

Judith, as head of our Wild and Feral division in Pulaski, Virginia has proudly speutered over 200 feral kitties, who will now live much happier and safer lives. Congratulations Judith! In such a short time she's worked out such a successful program! Thank you also Judith for maintaining our beautiful website and for helping with all that e-mail!

Mariza, Laurie, Cindy, Candy, Katarina, Ken, Angela, Ron, Melanie, Paul, Mary, Autumn and Melissa teamed up to take Rikki's on the road to events and festivals all over the state. The exposure our animals get from these outings is priceless. Thank you all, I know how many long hard hours of planning, packing, driving, setting up, tearing down and driving home is involved.



The wildlife is safer than ever this winter. Hunting season has always been a struggle. Poaching on Rikki's property is inappropriate for a number of reasons. It's illegal, it's dangerous and it's just downright wrong. Yet year after year Joe spends the winter months chasing the hunting trespassers off the property. Thank you Joe, from us humans and all the wildlife. And a big thanks to Rene and James Luther Land Surveyors who've been helping to clearly mark our boundaries. And that's not a small job in the thick, dense woods!

We lost a very special friend this year. Judy Link was a wonderful human being, a loving, caring, absolutely fabulous person. While living in Richmond, Virginia, she and her husband Kurt were avid volunteers. When they retired, they moved to NC to be close to their kids. They adopted Memphis, Pumpkin and Big Red.



When Judy crossed the Rainbow Bridge to be with the many, many friends she has there, Memphis, Pumpkin and Big Red came back to Rikki's. Despite being away six years, Memphis was desperate to get out of the 9th Life Center and get outside. He ran straight to his old cat house to talk to his friends he'd missed! Bless you Judy, you were loved by many.

There are so many of you with wonderful stories of the wonderful things you've done for the animals of Rikki's, I can't possibly include all your stories and get this to press on time! Beth, thank you for all you do for all the animals. Deb for your help. Fred for always being there, even if I am a crazy cat lady! Tom, for the advice, the post card printing and for rounding up all the players for the Golf Tournament; you have the gift of knowing everybody! Amy for your help, April for all you do, Barbara for so, so much, Carol for your support, Helen for your deep caring, Adam for your hard efforts, Kathy for being there week after week, every week, no matter the weather, you're a gift to the animals, Kay for all you do everywhere, Lloyd for your gentle kindness and strong help, Rebecca for your love and kindness and gentle soul and for letting Rikki's be on your radio show, Dave for being such a friend to the animals and for all the wonderful press you've given them in the Free Lance Star, you've made them stars!

And to all of you who've each contributed in so many ways to make Rikki's Refuge a successful whole, thank you with all my heart.

Kerry



The Life and Times of Snippy the Cat

This is a true story about a remarkable cat who had even more remarkable genes! How many kitties would cope with going to a shelter at the age of 18 and surviving to their 28th birthday? I was blessed to work with her as a volunteer at the shelter for 4 years and then to live with her for another 6 years.

Snippy made her mark on the world and, for me, it will never be the same place again. I'd like to think that reading this might make you consider visiting an animal shelter and taking home the shy old wretched little cat in the corner rather than a cute young playful cat. You might be in for the surprise of your life!

I've been a volunteer at an animal rescue shelter for many years. It is a privilege to help such dedicated and inspiring people and the brave trusting animals with their unconditional love. The shelter is an amazing place that has a no-kill policy. This meant that unlike other animal shelters, they had plenty of geriatrics taking up pens and needing extra love and attention.

It is a sad but hard truth, that although people are considerate and kind, when it comes to adopting they want a stress free, perfect animal that will settle into their home straight away. I can't blame them, after all, thank goodness, the person is taking a rescue animal at all.

Sometimes when an older or sick person was unwilling to go into hospital for worry over what would happen to their pet, Social Services would ask my boss to help out by kennelling the animals hoping the owner would recover and be reunited with their pets. One day my boss was asked to look after 3 cats while their owner was in hospital. They were tortoiseshell girls, Momcat aged 22, Bramble 18 and Snippy 18. When we saw them, we were impressed by their healthy condition and could see they were well looked after and loved. A few weeks after her surgery, their owner sadly passed away. Social Services could not continue to pay for the cattery costs and my big hearted boss was determined that the 3 cats would have a good and happy retirement together.

Momcat and Bramble used my lap on an agreed rota basis. Snippy would always watch and wait for me to go to her, and she would purr her heart out at a good tickle of her cheek and chin. I would always show the older animals and the disabled animals to possible adoptors but 9 times out of 10 they wanted the young, pretty, healthy ones and sadly that was not my great friends Snippy and her family.

After 6 months Momcat died. Bramble was the friendly one and Snippy was the quieter one who always sat in the cat bed watching rather than participating. After her Mom passed we saw Snippy slowly come out of her shell and find her voice, she was going a bit deaf and probably didn't realise her volume and was always quick to voice her emotions (good or bad)! Bramble was the more touchy-feely one and she also adapted well, snuggling up with Snippy in their cat bed.

The two sisters lived happily for over 4 years and we eventually faced the stark reality that we could not rehome them, no-one would take the old ladies and they would be spending their final days with us at the shelter. Bramble died from kidney failure and we all took it so hard as she was family. Snippy now 22 was devastated at being on her own and she went off her food as she sat on her own in the cat bed silent. I couldn't bear to see her decline and knew she needed something to live for. I badgered my husband and insisted we should give her a final happy 6 months, after all, both her Momcat and her Sister died at around this age so we wanted to make her final days special. She couldn't cause much disruption in such a small amount of time could she? I took her home to my small house, my 2 other housecats and a 5 year old house rabbit. I didn't have room and I was concerned how I'd cope with 4 geriatrics but what other choice was there?

Surprisingly everyone settled in well quickly, although my night time was very crowded with 3 cats all trying to snuggle up on my bed with my husband and me. Snippy was a total pleasure, although very, very loud due to her ever increasing deafness. Every day I came home from work I was greeted by chirps, gurgles, shouts and purrs of pleasure and I also had quite the little lap cat. The second I'd sit down she'd commandeer my lap; her gratitude was an extremely un-cat-like quality. She was old but very feisty and would shout her excitement whenever I dished out treats. She snored louder than any cat, and certain humans, which the vet thought was due to her asthma.

She ruled the roost even though by this point she had only one tooth left and occasionally creaked when she walked due to arthritis. The one bane in her life was Mr Bunny the house rabbit who seemed to think he was also a cat and wanted to be her friend (much to her annoyance). She wanted to be left alone to sleep or monopolize me and did not want the attention of an unruly rabbit. Other than that she had a charmed existence and her 6 months became 6 happy years. She was an incredible soul who lived by sheer willpower alone; we often commented that we couldn't understand how she kept going when her body was slowing down. She died at age 28 last Christmas (she always had bad timing, bless her).

Snippy the cat was a feline angel who taught me a lot about resilience, adapting to change, determination, hope, love, will and most of all about shouting out your joy to the world.

--- Hazel Ryan and her Angel Snippy