

CATS AND DOGS

A MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO COMPANION ANIMALS



Flossy needs a home.
Pet Tales Rescue – Page 4



Julie Beukema and Ray
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Bunnies - R - Us – Page 18



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MICHELLE KENAT
BESTPALS ANIMAL RESCUE
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CATS AND DOGS

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Rescue Tidbits

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At Bunnies - R - Us we do more than bunny adoptions. We have grown significantly in the rescue area over the past few years since the growth of abandoned bunnies has come to a higher need. Established in 2019, I made it my mission to tend to the unwanted and hurt bunnies. I was raised with bunnies and have 45 years of experience. Because of health issues, I was able to stay home and make it my mission to help the bunnies in need. We offer multiple services such as grooming, selling used products, bunny therapy, boarding and educational classes on how to raise a bunny. www.bunniesrusrabbity.com, Bunniesrusrabbity@hotmail.com

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Pet Tales Rescue: Hi, I'm Flossy! I am a 6-year-old lab mix with beautiful, shiny black and white fur. I came up from Alabama a few months ago and I love it here! I'm housebroken, rarely ever bark, non-destructive when alone, and am very easy-going. I enjoy a nice walk followed by some relaxation

time with my people and fur-siblings. I would fit best in a calmer lifestyle with a family that appreciates my laid-back demeanor. Could that be you? To learn more about me please visit www.PetTalesRescue.com

C-SNIP: Summer brings flea/tick and heartworm season. C-SNIP staff are passionate about the health and happiness of pets, and we want to remind you that it is time to schedule your pet's wellness visit. Make sure your pets are up-to-date on their vaccines, heartworm testing, and are getting their flea/tick/heartworm preventatives. Scheduling your cat or dog's wellness appointment is easy with our online appointment portal at csnip.org. Or you can call (616) 455-8220 to schedule over the phone. If you get voice mail, please leave a message and we will call you back.

West Michigan Ferret Connection: Keep your ferret cool this summer! Ferrets overheat easily in temps over 80 degrees (ideal temp is 60-80 degrees). They don't sweat so they can't lower their body temperature like dogs do when they pant. If your ferret acts tired or lethargic during hot weather, it's a warning sign. Air conditioning is ideal but not directly on their cage. A quick, easy fix is to freeze plastic bottles with water and place them in the cage or where your ferret likes to sleep or hang out. Wrap bottles in fabric so your ferret can't chew through them. www.westmichiganferretconnection.com

Join **Fig and Friends Pet Rescue** for a fundraiser at Culver's in Cascade, 6300 28th St SE, Grand Rapids. Rescue volunteers will be there from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, July 18 to help serve your food. Fig and Friends will receive 10 percent of sales from that time period. Check (www.figandfriendspetrescue.org) or Facebook page for updated information closer to the event. figandfriendspetrescue@gmail.com
www.figandfriendspetrescue.org

Cannonville Critters Newsletter



SUMMER May 2023

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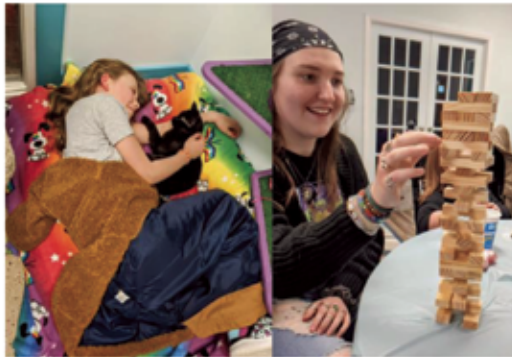
Stop in and visit us at 3604 64th St., Saugatuck, Michigan or call us at 269-455-5056 to schedule an appointment.

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Exciting things are happening this summer at Second Chance Cats of West Michigan!

Any event is even more fun when cats are involved!! Our events are not only fun for the public, but they are wonderful enrichment opportunities for our adoptable cats. Interacting with visitors is key for these cats in developing social skills and trust, and letting their personalities shine for their perfect families to see.



Second Chance Cats of West Michigan is a 501c3 certified non-profit with a mission to help cats at *municipal shelters* that are at risk for euthanasia, or cats who have special/ medical needs that shelters have a hard time managing. We believe every cat deserves a "second chance" and our volunteers work hard to help these cats find their perfect forever home!

SCCWM Summer Events

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Sunday May 21st, June 18th, July 16th, & August 27th
4:30-5:30 pm

Youth Reading Series

Wednesday June 14th through August 16th
10:30-12:00pm

Game Nights

May 27th, June 29th, July 20th, & August 17th
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Crafting with Cats

May 12th, June 3rd June 24th, & August 5th

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Furry Philosophy



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

A wise ol' bear named Winnie the Pooh once said,
"How lucky am I to have something that makes
saying goodbye so hard." -AA. Milne

There is something so incredibly magical about the unconditional love of a dog that when it is taken away from you it leaves a giant hole in your heart. Recently, my grandpuppy Cash, officially June Carter Cash aka, Cash-a-rooni, made her transition to the Rainbow Bridge after twelve-plus amazing years sharing time with her sweet heart.

Cash was a rescue and typical Labrador with over exuberance. She pulled me right down on my belly trying to get to the lake when she was a puppy. She loved to swim more than life itself and got into trouble just as much, eating lily pads until she threw up. She stayed at this grandma's house as much as I could possibly steal her, which was very often. She was a bed hog, and I would give anything to have to sleep diagonally or curl up in a ball again to make room for her, loud snoring and all.

I don't know why dogs always want to be with you in the bathroom and Cash was no exception. I have two doors to my bathroom, one to the living room and one to the bedroom. If you shut the one to the living room and the one to the bedroom was open, even a crack, Cash would come running around and get into the bathroom wagging her tail with all the joy in the world, thinking how smart she was for finding her way in. I could actually count to three once the bathroom door was shut and knew she would be popping her nose right through the other door like clockwork.

Cash was kind, loyal and loving. I don't think she had a mean bone in her body. She was best friends to my dog Odin J, and they are now at the Rainbow Bridge together. When Odin J passed I did not want to be alone without a dog. I would steal Cash often and she and I mourned together.

Cash could exude happiness. You would put your hand on her while she was laying on the bed and her tail would instantly go a million miles an hour. When you took your hand off it would stop, and as soon as you touched her again the motorboat tail would start once more.

Cash was here the first day that I brought home my dog Olaf to foster and it was incredible how fast they became best friends. I am certain that Odin J, had a hand in this.



Cash

Cash tried so hard to be friends with Raven Kitty even though Raven had to act like she was the boss. Cash gave her the utmost respect. She was so very kind and gentle and would ask Raven in animal language before she ever so slowly climbed on a bed or couch that Raven was residing on.

Cash was a girl who knew what she wanted and was cute enough to get it. Cash liked to bark and talk a lot. She was my best teacher in helping other dogs learn how to stop talking too much. Cash was good at taking a toy when she got over exuberant. I also would tell her to do her favorite "BAZINGA" which was a tote of balls I would throw treats in. That taught me how amazing redirection actually could be.

If humans could share as much unconditional love and joy as Cash, the world would be even more amazing. She will be my role model, and I hold her lessons close to my heart, "Be kind and BE HAPPY no matter what the circumstance." She has left a huge hole in this grandma's heart, but it is comforting to know that her and Odin J are back in the lake together at the Rainbow Bridge.

When I look back at the trick dog video we created together, all the photos and paw print art, it reminds me to encourage you to take those videos and take time to make those memories. There is never enough time. I'm so grateful for the time we had and for the moments we took to enjoy the presence of such a beautiful girl.

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PROUD TO TEACH THE
Summer-2013
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Training Tips

Fireworks

Fun for us, scary for dogs

By Robert Crough

The Fourth of July brings forth feelings of great weather, family, and patriotism to name a few. Through our dogs eyes it means fight, flight, fear and danger. More dogs are lost on the Fourth of July than any other time. Here are a few simple tips to help keep your pet safe.

It is worth noting that most Fourth of July lost dogs are escapes. Always make sure to *helicopter mom* your gate latches and leash equipment. Simply keeping a diligent eye on these can save you great heartache.

Beyond management of gates is training. The golden rule of working with fireworks is never try to train in the heat of the moment. You want to practice and prepare for the event. A couple of weeks before is best.

There are basic methods that can help aid you.

Exercise and lots of it—a tired dog is a good dog, and a good dog is easier to keep calm.

The use of different equipment such as Thundershirt, which helps slow the breathing and heart rate, backpacks for aid in exercise, calming caps and anxiety vests can help.

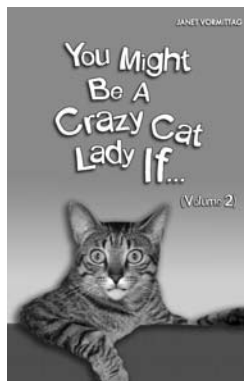
Desensitization is the best way to help dogs ignore sounds. You can start this process by taking your dog on a longer than usual walk in a strange place to help burn as much physical and mental energy as possible. When the dog comes home they should be tired and a bit hungry. With Youtube and a speaker, quietly play some sounds that do not scare the dog like running water, flutes, etc. Using very high value food, simply get the dog's attention, and have them do a simple command like "sit". You want the dog to ignore the flute and waterfall sounds and communicate with you for good scraps. Keeping the sound low, switch to a sound you want to desensitize to like fireworks and continue to reward the dog for ignoring the firework sound. Then back to the good sounds. Rinse and repeat. Slowly increasing the volume of the sound of the fireworks or thunderstorms as you practice. This will help the dog accept the sound as background noise and avoid and ignore instead of instinctively going into flight and fear mode.

It is hard to give across the board advice on such a nuanced subject. All dogs are individuals and it is always best to contact a professional dog trainer to help you come up with a specific plan for your dog.

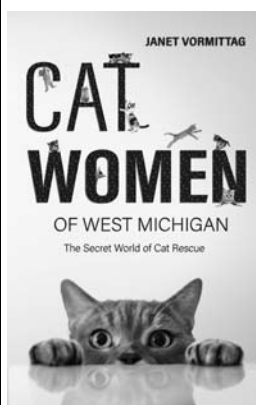
Robert Crough Owner/Professional Trainer Paradigm Dog School

(616) 796 2275

Paradigmds@gmail.com



You Might be a Crazy Cat Lady If ... (volumes 1 & 2) are collections of humorous, heartwarming short stories about the cats who have shared my home.



During the years of publishing *Cats and Dogs Magazine*, I've met amazing people involved in rescue. Some of the most amazing have been women devoted to helping cats and kittens.

I'm humbled and honored to be able to tell the stories of these unsung heroes. In *Cat Women of West Michigan, the Secret World of Cat Rescue*, you'll meet women who start rescues, trap-neuter-return feral cats, foster homeless cats, socialize wild kittens, bottle-feed orphans, transport cats for spay/neuter surgeries, fund-raise and so much more.

You'll learn the stories behind rescues such as *Heaven Can Wait*, *Faithful to Felines*, *Carol's Ferals*, *Focus on Ferals*, *Crash's Landing*, *Cat Tales Rescue* and several others.

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Meet the Author and get your book signed

July 15, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Summer's Hottest Arts and Crafts Market at Griff's Georgetown Ice Arena, 8500 48th Ave., Hudsonville.

July 22, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Holland Pet Expo, Holland Civic Center, 150 W 8th St., Holland.

August 5, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Holland Art in the Park, Centennial Park, 250 Central Ave., Holland.

Our Readers Write

Another Option

By Ben Ruehrdanz

Nobody ever plans to have cancer. And when I was diagnosed, I owned a German shepherd. As treatments progressed, it became apparent that I was not going to be able to keep my dog. If you've never had to surrender an animal in your care, it's more difficult emotionally than you might expect. I explored many options for Reika. I created posts on rehoming websites, I told friends, I made social media posts, I talked to rescues and messaged with shelters. For a while, I danced with the idea of euthanasia but I didn't have it in my heart to see her put down. Knowing Reika's fear of veterinarians, being sent to a shelter would likely be a death sentence for her too. For a while, most of the responses to my posts were bad. Really bad. I met with some good-intentioned but wildly underprepared dog owners. I messaged with one man who explained to me that he was disabled veteran and required a German shepherd dog as a service animal. Sir, whoever you are, that's just not how dogs work. This went on for five or six months until I found Grand Rapids Pitbull Alliance (GRPBA).

Grand Rapids Pitbull Alliance believes that there is a new option emerging in the animal welfare world for people who need to surrender animals. It's called self-supported rehoming. GRPBA supports animals and owners in crisis by assigning a rehoming counselor. Check it out, here's how it works:

1. Before anything else, GRPBA works to keep the pet with the current owner. They offer support like providing food and medicine, sharing training resources, or finding a low-cost spay/neuter. They currently have 11 different services that they offer to the community.

2. If the owner must rehome a pet, then the outreach organization like GRPBA works to determine if the current owner can "foster" their own animal. This is a key part of self-supported rehoming! Oftentimes, the current owner is the least stressful option for the pet even if the care isn't perfect. For Reika and I, we did our best while I was sick.

3. While in foster care with the current owner, a rehoming counselor is brought in. This rehoming counselor works alongside the owner to write bios, make posts, take pictures, filter potential adoptees, and set up new owner meetings. For GRPBA, the pet must be listed on an approved re-homing site. Check out the graphic they helped me make.

4. Once a match has been established, the counselor works with both parties to set up a meet-up. My counselor helped me ask good questions to the potential owners during our face to face meetings.



Reika's Rehoming Graphic created by Grand Rapids Pitbull Alliance rehoming counselors.

5. Lastly, if a rehoming is agreed upon, the counselor is there to oversee the transfer of ownership and can support the new owner as the pet settles into their new home.

Surrendering a pet is a difficult road to go alone. Most pet parents do not know best practices and can get discouraged and lost in the process. The usual path, shelters, offers an unnatural environment for animals and even the best trained dog can find them to be rather stressful. Home-to-home transfers, on the other hand, have a huge upside for the animals. Rehomed animals experience little to no disruption to their diet, medicine, toys, kennel and even their training when these items and knowledge are passed between owners. I would encourage any animal welfare organization to consider adding rehoming counselors to their team. My counselors' work kept Reika out of the shelters and supported me in finding her a new owner. For anyone who finds themselves needing to surrender their dog like me, seek out a rehoming counselor. You *can* rehome your pet directly and safely and there are owners out there who will love your pet as much as you do. The rehoming road is filled with ups and downs but a knowledgeable counselor can light your path.

At the time of writing this, Reika has been with her new owner for about six months. I stay in touch and they send me pictures of their adventures. I even got to watch Reika for a day while her owner traveled. My heart rests easy knowing Reika is safe and with an owner who is giving her all the love and attention she deserves.

BestPals Animal Rescue Center Celebrating ten years

By Janet Vormittag

BestPals Animal Rescue Center is having a party and you're invited.

"We're celebrating the past—ten years at this location—and combining it with looking forward," said BestPals Executive Director Michelle Kenat.

The celebration is June 25, noon to 5 p.m., at 6674 Blair Lane, Holland.

There will be games for children, tours of the facility, food trucks, a live DJ, prizes, raffles, a bouncy house and other animal rescues. There will be pets available for adoption.

"We're going to have so much fun," Michelle said.

Michelle said BestPals is seeking more support from the community. Her goals for the future include a new furnace for the cat building, an expanded emergency fund, a generator for backup power, a sprinkler system for fire suppression and a transport van.

Michelle has been involved in rescue her entire life. Growing up in Chicago, she got her first dog when she was three. Her grandmother picked up stray dogs and Michelle was her helper.

"It's in my blood. It's my passion," she said.

When Michelle was 16 she started volunteering at a shelter. She met a woman who used her home as a rescue for cats and dogs. "She was my mentor and role model."

After Michelle married, she and her husband moved to Holland to raise their children.

When the kids were older Michelle started volunteering at Harbor Humane Society. Eventually, she was hired as the shelter's intake coordinator. She met like-minded people, and they saw a need for another option for owner-surrendered pets.

Michelle's dream was to have a home where she could have a rescue. After a divorce, she looked for her dream house. She found it at 13888 Blair St. in Holland. The three-acre site had a house, a pond, and an out building that had once been used as a dog boarding facility.

"I didn't even see the inside of the house when I said I wanted it," she recalled.

The site was close to US 31 and the Chicago-raised woman loved the sound of the traffic. "I hear the cars and it soothes me," Michelle said.

BestPals officially opened in 2013. The group is a 501(c)3 nonprofit and is licensed by the Michigan Department of Agriculture. They have room for 30 cats in the renovated dog-boarding building where there are large kennels with cat trees, cubbies for sleeping and plenty of toys. Each kennel has a window where outside birdfeeders attract birds to entertains the cats.

The house's attached garage has been transformed into a dog kennel with room for 10 to 15 dogs. Michelle also fosters cats and dogs in her home.



Above: BestPals Animal Rescue Center's cat building.



Michelle Kenat, Executive Director of BestPals Rescue Center, in her office and with some of the animals at the rescue.



Two shifts of volunteers come each day to clean and play with the animals

BestPals takes in owner-surrendered pets and cats and dogs from overcrowded shelters.

Michelle said the hardest thing about being in rescue is finding a balance between rescue and the rest of her life.

"It's definitely 24/7," she said.

Michelle manages intake, takes animals to the vet, gives medications, screens adopters, trains and oversees volunteers, and does fundraising. She spends more time on running the business end of BestPals than she would like.

"I thought there would be more time to enjoy each animal," she said. She loves walking the dogs and cuddling with the cats.

The best part of having a rescue is finding the perfect family for a cat or dog. An example is a half deaf dog who was adopted by a family that knew sign language.

Michelle works hard to match pets to families. She only does foster-to-adopt, meaning a cat or dog lives with their new family before adoption fees are paid and papers signed. BestPals has less than a one percent return rate.

"There's nothing like a perfect adoption," she said.

For more information on BestPals Animal Rescue Center visit www.bestpalsrecue.org or follow them on social media. Email info@bestpalsrescue.org or call/text 616-212-3368.

10 Year Party!

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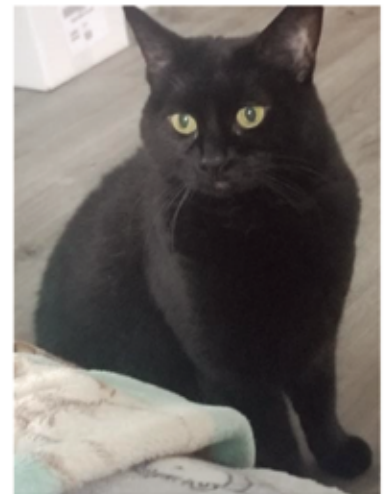
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Mewsings

Add Humans to the List

By Kristina VanOss



The Michigan DNR recently announced that it may add several new animals to the “nuisance list” of critters who may be removed and disposed of by property owners without a permit. If approved, the current list of four which includes woodchucks, skunks, raccoon and coyote, will expand to include beaver, weasels, opossum...and the tiniest terrorists... otherwise known as cottontail rabbits, muskrat, squirrels, and chipmunks.

Seriously?

It is disheartening to me, but I can't say that I am too surprised, given the current self-centered culture that reigns so much of our country. We want what we want. We want it now. And who cares how our actions affect anyone else. Most of us can't even comprehend how our lifestyle is going to ultimately be our own undoing. We are shooting ourselves in the proverbial foot.

Already, we are granted permits to “relocate” wetlands in lieu of behemoth shopping malls. Then we complain that waterfowl who are forced to live in their new habits adjoining “civilization” are getting in the way of traffic and pooping on our cars. We bulldoze farmland and forests to build sprawling suburbs with houses much larger than our needs, then complain that the deer are eating our tulips. We douse our yards with chemicals for the comforting illusion of green carpet perfection. Never mind that the groundwater gets contaminated, and the soil biome compromised. Worst of all, our garden alchemy creates a hostile environment for the birds, and for pollinators on whom our very lives depend. I could go on...

We have lost sight of the big picture.

Humans in this country, and I say *this country* because I think much of our arrogance is sadly unique to America. How else do you explain that the U.S. *with under 5% of the world population, consumes 30% of the world resources and are the first to resist efforts at fixing climate change?* While many folks may merely be clueless as to the consequences of their actions, I fear that others are worse than just unaware, they are uncaring, and some of them downright cruel as well.

Anyone over 40 who grew up in the city likely does not recall a wildlife problem in their childhoods. I know I can't. The city neighborhood of my youth, while populated by a healthy community of squirrels, birds, and the occasional box turtle who mysteriously emerged in our alley on rainy summer days, was completely devoid of deer, woodchucks, skunks, opossums, or even raccoons. There was no thieving fox in the neighbor's chickens, no random coyote

threatening our dog, no foraging bear in our trash. No deer ate my mother's flowers. Why is that?

It is not hard to put two and two together. We humans have invaded wildlife habitats with our urban sprawl. Most wildlife is programmed to live where they do. It is literally in their DNA to stay where they were born. Nature works by design and has its own way of balancing the scales when any one species gets out of control. Every plant, and every animal has a purpose in the ecosystem. Except for us. Humanity could die out tomorrow and the world would enthusiastically go on without us...and probably be better off.

Over the course of history, humans has tried repeatedly to rid themselves of certain animals they deemed a nuisance. Without foresight, the consequences were sometimes dire. The Bubonic Plague, which killed more than 25 million people...nearly a third of Europe's population in the 14th Century was directly attributed to the overwhelming population of rats after 100 years of *exterminating cats* because Pope Gregory IX had declared them evil.

We don't seem to learn from history.

Recent research suggests that nature loss increases the likelihood of pandemics like West Nile Virus and COVID for a variety of reasons. Not the least of which is that losing wildlife weakens the biodiversity necessary to dilute and defend against disease threats.

We are the nuisance, not the animals. If we keep demanding “our right” to take over wildlife territory, the least we can do is to intelligently and thoughtfully find ways to coexist with nature non-violently. There are better ways to do this than trapping, poisoning, shooting, or displacing. Being the supposed superior species, we ought to be able to figure it out.

If not, my suggestion to the Michigan DNR is to add humans to the list.

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.

“I think sometimes we need to take a step back and just remember we have no greater right to be here than any other animal.” – David Attenborough

Where, Oh, Where Has My Little Dog or Cat Gone?

By Ginny Mikita, JD, Animal Chaplain (she/her)

Last month, loss was at the forefront of both the Animal Companion Loss Grief Support Group I facilitate, my animal law practice and with a friend whose dog was stolen. Not the death kind of loss, but the cannot be found kind of loss.

As we debate the pros and cons of technology gone wild, e.g. AI, in the world of loss, there is nothing to debate. It is almost all pro. Almost.

The Runaway

Vanessa's mini yorkie, Lily, was partially blind. To ensure Lily's safety, Vanessa created an enclosed, safe space in her home near a screened, sliding glass door. Lily would regularly lie in the sunshine and fresh air while Vanessa worked from home. Vanessa rarely left Lily alone, even for a few minutes.

On one fateful day last month, Vanessa left to run a quick errand, only to return and find Lily had scratched and chewed her way through the screen door. After an extensive 24 hour search by her compassionate community - on foot, by posting on social media and using drones - her lifeless body was found the following day near a body of water. Vanessa was and remains devastated.

The Microchipped Adoptee

The following week, I received a call from Whitney who had recently fostered and adopted Buster, a rescue dog from a rescue organization down south. The rescue organization had microchipped Buster; however, the adoption contract included a provision preventing Whitney from updating contact information with the microchip manufacturer. The rescue organization, as is somewhat common, wanted to ensure that if Whitney - for whatever reason - was no longer able to care for Buster, he would be returned to the rescue organization.

The Stolen One

Last Friday, I virtually attended a memorial service for Zelda, a long-time canine companion of Brett, a pastor friend of mine on the East Coast. Brett shared in his eulogy a frightening experience he had had a couple years back when he left Zelda with a dog sitter he had employed through an on-line service. While Brett was away, the dog sitter called him to report Zelda had run away. In fact, she had given Zelda to a friend of hers. Devastated, Brett posted a reward. The dog sitter and her friend, more interested in the money, conspired to return the dog and split the reward. After Zelda's mysterious return, Brett's outraged community investigated and made the connection, and charges were filed.

Technology to the Rescue (no pun intended)

Technology offers a plethora of options. Kent County, Michigan, rolled out an updated dog license program last

year. Partnering with PetHub, license tags now feature a QR code. If your dog gets lost, anyone who finds her can scan the Code with their smartphone to immediately access whatever information you have provided. Each of my mom's cocker spaniels - Sugar and Gracie - have the new tags. When scanned, the tag reveals a photograph, name and description of the dog as well as my mom's name and contact information.

Other relative newcomers to the world of finding lost animal companions are GPS trackers, often built into collars. Most trackers use a combination of WiFi and Bluetooth to help share your animal's location with an app linked to your phone or other device. Some include a "lost dog" feature that emits a loud alarm or turns on a bright light (for those late-night potty runs in the backyard). There are many options available and a number of reviews on-line I recommend you read before purchase.

AirTags are a scaled-down relative of GPS trackers. While attaching an AirTag to your animal companion's collar sounds like a good idea, it may not be. Even Apple has stressed the AirTag is meant for locating items like wallets, not living beings. AirTags are limited to finding your companions while inside your Bluetooth network (around 100 feet), and, more importantly, AirTags contain batteries which, if chewed or ingested, could leak and cause organ damage.

Microchips, the longstanding technology that has been in use for years, remains a solid safeguard. The importance of registering your name and updating your contact information cannot be overstated. There are challenges (if someone finds your animal, they must either have a microchip reader at their disposal or take your animal to someone who does); however, microchips have been responsible for untold numbers of reunions of animal companions with their humans.

Haruki Murakami once wrote, "Every one of us is losing something precious to us. Lost opportunities, lost possibilities, feelings we can never get back again. That's what part of it means to be alive." Animal companions enrich our lives in ways too grand for words. While most of us will lose them to death during our lifetimes, technology can prevent losing them during theirs.

If you or someone you know is experiencing an animal companion loss - by any definition of the term - please reach out to me at www.animalblessings.love.



Ginny Mikita, JD, Animal Chaplain
www.animalblessings.love
ginny@animalblessings.love
616.460.0373
Facilitator of West Michigan
Companion Animal Loss Grief Support Group, 2nd Tuesday of each month, 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m., at Heaven at Home, 1530 Monroe NW, Grand Rapids. Please RSVP, text or call 616.460.0737 before noon on the day of the gathering.

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Bunnies – R – Us *From Breeder to Rescue*

By Janet Vormittag

Diane Dykema has a passion for rabbits and thought breeding and selling bunnies would be a fun hobby. She changed her mind when people started asking her to take rabbits they no longer wanted.

“I didn’t realize how many unwanted bunnies there were,” said the Wyoming woman.

That realization compelled Diane to transition from breeding to rescue. In July 2019, she started Bunnies–R–Us and began taking in unwanted rabbits and finding them new homes.

In 2022, Diane adopted out 92 rabbits. She has a 100% rate of finding new homes for rabbits in less than two months.

Diane thinks most people get rid of rabbits because they aren’t educated on what is involved in caring for their new pet.

“You can’t put a rabbit in a cage and leave it there,” she said. “Having a rabbit is a big responsibility.”

Before taking home one of Diane’s rabbits, adopters are required to sit through a one-on-one, hour-long education session. Using handouts and videos, Diane teaches what rabbits should and shouldn’t be fed. She shows how to hold a rabbit and explains why exercise is important.

Rabbits in Diane’s care get out of their cages at least once a day to play with toys in an exercise pen.

Diane explains that rabbits never look sick, have a high tolerance for pain, and can die from stress. They can also be trained to use a litter box.

Adopters leave with a folder full of information and a starter kit with litter, hay and bunny food. They also have Diane’s telephone number.

“They know everything they need to know before they leave. They can also call me anytime,” Diane said.

If people are hesitant about adopting, they can foster to adopt.

Besides owner-surrendered rabbits, Diane gets rabbits from people who find domestic bunnies. “People think they can live like a wild bunny. They can’t.”

Domestic rabbits shouldn’t be released outside—they lack survival skills and are vulnerable to predators.

Recently Diane took in seven bunnies from Traverse City Animal Control who got them from a rescue that had closed.

Diane charges an adoption fees to keep people from taking rabbits for snake food or meat. Fees range from \$30 to \$100 and depends on the rabbit’s age, breed and if it has been spayed/neutered. Diane doesn’t routinely spay/neuter rabbits.

“I don’t adopt a male and female together. I learned that the hard way,” Diane said. She also won’t adopt to



Diane Dykema, the founder of the Wyoming-based Bunnies - R - Us, with Nami a female Holland Lop mix.

someone who has a rabbit of the opposite sex at home. She explained that one gentleman adopted two females and neglected to tell her he had a male at home. He soon brought her a dozen young rabbits and the male rabbit.

Some rabbits bond with each other and become best buddies. Diane won’t breakup a bonded pair or trio, but if the pair consists of a male and female, one must be spayed/neutered.

Diane is learning as she goes and now charges an intake fee and asks that a rabbit’s cage be included in the surrender to reduce the stress on the rabbit.

When full, Diane asks people to foster the rabbit they want to surrender until a new home can be found. She has room for about two dozen rabbits and does most of the work of feeding and cleaning by herself. Recently, a 13-year-old girl started volunteering and helps care for the bunnies.

Diane’s family is supportive of her rescue. Her husband, Russ, helps where he can and her daughter helps with the website and makes bunny videos.

Diane said rabbits are often a neglected animal and are usually looked at like a farm animal. She sees them differently and hopes to educate people about their true nature.

“They’re smart and clean. They can be silly and are easy to care for. They each have their own personality. Each one is different and unique.”

For more information visit bunniesrusrabbitry.com.



Noah News!

- Pets in need
- Yard Sale Donations

PETS IN GREAT NEED!

In the last month, we have incurred over \$23,000 worth of vet bills. Please consider donating to help us care for these injured animals; mail us a check or see our contact info below.

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Accepting donations for our annual yard sale starting May 15! Drop off your gently used items Tuesday-Saturday from 11AM-7PM. Proceeds always go to the care of our animals!



Atlanta suffered broken bones after being thrown over our fence along with 5 other puppies. She needs surgery to heal. She and her siblings are 15-week-old Rottweiler mixes.



Spider is on the mend from his successful surgery, and is going through laser treatments to continue healing.



Henny is only 11 months old, but she is in constant pain from serious demodex skin infections.



Peanut Is a Chihuahua Yorkie Mix who needs a mass removed.



Baby is a stray who came to us for help because she was starving and bleeding.



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616-949-1390 - noahspc@comcast.net
www.noahspetcemetery.com

Trusted Journey Pet Memorial

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616-538-6050 - www.trustedjourney.com

Feral Cat Support Services

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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 In-Home Hospice

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www.pethospicevet.com

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Rescue Groups

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Call for an appointment 231-924-9230
www.bellwetherharbor.org

BestPals Animal Rescue Center

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

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231-773-8689 - www.muskegonhumanesociety.org

Bunny Adoption & Rescue Services

www.bunniesrusrabbitry.com
Bunniesrusrabbitry@hotmail.com
Owner/Founder Diane Dykema

Cannonsville Critters

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

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616-446-1591 - pettalesrescueboard@gmail.com
www.pettalesrescue.com - www.facebook.com/pettalesrescue

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Jeanine Buckner
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www.reubensroom.org
catrescuereubensroom@gmail.com

Community Resource Guide

Scarlett's Cat Sanctuary & Furry Friends Pet Recovery

A non-profit 501c3 in-home based cat and kitten rescue
Recovering lost pets & finding homes for the homeless
<https://www.facebook.com/furryfriendspetrecovery>
scarlettscatsanctuary@gmail.com

West Michigan Ferret Connection

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Dee Gage, 616-447-2978 - wmfc2001@att.net
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Wishbone Pet Rescue Alliance

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Fig and Friends Pet Rescue

Janet Vormittag

“Everything outside of work for me is rescue,” Julie Beukema said. In March 2022, she founded Fig and Friends Pet Rescue, a nonprofit devoted to rescuing cats and dogs.

By day, Julie is the supervisor of the Collection Services Department at the downtown branch of the Grand Rapids Public Library. She’s responsible for purchasing materials, cataloging the items and preparing them to be shelved.

Julie has been involved in rescue for more than ten years and has volunteered for various local organizations.

Fig and Friends is foster-based and relies on volunteers. The group takes in owner surrendered pets as well as



Julie Beukema, founder of Fig and Friends Pet Rescue, and her blind cat, Ray.

animals from shelters. They work closely with the Calhoun County Animal Center and shelters in the Detroit area. Julie also monitors Michigan Urgent Cats on Facebook where cats in desperate circumstances are posted.

That’s where she saw a post for a black and white, six-week-old male kitten with infected eyes. Julie couldn’t resist offering to help. A volunteer drove the kitten from Southeast Michigan to

Grand Rapids. After he arrived, Julie took the kitten to a veterinarian. The diagnosis was ruptured eyes. Surgery was recommended to remove both eyes. Other than his eyes, the one-pound kitten was healthy and purred up a storm.

“We felt we had to give him a chance,” Julie said.

The estimated cost for the operation was \$2,300 to \$3,000. A Facebook fundraiser was created.

Julie named the long haired kitten Ray Charles after the blind singer. Being blind hasn’t slowed Ray. “He’s the most social and curious kitten I’ve ever seen.”

Ray is now seven months old and is the official greeter at the Happy Cat Café in Grand Rapids. Julie partners with the Cafe to supply cats for their adoption room. Happy Cat Café has worked with several rescues since they opened and has adopted out close to 700 cats.

Ray is not available for adoption. He had been adopted, but allergies forced his return. Julie then decided to keep him. Because the blind kitten was so social Julie thought to try him at the café. “He’s doing phenomenal. He’s an advocate for physically challenged cats,” she said.

Ray navigates by hearing and his whiskers. He interacts

with people, plays with toys and was the first cat to figure out how to run on an exercise wheel.

Fig and Friends is named after a puppy the rescue took in from Calhoun County Animal Center. The three-month-old pup couldn’t walk, was dehydrated and had worms. It was determined the pup had calcification of her joints. It took a \$4,000 surgery to remove the calcification from her vertebrae to enable her to walk. Fig is now three years old. She’s on steroids and receives physical therapy. She has an awkward gait, but can walk.

“She epitomizes what rescue is about—it’s giving animals a chance,” Julie said. Fig looks like a French bulldog, but DNA testing revealed that’s only eight percent of her makeup. Someone suggested the name Fig due to the pup’s deep brown coloring. The name stuck. Fig’s now the rescue’s mascot and her face is part of the group’s logo.

Fig and Friends is funded through donations. This year the group will be eligible to apply for grants.

Julie said the best thing about rescue is hearing happy stories. “It’s seeing the joy pets can bring to people.”

The worst thing about rescue is not being to save an animal. “I’ve had a few,” she said. One that sticks with her is a stray cat who was old, had an eye tumor and was positive for FIV. “We decided to let him go,” she said.

Julie has several goals. Short term, she’d love to have an incubator for neonatal kittens. Long term, she’d like to have a facility.

Asked why she devotes all her free time to rescue, Julie had a quick answer. “I love animals. I also have an urge to help people. It’s why I was put on this planet.”

Ways YOU can help Fig And Friends Pet Rescue

1. Follow them on social media and share posts.

Facebook: Figandfriendspetrescue

Instagram: Figandfriendspetrescue

Twitter: @figpet

2. Do a Facebook fundraiser for them either on your birthday or for another special event. This helps in two ways: it raises money and it promotes the rescue.

3. Purchase supplies from their Amazon Wish List.

4. Donate your returnable deposit cans and bottles to us. Contact them to arrange pickup or they have drop off locations in SE Grand Rapids, Kentwood, Ada, Lowell and Hudsonville.

5. Donate used pet supplies you no longer need. They’ll take any cat and dog food and supplies.

6. Contact them about volunteering. They especially need people to help at the Happy Cat Café.

7. Leave them a review on Goggle, Facebook or any other platform you prefer.

8. Monetary donations are appreciated. The best way to get those to Fig and Friends is:

CashApp: \$figandfriends

Venmo: @Julie-Beukema

Paypal: figandfriendspetrescue@gmail.com

Contact us at 616-320-2400 or
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www.figandfriendspetrescue.org



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In addition to dignified, trustworthy cremation services and memorial items, Trusted Journey offers pet parents more.

Because we believe in comprehensive client care, all pet parents who use our services have access to our Compassion Careline. Here, you receive free 24x7 access to grief counselors. With Trusted Journey, you're never alone.

Choice of Quality Complimentary Urns

Dignified Cremation Services

Complimentary Grief Resources



Byron Center location

2755 64th St SW, Byron Center, MI

616-538-6050

TrustedJourney.com