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PETS - Helping Toronto's alley cats with Scarborough's new Feral Cat Recovery Centre

By Hanna Booth

With this winter's harsh weather, colony caretakers are extra appreciative of the new Feral Cat Recovery Centre in Scarborough.

The recovery centre, which opened just more than a year ago, is a proud achievement of the Toronto Feral Cat (TFC) Coalition. And I have to emphasize, this was no small achievement as it required thousands of hours of volunteer time, hard-earned donation dollars and a united approach with the City of Toronto and coalition member groups.

The initiative to open the centre was prompted by feedback from colony caretakers that identified the lack of recovery space as a significant obstacle to Trap Neuter Reuter (TNR) efforts.

When cats are spay/neutered as part of the TNR process, they need a safe place to recovery for a few days after the surgery and before they are re-released to their colony. For many folks who live in apartments or have physical limitations such that they can't hold the cats after the surgery, this makes participating in TNR difficult.

With the City of Toronto's progressive approach to managing the feral cat population, Toronto Animal Services and Councillor Glenn de Baeremaeker, worked hard to support the coalition in establishing the recovery centre.

Donations have been raised to cover the rent, insurance and daily upkeep of the centre. And a team of dedicated volunteers is committed to caring for the cats and working to improve the space and the services offered through the centre.

With the establishment of this recovery centre, caretakers can now make arrangements for cats to come into the centre after they are trapped. They are then transported to and from the clinic on the day of surgery, and are cared for by volunteers while they recover at the centre until they can be returned to the colony.



Mr. Sam loves to cuddle and is up for adoption. Email Emily at dt8thd@gmail.com

With the space and resources available at the recovery centre, this has also opened up the doors to allow for mass trappings of new colonies that are identified.

Mass trappings attempt to sterilize all the cats in a colony at once. This is the preferred method of trapping but requires a coordinated approach and significant resources and space to execute. (To read more about mass trappings and watch a video see the weblink at the month at the end of this column.)

While the centre's primary purpose is to provide a warm and safe place for cats to recover for a few days after their sterilization surgery, it is also used for many other TNR-related activities such as trapping and caretaker workshops, distribution of donated food, volunteer training, trap and equipment loans and fundraising events.

This recovery centre is the first of its kind in North America. Toronto, once again, comes out as a leader in progressive animal sheltering and welfare.

If you are interested in making a donation toward the recovery centre, you can visit the online campaign at: www.indiegogo.com/projects/feral-cat-shelter-build-recovery-centre (<http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/feral-cat-shelter-build-recovery-centre>)

Website of the Month

Curious about what mass trapping is all about? Read more and watch a video at www.neighborhoodcats.org/HOW_TO_MASS_TRAPPING (http://www.neighborhoodcats.org/HOW_TO_MASS_TRAPPING)

Colony Cat of the month

Sam had been a longtime resident of a managed colony behind a large hotel. Although he came for his meals at the feeding station, he kept his distance from the volunteers who were feeding. That is until one of the cold evenings during the ice storm just before Christmas when Sam decided to approach the kind woman who'd been leaving him food for the last year and half. It only took a few head butts to convinced her that he was social enough to be brought in for adoption.

Mr. Sam is a lovable, cuddly, teddy bear of a cat with a wonderful disposition. He is a calm, confident cat, who loves people. He especially loves being petted and will often flop over on his back for tummy rubs. Sam likes to sit on warm laps or recently vacated chairs.

Mr. Sam is very affectionate, but he isn't needy (although he does enjoy kneading), so he's happy to go exploring or curl up in a comfy spot when his people are busy. Sam would be fine as an only cat, provided his new family was attentive to his need for daily cuddle time, but he would also do well in a home with other cats, given a proper, polite introduction.

Sam is a mid-aged cat. He's been neutered, vaccinated and microchipped and is ready for his forever home!

For more information or to inquire about adopting Mr. Sam, contact Emily at dt8thd@gmail.com

Hanna Booth is a shelter veterinarian with a special interest in targeted spay/neuter programs to combat pet overpopulation. Booth and her husband spent a year spaying street animals in Central America; worked as a veterinarian at the Toronto Humane Society; now works for Toronto Animal Services; is a leading member of the Toronto Feral Cat TNR Coalition; and also runs a volunteer program www.torontostreetcats.com. She lives in Roncesvalles