



Johnson County Humane Society
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Summer 2014 Newsletter

A Girl and Her Cat: A Love Story

by JCHS Board Member, Cynthia Holcomb

The throwaway girl and the throwaway cat met on my deck in the spring of 2001. The girl is Cynthia, my daughter, whom I adopted later that year when she was 8. She had moved into my home after being in foster care most of her life. She had been through two disrupted adoptions, meaning she had lived with two families who were supposed to adopt her, but decided not to because they couldn't or wouldn't deal with the challenging behaviors related to her autism. During this time she had been separated from an older brother she dearly loved and a foster mom and friends she was close to.

The cat was Howie, a two year old handsome gray and white cat who had been thrown out by the neighbors down the street because he peed in the house. He wasn't neutered, and he was probably marking his territory. A few neighbors and I fed Howie, but he had no home and had been living on the streets for two years.

When Cynthia moved in with me, I had four cats. She was excited to have pets, but my cats wanted nothing to do with this loud talking, tantrum throwing girl who had moved into their quiet peaceful home. Even though Cynthia was glad to finally have a forever home, she was a sad girl dealing with a lot of significant losses. I knew how cats can make a person feel better and bring comfort, but my cats stayed far away from Cynthia.

When Cynthia was sad, she would sometimes go on my deck for a good cry, and that's where she met Howie as he was making his rounds of the neighborhood. They became fast friends, and it's not an exaggeration to say that they saved each other's lives. They spent a lot of time together on my deck that summer. Cynthia finally had a cat to comfort and love her, and Howie had his very own person who loved him dearly.

As fall came, and it started to get colder, I was worried about Howie facing his third winter outside. Cynthia was begging to adopt him, and Howie tried his hardest to get in

the house when we opened the door. How could I resist this girl and this cat? I made an appointment with our veterinarian and took Howie to be fixed up before he moved in with us. He was treated for fleas, worms, and an upper respiratory infection, and of course, he was neutered.

Even though I was the main cat caretaker, Howie knew his place was with Cynthia. Howie's move into our home went very smoothly (he always used the litter box). He immediately made himself at home, and my other cats accepted him with no problems. Howie did, however, insist on going outside every day to continue to patrol his neighborhood. It didn't take long for me to realize that this cat that the neighbors had thrown out like a piece of trash was no ordinary cat. He came whenever Cynthia called his name. If he wouldn't come for me, I had Cynthia call him, and he would come running. He went to bed every night with Cynthia, and when she was feeling sad, she would call him and he would come to comfort her. I let him out of her room at night when I went to bed, and every morning when he heard her alarm go off, whether he was inside or outside, he would go running to her room to wish her a good morning. I don't think I've ever seen such a strong bond between a person and her cat.

Howie also had a special way with other cats. When Cynthia talked me into adopting a puppy, Fluffy, Howie was not happy with this wild, hyper, barking puppy who liked to chase cats, but it didn't take long for Howie to get control over the situation. If Fluffy chased a cat (any cat), Howie would attack him. I can't count the times Fluffy came running to me to save him from Howie. With Howie's help, Fluffy was pretty well controlled when it came to chasing cats. When we adopted Grace, a shy kitty who was scared in her new home, all of our cats except Howie did the usual hissing and swatting when she arrived. Howie, on the other hand, did what he could to help her feel comfortable. She stayed under my bed for days, and Howie was right by her side, sitting quietly, keeping her company and being a good friend to her. When Grace was brave enough to come out from under the bed, and Fluffy discovered there was a new cat in the house, he went berserk. He barked wildly at her and chased her every time he saw her, scaring her so much that she was afraid to come out of my room. Cynthia and I were having a hard time stopping him from acting like this. When Howie saw what was going on, he attacked Fluffy every time he chased or barked at Grace. Sometimes I would notice Fluffy looking around for Grace, and Howie noticed too and attacked him just for looking for her. When our cat Tyger somehow got outside, and I didn't know where he was, I found Howie sitting by the tall grass behind my house, and I knew I would find Tyger there. He stayed there until Tyger was safely back inside. Howie didn't just look out for our cats, he also helped homeless cats in the neighborhood. More than once I saw him leading hungry homeless cats to the food bowl I left out for them. People who met Howie for

the first time would tell me “there’s something special about that cat.” I couldn’t imagine life without Howie, and I have always regretted that I didn’t adopt him sooner.



Howie

I thought of Howie as being invincible. So it was with disbelief that I found Howie gasping for breath and crying one early August morning in 2009. He had seemed fine the night before when I gave him his good night pat. I woke up Cynthia, and we rushed him to the emergency vet. As I suspected, they could do nothing to save his life. He had heart failure, and his lungs were full of fluid. We said our good-byes, and we stayed with him while he was euthanized. We were shocked and heartbroken. We couldn’t believe this wonderful cat who was such a big part of our lives was suddenly gone. We were so sad that he had such a difficult ending to his life. I was worried about how Cynthia would manage without her best friend. She was often sad and cried for her friend. She slept with his ashes by her pillow. I didn’t know what to do to help her. I knew that Howie was irreplaceable and getting her another cat did not seem to be the solution. We kept on trying to live our lives as best as we could as we grieved for Howie.

We continued to volunteer at Witty Kitties, a shelter for cats with special needs, every week. Sometime that fall, a kitten was rescued from a hoarding situation and brought to Witty Kitties. He was probably hours from death, but Dr. Jennifer Doll and the great volunteers at Witty Kitties saved his life. He was one sad looking kitten. Cynthia continued to grieve for Howie, and she was so sad all the time. When Dr. Doll sent a plea to the Witty Kitties volunteers for someone to please adopt this kitten, I asked Cynthia if she wanted him. I reasoned that she had never had a kitten before and every girl should have a kitten at least once in her life. Plus, how can a person be sad when there is a kitten the house? We brought him home on Halloween. He was still recovering. He was bony, his fur was full of lice eggs (despite several baths), he had diarrhea, runny eyes, and a snotty nose. Cynthia named him Lucky, and her love affair with this scraggly kitten began.

We quickly discovered that he was no ordinary kitten.

ADOPTABLES

Along with our JCHS adoptable cats, we have several cats (and even a dog!) advertised through our Owner/Rescuer Re-Home Service. Check them out www.johnsoncountyhumane.org

Live, Let Live, & Learn—If you happen to find young kittens (or other baby animals) without their mom, please think things through before you act. Cat bottle babies have very special needs (food, temperature, excretory, etc.) and require expert care. It’s easy to shift into “helping mode.” But mom cats do kitten care best! Unless you are sure mom isn’t coming back, be prepared to quietly observe for a while. Human intervention is not always what’s best for the animal! To paraphrase Antoine de Sainte-Éxupéry—you become responsible for those you rescue.

SPAY NEUTER NEWS

This has been an active year for JCHS and spay/neuter. With the help of local veterinarians and Iowa Humane Alliance, the Florence Unash Neuter Program (administered by JCHS) has so far paid for spay/neuter of 50 female cats, 47 male cats, 10 female dogs, and 9 male dogs. This number probably could be doubled if not for the geographic restriction of this fund, which targets the needs of only Johnson County residents. In addition to the Unash fund, Oxford Vet Center hosted another spay day this spring, where JCHS directly subsidized spay/neuter of 15 female cats and 8 males cats. And to help address needs of those outside our county, JCHS has paid for or helped subsidize spay/neuter of 24 female cats, 14 male cats, 1 male dog, and 1 male rabbit through our Olish Memorial Fund at Iowa Humane Alliance Regional Spay/Neuter Clinic in Cedar Rapids. Also through our friends at IHA, JCHS has paid for additional veterinary services such as vaccinations, antibiotics, and flea treatment to 29 female cats, 26 male cats, 3 female dogs, and 1 male dog. We have also worked with local vets on some urgent care needs of community pets when we have had funding available to do so. We’re particularly happy that we are on track to have a really banner year with spay/neuter. JCHS firmly believes that we can improve not only the lives of individual animals and their human families, but our community at large through spay/neuter of companion animals.

Johnson County residents who think they may qualify for financial assistance to spay/neuter their pets, or who are managing colony cats, can download an application through the JCHS website. On the front page, click on “assistance” under the photos of our featured adoptables, scroll down to “You May Qualify for Spay/Neuter Financial Assistance,” and “Download” the form. Clients may also contact JCHS through our e-mail, or if you are planning to take your animals to the IHA clinic, contact IHA directly and we’ll work with them.

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Iowa Humane Alliance 319-363-1225

Special Kitty, Special Rescue: how JCHS helped save a remarkable FIV+ cat

Guest Column by Michelle M. McIllece



He was a goofy-looking orange cat who had made our neighborhood his home in recent months, and he was already anesthetized when the test results came back. His treating veterinarian interrupted me at work. "What do you want us to do with him? He has a virus. He's not adoptable," she explained.

Was she saying what I thought she was saying? She wanted me to make a life-and-death decision, on the spot, as he lay unconscious, ready for his neuter surgery.

I knew little about FIV but I did know that that I wasn't going to let anyone end his life, not now, not when it was just getting started. I was his hero, having snatched him from the streets, and with the help of the Johnson County Humane Society, arranged for him to be vetted and then made available for adoption.

"Well, don't KILL him!" I spluttered into the phone. "Neuter him," I directed. "I'll figure it out."

We already had cats at our home, and I wasn't certain it was safe to bring in a kitty with FIV. Witty Kitties, a special-needs shelter in Solon, agreed to house him, as long as we gave him a place to live until a space opened up. So the Orange Cat came to live in our upstairs as he awaited a more permanent home at Witty Kitties.

During this time, we consulted with staff and volunteers both there and with JCHS. We learned that FIV is not an automatic death sentence and that it is not unsafe to have him around our other cats, as long as there isn't any deep biting going on. We weren't worried about that - the Orange Cat was missing most of his teeth, and we were learning that he was possibly the most non-aggressive cat in the history of the world.

A few weeks later, as fall faded into winter, Witty Kitties finally had an opening for him. We scheduled his moving day for the first Saturday in December, but those plans were thwarted by a nasty ice storm. So we rescheduled for the following Saturday - and Mother Nature rescheduled as well, sending another bad ice storm to Eastern Iowa. This happened two more times; every time we had an appointment to move Orange Cat to Witty

Kitties, a horrible winter storm hit. After four tries, we gave up. We were falling in love with him, he was getting along great with our other pets, we learned that FIV is very manageable, and we figured out that it was very, very clear that he was meant to be ours anyway.

He's been with us for almost 7 years now. We tried to name him Reggie but it just didn't fit - he already responded to Orange Cat (originally a descriptor, not a name) and that doofy name fit him just right. He's sweet, he's cuddly, he's laid back, and he's been healthy. Both JCHS and Witty Kitties have continued to be resources for us as we've had an occasional question or concern relating to his FIV. Without them, we wouldn't have him - and we would have missed out on the opportunity to save, spoil, and love a *very* special cat!

Animal Relief Foundation Trust Grant

Johnson County Humane Society recently received \$2,000 from The Animal Relief Foundation Trust. This trust was established by Ms. Addie Meek, to provide funds to organizations who seek the humane treatment of animals. Partnering with IHA, JCHS will use the grant in a cat spay/neuter project, targeting mobile home parks in Johnson and Linn counties, and beyond. JCHS and IHA will work together to advertise the project, and all surgeries will be performed at IHA. Anyone who would like to contribute to this specific campaign to make the grant go further, should contact either JCHS or IHA. The number of owned and colony cats in mobile home parks is staggering and the most humane and cost effective way to reduce their numbers in the long run is through spay/neuter. Watch for future information on the details of the project through the IHA and JCHS Facebook pages and other forms of social media. This project will continue until the funds are near depletion, at which time any remainder will go into the Olish Memorial funding line maintained by JCHS at the IHA Clinic. The Olish Memorial helps subsidize spay/neuter, vaccinations, flea treatment, antibiotics, and other veterinary needs of companion animals.

Report on North Liberty Garage Sale

We had a very successful sale held during North Liberty's annual city-wide garage sales in June. We raised over \$600 selling donated pet (and human) items! Special thanks go to Ardith and Kevin Stoner of North Liberty for providing us with yard space, tables, and even some breakfast goodies for the volunteers! Thank you to JCHS Board members and volunteers for helping out with this event, and thanks of course to those of you who stopped by and bought something you just couldn't live without. If you have yard space and would like to host a sale for us this fall, we'd love for you to get in contact with us. Mail us at jchs@johnsoncountyhumane.org.



Memorials and Special Donations

For the first half of 2014....

Memorials in honor of Jim Taylor from Ken & Denise Welsch, Harold & Sandra Weinard, Dr. Greg & Mary Maxwell, Mary Kinney, Carol Code, Mary Stallings.

Memorials in honor of Tommy Schaffnit from James & Lynne Brayton, Sue Thompson, Cherie Summerville, Lilann Brewton, June Sarama, Kristine Stewart.

In memory of Jay Stein, donation from the Vannis.

Alice Lyle, donation in memory of Dr. Kim William Lyle.

In memory of Frank Reinig, donation from Jan Olive Full.

Peg Bicker, in memory of Tom and Viv.

Lisa Pooley, Kathy Magarrell, and Kristin Johnson, in memory of Teresa Kopel and Tom Smith's friend Jolie.

Sue Pearson, in memory of "America," cat friend of Diane McBrien and Bob Bacon.

Susanne Humphreys, in memory Amos, "the perfect gentleman".

Amy Holcomb, in memory of Felicia.

Amy McBeth, donation in memory of Fred, a great character of a cat, and acknowledging Goldie, the lost boy.

Pat Emmert, in honor of Charlie Lasansky, Rory Lasansky, and Heath Foell.

Lois Lowenberg, donation targeted toward JCHS naming rights at new ICAC building. Thanks, Lois!

Melvin & Diane Sunshine, donation toward JCHS naming rights at new ICAC building. Thank you, Mel & Diane!

Lots of donations in honor of Heidi Du's birthday!

We'd also like to thank several local businesses who agree to let us keep donation jars on their counters: Animal Kingdom Veterinary, North Liberty Pet Clinic, Eastside Pet Clinic, Veterinary Associates, Leash on Life, Brenneman's Grooming and Pet Supplies, Hamburg Inn #2, Heyn's Ice Cream, Varsity Cleaners, and New Pioneer Coop (downtown location). We regularly receive \$1,500-\$2,000 in the form of anonymous donations through this program.

This sum means a lot to a small non-profit like JCHS. Many thanks to those businesses, and also to Don and Janet McClain, who continue to collect the bulk of these donations for us.

Thank you to all who contributed to JCHS since the last newsletter. For those who regularly give to us (and you know who you are!!), we appreciate having the stable source of income. Honoraria and donations to a specific project will be acknowledged in our newsletters—our apologies if someone was missed.

FERAL WRANGLER ACCOLADES

The JCHS Board would like to give a special, "Here, kitty, kitty, kitty," shout out to Board Member Amy Holcomb, who has facilitated the TNR of over 65 cats in her own neighborhood area in the last few years...and over 50 (!) of those have been in less than 12 months. She has gotten up very early, baited traps, hauled cats/kittens back and forth, and yet has somehow managed to NOT take any new adorable furry friends home. ☺ Congratulations!! We'd also like to thank long-time feral advocate and new mom, Kristina Sosa, for lugging around traps (sometimes with cats in them) during her pregnancy. What a trooper! And lastly, congratulations to Board Member Rosie S.-G. for catching all those kittens, and continuing in hot pursuit of those tricky feral moms someone stuck her with. We know you'll get those gals at some point, Rosie. Keep up the good work!!

Fundraising Events!

If you have ideas for public fundraising events, drop by a meeting, the second Monday of each month, 7pm. We're trying to alternate our meeting place between the Iowa City Public Library and the Coralville Public Library so watch for announcements on the location. You may also contact JCHS at jchs@johnsoncountyhmane.org if you can't make a meeting.

In order to use our name at your own event, we request you contact us ahead of time.

JCHS Board: Janet Ashman, Pres., Lynn Schaul, V.P., Amanda Clark, Sec., Amy McBeth, Treas. Board Members At Large: Teresa Kopel, RoZella Sorrenson-Grabin, Amy Holcomb, Mary Blount.



"It only takes a little to do a whole lot of good!"