

The Big Fix Homeless Cat Project HOLIDAY & WINTER 2014

(830) 896-6053 bigfixcats.com

We are a 501c3 and our work is primarily sustained from tax deductible donations. Call us at (830) 896-6053 for more information, to adopt a cat, or to become a volunteer. Do you have a skill that can help cats? We need volunteers for: grant writing, trappers, telephone counselors, foster care, transportation for vet visits, and more. Your help is vitally important to our success and we heartily thank you for your support!



DON'T SHOP – ADOPT!



The Big Fix will regrettably be closing our homeless, no-kill cat shelter by the end of March 2015. We currently have 12 lovely cats that would have been put down had we not taken them into our shelter. Please consider adopting one of these wonderful cats; they are tame, spayed/neutered, up-to-date on their vaccinations, and in need of loving homes. Maybe you know an older person who would enjoy the companionship of a calm, loving cat.

To view pictures (and descriptions) of our adoptable cats in need of loving homes please visit:

<http://www.BigFixCats.com>

Many thanks to the Kerr County Roller Derby (specifically Kathryn Dover, Leslie Jones, and Coleen Blackstock) for their generous support in helping us raise money at their “Rumble in the Concrete Jungle” held on November 1st. We had a great time and enjoyed the creative team names!

A folktale about the Christian nativity tells of how there was a cat in the stable giving birth to a litter of kittens at the same time that Mary was giving birth to Jesus. When the newborn baby would not sleep, Mary asked all the animals in the stable if they could help, but none was able to get the child to sleep. Finally, a little gray tabby kitten climbed into the manger and curled up next to Jesus, who fell asleep to the gentle sound of its purring. Mary rewarded the kitten by allowing all tabby cats from that time forth to wear a letter “M” (for Madonna) on their foreheads. This charming tale has influenced many artists, most notably Leonardo da Vinci, who included a cat and kittens as a part of many of his studies of the Madonna child. Does your tabby cat have a “M” on its forehead?

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Freeman-Fritz Animal Clinic & Shelter. Without their help and support we would not have a program for spaying and neutering, and they help us with veterinary treatment for our shelter cats and local feral cat communities. We would also like to mention that Freeman-Fritz is working toward a much needed expansion and donations are welcome.

Many of our caretakers are struggling to feed all of their feral cats and frequently ask us if we are able to help out with cat food. We mostly depend on donations of cat food made to our bin at Pet Supplies Plus but these are sporadic so many of our volunteers provide the caretakers with food at their own expense. We have colonies in our area that range from 5 to 50 cats that can use additional help with food. When you go to **Pets Supplies Plus** to purchase food please consider buying an extra bag or more and putting it in our bin near the cash registers. If you buy food elsewhere and would like to donate, you may call our helpline (830) 896-6053. Your generosity is greatly appreciated!

Christmas Cat: by Jay & Debbie Yarbrough

We had a Christmas miracle once. It changed our lives.

It was a very cold November night; below freezing. We'd gone out to eat at a cozy little steak house and stopped at the Kerrville Courthouse to gawk at the elaborate Christmas decorations. As we stood arm in arm, connected at the hip for warmth, something told us to turn around. Perched at the mouth of the storm drain, right there at the intersection of Main and Earl Garrett, was a precious little kitten. Trembling from the cold, her long blonde hair bristling in the cruel breeze, her big golden eyes clearly spoke, "Please people, be nice. I'm SO hungry!" Armed with leftover Rib Eye, we inched forward; but when we were within about six feet she lost her nerve and dived down the drain.

Disappointed, we laid the meat on the ground and backed away. Immediately she popped back up and ate voraciously. The white Christmas lights made her glow like a tiny angel, and we wanted so badly to hold her close. It became our mission to bring Courthouse Cat out of the cold.

Night after night we tried, with the same frustrating result: once within a few feet little blonde kitty would dive out of reach and wait for us to retreat. Telling coworkers our story, someone enlightened Debbie that there was a crazy lady in town who trapped homeless cats for people and got them vet care. A little research, namely a call to the Humane Society, revealed the crazy lady's name. Pam Warner had hatched the fledgling program Big Fix. A few days later Pam met us in the Courthouse parking lot; a few minutes later the little blonde kitty was snug in a trap. She never looked back.

After getting her spayed and vaccinated, we turned our spare bedroom over to Courthouse Cat, shortened to CC. She was spooky, but wanted to belong, and with patience we won her over. We didn't know it then, but taming a feral cat as old as six months is extremely rare. If we hadn't been so naïve we never would have tried, but we're so glad we did. Nearly ten years later we still love our Christmas Cat, CC, with all our hearts. We hold her tight, remember that cold November night, and marvel at how she changed our lives.

You see, Pam pointed out to us that there were other homeless cats huddled in that storm drain as cars and trucks pounded relentlessly by. She asked us to try to trap them and get them fixed so other kittens wouldn't be born in the cold and damp, likely to be squashed in the street in their quest for food. We did, and ten years later we still trap homeless cats weekly, all over the county. The people we've met along the way, not only the compassionate fellow volunteers, but also the concerned people looking for help who are delighted when they learn about Big Fix, have enriched our lives in more ways than we can begin to count. We have scores of stories in our hearts of cats and people helped.

And you could too. Think about it. Maybe a miracle awaits you.

Before starting your car, tap the hood a couple of times, and check between the tires—cats will sometimes crawl into the engine or hide underneath the car for warmth.

HASTING WE LOVE YOU!! We have been privileged to have Hastings as our host during our Saturday cat adoptions (the last one was November 22nd!).



HOW TO CARE FOR FERAL CATS OR OUTDOOR CATS OVER THE WINTER MONTHS

While cats do have thick winter coats to help protect them from winter weather, they still need warm, dry, well-insulated and appropriate-sized shelters. There are many plans and ideas for easy to build shelters online. An excellent place to look is: <http://www.alleycat.org/ShelterGallery>

What NOT to put in your outdoor-cat shelter. Don't use blankets, towels, or folded newspaper; they absorb body heat and chill the cats who are lying on them. Forego hay, too, which may irritate noses and cause allergic reactions.

Straw is the best material to put in a shelter because it allows cats to burrow. Pillowcases loosely stuffed with packing peanuts and shredded newspaper also work. Keep things clean: Replace straw and newspaper if moist or dirty, and wash and re-stuff pillowcases as needed.

Water bowls: Keep outdoor water bowls from freezing by keeping the water in the sun and using a dark-colored, thick plastic water container that's deep and wide which is better-insulated than a thin plastic or a ceramic container. A solar-heated water bowl can prevent or delay water from freezing. Change water bowls twice daily to keep water from freezing. If there is a water source like a spigot, run the water slightly, since it won't freeze as quickly as still water. DO NOT put bowls of water inside a shelter. Water is easily spilled, and a wet shelter will feel more like a refrigerator than a warm haven.

Food bowls: Feed the cats on a regular schedule. The cats will know when to come around, and both the food and the cats will spend less time in cold/wet weather. Feed dry food only – it's less likely to freeze. Make sure to feed larger portions than you usually do because they need to burn extra calories in cold weather. Approximately 2/3rds cup per cat would be an average amount for winter. 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. Remember to keep feeding areas clean, and free of empty cat food cans and bags/packages or any other type of trash.

Bring food bowls in at night so it doesn't attract other animals that would be dangerous to the cats.

Famous cat movies: Bell, Book and Candle (1958) cat's name - Pyewacket; The Incredible Journey (Disney 1963) Siamese named Tao; That Darn Cat (Disney 1965 & 1997) cat's name - DC; The Aristocats (Disney 1970) cats Duchess & O'Malley; Cats & Dogs (2001) cat's name – Mr. Tinkles.

Cats are smarter than dogs. You can't get eight cats to pull a sled through the snow.

We owe a big Thanks to: **Pet Supplies Plus.** They are the angels who kindly let us put up a box for cat food gifts, a bulletin board, and a donation box.

Did you know? A group of kittens is called a "kindle" and a group of cats is called a "Clowder".



How well do you sleep? A healthy adult cat sleeps up to 16 hours a day. So a three year-old cat has only been awake for one year of its life! Outside of mating season, a lion in the wild will sleep 20 hours a day, walk two hours a day, and eat one hour a day. They mainly hunt at night.

The Purrfect Gift...For the person who has everything! A gift to *The Big Fix* is a wonderful way to celebrate your shared love of cats and to make the world a better place for them. We will send a card notifying your honoree of your thoughtful gift in their name. Your tax deductible gift of as little as \$10 will allow us to continue our mission. Your donation goes directly to humane trapping, neutering, and cat care. Simply fill out the form below and enclose it with your donation.

Checks should be made out to: *The Big Fix* and mailed to:

Homeless Cat Project of the Texas Hill Country
P.O. Box 294003, Kerrville TX 78029

Name of Honoree:

Occasion (Christmas, birthday):

Send my gift card to:

(Recipient's mailing address):

Donor's Name:

Donor's Phone #:

