal weight, with a bit extra to spare! The day after Jasmine was transported to CVHS, Witty Kitties' volunteers Amy and her daughter Cynthia contacted Witty Kitties and said they had decided to adopt Jasmine. CVHS was contacted immediately, and we told the staff about what a great home Amy and Cynthia would give Jasmine. The adoption went through without a hitch. Jasmine, who is now named Grace, went to her new home right before Christmas.



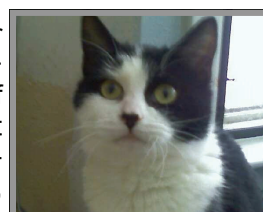
Jasmine, aka Grace

Here's an update on Grace from Amy: "Grace is doing well, and she is coming out of her shell. She has found the top of the bed and laid on it some with me. The other cats are still glaring at her, but they don't always hiss now. She is such a sweet cat. She loves to be petted, and she sure does talk to anyone who will listen, especially the other cats! My biggest problem will be introducing her to Fluffy, our dog. He looks at her through the baby gate that separates him from my room and barks because she is new. She doesn't seem that concerned, but she did give him a good hiss when he got too close. I think if they look at each other long enough through the gate, he'll get used to her and they will be okay. Fluffy is very nosy and has to keep up on just who is in the house!"

Amy and Cynthia are incredible new volunteers who started helping out at Witty Kitties last summer. They often come on Sundays just to visit the kitties and give them lots of love and attention. We appreciate this type of volunteer effort SO much — some of our kitties are true love-bugs who crave being held and cuddled. Thank you so much, Amy and Cynthia, for the time you give to Witty Kitties and for giving Grace a forever home!

Meanwhile, the FeLV+ kitten, Newby, made herself right at home in the shelter. She is a darling black and white fluffball with a heart-shaped black spot on her nose. She was only with us for a couple of days before another volunteer, Tim, decided that Newby would make

a great companion for his other cat. Tim previously had an FeLV+ cat that lived to about 13 years of age, who eventually died, not from leukemia, but from liver disease. His other cat is not FeLV+, so there is a small chance that Newby could pass it on to the other cat, but if Tim keeps vaccinations up to date, the risk is minimized.



Newby

There are no guarantees with any living being. Cats are just like humans, and even a 'normal' cat may get kidney disease, liver disease, or cancer. FeLV+ cats may pass on from the disease earlier than normal, but many live full, long lives and make wonderful companions. Perhaps because they have been overlooked so many times, our FeLV+ cats seem to be extra sweet and loving.

#### Connie Finds a Forever Home!

Connie had been at Witty Kitties for over three years. Although she really did not have any special needs, she was a wild kitty when she first came to the shelter. Two of our volunteers at the time, Danielle and her daughter Emily, fell in love with her. Unfortunately, they couldn't have pets where they lived, so all they could do was keep their fingers crossed that no one else picked Connie before they were able to adopt her. In December, they finally moved into a home where they could have pets, and Connie, who they renamed Cleo, got the best Christmas gift of all — a loving, forever home with Danielle and her kids, Emily and Curtis!



Connie, aka Cleo

Emily says: "Cleo is doing really well. For the first day and a half she hid under the couch, but then she started coming out when our other cats weren't around. She found out that she is bigger than them, and instead of them scaring her, now she chases them! Chase still growls at Cleo whenever they are on the same bed or couch, but at least they stay there together. Our fat cat Chance isn't all that happy about sharing food with Cleo, but she does. Cleo sleeps with me every night and is really playful. She became a Christmas tree ornament for about five seconds, but found out Mom didn't like having a fuzzy ornament when she received a squirt from the spray bottle! We also had a bit of trouble with her being on the counters, but she finally decided getting squirted wasn't worth it. All in all, she's doing great!"

#### You Can Help!

All of our recent adoptions have been by volunteers, and while that is great, we would love to have even more adoptions. To do that, we need your help. If anyone mentions that they are considering a pet, please tell them about the wonderful cats at Witty Kitties. If they

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don't want a cat or feel they can't handle the special love of a special-needs cat, then direct them to your local shelter. Even the latest 'specialty' breeds end up in shelters. Animals from reputable shelters will already have had medical checkups, shots, and will be spayed or neutered. The adoption fee is usually much less than the price of a puppy purchased from a store. Most shelters will even take your name and call you if you are looking for a specific breed or mix. By adopting from a shelter, you are saving a life. Remember: friends don't let friends buy from backyard breeders, pet stores and puppy mills while shelter pets die!

### STILL AT THE SHELTER

by Nancy Fultz

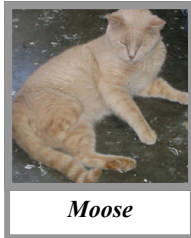
Witty Kitties got seven ginger-colored boys from Waterloo in 2003, the product of inbreeding. Two of them got adopted into loving homes, and one had a terrible abscess that would not heal, causing him great pain, so we decided to let him cross the Rainbow Bridge. The last four are still waiting for their forever homes. All four are happy, playful and sweet, but they do have some weakness in their rear legs and some dental problems.

**Mr. Lover** is the strongest of the boys. He will butt his head against your arm to get you to pay attention to him. He enjoys brushing, even on his belly, and he really likes to have his ears scratched.



Mr. Lover

**Moose** is the shyest. He's also missing a rear leg, but it doesn't slow him down a bit, and like all the others, he loves chasing wand toys or laser pointers. He likes to be petted, but he makes you come to him.



Moose

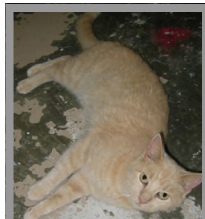


Digger

**Digger** has had a rough road this year. He got a sinus infection that took time to clear up, but through all of his treatment, he has been very patient, never giving any trouble. He's completely healed now, and he enjoys playing and being pet-

ted and brushed.

My personal favorite is **Speedy**. He crawls into your lap and loves, loves, loves to be held like a baby! As you hold him, he tries to put his paws around your neck, and he enjoys head butts and kisses.



Speedy

Any of these sweet boys would make a great addition to your home. They will give back all of the love you give to them. Special cats like these seem to know that it's harder for them to find a home, and they appreciate human love just a bit more.

### FINLEY—IN LOVING MEMORY

By Trish Wasek

We love all the cats at Witty Kitties, but every once in a while, there is one so special that the place just isn't the same when they're gone. Finley was with us for only six months, but he captured our hearts so completely that it seems we knew him his entire life.

If you recall from a couple of newsletters ago, Finley (and his pal Whiskers) came to Witty Kitties from Virginia, through the on-line efforts of a bunch of people who had never met each other – we all just wanted the two of them to have a chance to live with other cats, romp, play, and maybe even get adopted. (Finley had been living in a haven for weeks before he came here, due to his FeLV+ status.) But he adapted to the big open spaces at Witty Kitties almost immediately. He loved to watch the mice run in their wheels, chase Nancy's laser pointer, and roll on the floor so you could rub his tummy.

Over time, each Witty Kitty seems to find his or her own special "hang-out." Finley's was on top of the table right outside the laundry room. He'd jump up there, and as you walked in or out of the laundry room, he'd swat at you to make sure you knew he was there, waiting for his ears to be scratched. That table was also right underneath the phone. Whenever we'd listen to the phone messages, Finley would stand on his rear legs and climb up your chest with his front paws, as high as he could go, trying to put his arms around your neck. And then he'd get some big bear hugs and more ear scratches. He never really liked to be held, but he couldn't get enough hugging and ear scratches.



Then very suddenly, in late October, he became listless and not interested in his food (dry food only, if you please!). He seemed to be struggling with breathing, and Jenni drained a lot of fluid from his chest cavity. The fluid contained lymphoma cells – not good. He perked up for a week, but then needed a second procedure. It became clear he was very uncomfortable, so Jenni gave him some very big hugs and sent him on his way over the Rainbow Bridge. A postmortem exam showed that he had a huge tumor nearly surrounding his heart. He probably had it the day he arrived. Jenni could not believe that he was living so happily and care-free, bouncing all over the place, for all but the last few days of his life, given the size of the tumor.

It warms my heart to know that Finley found so much love, from both the other cats and the staff, while he was here. He was such a joy to be around and deserved a much longer life, but then, don't they all?

Kim McCullough, one of the people who helped arrange for Finley to come to Iowa, sent us a wonderful collage of photos from Finley's stay here. We mounted it on the wall by the phone, right above Finley's table...

*The Prez sez: I'm a woman of few words this issue — no room! Just want to echo a BIG THANKS to each of you who so faithfully support Witty Kitties, in any way. Keep spreading the word about this wonderful shelter!*



**MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS**

*In Memory of Eleanor Louise, our mother, as a gift for my brother,  
David Crombie, from Margalea Warner.*

*In Memory of Pat Ridenour, beloved husband of Linda, and  
special rocking chair buddy Toonces the cat, by Sondy Kaska.*

*In Memory of Finley, beloved cat of Cats Unlimited &  
Witty Kitties, Inc., by Dianne DeMay.*

*In Memory of O'Reilly, beloved cat of Wayne & Darlene Schilling,  
by Joseph & Linda Skvor.*

*In Memory of O'Reilly, our big, lovable cat — such a  
delight — by Wayne & Darlene Schilling.*

*In Memory of Alex James, beloved cat of Lois James by  
Marge McGowan & Ronnye Wieland.  
“Alex was a cat who knew what he wanted.”*

*In Memory of Chelsea, our beloved dog,  
by Peggy Walker & Paul Brennan.*

*In Honor of Sondra Kaska and Jerry Kinnamon —  
‘Merry Christmas, Sondy and Jerry, from Barb & Britt (Johnson)’*

*In Honor of my Siamese companions, Basha & Issa,  
by Debra Lee.*

**NEW ARRIVALS**

*by Trish Wasek*

I'm beginning to think of Cats Unlimited, in Lexington, Virginia, as our "sister" shelter! (Cats Unlimited (www.catsunlimited.org) is where Finley and Whiskers lived before coming to Witty Kitties – if you missed their saga, see the Summer 2007 Newsletter on our website.) Dianne DeMay, its founder, has been extremely generous in her support of Witty Kitties, including sponsoring both Finley and Whiskers. She occasionally hears about a special-needs cat and contacts us to see if we have space. And that's how Oliver and Kelly found their way here.

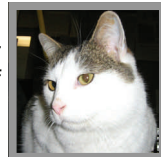


**Oliver's** rescuer, Russ, from Williamsburg, Virginia, needed help. When he took a very sweet and friendly stray cat to the local humane society, he was told that he was FIV+ and would be euthanized unless he took him back. But Russ and his wife already had three elderly dogs, two cats, and twins on the way. Another kitty mouth to feed just wasn't possible. On the other hand, they couldn't stand the thought of this sweet boy being euthanized, so they took him home and eventually found out about Witty Kitties from Dianne DeMay. We knew that our biggest challenge would be finding a way to get Oliver to Iowa. Cheryl Gardner, the American Airlines flight angel for Finley and Whiskers, was not available due to a family illness. With Cheryl's help, we found another American Airlines flight attendant, Linda Smith of Dallas, Texas, who was willing to transport Oliver for free! Russ and his wife

fostered Oliver for three months until schedules worked out, and then Linda flew from Dallas to Williamsburg, back to Dallas, then to Cedar Rapids, and finally home to Dallas, all in one twelve hour day! We barely had time for a hug and thank you before she had to re-board her flight home. Oliver adjusted very quickly, but we noticed right away that he was drinking an enormous amount of water. He's now on insulin for diabetes, but luckily he doesn't seem to realize he's getting stuck twice a day. He is absolutely the sweetest little two-year-old, with beautiful lynx points. He is super friendly and affectionate, and comes right up to everyone for pets and hugs. He's ready for a real home, if you have room for him!



**Kelly's** rescuer, Karyn, from Natural Bridge, Virginia, also heard about Witty Kitties from Dianne. She trapped this sweet little kitty last summer while trying to rescue a different cat. When Karyn initially contacted us, we simply didn't have room for another FeLV+ cat. So I was really excited when I heard back from Karyn that she had found a shelter in Minnesota willing to take Kelly in. Unfortunately, however, that didn't work out – the shelter wasn't going to let Karyn visit when she brought Kelly there. Would you take one of your cats somewhere where they wouldn't let you see the place?! So, Karyn kept looking for someone to take Kelly, and finally contacted us again late last fall. And wouldn't you know it, Finley had just passed away. His "place" at the shelter would go to another Virginia kitty! Cheryl Gardner was still not available for transporting, but she donated her mileage so that Karyn could fly Kelly out here. And Karyn definitely got the grand tour of Witty Kitties when she was here! Kelly is a bit shy, and isn't used to lots of other cats, so we're taking our time introducing her to everyone. But she's showing more and more interest in her surroundings, and we're confident that she's going to find a special buddy or two and be really happy here. Until that special day when someone takes her home, of course!



Last but not least, **Carlos** – another super loving guy, and from Iowa City! A couple of days before Christmas, we received a call from Tamara at Pet Central Station. She had just taken in a new cat, and it turned out he was FeLV+. Unless she could find a place for him, he would be euthanized. So Carlos came to Witty Kitties the day after Christmas. He is very outgoing and handsome, mostly white with gray spots. Jenni was a little bit concerned about a swollen lymph gland when he arrived. A couple of weeks later, it literally ruptured through his skin. He seemed very unconcerned, although some of us were horrified!! It looked awful at first, but we put him on antibiotics, and the area on his neck has healed well. He's an "in-your-face" kitty, and he's definitely filling the personality hole left in the main room upon Finley's death. If someone out there is looking for purrsonality plus, this is your guy!

**HEARTFELT THANK YOU'S TO . . .**

**Melba Hutchcroft** for her generous donation. Melba read the newspaper article written by volunteer Nancy Fultz, and decided to donate to our cause. Thank you, Melba. We appreciate your gift very much!

Thanks also to **Jean Walker**, who responded to the Witty Kitties' Christmas mailing, for your wonderful donation.

And, thank you to **everyone** who supports Witty Kitties. We hope you know how much we appreciate your support. You make it possible for us to continue doing what we do for these deserving animals who need our help.



## EXOTICS CORNER

by Torben Platt

A chilly greeting from the exotic corner. Jenni, Kirsten, and I have just returned from Orlando where Jenni attended the North American Veterinary Conference. While she was going to classes, Kirsten and I played and lounged poolside and saw some of the sights. She made me go to Gatorland and Disney's Animal Kingdom, and I made her go look for reptiles. Whenever I go to Florida, I get really excited about possibly adding a new snake, lizard, or turtle to my "lifelist," and usually whoever is unlucky enough to be with me soon finds themselves knee-deep in some mosquito-infested swamp, or lifting rocks and boards in 90-degree heat to see what may lurk beneath them. Of the various methods one uses to find reptiles — probably the most pleasurable — is driving back roads at night. On warm, humid nights, snakes will often crawl onto roads as they are hunting (most tropical and desert snakes are nocturnal) and one can drive up to them and photograph them and then move them off the road, without exerting a lot of energy. During winter in central Florida the nights are often too cool for this method to be very successful, but when Jenni was finished with classes, I usually asked (ok, forced) my family to go "night driving" anyway. The highlight of these nocturnal escapades occurred when I spotted a small snake on Jenni's side of the road and she eagerly leapt out of the car to pick it up. I warned her to make sure it "wasn't a cottonmouth or something" before she picked it up, and then Kirsten and I got out to see what mommy caught. We met in the glow of the headlights and she dropped it in my open palm so I could identify it. I must be teaching Jenni well because she had properly identified it as NOT a cottonmouth; unfortunately it WAS a rattlesnake, so while she went to get the camera I held the snake in hand above my child who was jumping and reaching in an effort to hold it. We then photographed it and let the little guy go, but it did make for some exciting moments. See? Doesn't that sound like fun?

While in Florida, we also drove down to Peace River Refuge to see B-Bear, the confiscated black bear that spent about two months in our garage. He is doing absolutely fantastic, with two pretty girlfriends and an acre and a half enclosure to roam around in. I asked if I could go in and 'wrastle' around with him just for old times sake, but was told his girl friends would "probably rip you to pieces," so we had to be content with watching him look for blueberries through the fence. Peace River takes in unwanted animals also, but on a much larger scale than Witty Kitties. They have a wonderful facility and are also very worthy of your support. It makes it all worthwhile when you see an animal doing so well that had come from such a deplorable situation.

Now, as you read this, I know what you are thinking: While you are lazing around in Florida during the coldest week of the year, exactly who is taking care of all your animals at Witty Kitties? Our intrepid volunteers, that's who. Kathleen, John, Trish, Mary, and Michelle all worked very hard, and we are extremely grateful. They had to deal with power outages, sick animals, and below-zero cold, in addition to the daily cleaning and feeding, yet they still talked to us when we returned. Witty Kitties is lucky to have them; thank you, again, guys! And, as usual, thank you to all our supporters. I hope you all have a great year!

**SOME SCENES FROM OUR FALL WORKDAY. . . MORE PICS (IN COLOR!) AT OUR WEBSITE:  
[www.wittykitties.org](http://www.wittykitties.org) — Click on News & Activities**



*Some of our intrepid volunteers install new gutters.*



*More volunteers make sure cages are deep-cleaned and that they sparkle!*

Available for educational and entertaining presentations at:

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**That Reptile Guy**  
**Torben Platt**  
Call: 319-848-6075 e-mail: [torbenplatt@earthlink.net](mailto:torbenplatt@earthlink.net)  
Also willing to take in unwanted or rescued reptiles

**Witty Kitties, Inc.**  
**3133 Roberts Ferry Rd.**  
**Solon, IA 52333**

**To find Witty Kitties. . .**  
**Take I-380 to the Swisher/Shueyville exit (No. 10).**  
**Go east one mile to Club Road (which becomes Curtis**  
**Bridge Rd.). Turn right.**  
**Go one mile to Sandy Beach Rd. &**  
**turn left.**  
**Go 1.1 miles to Roberts Ferry Rd.,**  
**turn right, then left at the 3rd drive-**  
**way (3133 Roberts Ferry Rd.).**

**Please call (319) 848-3238 and**  
**leave a message to schedule an**  
**appointment.**



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Want to honor or memorialize a family member, friend or beloved pet? Want to give a monetary gift to Witty Kitties? Just fill out the information below and send your check in the envelope provided in this issue. **Your donation is tax deductible, and we'll publish your memorial or honorarium in a future issue. We'll also send a complimentary copy of the newsletter to the person you honor or the family of the person or pet you memorialize.** Just provide the necessary information below and then send this form back to us in the envelope enclosed in this issue (don't forget to add a stamp!). No stamp? No problem! **Now, YOU CAN ALSO GIVE ONLINE — check out our new website (www.wittykitties.org)!**

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