



ONLINE CAT CONFERENCE

January 27–29, 2023
All times listed are Eastern Time.

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Friday, January 27

7:00–7:15 p.m.

Stacy LeBaron, Community Cats Podcast
Opening Remarks

7:15–8:15 p.m.

Danielle Bays, Senior Analyst, Cat Protection and Policy

Catpurrdy: A Game of Current Affairs

This community cats take on the Jeopardy game show will get you up to speed on hot topics for ailurophiles, pawlitics, and the latest mews from the world of cats.

About Danielle Bays

Danielle Bays is a frequent speaker, award-winning author and wiz at cat trivia. As the Senior Analyst for Cat Protection and Policy at the Humane Society of the United States, Danielle works with animal shelters, cat advocates, policymakers, and other stakeholders to broaden support for community cats nationwide.

8:15-8:30 p.m.

Stacy LeBaron, Host
2023 Highlights and Cat Trivia

Saturday, January 28

10:00–10:15 a.m.

Stacy LeBaron
Welcome

10:15–11:15 a.m.

Liz Finch, Senior Writer, Best Friends Animal Society
Stella Ickes, Community Engagement Officer and Animal Control Officer, Pasco County Florida

Handling Hoarding Effective Strategies for Removing Cats from Bad Circumstances

Whether you work for a grassroots rescue organization or a large municipal shelter, chances are good that you will eventually encounter someone who is in over their head and has way too many cats to care for. We refer to such people as hoarders, though that's a rather derogatory and unhelpful way to refer to people who started off with good intentions (and probably still have them). Mental or physical health crises, financial setbacks, the dissolution of a relationship, and a wealth of other traumas are often the triggering event(s) that cause individuals to collect more cats than they can possibly manage. One or a combination of those can push even the best of us over our limits and into a place where we – and our beloved animals – finally seek out help from others in the cat rescue community.

So, how can you help when someone reaches out and asks for support? More importantly, how do you navigate the tricky waters that come with such relationships? Liz Finch (Best Friends Animal Society) and Stella Ickes (Pasco County Animal Services) will share the steps you can take to rehome most – if not all – cats in the person or organization's care and set up a long-term strategy to help them from sliding back into the hoarding habit. Liz and Stella have decades of experience working with both large-scale (1,600 rabbits!) and small-scale (a dozen Golden Retrievers) situations and will outline the elements that make up successfully helping both the animals – and the people – who find themselves in such overwhelming and unhealthy circumstances.

About Liz Finch

During her 12-year career as a professional writer, Liz dabbled in animal welfare by volunteering for several small nonprofits and Los Angeles Animal Services. In 2000, she co-founded a cat rescue organization and began devoting herself more seriously to animal welfare. By 2005, she made the decision to give up her writing career and move to Kanab, UT, to work for Best Friends Animal Society. She started her career at BFAS answering questions from the public on all aspects of animal care and welfare; transitioned into the manager role of that department; served as senior manager over national programs; and was the director of the community cat programs before landing in her new role. As senior writer for the Network, she has merged her two careers and once again gotten value out of that English degree!!

After living in Kanab for 10 years, she relocated to Phoenix, AZ, in 2015, where she lives with a clowder of misfit cats who frequently interrupt her workday by taking over the desk or wreaking havoc in some other part of the house.

About Stella Ickes

Stella turned her lifelong passion for animals into a career in 1996 at Farmingville Animal Hospital in New York, where she worked as a veterinary assistant and kennel manager for 10 years. After moving to Florida in 2012, she realized she missed the industry and started volunteering in the veterinary department of Pasco County Animal Services (PCAS). She was soon offered a position as an animal care technician, which gave her firsthand experience with the plight of homeless animals in the community.

By 2016, Stella's passion for helping both pets and people caught the attention of the organization's Field Services supervisor, who encouraged her to train as an animal control officer. She is now a certified animal control officer, in addition to being certified in humane euthanasia. She has served as Community Engagement Officer and on PCAS' Community Engagement Committee, which processes requests for the Pet Safety Net Program.

In 2021, Stella was named Animal Control Officer of the Year by the Florida Animal Control Association. She was the lead officer in charge of a recent grant to Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate and Return 600 cats in a high-volume community, driving the effort to completion within two months. She has identified many hoarding cases and worked with overwhelmed caregivers to find sterilization and placement opportunities, as well as any counseling or other resources needed. In addition, she assists with presentations to local neighborhood associations and civic organizations.

Stella has six pets of her own: four feisty dachshunds — her favorite breed — a giant, lovable rottweiler and a beautiful 3-legged calico cat.

11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Corinne Bourgoïn, Shelter Operations Coordinator, MSPCA Adoption Centers

Reunited and it feels so good! Rethinking stray cats and improving your RTH rate

Leave all your preconceived notions about "dumped, abandoned, or unwanted" stray cats at the door! What if we presumed every stray cat who came to our shelters was a cherished pet with a loving home? How can we facilitate getting lost pets back to their owners without overwhelming current staff and volunteers, or tying up space with long stray holds? In this session we will discuss simple, actionable ways that we can support owners of lost cats, be a resource to those who find cats, and increase the rate at which cats in our shelters are reunited with grateful families.

About Corinne Bourgoïn

Corinne Bourgoïn began her animal welfare career as a volunteer with the MSPCA, where she is now the shelter operations coordinator. A detour to Hawaii allowed her the opportunity to work with the Maui Humane Society in many capacities, including coordinating volunteers, foster parents, a high-volume spay/neuter clinic, and community cat programs. In her current position she works with shy and feisty cats who need additional behavior resources, and she also focuses on reuniting lost cats with their owners.

12:30–1:30 p.m.

Lunch break

1:30–2:30 p.m.

Margaret Tompkins, Tompkins Foundation for FeLV Advocacy

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) - What You Should Know

Twenty years ago we were killing FeLV+ cats just because they had a virus. Ten years ago, we were looking for sanctuaries to send them to. Today, we're actively adopting FeLV+ cats into loving homes. What we've learned about FeLV in the last couple of years is nothing short of revolutionary! We will dispel the old myths with the results of science. FeLV is a virus to be respected but not feared. Comprehensive handouts will be provided.

About Margaret Tompkins

Margaret Tompkins is President of the Tompkins Foundation for FeLV Advocacy. She is a tireless advocate for FeLV education and FeLV+ cats. She actively networks FeLV+ cats all over the country. She is active on social media, especially Facebook, in promoting adoptions and education. She is a huge proponent of TNR and supports shelter and rescue programs that provide positive outcomes for FeLV+ cats. Her email is Margaret.Tompkins@comcast.net.

2:30- 2:45 p.m.

Cat Trivia

2:45-3:00 p.m

Break

3:00–5:00 p.m.

Angéline Fahey, Community Cat Program Manager, Humane Society of Southern Arizona
Sarah Hollars, Community Cat Manager, Animal Care Centers of New York City
Bryan Kortis, National Programs Director, Neighborhood Cats
Jayne Sage, Board President, Street Cat HUB (Albuquerque, NM)

Community Cat Program Managers Part 1 - "So many paws, so few hands"

A growing trend in the animal welfare industry over the past several years has been the addition of the Community Cat Program Manager as a standard staff position at shelters. In addition, in some communities, the role of a program manager is taken on in whole or part by a local non-profit partnering with the shelter. Responsibilities can range from running a Return-to-Field program to providing TNR resources and education, and everything in between.

We'll go over a brief history of how community cat management developed in the United States as TNR evolved from a purely grassroots movement into the mainstream of animal sheltering. Our panelists, three experienced community cat managers, will then describe what their current programs look like.

In the second half of the session, we'll explore the many challenges presented when typically a one or two person team or smaller nonprofit is expected to handle what is often the largest animal welfare issue in the community. Topics will include, among others, how to involve other shelter staff, working with partner organizations, handling the volume of calls and requests from the public, defining the Community Cat Program Manager role to stay within what can realistically be accomplished, and aligning the job with the organization's mission.

About Angéline Fahey

Angéline Fahey is the Community Cat Program Manager for the Humane Society of Southern Arizona, whose program provides trapping assistance, guidance, and education for several counties in Southern Arizona on Trap Neuter Return and colony management. Angéline also coordinates a group of community cat trappers, advocates, and rescuers called the Southern Arizona Community Cat Coalition, whose members work together to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the number of cats born outside through the

process of Trap-Neuter-Return, compassionate community education, and foster placement of unsocialized kittens. Angéline has always had a passion for nonprofit and volunteer service, having earned multiple community awards for her efforts and compassion to help others.

About Sarah Hollars

Sarah Hollars is the manager of the Community Cat department at the Animal Care Centers of New York City. She worked as the lone employee in the department for several years, developing ways to utilize staff and resources in other departments. This helped make the Community Cat department a key player in reducing the overall shelter population and ensuring appropriate placement and care for Community Cats coming into the shelter system. By making Community Cats part of the shelter culture from day one, improving the flow of communication with clients and the public, and building stronger relationships with the community both in and out of the shelter, Sarah has been able to increase her agency's ability to safely care for and provide resources for Community Cats in NYC and has even gained a staff member in the process.

Sarah originally hails from Southeastern Oregon completing her undergraduate degrees at the University of Washington and the University of Oregon. Earning her master's degree in painting at Hunter College, Sarah taught art for several years. After learning about TNR and starting projects in her neighborhood, it wasn't long before TNR and Community Cats became the clear focus in her work Efforts. Helping Community Cats by helping the people who care for them became a reality for Sarah at the city shelter.

About Bryan Kortis

Bryan Kortis is co-founder and National Programs Director for Neighborhood Cats, a leading community cat advocacy group with hands-on programs in New York City, New Jersey and Maui. Currently he and his wife, Susan Richmond (executive director of Neighborhood Cats), live in Hawaii where they have helped transform the state from high-kill to community cat-friendly. In between stints with Neighborhood Cats, he served as a grants manager for PetSmart Charities, overseeing over \$21 million in TNR and spay/neuter projects. He has produced many of the leading educational materials on Trap-Neuter-Return, including co-authoring The Return-to-Field Handbook published by HSUS, assisted numerous communities in setting up large-scale TNR programs and co-designed with Tomahawk Live Trap many of the most popular TNR traps now on the market. Bryan can currently be found teaching monthly TNR basic training workshops and advanced webinars on the Community Cats Podcast.

About Jayne Sage

Jayne has dedicated two decades of her life and counting to the Community Cats and communities of the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, and surrounding areas. This makes her uniquely qualified to provide insight, assistance and, most importantly, knowledge relevant to the issues Community Cats face in a compassionate yet realistic manner. From 2013 through 2015, Jayne served as the Community Cat Program Manager for the Best Friends partnership with the City of Albuquerque. In 2015, this partnership led her to create the nonprofit now known as Street Cat HUB where she served as Executive Director until 2020. The focus of this nonprofit is to continue both TNR in the Albuquerque area and the Return-to-Field (RTF) program with the Albuquerque shelter. She is currently the Board President and a volunteer trapper. Since its inception in 2012, this one of a kind, hybrid program has provided 4,000 to 6,000 spay and neuter surgeries per year (the majority for TNR), and now continues that much needed pace in its own clinic which opened in 2021.

Today Street Cat HUB has contracts with the City of Albuquerque, Bernalillo County and the Town of Bernalillo, and fundraises to provide support for independent trappers in rural and otherwise unfunded areas. As a pioneer in the RTF program, Jayne has been returning shelter cats since 2011. The RTF program is the top tier of a three tier program addressing overpopulation of free-roaming cats in Albuquerque and Bernalillo County. Street Cat HUB works with trappers to manage smaller colonies providing the second tier of assistance. The third tier, and the foundation, are our trapping teams which address entire blocks and neighborhoods and weave together all three tiers.

5:00 p.m.

Close

Sunday, January 29

10:00–10:15 a.m.

Stacy LeBaron

Welcome

10:15 a.m.–12 p.m.

Panel:

Stacy LeBaron, Host and Head Cat, Community Cats Podcast

Rossana Ceruzzi, Founder of Wildlife Freedom Foundation

Sheila Massey Founder of Hard Hat Cats

Mike Phillips Co-Founder of the Urban Cat League

Cats & Wildlife: Respecting and Protecting Both

Panel discussion with people who maintain community cat colonies near wildlife and have made it work. A federally licensed wildlife rehabilitator and 3 community cat caretakers with extensive experience will discuss the concerns surrounding cats and wildlife living side-by-side. They will share their anecdotal experiences and offer suggestions to address the most common situations that can arise when birds, raccoons, coyotes and other species live alongside a managed community cat colony. Hear how they have made it work and learn some talking points to explain to others how TNR benefits wildlife.

About Rosanna Ceruzzi

Rossana is the founder of the Wildlife Freedom Foundation specializing in the rescue and placement of stray companion animals and wildlife rehabilitation. Rosanna is a NY State and federally licensed wildlife rehabilitator. In addition to advocating to help, protect, and preserve wildlife and their habitats in New York City, the foundation practices TNR and maintains 3 community cat sanctuaries on Roosevelt Island in NYC. The largest and most visited is located at Southpoint Park and it has become a tourist attraction. The sanctuary has been rated by The Culture Trip and other publications a “Must Visit” in New York City. The foundation mission statement reads: We believe in a future where people and animals can live in harmony together.

About Sheila Massey

Prior to taking in a stray kitten, Sadie, which changed her life, Sheila worked as a forensic accountant, conducting fraud audits and investigations of international corporations in the US, Australia, Europe, and Africa.

After retirement, Sheila began doing TNR in an ethnically diverse New York neighborhood with an odd array of cat colony locations. Stray cats roamed a prison, large church, landmark mansion, community garden, and parking garage. By necessity, community relations became a specialty. Sheila co-taught the “Neighborhood Relations” workshop, as well as TNR training courses, for the New York City (NYC) Feral Cat Initiative.

In 2019, Sheila founded Hard Hat Cats® in order to rescue unadoptable feral cats from the NYC shelter. Hard Hat Cats places working ferals with “employers” seeking non-toxic rodent-control. The cats adapt remarkably well to various environments, such as breweries, distilleries, parks, gardens, and hotels. Hard

Hat Cats live independent lives, doing what they do best, ignoring people and deterring rodents. Employers adopt and care for the cats and continually sing their praises. This is a Win-Win-Win for the cats, employers, and the environment. Hard Hat Cats is a 501(c)(3), incorporated in New York

About Mike Phillips

Mike is currently president of Urban Cat League which he co-founded in 2003. In 2014, he was recruited to be the founding Senior Supervisor of the ASPCA's neonatal kitten nursery after having previously served as the Veterinary Technician Supervisor of the ASPCA's NYC Adoption Center. In NYC and around the country, thousands have attended Mike's workshops for Community Cats on numerous topics including Taming Feral Kittens, Advanced TNR Trapping Techniques, Feral Cat-Shelter Building, TNR Community Relations and Bottle Feeding Neonatal Kittens. In 2010, the Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association named Mike the recipient of the award, "BEST FRIEND TO FERAL CATS." The TNR Training Workshop that has been attended by over 10,000 New Yorkers was created over 20 years ago when Mike was the president of Neighborhood Cats. Though eventually also offered by the NYC Feral Cat Initiative and the ASPCA, the workshop continues to be offered regularly online by Neighborhood Cats in a collaboration with The Community Cat Podcast. Passing on the tools to help Community Cats through these workshops are Mike's greatest source of fulfillment.

Simultaneously to work for cats, Mike's alter ego worked in theater as a director, choreographer and performer for over 40 years including 20 years at the New York City Opera.

12:00–12:15 p.m.

Lunch break

12:15–1 p.m.

Marina Bayeva, Psychiatrist, Psychotherapist and Animal Welfare Advocate

Helping Animals in Ukraine - Lessons from Almost One Year of the War

As we are approaching the one year mark of the war in Ukraine, the animal crisis there has evolved through several stages. Having witnessed the plight of animals and their caretakers since early March 2022 through my efforts to help animal shelters in my hometown Dnipro, I will speak about the work of animal welfare volunteers in Ukraine, the intersection between heroic and everyday, the multitude of ways the world stepped in to help, and the ongoing needs of animals who are trying to survive the war alongside Ukrainian people.

About Marina Bayeva

Marina is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist in her last year of an advanced fellowship at the Austen Riggs Center. Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, she has been helping animals in her hometown Dnipro and beyond through her own fundraising efforts, helping shelters to apply for emergency relief grants, assisting with animal evacuations to Europe, and raising international awareness of the heroic work of animal welfare volunteers in Ukraine. For her efforts, Marina was awarded the Animal Action Award by the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

1:00–2:00 p.m.

Lunch

2:00–4:00 p.m.

Angéline Fahey, Community Cat Program Manager, Humane Society of Southern Arizona
Sarah Hollars, Community Cat Manager, Animal Care Centers of New York City
Bryan Kortis, National Programs Director, Neighborhood Cats

Jayne Sage, Board President, Street Cat HUB (Albuquerque, NM)

Community Cat Program Managers Part 2 - Hot Topics

Many community cat programs focus on Return-to-Field with the goal of reducing euthanasia, while others focus on reducing community cat numbers by providing resources to local trappers and citizens who want to do TNR. Some programs pursue both lowering euthanasia and reducing community cat populations by combining Return-to-Field with targeted TNR. We'll examine what hybrid Return-to-Field & targeted TNR programs look like and their results.

In addition, community cats have always been a controversial topic and Community Cat Program Managers find themselves at the center of many difficult policy issues. Our panelists will discuss hot topics like what to do with friendly cats, nuisance complaints, wildlife concerns, rabies outbreaks, dealing with government officials and agencies, demands from the public, messaging, and coping with the current spay/neuter shortage.

4:00-4:15 p.m

Cat Trivia

4:15-5:00 p.m.

MeloCat

How My Cats Optimized My Lifestyle... And Vice Versa

Ten cats. One me.

When people come into my apartment, they are always impressed by how neat and clean I keep it and that while I might have 10 cats, I'm not running around frantically. My ten cats together act as my Marie Kondo - pushing me to curate my cat lifestyle with intention. The systems I've created keep everyone happy and comfortable, both physically and emotionally. Cat and human.

About MeloCat

MeloCat is a cat rescuer and rehoming volunteer based in Hong Kong. As a small child her parents noticed her ability to bond with cats, leading her mom to create the nickname MeloCat. By using her psychology background and thinking from the cat's perspective, she has created unique solutions to improve cats' lives.

Her self-titled YouTube channel MeloCat explores her life in Hong Kong and experiences living with 10 adopted and rescued cats in a 550 square foot apartment. What sets apart MeloCat is her unique systems that help her not only save time, but create a better lifestyle for both cat and human. Her Cat Lifestylist Course aims to help others create the same ecosystem in their own lives.

5:00 p.m.

Stacy LeBaron

Closing remarks, cat trivia

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