

## Case Study

### **Alley Cat Allies' Expertise Saves Cats at the Army Navy Club** *Club Expresses Appreciation, Reverses "Trap and Remove" Plan*

When officials at the Army Navy Country Club of Arlington, Virginia, were looking for answers to some members' concerns about a colony of cats living on the property, they turned to Alley Cat Allies for help. The cats and their ancestors had lived on the grounds for decades, and were a familiar sight at the venerable club, whose members include military officers and their families, as well as senators, congressmen, and diplomats.

The current colony was cared for by four longtime club members, who provided food and water twice daily and had trapped all of the cats for neutering and vaccination at a nearby veterinary clinic. The club's management had tacitly supported the caregivers' efforts—and had even contributed club funds to the Trap-Neuter-Return program—but knew very little about the program or how it worked.

In 2006, a few club members expressed concerns about the colony's proximity to areas where children's activities take place. In response, the club's Board of Governors announced a plan to hire a contractor to trap the cats and take them

to the local animal shelter. The Board of Governors did not realize that once at the shelter, these cats—who were not socialized to people and couldn't be adopted into homes—would be killed. Many informed club members were fiercely opposed to the plan, knowing it meant an immediate death sentence for the cats.

After being alerted to the case via local media, Alley Cat Allies stepped forward and quickly diffused the crisis.

Alley Cat Allies provided the club's board with scientific studies showing that outdoor cats are just as healthy as owned cats, and that sterilizing and vaccinating the cats would improve their lives. Alley Cat Allies also pointed out that if the cats were trapped and removed, others would quickly move in, and these new cats would not be vaccinated or neutered—meaning the cat population would quickly grow with the addition of litters of kittens. Alley Cat Allies provided a plan to ensure the colony was well-managed and contained to an area where the cats could live peaceably and away from heavy traffic areas.

Club officials were convinced.

Said Club President Pete Gibbons: "The really good thing about Alley Cat Allies is that they are protecting cats, but they have an objective view[point]. They offer a balance between what's good for the cats and for the people...[We] appreciated having a professional tell us, 'You don't need to kill the cats to accomplish your goal.'"



The Club's cats were eartipped to identify they had been neutered.