



# Witty Kitties, Inc. Newsletter

A Special-Needs Shelter

Summer 2008

## ***PARTY! PARTY! PAR-TEE!!***

*Come to Witty Kitties Sunday, June 29,  
from 1—3 p.m. for  
Cupcake's BIRTHDAY PARTY!  
She'll be 8 years old, and we're going to  
celebrate!  
Bring the kids and visit the kitties!  
See details on page 3 of this issue.*

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

### **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.

### **Board of Directors**

Jenni Doll, DVM  
Torben Platt, Reptile Guy  
Kathleen Schoon,  
Volunteer Coordinator  
Chris Schoon  
North Campus Coordinator  
Trish Wasek, Webmaster  
John McLaughlin, Infrastructure  
Dona Pearce  
President & Newsletter Editor

## **THE CARNIVORE'S (KEEPER'S) DILEMMA**

*by Jenni Doll, DVM*

"I really wish snakes ate hotdogs. Then it wouldn't be so gross having them." I remember agreeing with my friend many years ago, saying "Yea, it wouldn't be so sad to have them". After all, I love fuzzy little anything's — rats, mice, bunnies, you name it. So I really had no interest in taking my little pets, for whom I'd make little houses, provide wheels, dote on, to the gaping mouth of a feisty carnivore.

"I just like animals too much." she said.

"Yea," I replied, not noticing my lack of consideration towards the poor reptiles.

Months later, as "That Reptile Guy" became a bigger part of my life, I was soon helping to care for dozens of snakes. But it wasn't so gross, the feeding, that is. It relieved me to know that I didn't have to take part in the killing of all those little mousies and rats and bunnies. That problem was solved by a distant company that raises them in little boxes, and, hopefully (for I have yet to get an answer on the "how"), humanely kills them, then freezes them before packing them nicely into insulated boxes of dry ice. They arrive at the door, so you can warm them up and pop 'em into those hungry mouths.

Just like hotdogs. Neat and bloodless. . . but not really.

So, you can't make snakes vegetarians. I feed my family tofu-based food products, but can't do the same for the snakes.

And, I felt sad for the rodents and rabbits who had probably (anthropomorphism police take note) sad and boring lives, only to be killed in whatever mysterious way, and shipped out. Though tiny little brains they may have, isn't some sort of enrichment deserving?

So, I decided to raise them myself. Kathleen and Torben can tell you that over the years I've tried to do this on and off many times. I'd start and then stop due to lack of time to keep the cages clean, or I couldn't keep up with the demand. Sometimes, the kitties would figure out how to get into the cage, or (and this is often) I'd start holding a mouse or rat and decide I liked it too much, or (sound the sirens...), it "liked" being held and "wanted" to be my pet. But, try as I might, I'd always give up. I truly believe "happy" mice, or rats, or anything for that matter, should somehow mean healthier and, therefore, better food. Also, I was sparring other less "happy" ones from being needed.

The year we discovered the mysterious arrival of baby bunnies running around in our yard the day after Easter, I made my only attempt to do the same with bunnies. After all, we soon had 18 rabbits running around in and out of the yard. Neighbors kept stopping on the road,

*(continued. . .)*

honking, or yelling, "your rabbit is out!" I'd yell back, "It's mine only by default!" I was catching and neutering as fast as I could. Once I accepted that we had a LOT of rabbits, most of which were not at all easy to handle, I then began keeping a small population. They were in a big enclosure, got sunshine, ran around and played. I was glad that they were "happy". Happy food.

Then, they had babies.....such cute babies.

So, that didn't last beyond the one generation.

I didn't quit raising them because I thought it was wrong. Nor did it make me too sad. No, it happened when a neighbor man made a special trip to our place and said, "Hey, I know someone who might want those rabbits for pets. That way you won't have to kill them." It was then that I really felt the dilemma. So, didn't it matter to the guy that these rabbits served another purpose. Did that mean we should starve the snakes?

Torben deals with that mindset all the time. "Why do you have to KILL things to feed the snakes?"

I had always known how passionate Torben is about reptiles, especially snakes. Anyone who knows him knows that. And, I always thought I understood it. Of course I would. I love animals. Reptiles are animals, Hence..... say no more.

But it wasn't until recent years that I REALLY started to understand the WHY of his passion. It hadn't occurred to me that just because I adore turtles, tortoises, geckos, etc., didn't mean I was embracing all reptiles. Snakes had always been a fascination for me, but the love took time. Snakes are hairless, can't come when called (no ears, however, food will do) there is no whining when hurt, or purring when content. They also don't have facial expressions to read. Heck, they look the same sleeping as they do awake! But, there is something extraordinary about them. And...they must eat.

But, this dilemma gets more complicated.

Frequently, a rabbit, or rat, or even other rodents are brought into various animal control facilities for whatever reason. And, many times, it is not a good candidate for adoption. Or, the shelter is overrun by rabbits at the time. What do you do with that animal? I can tell you I've taken several home, neutered them, and let them run on my farm. But what else can be done with them? They are euthanized by lethal injection. Only recently I diagnosed probable uterine cancer in an older female rabbit at a local shelter. She was 7 or 8, and not the most adoptable compared to the tame little butterballs the shelter already had. She was euthanized peacefully, and disposed of.

by writing this?) I think it was a waste of a body. That rabbit could have made a month's worth of a meal for a large snake. Of course, the shelter is not going to risk a rumor. They need to let the public know that lethal injection is the chosen form of euthanasia.

Nice and neat.

"Jenni, you mean to say you want to feed people's former pets to snakes? That is so cruel." And, what a public relations nightmare that would be.

But is it? Only recently have I come to grips with it. Constricting snakes kill QUICKLY. Many still believe it is suffocation that kills the prey (that would be awful). But only in recent years it was discovered (using fluoroscopy I think?) that the constriction is so quick and strong that it literally collapses blood vessels and the heart stops. Shock, and then fainting is what the prey feels. Of course, for huge prey, like antelope, or people (according those who have escaped it), it is not so quick. But we are talking small, easily-swallowed prey.

I'm beginning to feel like Torben — "prey", "constriction", "Snakes Rock, Man!"...

Even though I still don't have that deep, deep, deep, passion for them, as he does, I still want them to eat.

What is best for the animal in our care may not be seen as appropriate by the public. But we must let the public know that we have carnivores. Carnivores by nature, not choosing.

This whole eating of meat thing stinks in a way, but what do you do?

"People shouldn't have those big snakes anyway."

Duh. But they came to us, and we must provide them with food, water, and shelter. With the new laws in Iowa, we hope fewer and fewer people will feel compelled to buy snakes that get to be over 20 ft. long. I haven't even mentioned the caimans and alligators! Point is that we have them now.



I love fuzzy little animals. I love snakes. That is my dilemma.

# CUPCAKE'S BIRTHDAY PARTY!

**WHEN:** Sunday, June 29, 1—3 p.m.

**WHERE:** Witty Kitties, Inc., 3133 Roberts Ferry Rd., Solon

**WHY:** Cupcake is turning 8 years old!



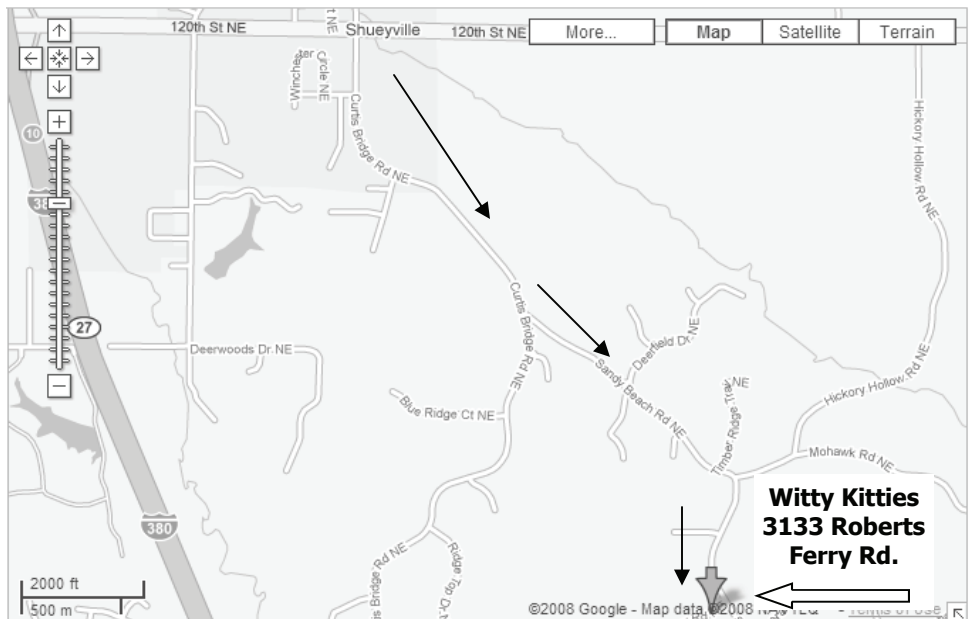
**DIRECTIONS TO WITTY KITTIES:**

Take I-380 to the Swisher/  
Shueyville exit (No. 10)

Go east one mile to Club Road  
(becomes Curtis Bridge Rd.).  
Turn **RIGHT**.

Go one mile to Sandy Beach Rd.  
and turn **LEFT**.

Go 1.1 miles to Roberts Ferry  
Rd., turn **RIGHT**, then **LEFT** at  
the 3RD driveway.



Bring the kids and visit all of the kitties — Helium-filled balloons for the kids!  
Freebies for Mom and Dad — pet care products! Punch, Soda, and — of course — CUPCAKES!

Cupcake says if you want to bring gifts, please bring:

- Scoopable Kitty Litter
- Canned or Dry Cat Food
- Paper Towels or Laundry Detergent
- Toys or Treats for Kitty-Cats

**HOPE WE SEE YOU THERE!**



## STILL AT THE SHELTER

by Nancy Fultz

In this issue, we'd like to spotlight some of our purrfectly sweet Felv+ kitties. Many Felv+ cats can live a full life and never exhibit any problems — it's just the luck of the draw. Many 'normal' cats may get sick and cross the Rainbow Bridge early. There is no way to look at a cat and say which one will be with you for a long time. Each cat deserves the chance for a happy home where they are loved by a caring family.

Jiggs is a very striking cat — not only does she have beautiful torti markings, but she is also a polydactyl. That means that she has extra toes on her very large paws. Polydactyls are also known as 'Hemingway cats' because Ernest Hemingway was a lover of these cats, and his former home in Key West is now a museum and home for more than 60 polydactyls. Jiggs has been with us since 2004, and even though she enjoys the outside enclosure and the loving volunteers, she would love it more if she was to get adopted.



G.C. Krumm is a loving boy who was named for his coloring: G.C. stands for graham cracker. When you visit his room at the shelter, he is always one of the first to greet you. He has been known to climb up your leg if he feels you aren't paying enough attention to him! He loves to sit on laps and also will climb up and around your neck — he really loves humans! He's been with us for over a year, and even though he thinks the shelter is nice, he would love a home all to himself.



Come visit these cats and all the other highly adoptable cats at the shelter — they would love to meet you!



## MAKE YOUR VACATION PAY OFF FOR THE ANIMALS!

by Nancy Fultz

If you're taking a trip this summer (or any time, for that matter), take a few extra seconds to make that trip help the animals. Visit [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com), and in the box that says "Who do you Goodsearch for?" type Witty Kitties and click verify. It should now say Witty Kitties (Solon, IA). If you have cookies enabled on your browser, every time you go back to Goodsearch, Witty Kitties will already be selected so you won't have to repeat this step every time. Now you can use Goodsearch just like Google or any other search engine, and each search will earn about 1 cent for the animals!

But back to your trip — click on the box that says, "Who do you Goodshop for?" and then click on the Travel button currently on the left-hand side under categories. Click on any of the merchant icons, and you'll be sent to their website. A portion of what you spend will automatically be donated to Witty Kitties! There are no forms to fill out. All it takes is a few extra clicks and you're helping the animals. Currently there are over 2 dozen travel merchants — some of them are: United Airlines, Price-line.com, Expedia, Raddison Hotels, Budget Rent-a-Car, Best Western, Carnival Cruises — the list changes all the time.

There are also hundreds of other merchants under other categories, so if you shop online, this is a great way to help the animals.

Your search or purchase may only bring in a few cents, but if 200 people earn 1 cent ten times a week for Witty Kitties, that adds up to over \$1000 a year. Aren't the animals worth a few seconds?

### **CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS, SCOUTS, HANDYMEN — IN FACT, ANYONE WANTING TO HELP WHO HAS CARPENTER AND WOOD-BUILDING SKILLS!**

We need a small shed built next to the garage that can hold feed and tools, and a larger wooden house (8'x8' and about 4—5' tall) for the piggies. Witty Kitties will buy the kits, but needs someone to help assemble the projects. We'll need these before bad weather comes back, so if you want to participate in a project that will make life better for some of our critters, please email [staff@wittykitties.org](mailto:staff@wittykitties.org), or leave a message at (319) 848-3238. THANKS!

*Jenni*



## EXOTICS CORNER

by Torben Platt

Greetings from Exotics Corner —

I will give a quick update on the latest goings on here:

This is the time of year when we start to move some of our cold-blooded cohorts (reptiles) outside. The crocodilians, turtles, and some of the lizards all do much better if they are exposed to natural sunlight. Unfortunately, we have had more natural rain and cold than sunlight this Spring, so we are delaying moving them out until the weather is a little more cooperative. Over the winter, Lex Luthor (our big alligator) has put on a few pounds and gained a few inches, so moving him outside will be exciting, I'm sure. Anyone eager to help should let me know.

The animals that spent the winter outside (pot bellied pigs, emus, goats, fox, assorted fowl, equines, etc.) have all survived more or less intact. We definitely need to make some improvements in their living conditions before next winter, however, in case we have another rough one.

The big plan is to move all the reptiles into our garage, moving the pigs to the flat area next to the road and building a small barn for them, and putting up a structure for feed and hay for the horses. There will be plenty to do this Summer! Any and all help is appreciated!

I am going to cut the exotic and reptile news a little short so I can write a bit about .....cats! ? I understand Jenni is writing about reptiles, so I guess it's only fair. Actually, I want to say a little about one particular cat. When you show up early in the morning (or anytime) to do the chores at Witty Kitties, you are often greeted first by one or two of the outside kitties, LeMans, Ulvar, and especially, Venus. We have had hundreds of cats pass through our lives; naturally, some of them leave bigger impressions than others. Venus is one of these friendly felines. She is one of the original Witty Kitties and has always been loving, trusting, and eager to be petted. The good news is that after a remarkably brief convalescence, she is still all of those things. It's just that she is all of those things on 3 legs now. While on our way over to the shed one Sunday to give a tour to Jenni's cousins, we were greeted by an understandably upset volunteer, Tim, who is a great admirer of Venus's. She had a compound fracture of her front leg. Jenni and Tim quickly took her back to the house and Jenni turned into Dr. Doll (her superwoman persona). After spending several hours working on her, Jenni amputated her shattered leg and found a 22-caliber bullet in her opposite leg. Apparently in her good-natured way, Venus approached someone (probably in a car), and instead of receiving the expected scratch behind the ears, was shot at point blank range. Due to my wife's expertise

and Tim's attention and generous donation of time and money, she is now back to being her trusting and loving self. Speaking for myself, I am generally in a bad mood and untrusting, and if I had lost a leg, I doubt very much that it would improve my personality. Fortunately (or unfortunately...depending on how you look at it), Venus is a better, tougher animal than I am. As for the person who shot her, I have no idea what the motivation for the act was, but you should think twice before trying something like that again. Things like this have a tendency to come back to BITE you (right, Lex?). Venus has a lot of friends in the neighborhood, including Tim's mom, Marlis, and I can't say what she wants to do with you (this being a family publication). Anyway, as I say, it takes more than the loss of a limb to keep a good cat down, so the next time any of you friends of the shelter stop by, be sure to give Venus a little extra attention. She deserves it! Thank you for your continued support and have a great summer.



*Venus taking a well-deserved nap*

## Torben

### SPECIAL THANKS TO . . .

#### Tim Van Loh!

Tim is a dedicated volunteer who comes to Witty Kitties every week, sometimes more often, and has given the kitties so much attention that they now get excited and start to meow when they see his car drive up.

Tim is Venus' knight in shining armor who found her after she was shot, and he donated money for her medication and care. He even brought her chicken during her recovery. The attention he lavished on Venus while she was recuperating has really helped her get 'back in the game.'

Tim has even had a few goat, pony and donkey-herding missions while visiting at Witty Kitties!

Tim, all the kitties, as well as the two-legged critters who populate this place, think you are truly a star!

**THANKS FOR ALL YOU DO!**

## MEMORIALS & HONORARIUMS

*In Memory of **Eleanor Louise Brown**, our mother, and our kitty,  
**Who Me**, that we had while growing up,  
by David Crombie & Margalea Warner*

*In Memory of **Hope**, beloved cat of Karen Hostetter,  
by Dianne DeMay. Hope brought joy to Karen's life for 7 years &  
was a leukemia positive kitty.*

*In Memory of **Emily**, our beloved cat,  
by Steven & Jen Fasnacht*

*In Memory of **Tyson**, beloved cat of Nikkie Fox,  
by her dad, Jeff Monk*

*In Memory of **Hanna**, beloved cat of Dennis & Marilyn Schipper,  
by Roger & Jo Rayborn*

*In Memory of **Mr. BW**, beloved bunny of Amy McBeth*

*In Honor of **Sondra Kaska and Jerry Kinnamon**,  
by Barb & Britt Johnson*

*In Honor of my animal-loving friend, **Nicole Fleck-Tooze**,  
by W. J. Ward*

## MORE SPECIAL THANKS GOES TO. . .

### Jonathan & Katie Fasselius

This nice young couple from Coralville has been volunteering every Tuesday night, cheerfully showing up and doing chores. We want them to know that we appreciate them VERY MUCH!

## SHELTER HAPPENINGS...

by Trish Wasek

It's been an amazing spring at Witty Kitties this year. Repairs and new projects have kept us really busy.

A winter ice storm destroyed the gutter that we installed at last fall's work day, so we had our spring water problem inside the shelter yet again – the water just flows in under the sill plate along the length of the building when the ground is still frozen. The poor kitties have damp paws until we can plug up all the leaks with towels. We also had to take up the lovely vinyl flooring that we put in last fall (good thing it was "loose laid"!!).

In order to solve this problem, we had an "industrial grade" gutter installed this spring. It's gorgeous! Downspouts at both ends! Heavy-duty brackets! (Yes, we really were that excited about a GUTTER!). And at this spring's work day, we dug a trench along that side of the

building and put in drainage tile with a heat strip inside. Now when the ground is frozen and the spring rains begin, the gutters will catch most of the rain, and what makes it to the ground will (theoretically) drain into the tile and be carried away from the building. Keep your paws crossed, kitties, but we're pretty sure we've licked our water problems for good! All that's left is to put the vinyl flooring back down, which we hope to do in time for Cupcake's birthday party.

We are extremely grateful to the Greg Biffle Foundation for Animals, who awarded a grant to Witty Kitties that allowed us to have the gutters professionally installed. One of our dedicated volunteers, Nancy Fultz, wrote the grant last fall. Greg Biffle is a NASCAR driver, and in 2005, he and his wife Nicole established a foundation to create awareness and serve as an advocate to improve the well-being of animals. They have awarded grants totaling more than \$100,000 to hu-



mane societies and animal shelters from coast to coast. You can find out more about the Greg Biffle Foundation at [gregbifflefoundation.com](http://gregbifflefoundation.com). Thanks so much to Greg and Nicole for all the work they do on behalf of the animals!

Another major project this spring was assembling our new storage building, affectionately known as the "Biffle Building." It, too, was purchased with funds from the Biffle Foundation grant. We've never had a place to store large quantities of food when we're fortunate enough to get a big donation. And the raccoons just love to tear into bags of dry food that are stored inside the garage portion of the shelter. (The coons come and go through the garage's kitty door, just as the cats do.) So we now have a lovely 8' x 10' building with sliding doors that can even be locked!

And speaking of large quantities of food, we need to say a **special** thank you to PAWS & MORE Animal Shelter in Washington, Iowa. Amber Talbot and her staff were having storage problems of their own, and they generously shared a very large amount of canned cat food with us. Thanks so much to Rich Houy of Cedar Rapids, who delivered it to our door step. And thanks also to Girl Scout troop 1332, The Waterfalls, of Iowa City, who helped us move all of the food into the Biffle Building.

That's pretty much it for now. If you haven't been to the shelter lately, you should stop by and check it out. Cup-

## JUNE IS ADOPT-A-SHELTER-CAT MONTH

by Nancy Fultz

When the stresses of a world in turmoil, or merely a bad day at the office threaten to overwhelm us, help is just a cat-in-the-lap away. Feline therapy eases anxiety by lowering blood pressure and releasing "feel-good" endorphins. At this time of year, when animal shelters are overflowing with cats of all ages, there has never been a better time to adopt a feline therapist and let a cat heal your heart.

This June for Adopt-A-Shelter-Cat Month, Witty Kitties invites the public to partake in some relaxation therapy by stopping by the shelter to meet available feline therapists and engage in some Cat Blanket Therapy (CBT) and a kneading massage. Our certified cat therapists will help you to forget that which troubles you, and you'll leave feeling much more relaxed.



*Feline therapist 'Speedy' giving a relaxing massage*

## OLDER CATS MAKE GREAT COMPANIONS

by Nancy Fultz

Several of the Witty Kitties are getting on in years. With advances in medical care, cats and dogs are living longer lives, just like their humans. A cat that is kept indoors and given regular medical care can easily live well into its teens. So many times adopters say they don't want an older cat — even a cat that is only 7 years old. Many older cats end up in shelters waiting, hoping, for someone to love them despite their age. These cats can make great pets. They are old enough to appreciate a warm lap and are already past the high-energy kitten phase. The next time you adopt, consider an adult or senior cat. Like a fine wine, they only get better with age.

*Morris  
9 years old*



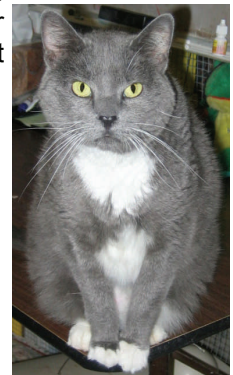
*Boca  
13 years old*



*Kayla  
14 years old*

*Cupcake  
Almost 8 years old*

*"Be sure to come to my birthday party on June 29th!"*



## WITTY KITTIES RECEIVES MICCIO GRANT!

By Trish Wasek

As we were about to go to press, we received notification that Witty Kitties has received a \$3,000 grant from the Miccio Foundation, a local non-profit organization that supports projects for the wellbeing of animals in Iowa.

Genevieve Gatto, who lives in Cedar Rapids and is a long-time supporter of Witty Kitties, has agreed to donate matching funds. These generous donations will be used to consolidate all of the reptiles (snakes, lizards, crocs and turtles) into one area which is the garage on Jenni and Torben's property. Watch for details in the next issue of the newsletter. We need to complete all the work before the reptiles have to come in from the cold this fall.

It's going to be a busy summer!

*Have you been thinking about volunteering? There's no time like the present — give Witty Kitties a call at (319) 848-3238 or email [staff@wittykitties.org](mailto:staff@wittykitties.org) to see how you can help. Many hands make light work, and it will also give you a great feeling of satisfaction to know you've helped make our little corner of the world a better place for the animals who rely on us for their care.*

**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 driveway (3133 Roberts Ferry Rd.).**

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



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**Gifts, Memorials and Honorariums**

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)!**

- Gift: \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- Memorial for: (name) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Person       Pet
- Honorarium for: (name) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Person       Pet

Send notification to: (name) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (please provide city, state and zip)