



New Beginnings: Barley & Betsy

Angela Townsend, Development Director

Sometimes, two old souls seem to recognize each other the moment they meet. So it happened with Barley and Betsy.

He'd been locked in a crate and abandoned in a barn. She'd been surrendered by her human.

He had an extreme case of sinus distress. She had such devastating dental disease, her inflamed mouth looked cancerous.

But when circumstances brought these seniors to Tabby's Place, Barley and Betsy radiated joy. Though suffering from serious medical issues, and despite the fact that they'd never laid eyes on one another, they bonded instantly. Betsy and Barley's gleeful affection for each other earned their room the nickname of the "Honeymoon Suite." When Betsy needed a feeding tube following laser surgery to relieve her dental agony, Barley remained at her side throughout her recovery.

Both kitties are equally enamored of humans despite their painful pasts. Betsy and Barley respond with gusto when shown even the smallest sign of love. Toothless Betsy rolls and lolls, her happy tongue sticking out further and further the happier she becomes. Tailless Barley has a deep, rumbly purr, and will let you hold him for eons – as long as you put him beside Betsy when you're done.

For all the grace they've been shown, our old souls have infinitely more to give. The best is yet to come for Betsy and Barley at Tabby's Place.



Best buds Barley and Betsy

Feral Cats Around the World Angela Townsend

Feral cats make up as much as 50% of the feline population in the U.S., and they're every bit as worthy of our love and respect as the lap-snugglers in our homes. As Tabby's Place expands our mission to nurture feral kitties, we wanted to shine a spotlight on our free-roaming friends around the world.*

*Herding cats is notoriously difficult, and counting them isn't much easier. These numbers are rough estimates; in particular, the total number of feral cats in the U.S. is regularly debated. When we first set out to compile these statistics, we expected to easily find the numbers of feral cats in each state, or at least for a good number of nations. As it turns out, state and federal governments are in many cases resistant to tracking feral cats' numbers, since knowledge implies responsibility.



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Why Do Cats... Want to be Outside? Angela Townsend

It's a soul-searching struggle for many of us who love cats: could it possibly be in any cat's best interest to remain outside? Do we really have to do the R part of TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return)?

If we want to do the most loving thing for each cat, the answer is yes. A "true feral" cat:

- Has never been socialized to



Winky, one of the cats helped by Tabby's Place's TNR work, loves his outdoor life.

people, or has not had human contact for long enough to revert to a "wild" state. Trusting humans is a learned – not innate – behavior for cats. Cats grow wilder with each generation.

- Flourishes outdoors, provided that she has reliable caretakers: her coat is well-kempt, she is in good health, and she enjoys her life. She is visibly "in her element" outdoors.
- Can live a long, healthy life in a managed colony, with a lifespan comparable to that of a pet cat.
- Is highly wary of humans and unlikely to acclimate to indoor life. Although there are certainly ferals who have learned to enjoy affection thanks to enormous patience, they are the exceptions. In most cases, the choice is between the cat's happy existence outside, and a life of cowering under a bed.
- May have kittens who can be

socialized (especially if they are under 8-12 weeks of age).

- Will behave very differently from a stray who can be re-socialized.
- Will likely be euthanized at a public shelter, since feral kitties are not friendly with humans, and are considered unadoptable.
- Has a home already: her colony. When you provide her with food and care in her beloved outdoor environment, you are showing a feral cat compassion and loving her for who she is.

Recommended Reading:

- [Feral and Stray Cats – An Important Difference](#), Alley Cat Allies
- [How to Conduct Trap-Neuter-Return](#), Alley Cat Allies
- [TNR Handbook, Neighborhood Cats](#) (see especially p. v and p. 1-2)
- [What Is a Feral Cat?](#), Neighborhood Cats
- [Feral FAQ](#), Urban Cat League

TNR Fund

Have feral cats touched your heart with their wild and wonderful ways? Do you wish you had the time and resources to do Trap-Neuter-Return on your own?

You can nurture feral cats and help them flourish by sponsoring the TNR Fund at Tabby's Place. Your monthly donation will provide food, spay/neuter surgeries and other medical care, and regular monitoring of our feral friends. We will keep you posted on our feral cat colonies with monthly updates and photos. Thank you for opening your heart to feral cats.



Sassy and Fluffy, two of the feral kittens cared for through Tabby's Place's TNR work.



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1100 US Highway 202

Ringoes, NJ 08551

(908) 237-5300

info@tabbysplace.org

Executive Director

[Jonathan Rosenberg](#)

Editor [Angela Townsend](#)

Design & Layout [Adam Sullens](#)

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Case Study: Drita, the Micro-Kitten Dr. Laura Collins, Veterinarian



Tiny Drita

Editor's note: since Tabby's Place rescues cats from hopeless situations, we regularly care for kitties with rare, serious – and often mysterious – conditions. This begins a new series on our residents' stories, from the perspective of our veterinarian.

Drita came to us at approximately 3 weeks of age, as a tiny grey ball of fluff. It took her a very long time to eat on her own. Typically, a kitten should be eating solid food by 6 weeks of age, but we had to syringe feed her until she was 13 weeks old.

At 4 months of age, when we expected her to be 4 lbs, she was 2 lbs. At 6 months of age, she would normally be about 6 lbs, but Drita is barely 3 lbs.

Sweet and cute as Drita is, we weren't sure if she was as active and playful as she should have been. In

addition, her skull shape seemed abnormal and she had a significant overbite. We were concerned she might have a disorder inhibiting her growth. So, we started a search for a diagnosis, by first checking for:

1. Liver shunt. In healthy cats, blood carries nutrients from the stomach to the liver, where they are metabolized into energy and byproducts can be eliminated. If a cat has a liver shunt, the blood bypasses the liver. Animals with liver shunts tend to be small and can suffer from hepatic encephalopathy, which can cause mental dullness. Fortunately, blood tests revealed Drita was unaffected.

2. Hypothyroidism. This is a common disorder in older dogs, but not in cats. When it does appear in felines, it causes stunted growth and mental dullness. Drita tested negative for this condition.

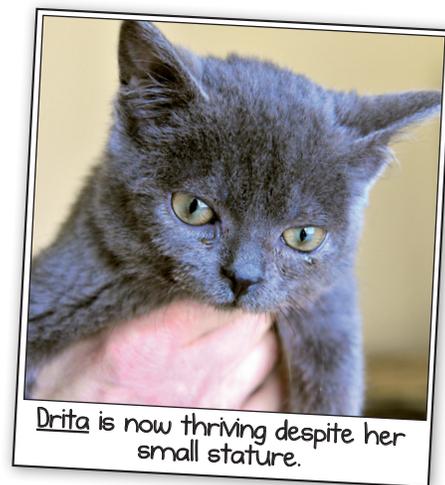
3. Hydrocephalus. A neurologic specialist agreed that Drita seemed "mentally inappropriate," and that her skull was clearly misshapen. He performed an MRI, but could not identify any cerebral abnormalities.

4. Storage diseases. In these rare congenital disorders, waste products from cellular metabolism are not eliminated, and build up in cells, causing them to become non-functional. Treatment is limited, and the long-term prognosis is poor. There is currently only one laboratory

in the country testing for these diseases, and as of this writing we are waiting for the results of Drita's test.

As we await these results, Drita is eating, playing and enjoying her life. We are planning to spay her soon, and to extract her bottom canine teeth, which are digging into the roof of her mouth when she eats due to her extreme overbite. We may never be sure what caused her symptoms, but as long as she remains healthy and happy, we'll treasure her.

Epilogue: Shortly before we went to publication, we received the results of Drita's final test: she does not have a storage disease. Having done all we can to rule out serious conditions, we now believe that our mysterious kitten is simply "unique." Drita is now also on hold to be adopted. Thank you for helping to make this possible.



Drita is now thriving despite her small stature.



Three years after her rescue, Linda is thriving thanks to big-hearted people like you.

The Linda Fund is Coming

Spring has sprung, flowers are opening – and so, we hope, is your heart for needy cats.

In a few weeks, you'll have the chance to double your love for cats in desperate medical need, when the Linda Fund Matching Challenge starts.

When you donate, your gift will be doubled by generous benefactors – which means your love will go twice as far for the cats who need you most.

The Linda Fund provides emergency and specialty veterinary care for cats with extraordinary medical needs (like both Betsy and Barley on page 1 of this newsletter). Watch your email for the launch of the Linda Fund Matching Challenge – and thank you for loving our cats so generously.



Age is Just a Number: Choosing the Right Cat for Your Home

Angela Townsend

From hours-old [McKinley](#) to 17-year-old [Ringo](#), we've learned that love can strike at any age. When you're ready to grow your feline family, consider the following:

	Kitten (<1 Year)	Adult (1-9 Years)	Older Adult (10+ Years)
PERSONALITY	<p>Contrary to popular opinion, young cats are not blank slates with moldable personalities. Kittens have their own basic dispositions from birth. In a very young kitten, this temperament may not be fully evident— so you can't know exactly how she's going to turn out. However, adopting a young cat affords the opportunity to teach basic behaviors like scratching appropriate areas, not playing too roughly, etc.</p>	<p>With well-established personalities, "what you see is what you get" in adult cats. Grown-up cats already know who they are, so you can get a good sense of your new family member's personality, and see how good she may be with other kitties, children etc.</p>	<p>Like the beloved grandpa at the head of the table, a senior cat has nothing to prove – and generally a great deal of love to give. Comfortably settled in their ways, senior kitties are unlikely to be much different at home from what you see in the shelter.</p>
HEALTH	<p>If you adopt from Tabby's Place, your little one will have all age-appropriate vaccinations, plus spay/neuter surgery, covered. Otherwise, be prepared to provide oodles of initial veterinary care. (See our past newsletter for a glimpse of average costs.) As with any cat, you'll need to bring your new kitten to the vet annually for a checkup and vaccines. Since kittens are fragile, children should be supervised when handling them.</p>	<p>Since the average feline lifespan is 13-17 years, you can look forward to many healthy years with your adult cat. Chronic conditions such as heart disease and urinary tract disease begin appearing in adulthood, so shelters can tell you about your potential adoptee's known issues. Annual veterinary visits help to keep your kitty in fine fettle.</p>	<p>Senior kitties need a bit of extra TLC. Whether or not they have chronic conditions, cats over age 7-10 should see the veterinarian twice each year. Since cats can live to 20 and beyond, be prepared to provide long-term care for such age-related issues as kidney disease, dental issues or arthritis.</p>
ACTIVITY LEVEL	<p>Fasten your seatbelts – you're in for madcap antics, laughter and endless energy. One of the responsibilities of adopting a youngster is playing with her - often. And be vigilant: even if you "kitten-proof" your home, kittens get into trouble if left unattended, and they are experts at finding/eating/playing with things that could harm them.</p>	<p>The tornado of kittenhood may be over, but adult cats still sparkle with energy. A grown kitty will not require the same level of 24/7 vigilance as the nonstop kitten whose "job" is to get into everything. But, your adult cat will still look to you for regular playtime, and he'll benefit from exercise with interactive toys.</p>	<p>Your senior kitty isn't (necessarily) ready for the rocking chair. Even elderly cats enjoy playtime, albeit at a lower frequency. While they still have plenty of zest, older cats will sleep – and snuggle – more often than youngsters, making them an ideal match for slower-paced households. Seniors are less likely to get into trouble or to trip you underfoot.</p>



Some homes are raring to go for rambunctious kittens like [Murray](#) and [Bolt](#).



Others will find themselves better suited to a healthy senior like [Posey](#).



Adult [Sabrina](#) has many years of love and liveliness ahead.

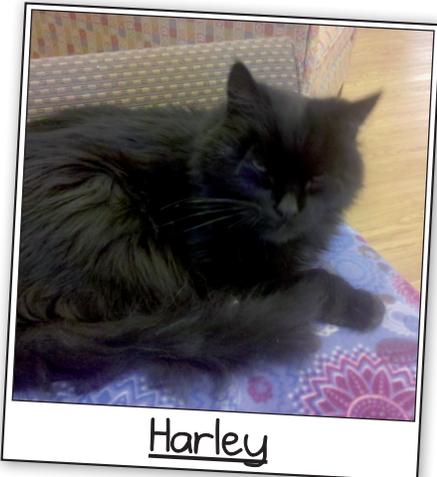
- Recommended Reading:**
- [Should I get an adult cat or kitten for my first cat?](#), About Cats
 - [What Kind of Cat Should I Get](#), About Cats
 - [Cat Adoption Checklist](#), Petfinder



Forever Loved: Harley

Ginny Carman, Administrative Assistant

Looking back, I'm not sure why Harley and I bonded so much. I would come into the office, and as I sat down he would come over and put his front paws on my lap. At first I would just move backwards and he would jump up.



Harley

He would go on my desk and sit in front of my computer screen. He spent hours there, and many pictures were taken of what looked like him checking my work. Maybe Jon sent him to spy on me? I was always leaning to one side and getting a neck ache, so I put a bed on my desk. But Harley would have none of it; the front of the computer was his spot.

I started to look forward to Harley coming over and sitting on my desk. As time went on, he got more fragile. Now he would tap my leg, but I would have to pick him up. It was too hard for him to jump up, and I was afraid he would fall. I would always put him down before I left the room.

As Harley got older, he didn't do much grooming, and he was shaved down to a lion cut. He still had all his hair on his head and legs and a little puff at the end of his tail. He was known as the Silver Fox at this point.

Unfortunately, Harley got ring worm and had to endure a long, difficult treatment. When he was cleared, I was afraid he thought it was my fault, because he didn't come by my desk for quite a while. He would love the attention from me, but not as before.

Then came bad news and good news. Harley started coming back to hitting my leg and looking up to me with his funny little face...but he was diagnosed with a fast-moving bladder cancer. It was very hard seeing him knowing the end was near.



Harley keeping watch on Ginny's desk.

Of course, in Tabby's Place fashion, Harley got the best medical attention before crossing the bridge. He died peacefully in my arms, with, of course loving staff and volunteers around saying good-bye. It is sad, always, to say goodbye, but especially when he was your loyal buddy. I still miss Harley, and he will forever be in my heart.

Happy Endings: Harvest

Skylar W., Adopter, Age 14

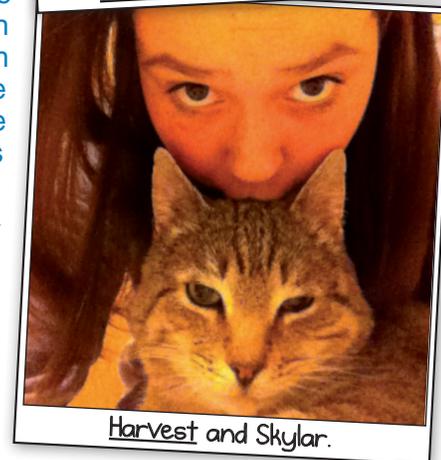
We adopted our brown tabby cat, Harvest, on Feb. 23, 2013 - and I was in love from first meow!

After I brought Harvest home from Tabby's Place, I spent my next few days sitting on the floor in my bathroom so he would get more used to me. After a week, he was up and around the house. One day, I even found him in a clean pot we had left on the counter, which was one of the big signs he was very, very comfortable.

Harvest has a whole attitude of his own, and he is loving and funny. He constantly wants to snuggle up next to



Harvest at Tabby's Place.



Harvest and Skylar.

Continues on Page 6...

When You Want To Do More

Your heart aches for every cat you read about in every last Facebook post, email or story...and you wish you could somehow save them all.

Often folks think that the best way to help is to start a sanctuary of their own. To help guide people with such big hearts and dreams, Jonathan has created this chart to help you determine how you can have the biggest impact for cats.

For additional information from Jonathan, based on his experience in founding Tabby's Place, click [here](#) for a full PowerPoint presentation.

So what can I do? Money is limiting factor

Spare Money	What You Can Do
None	Volunteer at a local shelter; foster cats/kittens; fund raise for local shelter; TNR
\$10,000	Donate to local shelter; foster special needs cats
\$100,000	Donate to local shelter (with eye to join Board, help set policies); start foundation (e.g., to fund special needs at shelters)
\$1,000,000	Build small shelter; start foundation to sponsor research

...Continues from Page 5

you or sit on your lap. He is also hilarious! When I adopted him I was told that he had no teeth because he was allergic to the plaque on them. Because of that, sometimes his tongue sticks out! He chases his tail and even a plastic ball. You could say he kind of acts like a dog.

Every morning, when someone in the house wakes up,

Harvest will follow the person and meow... meow... meow until you get out a can of his favorite treat, wet cat food. Even though he has no teeth, Harvest can still eat dry food, but he makes a mess eating it.

I'm so glad I adopted Harvest. Now I have a new friend that will sit with me while I read and sit on my brother's lap while he plays video games. I love him!

Where Are They Now? The Flower Girls

Angela Townsend

One by one, our feisty Georgia "Flower Girls" have been getting plucked by fortunate adopters.

Mama Gerber was first out the garden gate. At Tabby's Place, the gentle torbie struggled with a reluctance to eat and a habit of plucking out her own fur. We jokingly wondered if this was due to the stress of raising four teenage daughters – and we may have been right. Since finding her forever home, Gerber – now called Mako – has had "no more eating problems," writes her adopter. "She seems very happy here, and we are so happy to have her as part of our family. My daughters always say we chose the 'right' cat. But I think she really chose us."

Next was Gerber's tabby daughter Petunia. Initially the most timid Flower Girl, Petunia has become, in the words of her adoptive dad, "an absolute joy." Joining fellow Tabby's Place alumna Skye and big brother Sebastian, Petunia has "quickly taken over our house. She seems very happy and is becoming more and more affectionate with us. We take such pleasure in watching her discover her new environment. We are grateful to Tabby's Place for making Petunia's adoption such an enjoyable experience."

Just this month, Petite Pansy found a home with the tender patience she needs. Her new mom writes, "Pansy is adjusting to her new home a bit slowly, but she is beginning to get used to us. I enjoy working with her, and we look forward to a long and happy relationship. Many thanks to Nancy (Tabby's Place's volunteer behavioral specialist) for her advice. We believe her suggestions have helped Pansy come out of hiding and begin to bond with us."

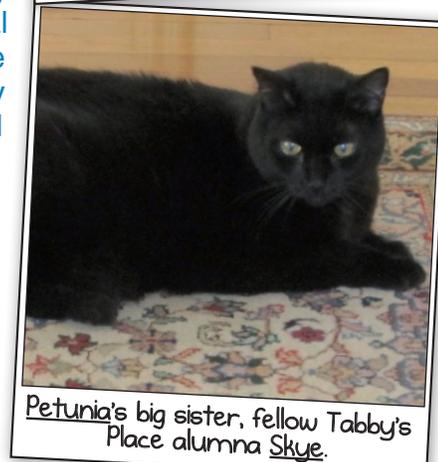
And what of the two final sisters, fireflower-feisty Violet and Daisy? These gorgeous girls still await their forever families. Might you have room in your heart for a stunning torbie – or two? We look forward to going back to the garden in a future issue with news of Daisy and Violet's adoptions.



Gerber loves her little girls.



Petunia dreaming in her forever home.



Petunia's big sister, fellow Tabby's Place alumna Skye.



Daisy



Violet



Pansy cuddles up in her new home.

