



Witty Kitties, Inc. Newsletter

A Special-Needs Shelter

Late Summer-Early Fall 2006

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 through Animals All About, a mobile veterinary clinic. We also provide rescue, care and appropriate housing for a variety of reptiles.

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.

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Jenni Doll, DVM
Torben Platt, Reptile Wrangler
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Website Address

www.wittykitties.org

The Darker Side of Things (Part II of III)

by Jenni Doll, DVM

All right, who wrote the article in the last Witty Kitties newsletter and signed MY name to it?! What is this I hear about my life only needing minor adjustments here and there? Whoever that was, should have experienced a specific three weeks of my life from this past July-August. During that time I had had multiple opportunities to think to myself, "What the &\$%# am I doing? This can't be happening! When will I learn?"

Let me start with the "I t'll-never-happen-again-in-my-life-time" situation: Picture if you will a reluctant veterinarian in the cab of a big diesel pickup. In the open back of the pick up are 4 plastic dog crates, each containing an adult cougar that had just been removed from a neglect situation under some level of sedation. Being towed behind is a very large horse trailer with a half asleep black bear. Now, for those of you who know about big cats, you can imagine plastic dog crates are not optimal, as they can break out easily if awake. I had NO part in the decision of how these cats would be transported, except that my vet services were needed to sedate the animals for the ride to new, temporary homes.

Little did I know at the time, but each crate was missing at least one bolt that holds the top and bottom together. And little did I know, either, that the one crate missing a bolt on both sides of the crate door contained the least sedated cougar, the big male.

Okay, so the driver, a very mild-mannered man name Dennis, and I were chatting, trying to make the two-hour ride go quickly. He kept checking his mirrors, and I kept turning my head, looking for evidence that anyone had awakened. I was feeling okay about how it was going, when just after getting off a four-lane highway, we both saw the male cougar's head out of his cage. He was trying to get

(continued. . .)

himself out from the crate but it was pushed too close to the cab of the truck. I remember saying, "Oh #\$\$^%\$\$ ^\$\$^%&%%," to the person I was speaking to on the phone, throwing open the truck door, then jumping into the back of the



B-Bear checking out his new surroundings from inside his transport van

truck to sit on the bouncing crate. By now the cougar was really frustrated and showing me every one of his beautiful canine teeth. With me on the crate, and the little sedation still in him, he was not able to get out. His head was held in place between the crate and cab. I had so many things going through my mind, including, "Now THIS is the most stupid situation I've ever been in!"

along with headlines reading, "Neglected Cougar Escapes Botched Rescue". Armed with a 23-gauge needle, I poked his nose a few times so he would pull his head back in. Once in, I drew up more of the drugs that had been in my pocket. Hands shaking, I waited for his big face, big teeth and all, to pop out. When they did, I gave the injection in his masseter (cheek) muscle.

Simultaneous to this, Dennis very calmly asked, "Should I call 911?" I said, "yes," and that a tazor would be nice. By the time the deputy showed up, the cat was going down. He later explained he didn't have a tazor, and that he could shoot it should the cat get away. I immediately pictured the headlines again — "Really Screwed Up 'Rescue' Does More Harm Than Good."

Furious and frustrated that the county I was working with had done no planning for how to transport these animals despite working for **over three years** trying to get them away from the owners, I vowed to learn to ask simple things like, "Will I be present for my veterinary skills? Just my signature? Or will I also be in charge of re-

locating the most difficult animals?"

What then followed were days and days of telephone calls attempting to find temporary homes for these animals. The first night the bear tore the bars off the trailer windows after first breaking the glass. Eventually, on day 3, he was transported to a rehabilitator in Davenport. (The bear would proceed to bend and break and disfigure the cage he was in until it was almost useless). As a favor, Misha Goodman took the cougars in for the "24 hours" I begged her to. . . they ended up staying over a week. (Talk to her about her own ordeal.) I wondered over and over again, "How did this responsibility become mine?"

Well, it gets worse....Cougars overstayed welcome at Iowa City shelter...Were welcome at Davenport rehab place.....Bear had to leave first.....No one would take bear.....We had less than 24 hours to prepare ourselves as hosts to bear.....Bear is in our two-car garage.....You get the picture. Torben will fill you in on this part.

Now, you may be wondering what happens with this story, but first, let me segue into a funny thought I just had: When thinking of what to write in this newsletter over the summer, I had decided to write about the "nightmare" time I had in Minnesota — this adventure happened just two days prior to the cougar incident: I had driven to Minnesota for a two-night stay, arriving at 2 a.m. Saturday. I was already tired from the work week, so had to pinch my arms to stay awake. Next day, I noticed bruises all over them. But wait. That's not my story.

I had packed surgery packs and drugs to do some "friendly family neutering" (of pets), and had planned for only four cats of the wife of a friend of my dad. Lo and behold, when I got to the home, I discovered there were over ten. Since most were already in the house, I wasn't ready to complain...yet. You see, I take pride in my having caught a heck of a lot of wild and even feral cats in my work, so these slightly scared house cats wouldn't be a problem.

After the first cat, I casually sedated the sec-

ond and let it go back into the room in which it had been. I then spent over thirty minutes wedging myself under the lady's bed, trying to grab the cat while the animal kept going between the many storage boxes there. I soon realized the cat was much wilder than I thought by seeing her minimal response to the sedative. I finally gave her the second injection, making it higher than usual. I waited. Finally she relaxed, and I took her outside (my surgery table was the picnic table. Sun was great for lighting that day).

During this time, my dad drove up to see how it was going, just for laughs I think. Or probably because he was worried I was going to embarrass him by doing a bad job. I felt the cat stiffen in my arms suddenly, and my head-under-the-arm hold was slipping. I was barely able to hold onto her and draw up more drugs to give her. It was at this point my dad asked if I needed any help. I said "No", with only a tiny bit of anxiety. However, by now this cat was struggling, sinking her claws into my belly, the way they always seem to do. Cindy, the owner, added "No, she's an expert". Well wouldn't you know it, no sooner did those words come out of her mouth than the cat rocketed out of my arms and into the nearby brush. I was cussing up a storm, and ended up spending an eternity looking for that cat, as did my dad and Cindy. Each time we'd spot her I'd say casually, "Don't worry. I got more drugs into her. She'll go down." Well, she just kept on going and going and going. I was stumbling through brambles and bushes without any worry of what they'd do to me. I also waltzed right on through poison ivy. The scars are still there.

I was fuming mad! Here I was on a weekend "off", traipsing through the woods due to a single second of stupidity. It was a hot day, the clock was ticking off each precious minute of my 36 hours in Minnesota, AND my dad was probably wondering, "What the heck kind of vet did this daughter become? Schooling cost HOW much?"

Anyway, I eventually gave up, finished the other cats, did another run through the woods, and then went home. It wasn't even an hour before Cindy

called after the cat came home. This time I managed to finish the job.

So, what about the bear and cougars? Long story, cut short:

Despite **six** veterinarians' recommendations, as well as the sheriff, two deputies, an equine rescue specialist, and two humane society members, the county attorney — for reasons even he won't give — **gave all the animals the couple wanted back to them** without setting eyes on a single photo or the video from the raid. A judge wasn't even involved until a signature was needed. We took their "throwaways" — the bear, chickens and fox. I'll get WAY too wound up giving more details, but at this time, they can't afford to even get the animals they want back from all the temporary homes the animals are now in. (And the county attorney thinks they'll be able to care for all 11 horses, the 4 cougars, and 24 unneutered dogs with no money.) Go figure.

Well, what's your point, Jenni? You've whined long enough. My point is: until the laws in Iowa change, teenagers will be able to buy declawed bears, lions, tigers, pythons, etc. Dogs and cats won't require more than the bare minimum care for life. And animals will continue to starve to death with no repercussions for the owners. Until that happens, we'll keep taking them in.

I'm tired. This isn't meant to be depressing. Just think of the books my kids will be able to write about our lives. They ought to be able to afford all those therapists they'll need eventually! But seriously, I'm still not about to change much. Call me crazy. (My shrink does.) Just wait and see how much fun can be had when you're in this business. It by far outweighs all the junk, and then some. Really, it does. Just wait and see. Part three should make you smile.

By the way, my agent for my liability insurance called today . . .



Exotics Corner

by Torben Platt

Greetings from the exotics corner of Witty Kitties. To say that life has been interesting lately is putting it mildly!

First there was the famous caiman incident, where one of our three caimans (a small South American relative of the alligator) escaped from its outside enclosure and was shot by one of our less humane neighbors. While I was responsible for this animal and therefore must take accountability for the unfortunate incident, it was a bit of an over-reaction by our neighbor. Despite the fact that they are exceedingly common in their home range and in the pet trade, no human being has ever been fatally injured by a spectacled caiman. At the same time, thousands of people have been fatally injured by people shooting handguns in suburban neighborhoods. All three of our caimans had been given to Witty Kitties because they were not wanted by their former owners or were found wandering the streets. DNR was on the scene and Animal Control had been called. Apparently the shooter was overcome by an urge to kill the animal before this unique (for Iowa) opportunity passed him by. Ah well, it's a shame I didn't get to the scene earlier.

The other incident that the local media has covered has been the recent, and hopefully temporary, housing of a black bear at Witty Kitties. My beautiful wife was called by the Jackson County Sheriff's Department and Humane Society to be the participating veterinarian on a raid on a "farm" in Maquoketa, where **55 animals** were

confiscated. My story involves four cougars and a 400-pound black bear.

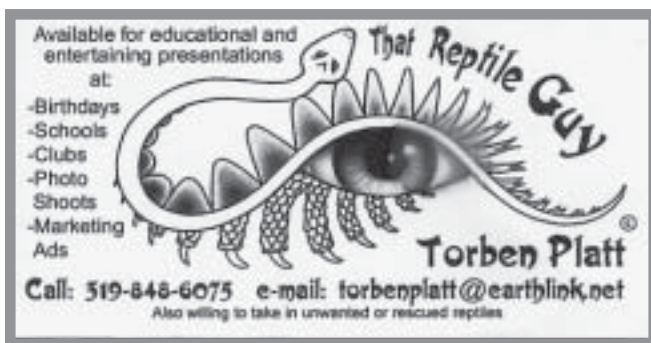
None of the agencies or people involved had thought the operation through, so a place to house the animals wasn't part of the original plan. As you might imagine, it's very difficult to find lodging for animals like these when there's very short notice.

After much negotiation, the cougars were taken to Iowa City Animal Control (a VERY exciting drive it was, but that's my wife's story to tell), and the bear was taken first to Chris and Kat Schoon's place, two Witty Kitties' board members. After a couple of days, the bear was moved to an exotic animal rescue facility in Davenport. He stayed there for nearly a week while we tried to find a permanent home for him. The Davenport facility is set up primarily for big cats, and the bear was making a mess of the enclosure, so the idea was to find a place for the bear and then Davenport would take the cougars.

One thing we found out during this time is that black bears and cougars are EXTREMELY hard to place. Zoos, animal rehab centers, rescues, etc. are already full to overflowing with these animals. It's really the same situation as with dogs and cats, only magnified and more dangerous. The animals are acquired when they are cute little cubs - or puppies or kittens. After they grow up or the novelty wears off, their owners don't want them anymore or cease to care for them properly. Then they become someone else's problem.

The bear apparently hadn't been let out of his tiny enclosure in years, nor had anyone cleaned it (the door was nailed shut) He was fed and watered through the chain link mesh of the enclosure.

So, poor B-Bear was tranquilized for the third time in a week and transported back to Witty Kitties where he is residing as of this date. He and the cougars were all declawed as young babies and have never spent one minute in the wild,



so there's no possibility of returning them to nature.



B-Bear

After all of the time, effort and money invested into this case, we have found out that the county attorney -- supposedly on OUR side -- ruled the animals be returned to the previous owners. This happened before the case was heard by a judge! The owners do not want the bear anymore, just the cougars, horses, dogs, and all of the other animals that had been rescued. As I write this article, the battle rages on. The original owners want the animals to be returned to them because ***they can't afford to drive to the various locations to pick them up.*** They also cannot afford to have any of the dogs spayed or neutered, nor provide any vet care.

Now, are you wondering why they purchased all of these animals to begin with? Are you wondering why the attorney wants the animals to go back to these people? So are we — let's all hope saner minds prevail, and soon.

Meantime, B-Bear whiles away the hours in what (for him) must be luxurious quarters by "redecorating" our garage and eating anything we offer him! It looks like a very well-thought-of-sanctuary in Florida will take him in mid-September. They have to finish construction of a one-acre enclosure before they can accept B-Bear. Until then, B-Bear is accepting donations of apples, pears, dog food, meat, peanuts, watermelon (a personal favorite!), raisins, honey and just about anything else, except bananas. He also enjoys seeing visitors -- afternoons are best. Although he has trouble expressing his gratitude, he is VERY appreciative of the donations he has already received -- and so are we!

That's about it from the Exotics Corner for

this issue. I sincerely hope the next installment from here is shorter and more boring. I could really use a break!

-- Torben

Work Day/B-Bear's Goodbye Party

Saturday, September 9, will be a day to remember! Not only will the new doors be installed in the cat shelter with the money received from the Miccio Grant (see next page) — plus general sprucing up and general cleaning, but we're also going to have B-Bear's goodbye party. It's a special day you won't want to miss. Where else can you volunteer to make the world a better place for helpless animals — AND get to meet a 400-pound black bear? Pizza and soda will be provided for those still standing at the end of the day, so come on down on the 9th, wear your work clothes, and prepare to have some fun with old — and new — friends. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. See you there!

Special, SPECIAL Thanks to . . .

The many folks who gutted our garage and helped re-enforce it for B-Bear! We have received so many contributions that we are overwhelmed at the generosity of people. We were able to send money to the Wildcat Sanctuary in Sandstone, Minnesota (the new home of the cougars), and more will go to B-Bear's new home in Zolto Springs, Florida. The remainder will go into reclaiming our garage, as well as B-Bear's belly while he's with us!

Your generosity is overwhelming -- and we thank you all SO MUCH!

Witty Kitties Receives \$1,000 Miccio Foundation Grant!

September 9th “Volunteer Day” Scheduled to Put Funds to Work

by Kathleen Schoon, Volunteer Coordinator

We got it! Witty Kitties is the proud and grateful recipient of a \$1,000 grant award from the Miccio Foundation. For those of you unfamiliar with the Miccio Foundation, the organization was named after Dr. Ursula Delworth's first cat, Miccio and is a not-for-profit corporation created for benevolent and educational purposes. It supports projects that address the well-being of animals in the state of Iowa, with primary focus on companion animals. The Miccio Foundation has awarded grants to Witty Kitties several times in the past and we are very thankful for their recognition and trust. This award was granted specifically for the improvement of the outdoor enclosures at the shelter. It's our responsibility now to show the generous people at Miccio that we deserve their trust and are capable of putting this grant (and potential future grants!) to good use. And that's where you come in! We need the help of our extended Witty Kitties family of supporters to fully take advantage of this much-needed funding. So...

Please mark Saturday, September 9, 2006 on your calendar from 11:00AM to 5:00PM! We are going to have an action-packed Volunteer-for-the-Kitty-Enclosures Day and we need everyone who can spare a few hours to chip in and join us. Whether you're a handy-person type or a kitty-petting type, we're hoping you'll turn up on the 9th and show the critters you care! Our outdoor enclosures have needed repairs for many months. Now, we can use this new Miccio grant to purchase some better fitting, heavy duty doors and accompanying hardware (so any carpenter-types out there will be especially welcome!). We're also hoping to attract some of you who could help us clean up and do other cat-friendly chores around the shelter. This has the added benefit of giving Dr. Doll more time to attend to some “elective” but important medical needs for several of our cats. There are numerous projects that she doesn't have time to address because of the demands of regular daily chores. If we get enough people to come to this work day we will be able to accomplish several projects beyond the regular daily maintenance.

As those of you know who have attended these Volunteer Days before, we always have a good time while doing good things for the animals. As usual, Witty Kitties will provide drinks and pizza for the whole gang, so PA-LEEEZ mark your calendar and drop by Witty Kitties on September 9, 2006 from 11:00 am to 5:00 pm- and be prepared to pet, groom, hammer, organize, clean, eat, and generally have a fantastic day with us and all our fab felines and other animals!



Witty Kitties T-Shirts!

Looking for an easy way to support Witty Kitties and let people know you're committed to helping helpless animals? Witty Kitties' T-shirts show the world you care! They come in red, green, yellow, black or white. The cost is \$15 for children's shirts and \$20 for adults.

We have a variety of shirt colors with blue or orange logos. Styles include T-shirts, tanks and long-sleeved shirts in these sizes: Childrens S, M, L, and Adult S, M, L, XL, XXL, XXXL.

We may not have all sizes in every color and style, but give us a call and let us know your the size and color you're looking for. It's that easy! (319) 848-3238.

A Few Words from the Prez. . .

by Dona Pearce

If you've read this far, those of you who haven't seen this newsletter before may have installed seatbelts on your chairs by now! This is not your typical shelter -- and the animals who have found a home here are mighty glad of that fact!

It's anything but boring at the Witty Kitties' address. The animals with nowhere else to go and no one else to turn to would tell you, if they could, just how grateful they are for Torben, Jenni, Chris, Kat and everyone else who jumps in and lends a hand when needed to turn a nightmarish existence into just a bad memory, giving these suffering animals a safe, comfortable haven that many have never known before.

As Jenni said in her article, until the laws are changed to protect the truly innocent in our midst, this shel-

ter and the people who run it are going to do all they can to make sure animals get a fair shake.

So now you have a chance to help -- **Sat., September 9th**, is our next work day. Come out and be a part of something that will warm your heart for a long time. Help these good folks help the animals they care for. And this time, you'll get to meet B-Bear! When's the last time you were face to face with a 400-pound black bear? He's a great guy, and you'll be sad if you don't come and meet him and be a part of his goodbye party.

And if you can't volunteer in person, let your check-book do the work for you. Donations are **always** appreciated!

See You There!!

Wish List

CAT FOOD - Purina Cat Chow, the original formula in the blue bag, is the favored brand; **CANNED CAT FOOD FOR A.M. FEEDINGS** - used as treats and for medicating; **CAT LITTER** - scoopable, please;

DONATIONS OF SKILL - carpentry (we'd love to have some cat walks in the shelter). Experienced folks with vet tech and grooming skills for periodic dematting, ear cleaning, etc.

LOVING HOMES for our special-needs animals;

NEWSPAPERS; PAPER TOWELS;

MONETARY TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS - any amount;

VOLUNTEERS - please call to arrange a visit and see just how you can help our furry friends (**Sat., September 9** would be the perfect time to see how good volunteering can make you feel!);

And to those of you who continually lend your support — **THANK YOU!**
We couldn't do it without you!

Memorials

In Memory of 'Homey Schoon' by Sondra Kaska;

In Memory of 'Callie the Barn Cat' at Scales Bend Stables, by Lois James & Ronnie Wieland

In Memory of our mother, Eleanor, by Margalea Warner & David Crombie;

In Memory of 'Lucy Doll-Platt' & 'Homey Schoon' by Dona Pearce;

In Memory of our childhood cat 'Who-Me' by Margalea Warner & David Crombie;

In Memory of 'Cassie' Ackman by Roger & Joanne Rayborn;

In Memory of our beloved 'Catie' by Chris & Kat Schoon & her brother, 'Buzz'

Honorariums

In Honor of Kathleen & Chris Schoon's anniversary by Mark Overbaugh;

In Honor of my brother, David Crombie, on his birthday by Margalea Warner;

In Honor of my cat 'Taz' by Margalea Warner;

*In Honor of 'Rolie Polie' & all his friends at Witty Kitties, by Shannon Poe & former Witty Kitties' alums
Stevie & Lydia;*

In Honor of the 13 adopted stray kitties living very well on my farm by Charlotte Grishaber

Witty Kitties
3133 Roberts Ferry Rd.
Solon, IA 52333
(319) 848-3238



To find Witty Kitties . . .

Take I-380 to the Swisher/Shueyville exit (No. 10).
Go east 1.0 mile to Club Road (becomes Curtis Bridge Rd.). Turn right.
Go 1.0 mile to Sandy Beach Rd. & turn left.
Go 1.1 miles to Roberts Ferry Rd. & turn right, then left at our 3rd driveway (3133 Roberts Ferry Rd.)

Please call (319) 848-6075 & leave a message to schedule an appointment.

Gifts, Memorials & Honorariums

Do you have a family member, friend or special pet for whom you would like to provide a memorial or an honorarium? Or, would you just like to give a monetary gift? General donations, memorials or honorariums can be given for a specific person, pet or reason. **Your donation is tax deductible, and we'll publish your memorial or honorarium in a future issue. We'll also send a complimentary copy 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 (remember to add a stamp). Thank you! Everything you give helps us care for the animals that are already a part of our shelter and also permits us to help even more animals looking for a second chance.

Gift: \$ _____

Honorarium for: (name) _____

Person

Pet

Memorial for: (name) _____

Person

Pet

Send notification to: (name) _____

(City, State, Zip)