

By PENNY FULLER

FELINES FIND 'FOREVER' HOMES

Longtime Feline Rescue volunteer Nancy Miller writes monthly newsletters and works as a shift lead. "I love this work because I see first-hand the difference that volunteering makes in the lives of so many cats," said Miller.

She and other leads oversee and coordinate daily shifts of volunteers that help with feeding, cleaning and enrichment activities. There are special adoption rooms set aside for interacting with the cats outside of the kennels. The shelter allows for easy access during open hours where visitors may meet a variety of individuals. Visiting hours (currently only by appointment) are posted on the website where there is an interactive scheduling process listing available times and dates. "The cats do enjoy having visitors!" said Miller.

Feline Rescue is staffed with individuals at all levels including a veterinarian that provides on-site care. Much of the day-to-day tasks are completed by volunteers. There are also many other ways to get involved.

According to Miller, volunteers and staff have a having real passion for their work and for the cats in their care. She also noted how the organization has expanded to work alongside numerous animal welfare organizations and individuals, even participating in national initiatives such as Shelter Animals Count. She is fond of this saying: "Saving one cat won't change the world, but it will surely change the world for that cat."

Gail Frethem is a newer volunteer. Although she is more of a "dog person," Frethem said she greatly enjoys her role and connects with the cats. "It's relaxing," she said, "without the challenges of working with people and politics."

EVERY CAT IS WANTED

Founded in 1997 by 23 people who wanted to continue shelter services from



Volunteer Gail Frethem plays with Tupelo at the shelter. (Photo by Penny Fuller)

a predecessor organization, Feline Rescue has been operating out of its present location at 593 Fairview Avenue North since 2006, remarked Feline Rescue Executive Director Phil Manz. They are a limited admission, no-kill organization providing safe shelter, veterinary care and socialization for stray, abandoned or abused cats. Feline Rescue has also provided outreach services for people helping cats in their neighborhood. This past year the Coolers4Cats program retrofitted and distributed over 150 coolers for sheltering homeless cats throughout Minnesota.

"Our vision guides our efforts," commented Manz. "A community where every cat is wanted."

FINDING THE RIGHT HOME

Jenni Charrier began her work with Feline Rescue 20 years ago as a donor because she loved the premise of a positive organization that puts cats first. "It's about finding the right home for each cat and it's essential to rise above human issues to make that happen," she said.

Charrier is involved in many aspects of Feline Rescue, most recently joining their board in January 2022. She helps to connect Feline Rescue with the public through her media skills including videography, Facebook management and start-up initiatives such as Coolers4Cats, the Cat Claw Clipping Clinic in Wayzata and many shelter improvements. She is also a

foster mom.

Charrier said, "Foster caregivers are very important to the organization. The private setting provides tailored care, particularly for cats with special needs. Pregnant cats or those with kittens prior to being weaned, as well as those in need of socialization or special medical care are included in this array. When a cat is ready for adoption, Feline Rescue arranges an opportunity for potential adopters to meet at the foster cat home or the Feline Rescue administration building."

WORKING FROM HOME

Stephanie Carver, a foster mom since 2020, realized that working from home during the pandemic provided an ideal opportunity for this role. "Making observations on each cat's personality and preferences is key to ultimately matching them to the right home," she explained. She pointed out that food and medical care is supplied for fosters so those with a limited budget or who can't have a long-term pet commitment may find fostering provides an ideal opportunity to enjoy feline companionship.

"Feline Rescue also provides training for individuals, if needed," she said. "I never imagined I could administer subcutaneous fluids to a cat, but I did and I'm very proud of myself for going outside of my comfort zone. It allowed me to care for a cat with special needs."

She described the role of foster as being flexible and well supported, and added, "Volunteers are very helpful with one another."

She is impressed in general with Feline Rescue's leadership and vision. "As a lawyer I am very fussy about what charities I give support to. They really get my stamp of approval!" said Carver. "I'm impressed, too, that their employee assistance program is available to volunteers."

For more, visit www.felinerescue.org.

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