

CATS AND DOGS

A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO COMPANION ANIMALS



Baker needs a home.
Pet Tales Rescue – Page 4



Tina Austin (left) and Jennifer VanderMeer
Wanderlust Acres Animal Sanctuary – Page 18



Lynnette Wieck (left), and Maureen Herendeen
Feral Cat Solutions – Page 23



Adam and Baset
need homes.
Second Chance Cats
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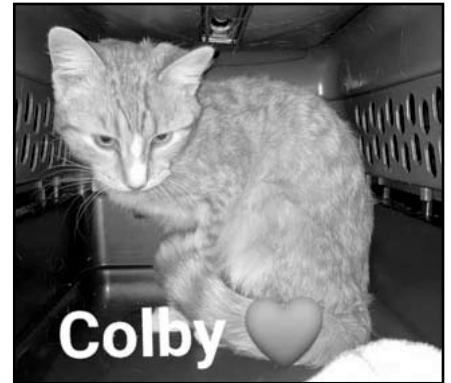
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CATS AND DOGS

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Rescue Tidbits

Pleasant Hearts Pet Food Pantry's 4th Annual Pets Are Family Fundraiser, March 20, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at The Revel Center. Silent auction, drag show, taco bar, mocktails, wine pull and more. Tickets: \$30. Find them at www.pleasantheartspetfoodpantry.org or on our Facebook event. Help us continue to keep pets with their families and out of shelters.

West Michigan Ferret Connection: Spring is almost here and people are thinking of taking their ferrets for walks outside. It's not a dangerous thing to do if you take precautions. Make sure your ferret is up-to-date with their vaccinations. Keep your ferret on a leash/harness. This prevents it from escaping and also gives you the opportunity to snatch it back in a hurry if an aggressive dog gets too close. My biggest fear is pesticides and poisons in the grass, but garden plants and small bites can cause bowel blockages, bacterial infections and/or poisoning. Parasites (ticks, chiggers, fleas) are always a problem. Be vigilant.



Pet Tales Rescue: Baker came into Pet Tales Rescue in September 2021 with 11 puppies. Baker has watched her babies be adopted, but she is still waiting for her time. She prefers to be the only pet in the home and is bashful at first, but she'll reward your patience with so much love. Baker has many funny quirks that she would love to share with her new family. She will greet you every day with the nearest stuffie (or sock). She gets the silly zoomies often and will surely keep you entertained and laughing. This gorgeous goofball is ready to find her family! Email PetTalesRescueBoard@gmail.com with questions or if you're interested in adopting Baker.

C-SNIP: Warmer days and shorter nights are just around the corner, and we here at C-SNIP want to remind everyone that now is the perfect time to schedule your pets for their wellness visits. Also, with Pet Vaccine Awareness Month being celebrated throughout March, we encourage pet owners to make sure their furry friends are up to date on their vaccines and clear of heartworm. Scheduling your cat or dog for affordable care is quick and easy with our online scheduling portal at csnip.org. If you have any questions, a customer service representative will be happy to connect at (616) 455-8220.

West Michigan Pet Expo: After a successful return in 2022, the West Michigan Pet Expo, Michigan's longest

running and best-attended pet expo has been postponed until the Spring of 2024. The West Michigan Pet Expo has historically been held at the DeltaPlex Arena in Walker, which closed in July of 2022. Wanting to ensure the best experience for adoption groups, vendors, and attendees alike, the decision was made to postpone the event until a new venue is secured.

"Over the past fifteen years, it has always been our goal to deliver the best possible event to our vendors and pet lovers in West Michigan. While disappointed to miss 2023, we look forward to finding a new venue and bringing the event back in 2024," said organizer Carmen Medina, iHeartMedia West Michigan. Follow the West Michigan Pet Expo on Facebook and stay tuned to Star 105.7 for announcements about the 2024 West Michigan Pet Expo.



BestPals is a local non-profit, no-kill, animal rescue with a focus on foster-to-adopt to ensure successful and lasting families. We help rescue the animals others cannot. Join us on June 25, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., on our property, for our 10-year Anniversary Party. There will be adoptable furry friends from BestPals and other local rescues, a DJ, games and raffles, food trucks, and more! To meet our adoptable fur-friends, schedule an appointment and #MeetYourNewBestPal.

Piper's Palace is putting on the Holland Pet Expo in Holland, Michigan at the Civic Center on July 22. They are looking for vendors of all kinds. The cost is \$60 for a 10x10 area with table and chairs included. Please email us at Hollandpetexpo@gmail.com if you are interested.

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Donated bottles have been a lifesaver in keeping the rescue going. We appreciate your help. Let's keep it going in 2023 !!

SPRING NEWSLETTER

Cannonsville Critters had "613" Adoptions in 2022.. Happy Cats...

Marshall is almost to the finish line...



Marshall has had 84 days of treatment for FIP. His last day Feb 6. He is winning it !!!

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In addition, they recover lost pets, stray and feral cats and kittens, and injured wildlife.

They focus on TNR and educating the public on the importance of spay/neuter of their pets and community cats.

If you can help with vet expenses:

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Ramsey

This misunderstood guy is a recent rescue. We received a call that he would be shot if he wasn't removed from the home immediately. A family member said **Ramsey** was being beaten by his elderly owner with a ruler. The owner said this un-neutered, un-vetted young male was peeing outside the litter box. The owner claimed

he would be attacked and needed to use the ruler to fend off the cat. Ramsey will definitely need time to decompress from the trauma. He is stressed and although we can tell he wants to be loved, he is having a hard time trusting. Sometimes life isn't fair, and we're glad this boy will have a second chance at a better life.



Jackson is a loving, sweet 8-year-old looking for a quiet home with a warm lap to sit on. He loves being brushed, bird watching and playing with his laser pointer. He's not a fan of other cats, mostly because he was the only cat in

his previous home for the last year and a half. We feel he would adapt, with a slow and proper introduction, to other cats. But he would be fine as an only cat. He has wonderful manners, loves treats and isn't a destructive scratcher or counter jumper. Jackson's owner recently moved to assisted care living and couldn't take him. She was heartbroken to say goodbye, and we assured her we would find the best home possible for him.



Solan was found starving, locked in a basement of an abandoned house where he had been for more than a month. Unfortunately, Solan was diagnosed with FIP. We need to start treatments right away if we are going to save

his life. In the past, FIP was a death sentence, now it is 99% curable with treatment. We will need approximately \$3000-\$4000 for his 84 days of treatments—if it gives him a chance at life, we have to try. He was purring and so happy at the vet. Please help save Solan's life.



Colby

This extra sweet and loving boy is one of the cats we rescued from a horrible and sad situation in Benton Harbor. **Colby** went to the vet and is negative for FELV and FIV, which is great. He's being treated for upper respiratory infection and bacterial infection.

The heartbreaking news we received today really hurt our souls. He has a large pellet in his front right side—some horrible human shot him with a pellet gun. He will have to have it surgically removed in a few weeks. Despite this treatment, he is one of the most loving and affectionate cats we've come across. Can you help Colby and his seven siblings/family members in our care? Please consider donating towards their vet care costs.

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By Jodi Jarvis -Therrian CPDT-KA CTDI
Certified Pet First-Aid & CPR Instructor
AKC CGC Evaluator

The least I can do is speak out for those who cannot speak for themselves. ~Dr.Jane Goodall

I admire veterinarians. Sadly, at the current time there is a shortage of veterinarians and they have a very stressful job. In most cases, they are doing the best they can, and genuinely care. Now, more than ever, we need to be advocates for our pets. It is not humanly possible for veterinarians to have the time to put into the research, that each animal deserves. Our pets cannot go on a computer or go to the library and do their own research. It is our job, as pet parents, to dig deeper.

I will give you an example of why to do this. A good friend of mine has an elderly dog with liver problems. The dog also has arthritis, so the vet prescribed a prescription for mobility. The label on the package for the prescription for mobility stated, "do not give to dogs with liver problems." In busy times these things slip through the cracks, and we have to be hyper vigilant.

Recently I wrote about my dog Olaf's journey with heartworm after being rescued and brought up from Louisiana. I just found out that heartworm preventatives, which contain ivermectin, are not always effective on the heartworm strain from down south. Guess what I had been using on Olaf? I found this and other valuable information out because I got second and third opinions from different veterinarians who had experience and integrative ideas. I did hours of research and am using a protocol from Canine Herbalist, Rita Hogan. I am doing this hand-in-hand with the slow kill Doxycycline and Advantage Multi. I have taken some knowledge from each professional, trying to be my dog's advocate to put together a protocol specialized for him, including green light baths, and infrared too. I have learned that a suggested dose for herbs may not be the right dose for your dog. With herbs you may have to experiment with dosages to find what works best with

your pet. I suggest taking notes and journaling every day. Journal your doses, your pet's diet, and all the details you notice: did they have diarrhea or are they extra sleepy? For suggestions and a chart to do this and to help you detect little problems before they turn into big ones, we have designed, *Dog Blessed Health Journal and Workbook*. It is available on Amazon.com <https://a.co/d/fIVXFEE> and Must Love Dogs in Grand Haven.

Remember, no one knows your pet like you do. Every pet is an individual and his or her diet should be too. I like to compare over-processed, carcinogenic kibble to our dry cereal. Could we live on just cereal? Possibly, but would we thrive? No! Our body needs whole food. Preservatives cause inflammation. Inflammation causes disease in the body. I passionately believe in whole food diets. If you want to research, a suggestion would be to head to Must Love Dogs and talk to the knowledgeable Tonya Christiansen and/or to purchase the *Forever Dog* book. As stated in that book, pet food was originated from an electrician who

was also a salesman looking to make money from the rich and the elite. He had no nutritional knowledge. Education is key. Make sure you read or consult a pet nutritionist or take a nutrition course. You pets will lack the vitamins and minerals they need if you don't cook with the proper nutrients added in. I honestly can say that since I have put Olaf on an all raw, whole food diet, his coat is fuller and he sheds less. I feel better giving him nutrients to support his heart. I combine a diet from Dr. Judy Morgan's Yin and Yang cookbook and wonderful whole foods from Must Love Dogs and add-ins I learned about from the book, *The Forever Dog*.

I just read an article about the oldest dog in the world. He was a mid-size dog who lived to be more than 30 years old. The owner stated he ate table scraps. Whole food table scraps. Coincidence? Food for thought.

It is our job to speak for them. ~Dr. Jane Goodall



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Training Tips

Daycare vs Dog Park

Dogs are pack animals who benefit from regular socialization with others. We are told our dogs are supposed to heavily interact with people and other dogs the first months of life to help ensure a calm stable dog in the future. If you missed this window, don't panic, as it is never too late to offer your dog the opportunity for proper socialization. Many cities and towns have doggie daycares and dog parks at our disposal. The question is, where is the best place to accomplish your goals?

Dog parks were innocently invented as a place for us to socialize our dogs. Over time we have turned it into a place to exercise our high-energy dogs. This is where the problem lies. People bring pent up dogs to socialize with other pent up dogs with no one really in charge. A dog should be exercised and then go to a dog park. Other innate problems at dog parks are we do not know who is and who is not vaccinated, and no one is in charge of

making sure the areas are cleaned up and disinfected. Also a lot of the intestinal parasites and canine ailments such as bordetella run unchecked at dog parks. It is also worth noting that a large percentage of my dog-to-dog aggression cases began from a fight at the dog park. Though in the end, I would rather see a dog at the dog park than doing absolutely nothing at all.

Doggie daycares on the other hand are widely accepted as a superior venue to socialize your family pet. Daycares employ trained staff to monitor and direct play during the day. They check for vaccination records and have daily cleaning schedules for the health and safety of your pet. Daycares also get to decide who can and cannot attend in effort to keep a stable pack of dogs who interact respectfully with one another.

If you decide to frequent your local dog park, understand the risks and monitor your pet. This is always the key to a successful dog park visit. For those who would like to have their pet attend a daycare, simply research who is in your area and choose the best facility to achieve the goals you have set for you and your fur child.

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On the Wild Side

with Allyson Swanson



Does anyone actually like *moving*? Our team took on the biggest move any of us have ever experienced this year. If you haven't heard, the founders of Wildlife Rehab Center decided to retire and doing so, also retired the organization. While it's bittersweet to say goodbye to Wildlife Rehab Center, we are proud to introduce the West Michigan Wildlife Center. We are officially a 501(c)3 non-profit and able to pick up where WRC left off. So, what do you need to know about WMWC?

Who is West Michigan Wildlife Center? WMWC was founded by our lead rehabber, assistant rehabber and some of the dedicated volunteers from WRC. We will offer a familiarity but also some new and improved services to West Michigan and wildlife in need.

Where are you located? WMWC is still working towards our "permanent home." We are currently looking into temporary/rental options for this year while we look for property suited for the center we aim to create.

Are you still taking in animals? We are! If you come across wildlife needing our services, call us at 616-361-6109 (same old number!) or text us at 616-606-5805 and we will evaluate the needs of the animal you have found and coordinate drop off to one of our team members.

What do you need most right now? Our biggest need right now is donations. With injured (and soon

orphaned) wildlife coming in, we still are incurring food and vet bills. Your contributions allow us to offer quality medical care for animals in need while working towards the center our animals deserve.

Our current mailing address for donations is 2751 Shadlow Trail SE, Ada, MI 49301.

Am I able to volunteer? The volunteer team from WRC is enjoying a much-deserved break while we are in our slow season and during this transition period. Without a current location, we aren't able to accommodate in-person volunteering but once a temporary location is secured, we will be re-evaluating our volunteer needs for WMWC. Stay tuned if you're interested! With our permanent home we hope to offer even more diverse options for volunteers of all ages and capabilities.

How can I stay up to date? We have transitioned and created updated social media accounts to stay connected to our followers. We are on Facebook as West Michigan Wildlife Center, Instragram @westmichiganwildlife TikTok at @westmichiganwildlife and our new website is westmichiganwildlife.org.

We are pleased to announce our contact numbers will remain the same! More questions? You can also email us at westmichiganwildlifecenter@gmail.com.

Allyson Swanson is a Licensed Wildlife Rehabilitator with West Michigan Wildlife Center (formerly Wildlife Rehab Center Ltd), based out of Grand Rapids. She has been licensed since 2013 but started as a volunteer over twenty years ago. Since then she has worked with countless species of birds and mammals and has become one of the main local resources for Virginia Opossums. She is also the Center's Education Coordinator and does presentations with their Educational Ambassador animals. westmichiganwildlife.org - 616-606-5805

BIG LAKE



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The Muskegon Humane Society was founded in 1972 as a nonprofit animal rescue group and has continued to grow over the past 50 years. When 2022 brought the unplanned acquisition of a low-cost community animal clinic (Pay It Forward Outreach), it launched the next step in our journey to better the lives of animals. This exciting new branch of our mission lead to our rebrand as Big Lake Humane Society.

By broadening our name with the growth of our services, we can represent and serve an even larger community. Being a private organization without ties to the government or bigger entities, we depend solely on our services and community support to continue our mission and grow our impact. Therefore, it is vital that we have a cohesive name and branding.

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Declawing is Cruel

Bans of the Discredited Practice Gain Momentum

Reprinted from *Action Line*, the Friends of Animals' Magazine (Winter 2022), 777 Post Road, Darien, CT 06820

By Nicole Rivard

Declawing a cat is a far cry from a mani-pedi. It's a brutal surgical procedure—an amputation—that removes individual toe bones from the animal's paws.

That's the message New York Assemblywoman Linda B. Rosenthal wanted to make clear when she introduced a bill to ban declawing in January 2015.

Her message was effective. In July 2019, New York became the first state in the country to ban the practice. The law prohibits declawing unless done to treat a medical condition affecting the cat such as an injury, tumor or untreatable infection. Vets face up to \$1,000 in fines.

"When I pass a law I follow up to make sure it's being enforced," said Rosenthal. "So we've been calling random veterinarians and asking if they declaw and get the answer, 'No, it's against the law.' And it's very satisfying."

It's also rewarding for Friends of Animals since we have been educating people about the horrors of declawing for decades. We've produced a brochure, available to order online, that talks about the importance of a cat's claws, the ill effects of declawing and how you can discourage your cat from scratching furniture.

Rosenthal is appalled that the main reason people declaw their cats is to protect their furniture.

"It's so selfish to say your furniture means more to you than an animal," said Rosenthal who has two rescue cats of her own. "What I always say is if your furniture is more important to you than a cat's integrity and life, then don't get a cat."

"Cats scratch, that's part of who they are and what they do. People need to be prepared to put a little effort into getting their cat not to scratch furniture—there are many tried and true methods."

We couldn't agree more. And we're bolstered by Maryland becoming the second state to ban declawing earlier this year. Los Angeles, San Francisco, Denver, St. Louis and Austin have passed similar bans. And more than 20 countries including England, Germany, Spain, Australia and New Zealand have also long banned the practice.

Rosenthal explained that it took four years to get the bill passed because of opposition from part of the veterinary community, which was disseminating misinformation.

"It's a money maker for some. They up sell," she said. "You bring a cat in for spay/neuter and then they offer a package for declawing. They don't want anything to interfere with their business model."

According to the Southern California Veterinary Medical Association, most veterinarians offer declawing and five percent make more than \$1,000/hour performing the procedure.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association came out against declawing in 2017.

Myths vs Reality

The misinformation that opponents spread included that surrenders to shelters would go up. However, the Paw Project, the California-based nonprofit that Rosenthal met with prompting her to draft and introduce legislation, points out that there is ample evidence showing that declawing results in increased biting and litter box avoidance, and those are the behaviors that scientific researchers and shelter workers agree are the most common reasons for relinquishment. Many animal shelters publicly discourage declawing.

"Opponents also said people who were immunocompromised would risk their lives if they didn't declaw their cats. That is absolutely untrue," Rosenthal said.

Scientific studies have found that declawed cats bite more often and harder than their clawed counterparts. A bite wound is unquestionable more dangerous than a cat scratch to immunocompromised people, children or the elderly, according to the Paw Project. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Public Health Services, the Canadian Medical Association and the Infectious Diseases Society of America agree that declawing cats to protect humans is "not advised."

"It's important to educate elected leaders to the fact that there are no human health benefits to declawing, and that there are other options to prevent scratching," said Delegate Lorig Charkoudian, who championed the Maryland declaw ban. "It's also important to make sure elected leaders understand the actual procedure and long-term damage to cats."

The ill effects include a gradual weakening of the muscles of the legs, shoulders and back, which leads to impaired balance. Declawing is known to cause acute and chronic pain and permanent or intermittent lameness.

Data also shows that declawed cats have chronic stress.

You Can Make a Difference

Don't underestimate your ability to affect change. With New York and Maryland making cat declawing illegal, there is precedent for banning declawing.

"A constituent educated me on the cruelty of the practice of declawing. I was appalled and immediately willing to introduce a bill to ban it," Maryland's Charkoudian.

Rosenthal agrees. "Elected officials want to get reelected. If their constituents demand something they would be smart to listen. People who vote based on how someone handles animal issues are a mighty force."

Be patient.

"Change doesn't happen overnight, however, slowly but surely we refuted all of the oppositions' points,"

Continued on page 13

Rosenthal said. "It comes down to showing that declawing is motivated by selfishness and putting humans needs above that of an animal who is defenseless, who needs you to care for him or her. Why would anyone want to confer pain onto a defenseless animal who depends on you?"

Take Action

A little training goes a long way to deter scratching. Here are tried and true methods to training a cat to use scratching posts.

1. Be aware of what the cat chooses to scratch on and duplicate it in your choice of scratching posts. Placing a little catnip on the post will help entice the cat to use it. Always reward the cat for scratching in the right place.

2. Apply products to furniture to help deter cats from scratching: double-sided sticky tape like Sticky Paws; the Sofa-Scratcher, a combination scratcher/furniture guard that fits snugly against a couch or chair; and the Clawguard, which slips over the arm of the couch.

3. Apply cat repellent sprays that use pheromones or strong fragrances like citrus or lavender to furniture. Consistent nail trimming and nail caps called Soft Paw or Soft Claws can also help prevent damage to furniture.

4. Order FoA's "Paws Come with Claws" brochure to help educate legislators about the declaw issue. Visit friendsofanimals.org and click on the Store tab.

It's not easy saying goodbye.



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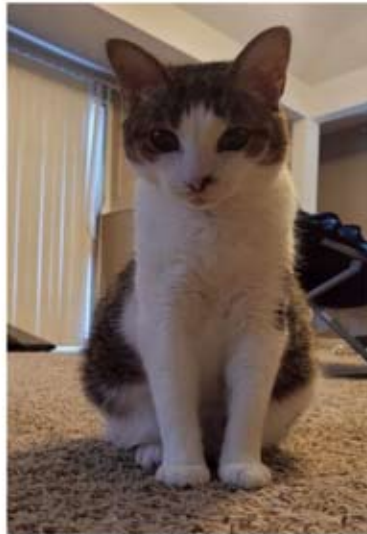
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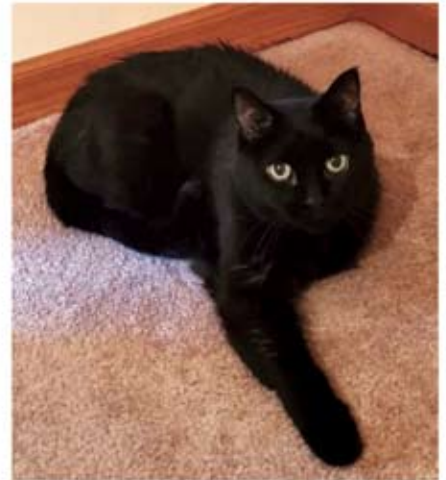
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Mewsings

Good Medicine

By Kristina VanOss



In nearly forty years, my journey with animals has evolved from custodianship of merely two cats, to employment at a vet clinic, which inevitably led to adventures in rescuing dogs, cats and occasional wildlife. The practice of TNR (trap, neuter and return) of community cats soon followed, and brought me to fostering so many cats and kittens that I have lost count. Ultimately, I ended up here—as guardian of a large group of mostly loveable, elderly, misfit cats and one fabulous dog. I have backed away from rescue for the most part. I am concentrating on writing and art to advocate for the animals I so love.

Two things I have learned are: to expect the unexpected and that unexpected vet emergencies are most likely to happen on weekends, holidays, and the day after you have a major car repair. It is so important to have a close relationship with a vet clinic. It takes time to build a strong alliance, especially when your first meeting is under dire circumstance. But I have found, as all parties get better acquainted, the level of care and satisfaction only magnify. It is an investment worth making.

Veterinarians, veterinary technicians, and their office staff are a special breed of humans who have dedicated their lives to the well being of animals. Only someone with a deep sense of compassion and purpose could endure work that can be hard and dirty, often requiring long hours, quick-thinking, and careful calculations. Not to mention the drama, frustration and sorrow that is mixed in with joy. It is work not meant for the faint of heart.

I have had my share of heartbreak during my years of rescue. It is hard to shield your heart when you care so deeply. Thankfully for me, animal tragedy is not an everyday or even every month occurrence. I can only imagine the challenge of balancing tenderness and resiliency to loss on a near daily basis at work. And yet veterinarians and staff do just that.

I recently learned that veterinarians and veterinary technicians top the statistics for suicide in this country, surpassing the previously held status of dentists fourfold. At most risk are female veterinarians and male veterinary technicians. Studies probing the reasons for this grim reality have come up with a list that includes massive debt. The average new veterinarian graduates with \$150,000 in student loans. While a veterinary technician may have much less debt, theirs is a low-paying job. This is not to say veterinarians enjoy high pay. I do not know a single wealthy veterinarian. Clearly, this is an arena fueled by purpose more than anything else.

And yet, unlike most *other* professions, veterinarians

are constantly being asked to perform services or give out medications for free. And they are judged harshly when they won't.

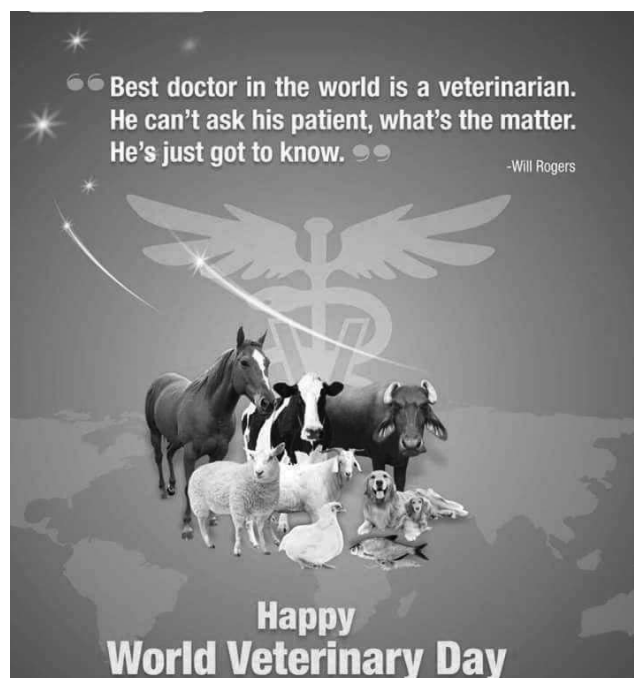
Every day, veterinarians are faced with patients who can't speak to tell what is wrong. Pediatricians have a similar problem, but *unlike pediatricians*, veterinarians frequently find themselves euthanizing a patient with a treatable injury because their owner can't afford the remedy or does not have the emotional investment to spend the money. Sometimes there simply is no owner. Finding new homes for those treatable animals would be another full-time job. Many clinics do try their best to work with rescues. Vet clinics are businesses, not charities. They can only do so much without compromising the care of paying clients.

And now, with the boom of social media, veterinarians face public scrutiny, cyber bullying, and threats on-line, which are most often made by difficult clients who are only telling a distorted version of the truth. It is a lot to swallow for a caring professional who spent more than a decade of schooling and perhaps decades more of hands-on experience caring for our animals.

Some of our best veterinary professionals are nearing retirement. Let's not lose even more of them to suicide.

In my world, every day is *veterinary appreciation day*. I simply could not have done what I have without them. I hope I have told them that enough. If you need a specific occasion to express thanks to your veterinary team, you are in luck! World Veterinary Day is April 29th. Send a card, send a box of cupcakes, or write a great review on social media! You could make a difference. I know it will be appreciated. They are just *that kind* of people.

Kristina VanOss is an artist, writer, and life-long animal lover and advocate. Her latest endeavors include chronicling her adventures in cat rescue in an upcoming book due to be released later this year.



Holding On While Letting Go

By Ginny Mikita, Animal Chaplain

One of the most common conversations folks have in the monthly Companion Animal Loss Grief Support Group I facilitate centers around when and how to let go of a beloved's things—beds, food/water bowls, toys, clothes, leashes, after they die. These items are physical reminders of our companions, oftentimes keeping their loving energy present and our memories alive. Some people have even expressed the fear of forgetting their beloved without visible and tangible remembrances.

For some, there is comfort in keeping everything just as it was. For others, the sight of these things only adds salt to the wound of loss. There is no universal "right" time. Instead, there is your unique-to-you right time. Trust your inner wisdom. You will know.

If you share your home with other humans, challenges can arise when not everyone agrees. Recently, a husband and wife shared this story. After their dog, Finley, died, the husband couldn't bear to see his empty bed and moved it to the basement. When his wife came home from work and the bed was gone, she was wracked with grief and demanded he put it back. Conflicts like this—especially in heartbreak—can be thinly-veiled opportunities to explore and share one another's grief experiences. What meaning do we attach to physical objects belonging to and holding the energy of our beloved companion animals, in life and in death, and is there room to honor mine and yours?

Often, I hear stories, frequently shared sheepishly, of people sleeping with their animals' blankets, breathing in their scents as they drift off to sleep. I have a dear friend



Memories of Kadie

who for years walked five miles daily with her beautiful German short-hair companion, Deacon. After Deacon died last month, she continued to walk the same path holding Deacon's collar close in the palm of her hand. Others have shared how they've left nose prints on the inside windows of their cars long after their companions died.

Most importantly, be gentle, gracious, patient and even a bit creative with yourself when making decisions about if and when to let go of your beloved's items.

Our black lab/beagle rescue, Kadie, died in 2018. I recently made a little altar in which I placed her photo in a miniature frame, glued a Perler-beaded rendition of her that my nephews and niece gifted me when she died along with a rose quartz heart which represents healing and hung her name tag she wore for years. If you'd like something to carry with you, might I suggest doing the same with an Altoid tin.

I've also seen a beloved's collar and tags fastened around their food bowl and used as a planter for succulents.

If there are things with which your heart is ready to part ways, consider gifting your beloved's items to another companion animal in your circle of family and friends or to a local shelter, knowing your beloved's energy and spirit will bring comfort and joy to other furry beings.



Ginny Mikita, JD, MDiv Candidate

www.animalblessings.love

ginny@animalblessings.love

616.460.0373

Facilitator

West Michigan Companion Animal
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Wanderlust Acres Animal Sanctuary

By Janet Vormittag

In 2011 Jennifer VanderMeer was working on a project in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. During a walk along the James River on her day off she noticed a man with two young girls. The sisters were crying because their dad was going to pitch two ducklings into the water. Jennifer intervened.

“That was my first rescue,” she said. For six weeks, the ducklings lived with Jennifer in an apartment. When the job ended she brought them home to Michigan. “They lived a long, spoiled life.”

Jennifer is an ornithologist. “I love birds. It’s a passion and has been a profession for over 20 years,” she said.

For years she volunteered for the Michigan Duck Rescue. In October 2020, with the encouragement of her late husband, Lenny Rockwell, she opened Wanderlust Acres Animal Sanctuary. The Rockford-based rescue specializes in ducks.

“Ducks and other domestics get overlooked,” she said. “They need someone to be their voice. They’re sweet souls.”

Close to 130 ducks live at Wanderlust with ten breeds represented. Each duck has a name, and Jennifer can tell the story about how each one came to be a resident of the sanctuary. Most are from Michigan—Millennium Park, the Flat River in Lowell, the Muskegon Causeway, a busy intersection in Jenison, a Sand Lake park, a pond behind Home Depot in Grandville and several other recognizable locations. A few came from Indiana and Illinois.

“They were dumped—in ponds, lakes, streams, wherever there is water,” Jennifer said. “Don’t dump ducks. It’s illegal to abandon animals.”

Domestic ducks can’t fly, so they can’t escape predators. They also don’t know how to forage for food. “They either fall prey to a predator or they starve to death.”

Most of the dumped ducks are drakes—male ducks. Jennifer explained people get ducks for their eggs. When they discover their ducks are drakes, they get rid of them. People also buy ducklings as Easter presents. When they grow up and the novelty wears off, the ducks are dumped. Ducks also come from classroom projects—eggs hatch into fluffy cute ducklings—then what?

Ducks can live 10-20 years.

The rescue of one duck, Gertrude, almost didn’t happen. “Lenny said no more ducks,” Jennifer recalled. But he agreed to go along to see the Khaki. Someone had put a zip tie on Gertrude’s leg when she was young. As the duckling grew the hard plastic didn’t budge causing deformity and infection.

Lenny’s no-more-ducks turned into we’re-taking-her after he witnessed the abuse done to the young duck. He even held Gertrude while the veterinarian examined her.



Jennifer VanderMeer (right), founder of Wanderlust Acres Animal Sanctuary and volunteer Tina Austin with residents of the sanctuary.

Below: Jennifer with Gertrude, who has a deformed leg and is part of the Disabled Flock.



“He had the biggest heart,” Jennifer said. Lenny died Sept.14, 2022, three months after being diagnosed with cancer. The couple had 21 1/2 years together.

While Lenny was sick Jennifer devoted all her time to him and relied on volunteers, especially Tina Austin, to care for the ducks.

“She’s a godsend,” Jennifer said. Years ago the two women met while waitressing. They reconnected through Facebook after the sanctuary was started. Tina, a vet-assistant and owner of a pet care business, has 17 chickens and 7 ducks.

Jennifer’s dad, a biologist and a lover of animals, also volunteers. He has five flocks at his Ada home that will be moved to the sanctuary in June.

Gertrude survived and is part of the Disabled Flock—all have leg issues. They live in a fenced area in the garage where they get extra care and aren’t stressed by abled ducks. “Her leg is permanently disabled, but that doesn’t stop her. She’s very tenacious,” Jennifer said.

The majority of the ducks live in Duck Village, a maze of dog kennels that provide homes to small flocks such as the Dirty Girls Flock, Eaters Flock and the 19-member Dutch Village Flock that came from the Dutch Village in Holland.

Each flock has a coop where they spend the nights. The doors of the coops are latched, chained and, for extra security, a cement brick is placed in front of it. It takes close to an hour each evening to tuck all the flocks in for the night.

Domestic ducks have numerous predators including raccoons, possums, fox, hawks, coyotes and snapping turtles. "The words 'sitting duck' is quite applicable," Jennifer said.

Duck Village is predator-proof. The 20 enclosures have woven wire tops, chicken wire skirting and dig guards. In addition there is a camera surveillance system so the village can be monitored at all times.

The sanctuary is funded through donations.

It costs \$300 to \$500 per month for food and the wood shavings used for bedding. They go through a 40-pound bag of duck pellets every day. Ducks also eat corn, greens and mealworms. They love fresh vegetables and fruit, but the food has to be cut into small pieces because ducks don't have teeth. It takes 3 to 4 5-gallon buckets of cut-up eatables to ensure enough for everyone.

Frozen peas are a favorite treat.

Last fall the Rockford community donated enough uncarved pumpkins to fill the garage.

Jennifer sells duck eggs to help pay the bills. When egg sales and donations don't cover expenses, Jennifer pays the difference. But the expense is worth it. While the ducks aren't cuddly like a dog or cat, they can be sweet and sassy. They wiggle their tail feathers when they recognize their names and they're trainable.

"They all have different personalities," Jennifer said.

When she told the usually, chatty, loud flocks that Lenny had died there was silence across the sanctuary. Some ducks lowered their heads, others turned their backs to her, or went into their houses or into corners.

"Ducks understand more than people give them credit for. They're feeling, emotional creatures. They form strong bonds, not just with other ducks, but with people. A lot of people don't see that."

Since Lenny passed, Jennifer has struggled with the workload of running and caring for the animals at the sanctuary. She also has three cats and four dogs.

"It hasn't been easy," she said.

For more information follow Wanderlust Acres Animal Sanctuary on Facebook and other social media sites.

How you can help: volunteer, buy supplies through Amazon Wish List, donate through Venmo@WanderlustAcres, paypal.me/WanderlustAcres or Cash App \$WanderlustAcres.



Some of the residents of Duck Village.



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Your Pets Naturally New pet store opens in Grand Rapids

In late January, dog and cat lovers helped celebrate the grand opening of Your Pets Naturally in the Cascade East Shopping Mall, 6439 28th St. SE, Grand Rapids.

Your Pets Naturally, a holistic pet supply store, carries a full line of health aids, wellness products, and the highest quality food and treats for cats and dogs. Customers can shop for goodies at the Dog Bakery, offering home-baked, all-natural dog treats. Shoppers will also find a full line of environmentally safe, non-toxic, allergy-free products and accessories, from throw toys to harnesses and chews.

Theodorus Rodgers of Lowell attended the store opening with his dog, Ellie. “It’s awesome. We needed something like this—holistic, healthy ingredients.” Ellie sampled snacks for a buffet setup for dogs. “She loves the holistic dog treats,” he said.

The Grand Rapids store is the first locally-owned franchise of Your Pets Naturally, which was established in 2013 in Traverse City by Kathy Hyland. “Every product is carefully chosen and one hundred percent healthy for your pet,” she said.



Theodorus Rodgers and Ellie at Your Pets Naturally open house.

Rapids and knows the community will value Your Pets Naturally’s commitment to safe and healthy pet products. “We are truly grateful for the warm reception we’ve already received,” he said.

Kathy’s interest in pet nutrition began when her Boston terrier, Lucy, developed health issues—her skin turned black and her fur fell out. Poor diet was the reason. With a change to better food and supplements, Lucy’s health returned and she lived to 14.

Jim VanDyken, owner of the local franchise, said he is beyond excited to provide healthy alternatives for pet wellness to the West Michigan area. He was born and raised in Grand

Community Resource Guide

Cemeteries

Clock Timeless Pets

1469 Peck St., Muskegon, MI 49441
231-722-3721 - www.clocktimelesspets.com

Noah's Pet Cemetery & Crematory

2727 Orange Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49546
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www.noahspetcemetery.com

Trusted Journey Pet Memorial

2755 64th St. SW, Byron Center, MI 49315
616-538-6050 - www.trustedjourney.com

Feral Cat Support Services

A Feral Haven

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<http://www.aferalhavenmi.org> - 616-377-4783
a.feral.haven.mi@gmail.com

Humane Societies/Shelters

Allegan County Animal Shelter

2293 33rd Street, Allegan, MI 49010
269-686-5112 - www.petfinder.com/shelters/MI299.html

Harbor Humane Society

14345 Bagley Street (at US 31), West Olive, MI 49460
616-399-2119 - www.harborhumane.org

Humane Society of West Michigan

3077 Wilson Drive NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49534
616-453-8900 - www.hswestmi.org

Ionia County Animal Shelter

3853 Sparrow Drive, Ionia, MI 48846
616-527-9040 - www.petfinder.com/shelters/MI342.html

Kent County Animal Shelter

740 Fuller Ave. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-632-7300 - www.accesskent.com/kcas

Pound Buddies Animal Shelter & Adoption Center

3279 E Laketon Ave., Muskegon, MI 49442
231-724-6500 - www.poundbuddies.org

Pet Boarding/Sitters

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catspajamashotel.com — cats.pajamas.mi@gmail.com
607 592 8525 — Jill Hathaway, owner

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www.pleasantheartpetfoodpantry.org
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www.paradigmdogschool.com

Rescue Groups

BestPals Animal Rescue Center

13888 Blair St., Holland, MI 49424
Call for appointment, 616-212-3368
www.bestpalsarc.wix.com - bestpalsarc@gmail.com

Big Lake Humane Society - a no kill, non-profit shelter

Formerly Muskegon Humane Society
2640 Marquette Ave., Muskegon, MI 49442
231-773-8689 - www.muskegonhumanesociety.org

Cannonsville Critters

Michelle Hocking — Helping cats in Montcalm County
989-287-2553 — www.cannonsvillecritters.org

Headin' Home Pet Rescue, Inc.

185 Panther Dr., Holland, MI 49424
616-886-1474 - headinhomerescue@sbcglobal.net
www.headinhomerescue.org

Hearts of Hope Dog Rescue

Until there are none, rescue one
616-366-8455 - rescueofhope@gmail.com
www.rescueofhope.com

Fig and Friends Pet Rescue

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616-320-2400 — figandfriendspetrescue@gmail.com
www.figandfriendspetrescue.org

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www.mackenzies.info

Michele's Rescue

501c3 non-profit companion animal rescue
301 Alten Ave. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
231-798-4935 — michelesrescue@gmail.com
<https://michelesrescue.com>

Community Resource Guide

Pet Tales Rescue

A non-profit, volunteer, foster-based, all-breed dog/cat rescue.
Kathy Brown, P.O. Box 88084, Kentwood, MI 49518
616-446-1591 – pettalesrescueboard@gmail.com
www.pettalesrescue.com – www.facebook.com/pettalesrescue

Reuben's Room Cat Rescue

Jeanine Buckner
A no-kill, non-profit 501 (c) (3) organization
www.reubensroom.org
catrescuereubensroom@gmail.com

The Next Chapter Pet Rescue

Where pets find their happily ever after
www.facebook.com/nextchapterpetrescue
616-606-0911 - nextchapterpetrescue@gmail.com
www.nextchapterpetrescue.rescuegroups.org

West Michigan Ferret Connection

Rescue - Adoption - Boarding - Education
Dee Gage, 616-447-2978 - wmf2001@att.net
www.westmichiganferretconnection.com
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Wishbone Pet Rescue Alliance

Managing the Allegan County Animal Shelter
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269-455-5247 - www.wishbonepetrescue.org

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www.laketowncathospital.com

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Wildlife

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www.westmichiganwildlife.org
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Feral Cat Solutions

By Janet Vormittag

Most retirees enjoy traveling, grandkids and sunny days in southern states during the winter months. Not Maureen Herendeen. When the Grand Rapids woman retired from nursing in 2020, she decided to advocate for community cats in Kent County.

“I like the challenge of it,” she said.

Maureen has a passion for cats, especially outside cats. She believes in trap-neuter-return (TNR) and in July 2022 she turned her passion into Feral Cat Solutions, a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. Her goal is to get feral cats neutered/spayed and to get friendly cats off the streets.

Over the years, Maureen has volunteered for several cat rescues including Carol’s Ferals. When Carol’s closed, Maureen continued TNR on her own. She approached Kent County Animal Shelter and asked if they could help with the spay/neuter surgeries of cats she trapped.

“I couldn’t ask for more cooperation from them,” she said. The shelter has a staff veterinarian and a grant to help cover surgery costs. They’re able to give Maureen 16 surgical appointments each week.

People with outside cats who need to be fixed can contact Maureen. She loans traps and people are expected to do their own trapping. She will help trap for seniors and disabled people.

Trapping is scheduled for five days each week. When the cats are caught, they’re taken to Maureen’s home in northeast Grand Rapid and she transports them to surgery. She has ten cages in her garage where cats stay before and after surgery. “It’s an elaborate dance of a schedule.”

When there is a need, Maureen also uses local veterinarians who offer discounted spay/neuter services.

If there are kittens who can be socialized and adopted to inside homes, Maureen finds them a foster home. The same goes for adult cats who appear to be friendly.

In 2022, Maureen had 534 cats and kittens spayed/neutered. Of those, 329 were placed in local adoption programs including those at Second Chance Cats, Crash’s Landing, Kent County Animal Shelter and the Humane Society of West Michigan.

Maureen is an action person. “I move at warp speed,” she said. “I do all the interacting with trappers, planning, collecting the cats, caring for the cats and transporting.”

Maureen gets a lot of help from fellow cat advocate Lynnette Wieck, who has also volunteered for numerous rescues over the years.

Lynnette is laid-back, detail oriented and spends a ton of time doing behind-the-scenes work. She also feeds feral cat colonies several days a week.

Maureen has a network of rescues and fosters who help as needed. “I love all the people I meet in animal welfare. There are so many awesome generous people. It’s so satisfying.”



Lynnette Wieck, left, and Maureen Herendeen advocate for outside cats.

When she can’t find fosters for adult cats, Maureen puts the cat in her Socialization Boot Camp, which means she lets the cats loose in her house and gives them time to become friendly. “It can take a long time, but it’s so rewarding. I feel like I won the lottery when they let me pet them.”

Besides being a lot of work, helping cats is a big expense. There are intake fees for cats accepted into adoption programs, veterinarian expenses, and the cost of supplies including live traps. Occasionally, Maureen will do a fundraiser on Facebook, but when donations don’t cover the expenses she opens her own wallet.

Often Maureen sees people willing to feed cats and even provide them shelter, but they don’t get the cats fixed. “Spay/neuter costs money,” she said.

Maureen has a wait list of people needing help.

“It’s astonishing how many starving cats there are—in parking lots, abandoned buildings, yards.”

Maureen no longer wants to hear sad stories. She’s more than willing to help but doesn’t have the heart to hear depressing stories involving cats. “It hurts my soul,” she said. Some of things she has witnessed haunt her.

“Hearing a tragic story doesn’t compel me anymore,” she said.

Unfortunately, there are some folks who don’t want to do the work involved with TNR. Maureen said she’s heard many excuses of why people can’t trap.

“People can be so disrespectful. They don’t understand we do this for free,” she explained.

Lynnette agreed. “It’s not fun. It’s a need. It’s our choice to help animals.”

As much as Maureen, Lynnette and other rescues have done, the calls for help haven’t slowed down. “It’s discouraging not to see an end in sight,” Maureen said.

If you need help with outside cats contact Feral Cats Solutions through their Facebook page. You can also call the Kent County Animal Shelter for a referral.

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