



A note from

Founder & Executive Director Jonathan Rosenberg

It was a bright sunny day in April 1999 when I stepped out my front door to “start” Tabby’s Place. I was making good on my commitment to honor the memory of our dear cat Tabby.

Excellent. On to step one ... but wait. What is the first step for “starting a cage-free sanctuary to save unwanted cats?” The task looked like a rat’s nest of interdependent issues: state, county and local regulations for animal shelters; purchasing land; local zoning ordinances; construction; becoming a non-profit. The nest was bottomless and I had never done any of this stuff before. This was my first cat sanctuary.

I wrestled for days looking for a place to start. Then I realized the secret: It didn’t matter where I entered the path. I was about to embark on a “path with heart.” The walk would lead me where I needed to be.

Looking back over our ten years of operation, Tabby’s Place has followed the “path that saves cats.” Like any good path, this one had twists, turns and blind alleys. But it has led us on an ever-evolving journey to expanding our mission.

I hope you enjoy the following sections, which provide some the highs and lows of our journey to date. After that, I’ll tell you about where we’re headed.



Jonathan Rosenberg & Erin

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2003

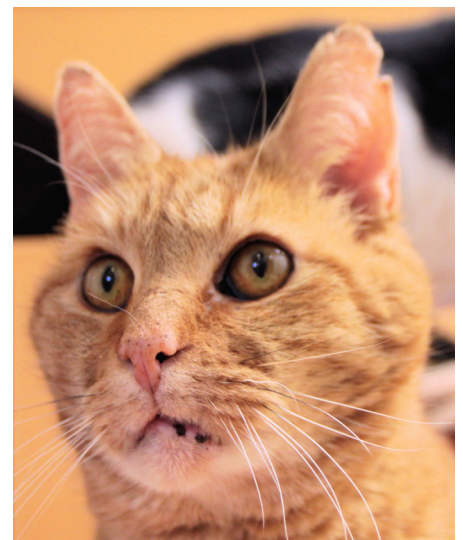
Grand Opening

On October 5th 2003, in the sleepy town of Ringoes, NJ, an outpost of love opened its doors. From the start, Tabby’s Place beamed out a message akin to that greeting immigrants at the Statue of Liberty: “Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free ... Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.” The spirit that launched Tabby’s Place was born of love and courage. We – human and feline – would need both qualities during the decade ahead.

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2003

The First Cat (& First FIV+ Cat)

With a spirit as warm as summer, FIV+ Thomas got Tabby’s Place started with sweetness. This Special Needs boy made a fitting first resident, since Tabby’s Place had committed to rescuing cats regardless of age, personality or most medical issues. In the years ahead, Thomas would be adopted and returned twice, ultimately to find the home of his dreams.



Thomas

First Adoption

Our first adoption, a sweet tabby girl named Bailey, occurred before we were officially open.

You see, we began accepting cats from local shelters before the Grand Opening, as we wanted to

have some "stock" on hand for the official celebration.

I was stunned when a young lady showed up at our front door several days before the Grand Opening saying she wanted to adopt "Bailey." But how had she heard about Bailey? We weren't open

and hadn't listed our available cats anywhere.

Turns out that the woman had visited Bailey at her former shelter, and when going back to adopt her, she discovered the cat was at Tabby's Place. It was an auspicious start for our fledgling sanctuary.

100th Cat

Marmalade Corey was blind, deaf, emaciated, and afflicted with congestive heart failure, kidney disease and glaucoma. Despite this, he was a happy-hearted soul who gobbled up human affection. This gentle boy taught us about caring for "ultra-needy" Special Needs cats and repaid our efforts with love. Thanks to Corey, we knew that we could provide well for felines with serious needs.



[Corey](#)



[Ozzie](#)

First Diabetic

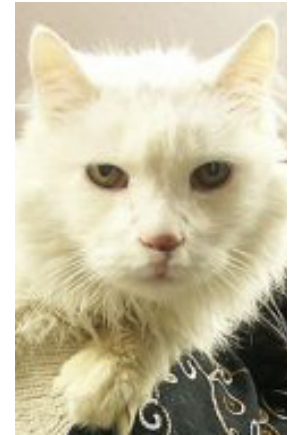
Shortly after her arrival, Ozzie was diagnosed with diabetes. Ozzie's condition was controlled initially with a prescription diet, but she ultimately required daily insulin injections. As if to teach us the full spectrum of diabetic possibilities, Ozzie then went into remission, enabling her to come off of insulin just in time to be adopted into a loving home.

Ozzie earned her place in Tabby's Place history for both her enchanting nature and her pioneering role of teaching us feline diabetic care.

Breaking the "Community Room Barrier"

Pre-2004, cats lived in suites, humans worked in offices, and the lobby was clean and catless. Then along came 16-year-old Gizmo.

The handsomely scruffy white cat started in a suite, but his scream soon broke the (sound) barrier. When he saw a human through his window, Gizmo would yowl so plaintively, he shattered our hearts. Finally, the old boy wore down our defenses, and we moved him to the lobby. Of course, once Gizmo rewrote the rules, other felines would follow, leading to cats in every nook and cranny of the sanctuary.



[Gizmo](#)

First Passing

Kitty showed up shortly after Gizmo had conquered the Lobby. She seemed like a good match for him: old, grizzled, tough as nails but with a heart of gold for people. We installed her in the Lobby and expected the best.

We quickly learned that looks

can be deceiving: Gizmo and Kitty couldn't stand each other and spent much of the first few days batting each other about the head. We tried separating them with a baby gate. But Kitty climbed the gate almost as quickly as a spry young kitten. And they were at each other again. We moved Kitty into the Community Room (thereby destroying another barrier) and our world was peaceful

again.

Kitty was only with us for a few months, but she enjoyed her life here as much as we enjoyed her. When she began to slow down, an ultrasound and biopsy showed that she had untreatable cancer. Letting Kitty go was our first lesson in the most difficult, but necessary, part of caring for cats.

First Trans-Continental Cat

While most of our early residents came from within 200 miles, Mango actualized Tabby's Place's mission to love cats without limit – including geographical limit. When a high-kill shelter in Arizona contacted us about an enchanting orange tabby who “peed everywhere,” we widened our embrace. Since that time, Tabby's Place has rescued cats from New Jersey to Kentucky to Missouri and beyond...far beyond. (See 2010.)



[Mango](#)

First Paraplegic

The phone call about Bagheera provoked serious soul-searching at Tabby's Place. Jonathan led the staff in wrestling with the hard questions: Would a paralyzed cat have a good quality of life? Would we be up to the task of caring for him and making tough decisions?

Ultimately, Tabby's Place extended a “yes” to Bagheera – and we were forever blessed. In addition to enjoying a rollicking good quality of life at Tabby's Place, “Bags” was a gentle teacher for many visitors, sponsors and admirers who drew inspiration from his life. Bags con-



[Bagheera](#)

vinced us that, just as a cat can bounce back from adversity, so we could rise to the challenge of providing for each cat's needs, no matter how extensive.

To our delight, Bags was adopted by a veterinarian in 2008 and continues to thrive.

Guardian Angel Program Begins

The heartbreaking phone calls weighed heavily on our spirits: “My father just passed away, and he left eight cats. No one in the family can take them, but it would break Dad's heart for his babies to go to

a shelter...can you help?” Jonathan decided it was time to help people plan for the unthinkable by creating the Guardian Angel Program. Now, cat “parents” could arrange for their cats to come to Tabby's Place if anything should happen to the owners. To date, Tabby's Place has welcomed 15 Guardian Angel cats, with 250 currently enrolled.



[Heather's kittens](#)

First Kittens Born at Tabby's Place

Heather was a soft grey tabby with a marshmallow-sweet nature... and a belly swelling with babies. We marveled at the power of Heather's motherly love for her four babies, even as we were alarmed that this new family brought our first CH cats.

First CH Cats

Within a few weeks, it was clear that Twig and Halo, two of Heather's kittens, were not developing in step with their siblings. Our veterinarian diagnosed them with cerebellar hypoplasia (CH), a neurological disorder caused when the pregnant mother-to-be is exposed to distemper. This resulted in Twig and Halo having underdeveloped cerebella, the parts of their brains responsible for motor control.

Although Halo was only mildly disabled, Twig struggled to sit, walk or use the litter box. We accepted the likelihood that they would be “lifers,” and resolved not to break their powerful bond by adopting

them separately. To our elation, an extraordinary family from Maryland was besotted with the babies, and the duo has thrived in their new home. Halo and Twig also paved the way for our many future CH cats.



[Halo & Twig](#)

First Bottle Babies

When Camilla and Emily arrived at Tabby's Place, they were hardly distinguishable from two fuzzy, grey hamsters. Their eyes were still mostly shut, and their tiny legs could barely hold their weight as they crawled and nuzzled into a blanket looking for mom. Left alone outside, defenseless against predators and facing starvation and hypothermia, the kittens' future was bleak until their arrival at Tabby's Place. Until 2006, kittens were a rare sight at Tabby's Place, but Camilla and Emily opened our doors and our hearts to many future bottle babies. At 8 weeks of age, they were adopted into loving families.

First Sewage Treatment Plant Survivors

If ever a cat deserved his name, it was Miracle. Together with sister Gabrielle, the little fighter endured a sewage treatment process at a New Jersey wastewater plant. After tumbling into the rushing water, which travels at 7,000 gallons per minute, Miracle and Gabrielle were stopped by a screen that filters out sludge and debris, scooped up by a rake arm, and thrown down a garbage chute.

Although they were initially terrified and (understandably) a bit angry, Miracle and Gabby ultimately learned to trust humans, and to find forever homes. In addition to reminding us that anything is possible, Miracle and Gabrielle showed us the ropes of socializing scared, semi-feral felines.

Ringworm Outbreak

We have honed our ringworm-fighting skills for 10 long years. But 2006 was the beachhead that tested our stamina and forged the protocol that has served us well since then.

D-Day for us was in 2006, when we noticed that little Boo Boo had a crusty looking spot on one of her ear flaps. Fearing the worst, we isolated her and started her treatment.

But it was too late. The fungus had already spread to 50 other cats.

This began a 6-month lockdown period of days that

began with dipping 10-20 cats in lime sulphur solution and ended in cleaning rooms with bleach ... followed by more bleach.

We eventually bested the fungal monster, but it was a very difficult time and we vowed to tighten up our processes to avoid a recurrence. While the pain still lingers in my mind, I feel strong enough to thank Boo Boo for the valuable lesson.



Boo Boo

500th Cat

Evicted from his home for the "crime" of becoming diabetic, then attacked by an animal, Mittens was a sad shadow of a cat upon arrival at Tabby's Place. With no reason to trust humans, the emaciated, deathly-ill tabby still delighted in our affection. Mittens survived his injuries, going on to reign in the Tabby's Place Lounge for six years. Mittens lived with diabetes, heart disease and IBD, teaching all who met him about aging gracefully and gleefully.



Mittens

First Cancer Survivor

Angel-faced Lily was an icon at Tabby's Place for her equal helpings of cuddly and cranky. Following a devastating diagnosis of gastrointestinal lymphoma, Lily began a regimen of chemotherapy. To our deep delight, our feisty girl would soon go into remission, thriving on for an incredible four more years of cuddling friends and bopping foes with her well-placed right jab.



Lily

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2007

First Acromegalic Cat

From his epic gentleness (he would allow kittens to play with his tail and sleep on his belly), to his zest for life, to his bottomless appetite for wet food, Tony lived large. So did his body: Tony was diagnosed with acromegaly, a rare condition in which a benign tumor causes the pituitary gland to release excessive amounts

of growth hormone.

Following extensive research by our vet, we treated Tony with multiple radiation doses. After stealing the hearts of the entire staff at the specialty hospital, Tony returned to Tabby's Place, and flourished for three happy years. Even as diabetes, heart disease and his endless hunger (a symptom of his acromegaly) dogged him, Tony remained sweet and uniquely empathetic, becoming known for seeking out staff mem-

bers who were sad. His gentleness lingers on as a testament to the power of a peaceful spirit in the face of adversity.



[Tony](#)

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2008

First Cat with a Nasopharyngeal Stent

Just when we thought Tony had presented "the weirdest condition," along came Yasmine. From the time she arrived at Tabby's Place, the plump grey girl emitted a low rumble akin to a snore. Again our vet did extensive research, and again we had a rare diagnosis: nasopharyngeal stenosis. The upper part of Yasmine's throat, behind her nose, was almost closed. A veterinary surgeon at the University of Pennsylvania inserted a stent in Yasmine's nasopharynx, enabling Yaz to live happily in our lobby for the next four years. Like Tony before her, Yasmine solidified our resolve that Tabby's Place could expand our expertise to tackle each cat's needs – however rare they may be.



[Yasmine](#)

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2008

Second Paraplegic

If Bagheera taught us that Tabby's Place could care for a paraplegic cat, Tashi proved that



[Tashi](#)

some things are simply meant to be. The door had barely closed behind Bagheera's happy adopter when we received a plea for help about a paraplegic kitten in Ohio. The providential timing made it clear: little Tashi was meant to be a Tabby's Place

cat. In his three years at Tabby's Place, Tashi was a tornado of joy, spinning out to admirers as distant as Australia and the United Arab Emirates.

Arrogant, affectionate, and unwilling to take "no" for an answer, Tashi was a force of nature. His adoption in 2012 brought forth a flood of happy tears, as once again we rejoiced in the stories we're permitted to be part of at Tabby's Place.

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2009

First Brush with Fame

The CBS Evening News' two-minute feature on Tabby's Place expanded our cats' fan base to every continent but Antarctica. In addition to attracting much-needed support, CBS' attention encouraged us that our mission of mercy is changing the world for cats – and humans – far beyond our doors.



[Richard Schlessinger, CBS News](#)

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2009

Elimination of the Last Porous Surfaces

It was a foregone conclusion as soon as Gizmo broke the Communi-

ty barrier: wall-to-wall carpeting was not welcome at Tabby's Place. After many years of abuse, the carpets in our office spaces and the hallway finally met their demise in the fall of '09, being replaced with easy-to-clean tile. Humans and cats have breathed easier ever since.



Geoff

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2010

First Long-Distance Return

"Once a Tabby's Place cat, always a Tabby's Place cat" is a mantra at the sanctuary. We didn't know just how far that promise would stretch until we received a strange call from Luzerne County (PA) Animal Control – 117 miles northwest of Tabby's Place. They had picked up an emaciated tabby from the side of the road, apparently struck by a car and seriously injured. A scan with a microchipping wand linked the cat to Tabby's Place. When the animal control officer asked, "Do you want him?," we couldn't say "yes" quickly enough. While we were never able to reach Geoff's original adopter, we were grateful the gregarious tabby was home at Tabby's Place. He sailed through surgery to repair his injured leg, and went on to serve as Jonathan's office mate before finding a fabulous adoptive home.

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2010

X-Ray Machine

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, Tabby's Place raised the funds to purchase and install a refurbished veterinary X-ray machine. This marked the first major expansion of our in-house medical capabilities. Having an X-ray machine on the premises has allowed us to provide speedy, at times life-saving, diagnoses for residents, marking a major turning point in our ability to care for the neediest cats.



Kimiko, Pikachu & Miyagi

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2010

First International Cats

Siblings Miyagi, Pikachu and Kimiko had been scheduled for euthanasia on the Japanese island of Okinawa. After compassionate members of the American military contacted us from the island, the three timid tabbies crossed the ocean on a 35-hour flight to Tabby's Place. Following a long journey towards trusting us, the tightly-bonded trio was adopted together, bringing joy to both sides of the Pacific.



Miyagi



Tashi & Bialy

Ten Years of Tabby's Place 2010

First Cat with Hydrocephalus

By 2010, Tabby's Place had embraced our niche of caring for uniquely-needly – and sometimes "bizarrely-needly" – felines. Still, we stewed with concern when a tiny kitten arrived with a very large head. Our fears were confirmed when Bialy was diagnosed with hydrocephalus, or fluid on the brain. Through MRIs, many medications, and a long, hilarious friendship with paraplegic Tashi, Bialy was a blithe spirit – and, ultimately, a healthy little boy despite his condition. Bialy was adopted just one month after Tashi in 2012.



Bialy

First Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) Initiative

In 2011, we began our own boots-on-the-ground work for feral felines. With cooperation from the caretakers, Tabby's Place staff and volunteers humanely trapped a family of feral cats on a local farm, bringing them back to the sanctuary for spaying/neutering and treatment for injuries and dental disease. These ten marmalade cats would be the pioneers in a new direction for Tabby's Place.



Preparing one of the orange ferals from our first TNR initiative for surgery

Launch of the Linda Fund

As each cat joins the Tabby's Place family, we make him a promise: whatever he needs, he will receive, regardless of cost. Keeping this promise makes emergency and specialty medical care our largest expense. With the help of generous benefactors, we began a designated fund for these life-saving expenses, leading to an annual matching challenge on behalf of the neediest cats.



Injured baby Linda inspired the creation of the Linda Fund

Second TNR Initiative

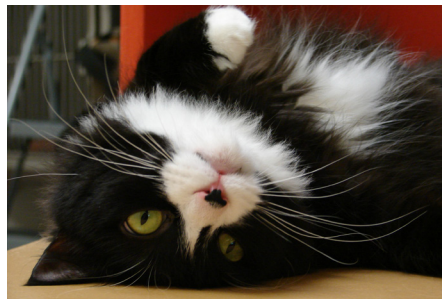
Tabby's Place received a cry for help from the Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women (EMCFW) in nearby Clinton, NJ. The prison grounds were home to a large colony of feral cats. Kindhearted inmates fed the cats, but the unspayed felines continued to birth litter after litter of kittens. Tabby's Place began a program of humanely trapping, spaying/neutering, and returning the cats. A handful of the fearless ferals were suffering from dental disease, wounds from wildlife, and other conditions, which we treated with the same stellar veterinary care we provide to each of our residents. Changing the world for the Clinton ferals stoked our passion for helping cats beyond the gates of Tabby's Place on an ongoing basis.



Emilia is one of many former ferals from our 2nd TNR initiative who has since been adopted into a happy home

1,000th Cat

FIV+ and overflowing with black-and-white, Twix was a big-eyed glamour girl. As sweet as she was beautiful, the young cat made a splash as our 1,000th resident. Despite her FIV, Twix was adopted almost instantly.



Twix

Third Paraplegic

Once again, one Tabby's Place paraplegic would pass the baton to another. Tashi's adoption was followed by a plea for help from Virginia. A tiny tabby born to a feral mother had been diagnosed with spina bifida, leaving the kitten incontinent and paralyzed in her hind end. That

little spark would become our world-famous Dot. Despite being told by veterinarians that Dot's birth defects were "incompatible with life," Tabby's Place determined to do everything we could for the little wonder. Dot did her part to explode expectations: in addition to blithely disproving the veterinarians' predictions, the little paraplegic learned to climb a 7' tall cat tree. Like her predecessors, Dot went on to find a forever home (with Tashi's adopters, no less).



Dot

Expanding the Mission

"Does this path have a heart? If it does, the path is good; if it doesn't, it is of no use."^[1]

The path that began 14 years ago has proven to "have heart." In the first decade, Tabby's Place has saved almost 1,300 cats from hopeless situations. It has been an amazing journey on which we have had the honor of knowing and caring for some amazing beings.

Most of the cats have been adopted into loving homes. For those that remained, we have provided food, medical care, love and respect, allowing each cat to let us know when it was time to let go.

We have learned that cats in need come in many "forms:" as young as one hour, as old as twenty years; often healthy and thriving, sometimes debilitated and suffering. We have cared for cats with every imaginable disease and disability. We have been amazed by their resilience and will.

We have seen what I can only describe as "miracles," where cats that were expected by the best veterinarians to live for weeks have thrived



Winky, one of the feral cats Tabby's Place neutered, nurtured and safely relocated from a barn that was scheduled to be razed

for years. I acknowledge the role of probability, but I also see that when medicine has nothing left to offer, there remains love. Love heals.

And, while we have known it in our minds, the journey has shown us that everything that has a beginning has an end. Ultimately, the sole remaining kindness is to let a being leave this world gently, surrounded by love. None of them have left our hearts, however.

Along the way, we have also seen the "other" cats: the ferals who live in the wild, just getting by. And while we felt for them, it seemed like helping them must take place on another earth. It was too messy for us.

But in 2011, one of our employees saw some cats living in a dilapidated barn she passed each morning. We decided to dip our toes into the "feral waters." Upon discovering that the owner had died and the barn was to be razed, we obtained permission from the estate to trap and remove the cats.

We began the process, visiting every day to feed and set traps. One morning Danielle returned with a cat with an obvious oral problem. Our vet examined her immediately and was horrified by what saw: the cat's mouth was so inflamed as to be virtually closed. We rushed her to an emergency vet where they determined she had cancer and there was nothing to do for her. We let her go peacefully.

I knew then that our mission would expand to help ferals. I saw it would be physically and emotionally messy. But they were cats, they were needy and Tabby's Place could help.

We have begun this effort with our "Expanding the Mission" campaign to raise funds for the construction and initial operation of an expanded medical facility. This will enable us to continue the high level of



Jonathan's longtime office mate Pepper epitomized the path with heart, outliving her terminal diagnosis by three years before leaving us with grace and gratitude

medical care for our residents, while providing the specialized environment required for the ferals.

We will be practicing a new form of TNR^[2], known as Targeted TNR (T2TNR), in which the goal is to proactively trap and sterilize all stray cats within a geographic region. It is believed that this approach is more likely to be curative than the standard approach of providing low-cost sterilization to the public.

We hope you are looking forward to continuing the journey with us as we widen our net of compassion to include the ghostly cats that live around us all. I know it will continue to be a path with heart.

^[1] *The Teachings of Don Juan: a Yaqui Way of Knowledge*, by Carlos Castaneda

^[2] Trap-Neuter-Return, a method of humanely trapping feral cats, spaying or neutering them, and returning them to safe colonies.



Mimi, one of the newest former ferals now thriving at Tabby's Place

