



Volume III, Issue 2

# Witty Kitties, Inc. Newsletter

A Special-Needs Shelter

Spring 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.

### Board of Directors

Jenni Doll, DVM  
Torben Platt, Reptile Wrangler  
Dona Pearce, President &  
Newsletter Editor  
Chris Schoon, Webmaster  
Kathleen Schoon, Volunteer  
Coordinator  
Cindy Thompson, Board Member

### Website Address

[www.wittykitties.org](http://www.wittykitties.org)

## The Best of Times. The Worst of Times

by Jenni Doll, DVM

As I'm spaying yet another animal, the billionth of the day, I try to gather my thoughts once more. I'm at the Muscatine Humane society again, trying to enjoy the peace and quiet in the small clinic behind the shelter building while I decide what drugs to use on the next dog that needs my attention.

I'm having a little trouble on this day, however. After just a bit of thinking as to why, I look down at the two tiny arms wrapped around my legs that are attached to a tiny person who is screaming and crying, "Ma ma ma, Momma!" It's uncanny how Kirsten can detect just when I'm least available, and decide that is the best time to need me desperately. Didn't I just take her out in her stroller? Luckily the six rocks I found in a pile by the driveway preoccupied her a good half hour. After those got boring, stacking eight cans of dog food kept her happy, until now. Her behavior is not unusual, I know. I recall my sisters and I all clinging to our mom's legs as well. After having seven of us by the age of 30, the highlight of her days had dwindled down to stealing away to the bathroom with a cup of coffee, her cigarettes, and a crossword puzzle for the better part of an hour. That doesn't mean we didn't sit outside the door, whining the whole time. Maybe she had earplugs hidden away in there too.

But back to the inappropriate use of surgical space. . . I'm not alone in my crazy dilemma, as I know of plenty of mom veterinarians in the same situation. Many a time I've put my little tyke into a dog kennel (a clean one!) to provide her with a safe play area while I was working on tricky animals. People who've witnessed this may have thought of calling DHS, but I defy anyone to find a safer playpen than a 3 x 3 x 3 foot stainless steel cage, stuffed full of blankets and toys. This care technique has been used numerous times by moms who needed just a bit of time to do their work unencumbered, quickly and methodically working through the situation. It is an act of necessity.

(continued. . .)

I often wonder how I got to this point in my life, feeling my blood pressure rising, concentrating on the task at hand, yet reserving a small part of my brain to direct my mouth to sing "The Wheels on the Bus" at the top of my lungs just one more time. I never wonder over the question for long, as I know very well that my life is just as I've made it to be . . . and want it to be . . . as full of life as possible. I can look back at so many situations in my past, both extremely happy and devastatingly sad, thanks to my strong desire to take care of animals, especially the rejected misfits, and realize that I wouldn't change a thing. Although getting our baby into daycare will be a blessing, these situations are an integral part of my family's days. However, anyone seeing them from the outside may just want to run and get a movie camera, as they could easily win a prize on "America's Funniest Videos!"

For instance, there was the time when I had to use a plumbing snake to unplug our toilet. I wasn't the least bit surprised when I saw pieces of starfish, shells and sand dollars coming out. I had discovered not long before this day that one of the raccoons we had been rehabilitating had learned how to flush the toilet and had been playing in it. I just wish I had had the sense to remove the glass bowl of sea creatures from the back of the tank.

That raccoon (the thought of her still makes my heart swell), Junie B. Coonie, was the source of innumerable fun moments and some frustrations. She was from one of a few batches of baby coons we had taken in due to separation from their mothers for various reasons. Though we released them into the wild on our fourteen acres, Junie knew very well that boxes of cereal, bags of white rice, and rolls of toilet paper were waiting for her in our house. They were just begging to be opened, dragged around the house, and played with! The wild of the forest was nice, but after about a week out there she insisted on going through the dog/cat door and welcoming herself back into our lives. She especially liked to hit the bedrooms first, at night of course, and to try to reach her fingers as far into our ears or nostrils

as possible. Our hair was always in need of being messed up, and she also insisted on one or two of our dogs joining in the fun. I may be the only mom in Iowa who heard her son yelling, "Mom, the raccoon keeps bugging me" in the middle of the night.

We all had different tolerances for Junie. Though she was the most personable, sweet, cuddly little muffin you could ever meet, she was still a wild animal, so she had an "anything goes" attitude for our house. Torben was certainly the most tolerant. But Joseph (my son) and I got especially frustrated with her night raids. We really got fed up when she entered our house after a long while away to discover we had brought in a tree just for her! We had even put all kinds of shiny things, lights and glitter on it. We really had the nerve to think it was our Christmas tree, and shouldn't have been surprised when dozens of decorations started disappearing at a fast rate. We also had to stop putting presents under the tree, as Junie, despite the opposable thumbs, couldn't shake the presents to find out what was inside, but had to tear them apart. To this day, I think she taught our dog Cha Cha her quick "retrieval and entry" technique for opening any kind of package.

Needless to say, when I figured out how to scare Junie from the tree (spray her with water? Are you joking? Yell at her to scare her? You're ridiculous!), I was thrilled. I had plugged a vacuum cleaner into a nearby outlet and left the vacuum in the "on" position. I put an adapter at the plug site to control the vacuum's switch with a remote control, allowing me to actually turn it on and off from another room, thus making me appear completely innocent and sympathetic, of course, when she sprang three feet in the air and hightailed it back out to the woods when the evil vacuum erupted into a deafening noise. I admit, I've always had a bit of regret and sadness



(continued. . .)

when seeing this in my mind, as I loved Junie so much, and I hated thinking she may one day never visit again.

Even though Junie's leaving forever was supposed to be the ultimate outcome to our having raised her, I would have a mix of happiness and anger when I'd come home and discover she had come back. I would know she had been in the house because I would find everything previously on the kitchen table now on the floor.

Junie isn't the only raccoon who entertained us and also caused hours of frustration. When Junie and her three buddies were still feeding off baby bottles, Torben and I had taken them on a camping trip to southern Illinois. A few hours into the adventure we decided to let them run loose in the van, as they were getting the crate all poopy and smelly. As long as we made sure none were at the driver's peddles, everything would be okay, right? Well, about an hour after a pit stop we noticed none of the coonies were visible. To make matters worse, a small sliding window in the back of the van was partially open. We immediately began taking the van apart. One, two, three, but where is the fourth? A good thirty minutes into the search, I found him **inside** the back seat, sleepy and annoyed for being bothered. Back into the crate they went. I have wonderful photos of that trip, the four of them playing at an overlook at a nature preserve, climbing the benches and scaring each other. The weathered wood, contrasting with their beautiful coats, made for some great shots. Of course, I also remember with joy the pictures I have of them when they spent the night loose in our bathroom. All drawers and cupboards were open and the trash was tipped over. Towels and toilet paper were strewn all over the place. Their first experience "hunting" for live crayfish Torben bought and put into a kiddie pool was probably the pinnacle of cute. Oh yeh, did I mention how they crawled up our bare legs first thing each morning while waiting for their bottles?

My point is that **my life is a mess!** I have no personal time to think of anything, I am always

doing ten projects at a time, and I lie awake at night worrying about what I've forgotten to do. Why, it was only last week when I was stopped at a light in Coralville by a cab driver, only to be told I had a stack of towels and a box on the bumper of my van. The fact that they were there isn't so weird -- for me, that is. The crazy thing is that they made the trip from Shueyville via I-380 and I-80! Just another day. . .

I complain with the best of them, but when I try to picture my life any other way, I can't. I love how things are, and I don't have many regrets. I just need a bit of fine tuning . . . okay, a lot of finetuning!

If you are interested in "the rest of the story", stay tuned for parts 2 and 3 in upcoming newsletters.



## Witty Kitties T-Shirts!

Looking for a way to support Witty Kitties but don't have time to volunteer? How about buying a T-shirt? T-shirts can be 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. Sizes are: 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 size and favorite styles and colors. It's that easy! (319) 848-3238.

## Exotics Corner

by Torben Platt

One of the questions I am frequently asked when giving reptile presentations (after "Is that alive?" and "Do you know where the bathroom is?") is "Do reptiles make safe pets?" The answer? It depends on the species of reptile. The vast majority of reptiles typically offered for sale or adoption are completely safe for the human caregiver. The reptile is usually in more danger from their owner than the other way around. Having said that, there can be no argument that certain reptiles are dangerous and do not make appropriate pets. Witty Kitties is a certified animal shelter, and therefore is permitted to have a few animals that would normally be illegal without a dangerous animal permit. Iowa has some of the strictest ordinances regarding reptiles I have ever seen, particularly Cedar Rapids and Iowa City. Always check with the local agency in charge of animal control before acquiring an exotic animal.

I would never recommend owning a venomous snake if you are inexperienced with them, but it is possible to keep them and other dangerous animals safely if you have the proper facilities. Our large constrictors, venomous snakes, and caimans are kept in locked enclosures in a locked room. I take every precaution even though none of the animals I have are capable of killing an adult human being. I find the strict laws in this state a little strange because they don't really seem to be based on safety. Many more people are injured (like our intrepid board member Kathleen) or even killed by horses in this state than by boa constrictors or iguanas (I don't think a single person has been killed by either reptile), but I don't think you need a special permit to own a horse in Linn County. All in all, I support the strict laws because they prevent people from getting animals they cannot properly care for.

In closing, I would like to remind our many caring supporters to keep your eyes open when driving this spring. All kinds of critters are moving around more than usual, so give 'em a brake. Thank you for all your help and contributions to Witty Kitties!

Available for educational and entertaining presentations at:

- Birthdays
- Schools
- Clubs
- Photo Shoots
- Marketing Ads

**That Reptile Guy**

**Torben Platt**

Call: 319-848-6075 e-mail: torbenplatt@earthlink.net

Also willing to take in unwanted or rescued reptiles

### Making a Difference

Are you hoping to make a difference helping animals who need you, but you don't know how to get started? Look no further! Volunteer at Witty Kitties! The rewards (lap sits, purrs, and kisses from our darling kitties) far outweigh any monetary rewards. You'll give much-needed help and bring comfort to animals who need and crave love and attention. **Call us today at 319-848-3238.** Leave a message and we'll get back to you to discuss what you'd like to do and when you'd like to do it. Call now -- you'll be glad you did!



### A Star is Born!

Morris, one of our FIV Witty Kitties, made an appearance on Channel 9 news on April 13 during the 11 a.m. show. Alan Berger, DVM from Bright Eyes and Bushy Tails, wanted to discuss FIV, so he borrowed a Witty Kitty for his subject. We appreciate the mention given to Witty Kitties, as well as helping to educate the general public about FIV.



## Memorials

### *In Memory of Lucy Doll Platt*

*With great sadness, we need to let our many friends and supporters know of the passing of **Lucy Doll Platt**, one of the sweetest souls to ever grace the face of this earth. She had a way of making everyone she met feel like her very special buddy. It was this affectionate trait that made her an extremely talented therapy dog, as well as the most popular animal on trips to Camp Courageous. She was never upstaged by cool-looking reptiles or cute potbellied pigs. She had a presence that made everyone who ever met her love her immediately and want to be her friend. She was Witty Kitties' official greeter, and she will be greatly missed by all of her special friends, and most especially by Torben, as Lucy was his jogging partner and best buddy.*

*In memory of 'Winky,' a sick little wild kitten I had for only six days. "He touched my heart." - by Deb Peterson*

*In memory of 'Else' and 'Tammy' by Bob and Bodil Platt*



**Lucy**  
(Photo courtesy of  
Steve & Jen  
Fasnacht)

## Honorariums

*In honor of our son **Shane's** 7th birthday, by Linda and Joe Skvor*


*In honor of **Chris Witmore**, Iowa City Animal Care and Adoption Center Employee  
Extrordinaire! - by Amy Parker and Matt Schikore*

## Thank You!

*A BIG thank-you to **Jackie Ferdig**, a student from Solon High School who has been volunteering with Witty Kitties each week since October! Your help and efforts are really appreciated!*

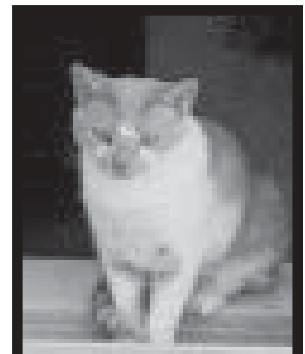
## Wish List

- 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.
- VOLUNTEERS** - please call to arrange a visit and see just how you can help our furry friends;
- LOVING HOMES** for our special-needs animals;
- NEWSPAPERS; PAPER TOWELS;**
- MONETARY TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATIONS** - any amount is welcomed!



**Kayla purrs  
heartfelt  
thanks!**

**To all of our wonderful supporters -- THANK YOU! We couldn't do it without your help.**



**Bob has great  
news -- he's been  
adopted!**

## Changes Are in the Air

by Kathleen Schoon, Volunteer Coordinator

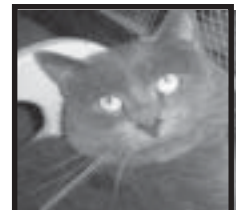
There are some exciting changes going on at Witty Kitties this Spring. The most significant change is our new President, Dona Pearce. If you recognize Dona's name, it might be that you have seen her listed on our newsletter as the editor. We would not have a newsletter if it were not for Dona, who agreed to take it on for Witty Kitties about two years ago. It has been the most exciting and beneficial thing that has occurred for our shelter since we moved into the new building three years ago. Dona has been involved with numerous animal welfare organizations. While living in San Diego for several years, she was a long-time volunteer for the San Diego Humane Society in the fundraising department. She also spent several years volunteering with FOCAS (Friends of County Animal Shelters), a grass-roots organization that helped get more animals adopted out of the three county shelters in the San Diego area. One of her projects with this group was to hold adoption events at each of the three shelters every month. And as if that were not enough, she also published and edited the FOCAS quarterly newsletter. Dona says, "It was very fulfilling work. I realized I wanted to always help animals in need find a better life and help them get a second chance." We met her as a volunteer at Cedar Valley Humane Society and begged her to bring her expertise to Witty Kitties. Thankfully, she has agreed to continue doing the newsletter. As you can see, we are incredibly lucky to have her with us and look forward to the new ideas and energy that she will bring to her position. As for me? I'm not going anywhere. I continue to enjoy my three-times-a-week cleaning visits with the cats and now hold the title of Volunteer Coordinator. It seemed like a good time for

Witty Kitties to include some fresh faces with new ideas.



**Jiggs says, "You woke me up to find out how much I like the updated enclosures???"  
Seeing is believing!**

And finally, when you visit us this Spring, you might notice that the outdoor enclosures are getting a bit of a face lift. We are laying down gravel in part of each enclosure in order to cut down on the mud and inevitable "au natural" litter box use of the outdoor area. Don't feel sorry for the kitties because we are going to leave the last third of each area with grass for them to have their way with. We will also replace each of the screen doors with a higher-grade vinyl door, which shouldn't warp as badly as the wooden ones did. We are submitting a grant application in hopes of covering the expense for this necessary upkeep. Check your mailboxes for our next edition of the Witty Kitties newsletter in order to find out if we got the grant!



**My dear - the enclosures are paws-i-tively fabulous!**

**Jenni Doll no longer has a pet veterinary practice, but she highly recommends Bright Eyes & Bushy Tails. They have emergency services and they are located on Hwy. 1, about six miles south of Solon. Give them a call at (319) 351-4256.**

### **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

**It's time to do some spring cleaning at the shelter! Come on out on Saturday, June 3, and help us spruce up the place. We'll reward your hard work with pizza and sodas. We'll start around 11 a.m. and end about 5. See you there!**

## A Note From the New Prez

by Dona Pearce



Dona  
Pearce

Hi, everyone! You just read about me on the previous page, but I always like to put in my two cents' worth. I have been working with Witty Kitties for a couple of years now, and let me tell you this is a dedicated and devoted bunch of people! Making life easier for helpless animals is a tough task, and it consumes much time and money.

There's little glory involved, and seldom, if ever, are you singled out for praise for what you do. But Jenni, Torben, Chris and Kathleen all do it because they really do love these animals and want to make the world a better place for them. It's one of the main reasons I agreed to be the editor/publisher of the newsletter and why I've also said yes to the duties of president.

We all get caught up in the day-to-day hassle of just living and getting our jobs done. It's all too easy to say, "I'd love to volunteer, but I just don't have the time. Maybe tomorrow -- or next week -- or next year. . . ." Meantime, the needs of homeless animals go unmet, or others do double duty taking care of those needs.

The Witty Kitties Board of Directors is one of the most selfless groups of people I have ever met. It's not easy to get up early every morning before your regular job begins to clean litter boxes and feed hungry animals. But at Witty Kitties, it gets done. **Every day.** There's no fanfare, no notice, no special awards. There's just a lot of hard work . . . **and** many grateful and loving kitties (along with exotics, reptiles, potbellied pigs, goats, etc., etc.) who are **very** happy that someone cares for them and about them. That's why I urge each of you (within traveling distance of Solon) to think about volunteering at Witty Kitties to make a difference. You can volunteer as much or as little as time permits. If you live too far away to participate, you can mail in a check to help with expenses. Grass-roots organizations often put your money to far better use than many well-organized groups who have professional

fundraisers. Don't ignore the groups you enjoy supporting. Just make a little room in your check-book for a group who will use 100% of your donation to make life better for the animals in their care.

And if you're not familiar with these wonderful people on our board, here are their names and the jobs they do:

**Jenni Doll, DVM** -- the mastermind behind Witty Kitties -- cures the sick, heals the lame, and works night and day to make sure the animals in her care are well and happy;

**Torben Platt** -- husband of Jenni, father of Kirsten -- takes care of all of the exotics and is not above scooping cat poop;

**Kathleen Schoon** -- former president, now volunteer coordinator, grant writer and kennel cleaner;

**Chris Schoon** -- helps Kat write grants and is Witty Kitties' Halloween dungeon-master, as well as pitching in whenever and wherever needed.

**Cindy Thompson** -- Cat Whisperer and long-time advocate.

If, like me, you help animals in need because you know it's the one place in this crazy world where you can make a difference, think hard about volunteering with this great group. You'll help lighten the load, you'll make new friends, and you'll feel really good about making a difference. And isn't that what most of us want to do while we're hanging out on this planet?

One last thing: **If you belong to a group or organization that has monthly programs, tell your program chair to call Witty Kitties (319-848-3238).** Torben and Jenni would each be very willing to present a program that's much different from what you've seen before. Your group will certainly be entertained -- and informed!

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) 848-3238 & 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)