



## **FERAL CAT FOCUS INC. COMMUNITY CAT NEWS**

P.O. Box 404, East Aurora, NY 14052

1-888-902-9717 (toll free)

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

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**PROVIDING FERAL & FREE-ROAMING CATS WITH FUNDAMENTAL COMMUNITY SERVICES**

**DECEMBER 2018**

### **THIS HOLIDAY SEASON... REMEMBER THE CATS THAT ARE IN NEED**

*Not every cat has a warm, safe home.*

*Many cats are left to fend for themselves outdoors.*



During the holiday season, we give thanks for the comforts of a warm home, hearty food, a roof over our heads...but feral cats struggle throughout the year to find food, fresh water, safe shelter and to just survive.

Feral and free-roaming cats who only know the outdoor life shouldn't be forgotten. Saving one cat may not change the world, but it will change the world for that one cat.

Feral Cat FOCUS is committed to humanely reducing the feral and free-roaming cat population in Western New York through the use of Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return as fully understood, accepted and practiced in every Western New York community.

Feral Cat FOCUSs programs are entirely volunteer-run and supported solely by the financial support of the community. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and the dedicated work of our volunteers, we are working hard to make a difference in our community.

*This holiday season please remember Feral Cat FOCUS and consider supporting our work with a charitable donation to help make 2019 a better year for free-roaming cats.*

*Your gift will be used to help them live safer, healthier, longer lives.*

*You can mail a donation with the enclosed donation form or online at [www.feralcatfocus.org](http://www.feralcatfocus.org)*

**On Behalf of Everyone at Feral Cat FOCUS,  
We Wish You a Joyous Holiday Season and a Happy New Year.**

## **WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED**

In 2018, Feral Cat FOCUS continued to carry out our mission of reducing free-roaming cat overpopulation in Western New York through the use of Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return (TNVR). TNVR is a humane non-lethal method of controlling cat populations in which free-roaming cats are humanely trapped, evaluated, spayed or neutered, vaccinated against rabies and distemper, and returned to their outdoor homes.

It is often difficult and emotional work that we do. But as we close 2018 we know that the work will—and must—go on. These are just a few of our accomplishments in 2018.

- The TNVR project numbers are in! Feral Cat FOCUS with Operation PETS Spay/Neuter Clinic subsidized 2,155 spay/neuters of feral/free-roaming cats.
- Phone volunteers received 1,160 phone calls requesting information and guidance on TNVR.
- Feral Cat FOCUS was instrumental in 10 large-scale TNVR projects across Western New York (about 200 feral and free-roaming cats were trapped, spay/neutered and vaccinated).
- Our "Working Cat Program" placed 75 free-roaming cats into barns, stables, and other appropriate shelters.
- Feral Cat FOCUS provided Neuter-Vaccinate-Return Training program open to feral cat caregivers and the public.
- Purina Pet Food donated 24 pallets of cat food to Feral Cat FOCUS this year. We shared this donation to over 200 hundred grateful feral cat caregivers.
- SPCA Serving Erie County directed Feral Cat FOCUS to multiple cases at abandoned and dilapidated motels and barns. The cats were malnourished and many had serious medical needs. We removed all the cats and treated their medical needs (this was a major expense for us!). All cats are thriving in new homes and placements.
- Our feral kitten foster homes socialized 125 kittens. Once socialized, the kittens were transferred to rescue & adoption organizations to be placed for adoption.
- We were invited to make presentations to several municipalities and communities seeking humane and effective ways to manage feral and free-roaming cats through TNVR. This included the City of Batavia in Genesee County, Town of Tonawanda, and Rivermist (a gated community on the Buffalo waterfront).

***WE ARE GIVING A VOICE TO THE VOICELESS  
AND HELPING THE HELPLESS***

## **WINTER TNVR TRAPPING POLICY (Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return)**

Feral Cat FOCUS does not support winter TNVR in Western New York because our winters can be severe and temperatures can be in the teens (or below). We know other areas of the country support winter TNVR but their winters are not our winters with freezing temps and several feet of snow.

During winter you cannot safely trap and keep feral/free-roaming cats warm enough to heal properly after spay/neuter surgery. These cats are already struggling to stay alive we don't want to put one more obstacle in their way.

Think of it this way: A cat that just had surgery is put out in the freezing cold with an incision and a shaved tummy with no fur to protect her from the cold. She is exposed to the elements. She may not have a warm dry shelter. She may have to forge through snow to return to her colony. She has to find a food source in a snow storm. This would be cruel to do to a cat already struggling to survive a Western New York winter.

In the spring Feral Cat FOCUS will kick into high gear and begin spaying/neutering feral and free-roaming cats.

We normally start scheduling surgery appointments mid-late March (depending on weather).

Appointments are required. Never trap before you have an appointment!! You don't want to trap cats and then have nowhere to take them.

## **FERAL FOOD DONATION DAY**

In November Feral Cat FOCUS, along with the help of Second Chance Sheltering Network, got to play early Santa Claus to help feral cat caregivers. When we received a donation of cat food from Purina Pet Food, our volunteers rented a large truck and drove to Dunkirk in Chautauqua County to pick up 12 pallets of food. They then organized a distribution day for our registered TNVR colony caregivers. Caregivers arrived at their pre-registered times to load up with food for the feral cats in their care. We were able to share Purina's food donation with 120 grateful caregivers.



Thank you to Helen at Second Chance Sheltering Network, Purina, Operation Pets, and the dedicated Feral Cat Focus volunteers who stood out in the cold on food donation day to help distribute food to help free-roaming cats.



## **BUT THAT'S NOT ALL WE DID!!**

We saw a plea from Chance's Pet Food Pantry that they had no cat food to hand out. We were able to donate some of the food Purina donated to us to Chance's to help the people (and cats) in need in Buffalo.

### **UNSUBSCRIBE ME**

Please let us know if you no longer wish to receive our print newsletter because it will help us save money. It's easy to do. Just send opt-out email to [rose@feralcatfocus.org](mailto:rose@feralcatfocus.org).

### **BUFFALO COMMUNITY DAYS**

Feral Cat FOCUS volunteers Debbie Karcher and Sue Sellingsloh were busy this summer participating in community outreach events in the City of Buffalo. They set up information tables at the Buffalo Police Department Community Days on July 30 and August 30 and at a Community Day event on August 29 sponsored by the Stop the Violence Coalition. Talking to people and listening to their stories is a great way to get the Feral Cat FOCUS message out to the community. The need for feral cat services is great in many Buffalo neighborhoods so these outreach efforts by our volunteers really help make a difference.

Thanks to all of our  
**Volunteers**

Feral Cat FOCUS's programs are entirely volunteer-run. Without our volunteers, there would be no Feral Cat FOCUS. Thank you to each of you who have given your time so willingly, your compassion so unconditionally. Time and time again, you look past the hard work and delight in the very smallest accomplishments. With your help we can continue to protect and improve the lives of free-roaming cats.

*Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night keeps a Feral Cat FOCUS volunteer from helping some of the most vulnerable and voiceless members of our society.*

## **FOUR PAWS UP**



Kathy and Bob, a husband and wife team, are two of our major behind the scenes volunteers who greatly assist in keeping the wheels of spay/neuter turning.

On a quarterly basis Bob drives to Angelica Linens in Batavia and loads up his truck with donated nursing home pads and carts them back home. He and Kathy cut the pads so they become liners that precisely fit in the bottom of our TNVR traps.

Kathy and Bob have developed a system to move the work along quickly so that Bob can deliver about 50 liners a week to Operation Pets Spay/Neuter Clinic. Operation Pets uses the pads to provide each spayed/neutered feral cat with a clean, white, cushy liner in their trap post surgery.



Tom and Kathy dedicate their volunteer work to "TC", their deceased feral male kitty that was neutered when Feral Cat FOCUS was just starting out.

***Great job Kathy and Bob!!***

## **KITTENS, ANYONE?**

Feral Cat FOCUS is not a rescue organization. This is not what we do. Our mission is TNVR. However, sometimes in very specific cases, we have kittens. These are kittens born to a feral mom while she is in a humane trap. These are kittens we find alone in bushes or woodpiles during TNVR projects.

It has been a very busy year with kittens. In the spring we were called to help with two separate cases with pregnant cats. One case resulted in eight kittens and the other with 30! We have a very limited number of foster homes and they are reserved for kitten emergencies when there is absolutely no one to care for the kittens.

These kittens require lots of time, patience, and love to socialize them so they can be adopted. It can also be very expensive as kittens often come to us with medical needs. This year several kittens had eye infections. Two had to have eye surgery. There was one little guy who developed severe diarrhea and needed to be hospitalized for a few days to give him a chance to survive. He is now recovering in one of our foster homes and is doing well. These are just a few of our cases.

We held our very first kitten shower in May to help these precious babes find homes. Eight of our kittens were adopted through this event. In July we were invited to an event at Praxair where an additional four kittens were adopted! Since that time we have taken in an additional 80 kittens, many of whom have been sick.

**WANTED: HUMAN TO LOVE**  
***Adopt Yours Today***



Call us at 1-888-902-9717 (toll free) if you are interested in adopting one of our sweet kittens.

# **HELPING NEIGHBORHOOD CATS - INTERVIEW WITH A CAREGIVER**

By Sue S./FCF Volunteer

I turned onto a lovely, tree-lined street on Buffalo's West Side and parked in front of a charming house. Marlene met me at the curb and invited me into her home. I have known Marlene since she began bringing cats to get spay/neutered through Feral Cat FOCUS. She started in the summer of 2016 and since that time she has done 18 cats. Her neighbor Susan and her son Sean have socialized over 20 kittens and sent them along to be adopted. This accomplishment in less than two years is amazing so I wanted to find out how she did it.



**FCF/Sue:** Marlene, tell me what the situation was like on this street before you started TNVR trapping?

**MARLENE:** This street was a mess. There were at least 20 adult cats and lots of kittens running around. The kittens and some older cats would get run over by cars. I was feeding some and a few neighbors were too. But the numbers kept growing and it was all getting too much. The man across the street told me about Feral Cat FOCUS. I told my neighbor Susan, "We have to do something to help these cats." And so we just started. That was in 2016.

**FCF/Sue:** What problems did you run into when you started and how did you solve them?

**MARLENE:** At first learning how to do the trapping was hard. But I soon caught on and it all started working out. In 2016 the cost was \$25 per cat (subsidized by Feral Cat FOCUS and Operation PETS). In 2017 the City of Buffalo had a grant and the cost was free for Buffalo feral cats. That really helped me a lot. We

solved problems by working together. It was also great that volunteers from Feral Cat FOCUS were so helpful. They really helped a lot because I knew I could call with any questions.

**FCF/Sue:** How did you find people to help you and what did they do?

**MARLENE:** I talk to people a lot so gradually people saw what I was trying to do and offered to help. My neighbor Susan was with me and when we found kittens, she took them in and socialized them. The man across the street had a garage in back for feeding and shelter. Other people brought me food or gave me money. It soon became a neighborhood project and there was a ripple effect onto other streets.

**FCF/Sue:** Were there any people who objected to your work or caused problems?

**MARLENE:** There were a few who would say, "These are your cats. Why don't you keep them in your yard?" I would tell them, "These are not my cats. They are our neighborhood cats. They are community cats. They are helping our neighborhood by keeping the mice and rat populations down. Now we are helping them."

**FCF/Sue:** What is the situation now?

**MARLENE:** We have about 12 cats now. All of them are fixed and there are no kittens. The cats go around the neighborhood between the houses. We have shelters for them and a couple of feeding stations in different yards. We sometimes get new cats that we try to get trapped and fixed as soon as possible.

**FCF/Sue:** Finally, what motivated you to take on this huge challenge and organize your neighbors to help all these cats?

**MARLENE:** It wasn't just me. A lot of the neighbors helped. My neighbor Susan and her son Sean have done so much with the kittens. I figure the cats have nowhere else to go. They are looking for love—just love from a distance. So we are giving them love and the cats know they are loved.

***Thank you Marlene for all your hard work.  
Great job!***

## **FERAL CATS CAN ALWAYS USE EXTRA SHELTER IN WINTER**

You may be wondering how free-roaming cats can survive in cold weather. Even though these cats are at home outside, they can always use some extra help in cold or severe weather. Feral cats typically build a protective coat for winter, but the effectiveness of their fur as insulation is greatly reduced if it becomes wet or frozen and can often times result in hypothermia. They can get frostbite on their ears, nose and paws. They can die from exposure if protection is not available.

It's important to provide enough shelters for everyone in your colony. Some cats like to mingle; some prefer to have their own space.

A shelter doesn't need to be expensive or elaborate. There are many types of shelters that you can build or buy pre-made.

### **BEDDING**

Shelter will be warmer and cozier if you put loose insulating material inside. The material must be dry and loose, so that the cats can burrow into and underneath it.

### **STRAW – NOT HAY – FOR SHELTERS**

Straw and hay may look similar, but they're very different when it comes to insulating shelters.

Hay is used for animal feed—it draws and holds moisture, which you don't want in your cat shelter. Hay, because it's moist, can become moldy and some cats are reportedly allergic to hay and can develop nasal sores.

Straw, the dry leftover stalks from harvested crops, repels moisture, making it ideal for keeping cats and other animals warm and comfy all winter long. Straw resists the wet and keeps a shelter warm, and is the best choice for insulation and bedding. Straw is less prone to mold or rot, and does not carry risk of an allergic reaction by the cats.

***More information on winter shelters can be found at [www.feralcatfocus.org](http://www.feralcatfocus.org).***

### **OTHER BEDDING OPTIONS**

Shredded newspaper will also work.

**DO NOT USE** folded newspaper, blankets, towels, carpeting, fake sheepskin, or any material that holds moisture. Cats can only lie on top of these materials so they actually draw out body heat and defeat the purpose by making the cat colder.

Some caregivers use Mylar thermal safety blankets as bedding. Mylar is a product that retains body heat. Mylar blankets are inexpensive and can be purchased at places like Walmart or outdoor stores.

You can use hardwood shavings (not cedar or pine) but softwood shavings are not suitable due to possible toxicity.

### **SIZE**

For shelters, size matters. A space just big enough for three to five cats is best.

Cats give each other body warmth and will huddle together in the cold. Keep shelters small for only a few cats. The shelter must trap cats' body heat to warm the shelter's interior. If shelter is too large, it will be difficult for the cat's body heat to keep the space warm.

A good shelter size is at least 2' x 3' and at least 18" high. Larger shelters are not necessarily better, since heat disperses quickly, leaving the inside as cold as the outside.

### **MAINTENANCE**

Shelters should be checked regularly to ensure their optimum quality and function. You must change insulating materials such as straw regularly to ensure it and cats stay dry.

Don't forget to shovel shelters so cats don't get trapped inside. Keep entrances clear and shovel an exit for cats.

## **FOOD & WATER - WINTER WEATHER TIPS**

### **FEEDING STATION**

A feeding station establishes a specific area where cats know to come for food, so they spend as little time exposed to the elements as possible. To protect food and water from the elements, place them in a covered shelter (feeding station). There are many types of feeding stations (they can be purchased pre-made or you can build your own). One of Feral Cat FOCUS's favorite feeding stations is a Rubbermaid storage bin.



It's important that one side of the feeding station is open because only a small opening or doorway could allow one cat to stay or sleep in there and keep the other cats out.

Keep the feeding location neat and clean, for the health of cats and for community relations. Place the food dishes in one place to facilitate cleanup and to provide a tidy appearance. Remove the feeding dishes within 30 minutes.

### **FOOD**

When temperatures drop, your colony needs extra calories to maintain energy levels. Provide extra food during the winter. The amount of food a cat needs depends on size, weather, and what other food sources are available. Cats vary in their needs, so some will eat considerably more food, others less. In colder weather, make sure to feed larger portions for an extra caloric boost.

Observe the cats and the time it takes for the food to be eaten. If the cats eat all of the food in 15 minutes or less put out a bit more.

Feed cats on a regular schedule. They will know when to come around, and both food and cats will spend less time exposed to weather.

If you can keep it from freezing, wet food is easier to digest, so cats save more energy for keeping warm. Consider warming canned food prior to arriving at the site and using insulated bags to keep the food warm during travel. Since wet food is quicker to freeze, make sure you put out dry food too, or if you think the food is very likely to freeze, feed only dry food.

### **WATER**

Cats need water during wintertime, especially when dry food is the predominant food.

The type of bowl can make a difference. The best bowls are deep, insulated and have small openings compared to their volume. Use one made of thick plastic because it takes water longer to freeze. Use double-layered bowls—they have an insulated air layer between the surfaces. Black or dark colored bowls absorb solar radiation better.

Delay freezing by placing water bowl inside a small Styrofoam cooler. Cut a doorway in one of the short ends, leaving the bottom of the opening a few inches off the ground to prevent flooding. Place the bowl inside and close the lid. Weigh down with a brick or heavy rock. Use only a small container, one large enough to hold the water bowl and no more than one cat. You don't want cats hanging around inside using the water station as a shelter.

Position the bowl so it's protected from the wind and, if possible, exposed to the sun. Change water bowls twice daily to keep water from freezing. Refill with hot or warm water.

Add a pinch of sugar to the water to keep it from freezing as quickly and to provide an energy boost for the cats.

Purchase a microwavable heating pad to use under the water bowl.

***More winter weather tips n can be found  
at [www.feralcatfocus.org](http://www.feralcatfocus.org).***



## **FERAL CAT FOCUS** **WINTER SHELTER PROJECT**

Every year Feral Cat FOCUS volunteers make winter shelters to help free-roaming cats survive our extreme winters. A group of volunteers have been busy making shelters. The shelter's outer bin is a 30 gallon tote and the inner bin is an 18 gallon Styrofoam container. The shelters are insulated in between the two containers with straw. Volunteers made 112 shelters available for purchase at a low cost. Call us at 1-888-902-9717 (toll free) to see if there are shelters still available. We have a pick-up point in the Northtowns and one in the Southtowns.



## **SHOUT OUT TO THE** **PRAXAIR SHELTER BUILDERS**

Feral Cat FOCUS volunteer Marla and her co-workers at Praxair, Susan and Ashley, came up with the idea of making feral cat shelters right at Praxair. Marla, Susan, and Ashley created a list of Praxair co-workers who are also passionate about animals and invited them to come and join them build shelters. Other employees who helped were Jill, Morgan, Rachel, Kristin, Melody, Jenn and Lyndsey.

The Praxair Shelter Builders scheduled a day to make the shelters at the Praxair Innovation Center in Tonawanda. Praxair donated money towards materials to build the shelters and the rest of the money came from donations from the employees who helped make the shelters. The Praxair Shelter Builders met on lunch break and they made 20 shelters!!!



But that's not the end of the story. Marla and her co-workers asked a vendor if they would be interested in donating bins to make more shelters. The vendor was willing. The good news is that additional bins have arrived and the Praxair Shelter Builders are making 20 more winter shelters. They are also generously donating the small Styrofoam containers and straw used inside the bins for insulation.

### **A FERAL SALUTE TO THE PRAXAIR SHELTER BUILDERS**

Winter shelter is critical for free-roaming cats living in frigid climates. This gift of shelters makes it possible for more cats and kittens to have a warm place to sleep this winter.



## **SAVING FERAL CATS: ONE VOLUNTEER'S STORY**

By Roxanne/FCF Humane Trapper

This was an emergency case in Buffalo. One of our phone volunteers texted me asking how busy I was. She had just taken a call from a lady who said a momma and her four kittens were in danger and needed help. This was during a bad rainstorm, and the caller made it sound like the kittens were too small to be moved to safety if the bushes and run-down home they were living in became flooded. I got the address and was on the scene in less than 24 hours.

I was hoping to be able to grab the kittens and put them in the carrier and use them to lure/trap momma in the same trap. Once I saw the dilapidated condition of the abandoned house the cats were living in, I knew I had to get them out immediately. The kittens were about four weeks old. They were running, playing and sleeping in exposed of insulation. They were covered in insulation – one was the pink, fiberglass type and the other was the white, spray foam insulation. This was a toxic and dangerous environment for mom and kittens.

I could clearly see the kittens' eyes were bad. A few of them had conjunctivitis. Mom and kittens were starving. I was able to trap one kitten immediately. Once she was trapped, I transferred her to the cat carrier and reset the trap and immediately caught momma. After a few hours, I was able to catch the remaining three kittens.

When I had the mom and all the kittens I contacted our volunteer kitten Foster Home Coordinator. She took the kittens and socialized them so they could be transferred to a rescue & adoption organization for adoption. The mom cat turned out to be friendly and was adopted by the Good Samaritan who notified us of this emergency.



**MOM AND KITTENS**



**KITTENS SLEEPING  
IN ABANDONED HOUSE**



**TRAPPING IN PROGRESS**



**KITTEN IN TRAP**

## OTHER WAYS TO GIVE

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Feral Cat FOCUS Gets Money.**



Shop at more than 1800+ online stores you already know and a percentage of what you spend is donated to Feral Cat FOCUS. Donations range from .5% to over 20% varying by store.

The stores pay for it all. You never pay more. There are no added costs, obligations, or hidden fees. You don't need to enter any codes, notify the store, or iGive. It's all automatic! iGive takes care of the details, including sending the money you've helped raise directly to Feral Cat FOCUS. Your iGive account is totally free and private.

**For more information or to join visit  
[www.iwww.igive.com/feralcatfocus](http://www.iwww.igive.com/feralcatfocus)**

### **AmazonSmile**

**You Shop.  
Feral Cat FOCUS Gets Money.**



AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way for you to support Feral Cat FOCUS every time you shop, at no cost to you. Millions of products are eligible for donations. When you shop at smile.amazon.com, you'll find the same low prices, selection and convenient shopping experience as Amazon.com, with the added bonus that Amazon donates 0.5% of the purchase price of your purchase price to Feral Cat FOCUS.

**For more information or to join visit  
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# FERAL CAT FOCUS

PROVIDING FERAL CATS WITH FUNDAMENTAL COMMUNITY SERVICES



## THIS HOLIDAY SEASON...REMEMBER THE CATS THAT ARE IN NEED



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Many cats are left to fend for themselves outdoors.

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Feral and free-roaming cats who only know the outdoor life shouldn't be forgotten.

Please help us make 2018 a better year for the feral and free-roaming cats of Western New York.

Saving one cat may not change the world, but it certainly will change the world for that one animal. It is only through the generosity of people like you that Feral Cat FOCUS programs can continue. As the holidays approach, we ask that you remember Feral Cat FOCUS and consider supporting our work with a charitable donation.

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Please mail your donation to the address below or you can make an online credit card donation at [www.feralcatfocus.org](http://www.feralcatfocus.org).

**YES**, I would like to donate \$\_\_\_\_\_ to Feral Cat FOCUS

\_\_\_\_\_ No Acknowledgement Needed

\_\_\_\_\_ I Would Like an Acknowledgement

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### FERAL CAT FOCUS

P.O. Box 404, East Aurora, NY 14052  
1-888-902-9717 ~ [www.feralcatfocus.org](http://www.feralcatfocus.org)

Feral Cat FOCUS is a registered nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code. Contributions are tax-deductible as allowed by law. A copy of our latest annual report may be requested from us or from the Office of Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271.