



# The Scoop



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This issue is dedicated to Thomas O'Malley, inspiration for Helping Paws Animal Sanctuary.

## How a Stray Cat Changed My Life

By Marnie Miszewski

When I said I would write about Helping Paws' take on FELV this month, I never imagined that my story was going to be cut short so soon. Well that's not completely true, the story continues to have a happy ending for many cats that might not get a second chance.

Let me tell you about my Thomas O'Malley. Before the shelter, I was employed by the News-Press. One day I was coming back from lunch, and I saw a few people feeding a stray black cat. Human Resources wanted us to call Animal Services, but the cat was in such terrible shape, that I knew I had to do something. I took the rest of the day off and found a vet to see him.

When his combo test result came back positive for FELV, I was devastated. I'd grown attached to the tenacious kitty and my previous experience with the disease didn't end well. I expected to be told he needed to be put down. I had rescued a positive cat before and was advised to put the cat down immediately. I was even told that my mother, who has a form of MS, could get sick from contact with a leukemia cat. Dr. Alexander from Santa Barbara Animal Hospital, patiently answered all my questions and explained what precautions I needed to take. I left the office with my cat alive and I was determined to make sure he stayed that way.

Because of my other cats, I began searching for a place for him to live. It didn't take long to find out there wasn't any place that would take him. I fantasized about starting a place for cats like him and decided to make it a reality, when I was one of the many casualties of a company wide lay off a week later. I had always wanted to start a shelter, but in my head it happened after I won the lottery.

The shelter took some time to get up and running, but by then Thomas had become a permanent member of our family. Things were going well until last month, when he started showing signs of anemia. We attempted a blood transfusion, but his body had stopped producing red blood cells. Thomas succumbed to the disease on February 28.

I learned a lot about the disease over the four years I spent with him, and about how rewarding it can be to love a special needs cat. People make comments all the time about how black cats are bad luck. My Thomas brought luck, but it was far from bad. He changed my life and in doing so touched the lives of many others.

*I would like to thank Cape Coral Pet Crematory for donating the beautiful frame that holds his ashes. It is hanging where it belongs, above my desk at Helping Paws Animal Sanctuary.*



Thomas O'Malley  
RIP 2/28/2013

## What's New

Besides the devastating loss of our Thomas, things have been interesting here at the shelter. We attended the Grace Community Church Pet Expo and met some really great people, including our newest volunteers Sarah and Joe. We also found a wonderful who adopted two of our kittens, sold bakery to benefit the shelter and enjoyed watching the canine competitions (yes we love dogs too).

We need to thank Nancy Benjamin and her family for representing us at a Garden Club event on the Island, that fell on the same day as the Pet Expo. Who says you can't be in two places at the same time?

This month we will be at the Pet Supermarket Customer Appreciation Day on March 23rd with more kittens and bakery too!

Speaking of bakery (my favorite subject) Wenie and Gabby made the best ever red velvet and chocolate MM cookies for us to sell!

I know every month I thank our volunteers, but I think you should know what these selfless people do. Trust me, scooping boxes isn't everyone's forte but it needs to be done. They also sweep and mop floors, pet cats, feed, give special treats and help us transport cats. Most importantly, they help get the word out about us

Thank you just seems inadequate.  
Betty

## 16 Cats?

On Valentine's Day we rescued 16 cats from an abandoned house. They had been left with only 2 litter boxes, a small bowl of food and no water. Filthy doesn't even begin to describe their living conditions.

I had received a call asking for help to trap a cat that had been left in the house. When I arrived, I was shocked to find there were 16 cats and a bird!

With only 2 carriers to work with, it took multiple trips to get them to the vet. Despite the short notice, South West Veterinary Care Center agreed to examine all 16 cats that afternoon.

The cats are all incredibly friendly. The man who called me to rescue them, paid for their shots and combo tests. Unfortunately, many of them still need surgery. Half need to be fixed, several have hematomas on their ears, one has a club foot that needs to be amputated, and one has a growth that needs to be removed and biopsied.

WINK featured our story on their evening newscast that night, but we didn't receive any calls to adopt or donations to help.

Please spread the word. If you know of anyone that can help or is on the fence about adopting, send them our way. These cats are amazing and deserve a chance to live with a family that actually cares about them. In the meantime, they are really enjoying life at the shelter!

### SUCCESS!

Thank You to everyone that helped us match what we call "The Kathy Jones Challenge!" Her donation of \$2500, became a donation of \$5000 and we are very grateful. It couldn't have come at a better time. We've had a lot of unexpected expenses this month!



## Peters Purr-spective...

Hi. I need to be a little serious this month. We have lots of days on our calendar to honor special people who have died, the people that have made a lasting impact on the lives of others. Here at Helping Paws we have Thomas O'Malley. Now I have never laid eyes on the dude, but I know without him I wouldn't be here at the shelter enjoying the good life. When Marnie met him she knew she had to help all of us. I guess he was an ins-purr-ation to her. He died, but everyone here will remember him. I'm trying to convince her to make it an official holiday. The kind where I get the day off, and we all get treats! Even better, we could celebrate the entire month... Nah. She'll never go for that.

OK, now lets talk Easter. I want the Easter Bunny to bring me... Wait! Maybe he should just stop in for a little visit himself!

Peter  
Resident Philosopher