



Project Cat is nonprofit tax-deductible organization

Feline Community Assistance
Rescue and Adoptions

MAIL: 571 County Rt 2, Accord, NY 12404
SHELTER: Adoptions are by appointment
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Dear Friends of Project Cat,

Winter 2012

Every year around this time I recall a very sad and poignant cat rescue that we made several years ago and it reminds me of why I keep doing what I do. A few days before Christmas we received phone calls from concerned people about a very thin cat with a possibly broken leg hobbling beneath parked cars in the Hudson Valley Mall parking lot in Kingston.

In the late afternoon I went there to look for signs of a cat. The mall parking lot was packed with busy holiday shoppers. It was bitterly cold that winter with lots of snow and continuous subfreezing temperatures. I parked at the far end of the lot and stepped over the guard rail where the steep embankment dropped down to an exit ramp. Luckily, freshly fallen snow revealed a set of cat paw prints going down the embankment. Nobody paid any attention to me as I made my way down over the rocks following the tracks. At the bottom, just a few yards from heavy automobile traffic, the tracks disappeared into a rocky burrow. It was a deep burrow and my flashlight revealed nothing near the entrance.

I retrieved a humane live trap and dry cat food from my car. I put bedding in the trap, wrapped a blanket around it and set it up at the burrow entrance. Time stopped for me and Christmas did not exist as I sat by the entrance in the dark waiting for a cat to show up.

Because I lived 15 miles away I asked a volunteer who lived in Kingston to check the trap every couple of hours throughout the night. I went to sleep late that night thinking of that poor cat living in a hole in the cold ground amidst hazardous automobile traffic and a busy shopping mall. The bone chilling cold made my heart ache for any animal not hardened to such weather.

To my relief I received a call early the next morning that the cat had been captured. When he arrived at the shelter we observed a very thin black and white male cat, wide-eyed and frozen with fear, huddled in the trap. He was very dirty and had massive diarrhea. We set him up in a cage and watched as he hobbled low to the ground on two dislocated hips.

It was terrible to think of how he might have been living like this: injured, sick and scrounging for fast food and garbage in dumpsters - eking out a meager existence in a concrete environment amidst so much activity and beneath the radar of thousands of people working and shopping every day.

We kept him warm, dry and as comfortable as possible that night and the next day, Christmas Eve, took him to the animal hospital to be humanely euthanized.

This winter season, please don't forget all the unfortunate creatures like him, whose suffering Project Cat is committed to alleviating.

Thank you for generously supporting our crucial animal welfare work.

Gail Mihocko

Director

Gail Mihocko



In Memory Of...

Samantha Mullen who left this earth on December 21, 2012 after fighting a battle with cancer. Samantha fought passionately for animal welfare and sought to improve the lives of all animals and to free them from the senseless cruelty of which so many are subjected.

After teaching French at SUNY New Paltz for 10 years, in 1984 she left to follow her passion and became involved in the animal humane movement. She joined the board of the Ulster County SPCA and then became the Administrator for New York State Humane Association. In 1987, she headed up the team for one of the largest animal hoarding investigations in the nation that succeeded in closing down the Animals Farm Home in Ellenville, NY, where hundreds of farm and pet animals were rescued from cruelty and misery. In 1994, she was hired by The Humane Society of the United States as Director of Animal Sheltering and then Program Coordinator where her duties included coordinating animal rescue efforts after Hurricane Katrina along the Gulf Coast.

After her retirement in 2008, she returned to New York State Humane Association's board and dedicated her time to working on Animal Protection legislation in Albany and was instrumental in getting important legislation passed for the benefit and protection of animals. She continued working almost to her last moments.

Samantha was an avid supporter of Project Cat and our philosophy and helped us through difficult times. She was an amazing person, and we were so fortunate to have come to know her. We and all the animals have lost a determined and compassionate friend.



New digs for the kitties at the shelter — lots of new climbers, ramps, shelves and stuff to do

We love getting updates from adopters about all the cats that have been adopted from our shelter. If you would like to share your stories and pictures in our next newsletter please submit them by email to info@projectcat.org. You can write about your adoption experience or anything else you would like to share about life with your cat(s); be it heartwarming, funny, poignant, or just because you love your cat. You can also post your pictures and updates anytime on our face book page. We look forward to your response!



Adopting A Cat

There are many ways of choosing a cat to adopt. Some people make a decision based on a photograph and description; some come to the shelter with no specifics in mind; some have a list of characteristics they would like in a cat, while others 'shop around' looking for that special connection. Cats are complex living beings that cannot be categorized by a list of personality traits. They respond differently to changing situations, environments, people and other animals. Moreover, they will change as they mature, just like people. While they all exhibit specific cat behavior, each cat is different having its own set of personality traits along with a unique combination of colors, markings, and body type. The most important thing to remember is that adoption is a two-way street. You are not just looking for a cat that you find appealing but for one that is receptive to you and your particular personality.

When meeting a cat for the first time it is a good idea to let it seek you out. This is best accomplished by sitting in a chair or the floor so you look less threatening to the cat. Bold, outgoing cats might not have any fear of an unfamiliar human, but a more timid cat might be too cautious to approach unless you are at or below their level. Cats are predators but they are also prey for larger animals and so instinctually flee from perceived danger, such as a human being towering over them or moving toward them.

While humans are taught to make eye contact with other humans to show friendliness, a cat meeting you for the first time may perceive eye contact as a threat and a challenge. As you get to know your cat, however, eye contact can become a means of communication and a display of trust. Have you ever noticed that when you look directly at your cat it starts to close its eyes or may blink or squint? This is a sign that the cat feels comfortable enough with you that it does not need to be on high guard. But even a cat you've had for years may never feel comfortable being stared at. You have to figure out your own cat's comfort level. I have cats that will become nervous and move away when I stare at them for too long because they are afraid I am targeting them for attack.

If you are a first-time cat owner I suggest adopting what I call a 'beginner cat', a calm, sociable cat that tolerates handling well that will make nail clipping and giving medicine easy. If, on the other hand, you are an experienced cat owner, you might want to take on a more challenging animal, one that might be a little bit shy and needs encouragement to come out of its shell or a highly active and intelligent cat that will keep you guessing what it is going to do next.

I suggest keeping an open mind when preparing to adopt. If you limit yourself to a specific color or gender you might be disappointed if the cat doesn't meet your expectations, and you might miss out on adopting a cat with a stupendous personality. You may think you know what you want but after actually meeting the cats, you could end up going home with something altogether different!

One visit to a shelter will give you a 'snapshot' of a cat, but you won't have the opportunity to see the cat's entire personality as its mood changes throughout the day, toggling between eating, sleeping, playing and so forth. Try to visit the shelter when you aren't in a rush and can spend time interacting with the cats. The entire family should visit to see how the cats react to each person, male, female, young and old. Remember that you are not choosing a made-to-order animal but a sentient being with



Cat Personalities

It is a mistake to think that by adopting a tiny kitten you can shape its personality. Like any animal, kittens are born with a set of genes that lay the groundwork for their development. Although their environment, their exposure to humans and their experiences growing up will have an impact on how they develop, they are essentially who their genes map them out to be -- the result of a combination of nature and nurture.

Not only do tiny kittens have different personality traits, but as they mature their personalities may change. I have often been surprised by the changes that have occurred by the time a kitten reaches four to six months of age. My advice to people who want to be sure what kind of cat personality they are taking home is to adopt an adult cat, one year old or more. But these cats too may change with increasing maturity and in response to their environment.



During the past 12 years we've cared for hundreds of kittens growing up in the shelter. Among kittens born indoors to friendly mother cats we have observed -- within the same litter -- some that are very friendly and sociable to humans and others are aloof or timid and intolerant of being handled. Kittens in a litter born outdoors to feral mothers can also vary considerably, some being extremely wild and aggressive, others quite tame and showing little to no aggression at all. A study done at Cambridge University by Sandra McCune, an animal behavior expert, concluded that friendliness, or boldness as she labeled it, is a genetic trait passed on by the father to his offspring. Since it is necessary for the mother to raise the kittens it is difficult to determine how much her genes and method of rearing influence their personalities. It should be noted that female cats can mate with several males during a heat cycle thus kittens within a litter can have different fathers, resulting in greater variations within the litter.



Communicating With Your Cat

The first step in trying to understand your cat's behavior is acknowledging the fact it cat perceives the world and interprets its surroundings differently than humans do. What seems perfectly rational to you may be totally perplexing to your cat. Taking the time to try to understand how your cat's mind works can open a huge door to communicating with your pet.

We humans like to be understood, and we somehow expect our pets to automatically understand what we want from them. The best thing you can do for your cat is learn how to speak some of its 'language', try to figure out its behavior and why it does the things it does. Their sense of smell and hearing is much more acute than ours and they respond to stimuli that we are not even aware of. Odors or sounds may make your cat nervous or afraid or curious while we are scratching our heads in puzzlement over what they are responding to.

We want our pets to enjoy and value the same things that we do, but that is unrealistic. Whereas you see a beautiful, expensive new sofa, your cat sees an ideal scratching post in the perfect location for territorial marking. Whereas you see a perfect location for the litter box, your cat perceives a dark or scary place with strange smells, sounds and no escape route. Your cat might prefer sleeping in the dirty laundry basket instead of the cute bed you bought because the laundry conveys a comforting scent of safety. Whereas you see your neighbor's cat walking across the yard, your indoor cat may see an interloper, an enemy to be chased away. Certain smells or sounds that you might find relaxing might put your cat on high alert or conjure up past dangerous situations.

Being highly perceptive creatures, cats are probably learning more about you than you are about them. Your unconscious body movements, touch, tone of voice, and the scents that you pick up on your clothes may all affect your cat's behavior and tell it things that you are unaware of. For your part, learning to read your cat's eye, ear, whisker, tail, and body movements can reveal the changes in its moods.

Animals live in the moment. Whatever they are doing has their full attention and focus. They are not holding a grudge about their tail being stepped on yesterday or wondering what you are going to cook for dinner tonight. They respond to the immediacy of their environment without all the psychological and emotional complexities that we bring to our decision making. Cats are predators that are hard-wired to hunt and chase small moving things. That is why they like to chase wiggling strings and jingling balls that are rolled across the floor.

Accepting a cat or two into your home can be a life-transforming event. It allows you to expand your mind through understanding how another species experiences the world. Being open to learning about and understanding your cat's personality and behavior is part of the joy of living with an animal.



Despite the vast number of books written about domestic cats, their behavior can still be difficult to decipher. If you want to further explore your own cat's psyche or if you want *train* your cat to do cool things, here are a few books that I found educational and enlightening. Although some of these books are not specific to cats, they provide a basic understanding of animal behavior in general that can then be applied to cats or other animals. Learning about basic animal behavior is a pathway to gaining a better understanding of your cat.

- ⇒ *Don't Shoot the Dog: The New Art of Teaching and Training* by Karen Pryor, Bantam Books
- ⇒ *Clicker Training for Cats* by Karen Pryor, Sunshine Books (Yes, cats, as well as any other animal (dogs, fish, humans) can be trained through positive reinforcement.)
- ⇒ *Thinking In Pictures* by Temple Grandin, Vintage Books
- ⇒ *Animals In Translation* by Temple Grandin, Scribner Publishing
(Temple Grandin is well known for her humane work with farm animals and ability to read animal behavior because of her thinking abilities related to autism.)
- ⇒ *Cat Behavior* by Roger Tabor, Reader's Digest
- ⇒ *Think Like A Cat* by Pam Johnson-Bennett, Penguin Books
- ⇒ *Cats' A.B.C.* by Beverley Nichols, a fun and lighthearted romp by a British cat enthusiast from the 1950's complete with wonderful drawings.
- ⇒ *Everything Here Is Mine: An Unhelpful Guide to Cat Behavior* by Nicole Hollander, Sourcebooks, for sheer humor from a cartoonist who captures the essence of cats so well.



Wish List



- Prefabricated shed for storage (8'x10')
- Shelter quality stainless steel or fiberglass cages
- Laptop computer compatible with
Windows XP or Windows 7
- Laundry Soap (unscented), Dish Soap, Paper Towels
- Cat Food Dry and Canned
(prefer Innova, Evo, Holistic Select, or other
high quality)
- Litter: Corn clumping or Pine clumping or Pine pellets
- Printer Ink - black and color for HP OfficeJet K80
- Small microwave

Please call for drop – off arrangements
Smaller items may be dropped off at Lucas Ave Pet Supply