



Editor's note: This quarter, we're turning the newsletter over to the brave, beautiful cats at the heart of Tabby's Place: our Special Needs crew. It's Tabby's Place's unique calling to care for kitties with nowhere else to turn, and cats with delicate medical or emotional needs stand at the head of that line. We're inspired by their courage, their love, and their unsinkable joy. We hope you'll cherish them, too.

New Beginnings

New Beginnings: Scoots

Angela Hartley, Development Director

She's got big eyes and big dreams, and she's ready to take a big bite out of the future.

But little Scoots was almost denied the bright future every kitten deserves. At just three weeks of age, the silvery kitten was bitten by a dog. Her injuries were so severe, Scoots was taken to a veterinarian for euthanasia. But even in her



Sweet, fearless Scoots

agony, Scoots exuded a super-sized love for life. The vet took a big leap of faith, opting to treat Scoots at her own expense.

Scoots would survive...but she still had one big problem. Her injuries left her paralyzed in her hind end. Even with eyes like oceans and a heart bigger than the sky, Scoots faced a steep climb. Could the tiny triumph scoot her way to a safe haven?

Tabby's Place is always scooting towards cats in hopeless situations, and so we sped to Scoots with arms wide open as soon as we heard her story. Alive and adored, Scoots soared – make that scooted – into the future.

Today, Scoots can be seen as a silver bullet, zipping around our Community Room at meteoric



Meet Scoots

speeds. The giddy kitten makes the most of every moment, pouncing on poof balls and purring her heart out in laps all day. She has no sense that she's "broken" – and, through her love and grit, she's making us human beings a little more whole.

Your love is the motor for all that we do, especially when it comes to Special Needs superstars like Scoots. Thank you for being there for each little cat in a very big way!

State of the Special Needs

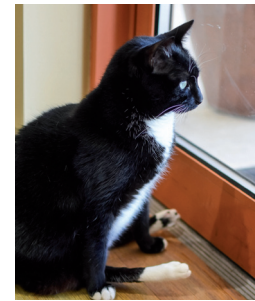
When you think of Tabby's Place, your mind may fill with the faces of Special Needs cats like Scoots, Pepita and Olive. Special Needs kitties compose less than half of our population at any given time, but they're our soul and inspiration – and many of them find that Tabby's Place becomes their home for life. Here's a current snapshot of our Special Needs family¹:

¹ Note that total does not add up to our total number of Special Needs cats, many of whom have multiple conditions.

² As of 05/24/2019

- A.H.

Condition	# of Tabby's Place Residents ²
Allergies	2
Arthritis	6
Behavioral Issues	10
Cancer	8
Heart Disease	4
Chronic Renal Failure	6
Diabetes	7
Elderly	36
FelV	1
FIV	13
FLUTD	5
Hyperthyroidism	4
IBD	7
Inappropriate Elimination	9
Incontinence	8
Kittens	16
Neurological Issues	4
Paraplegia	5
Other	16



← Zesty Olive is paraplegic



← Gentle Pepita is incontinent

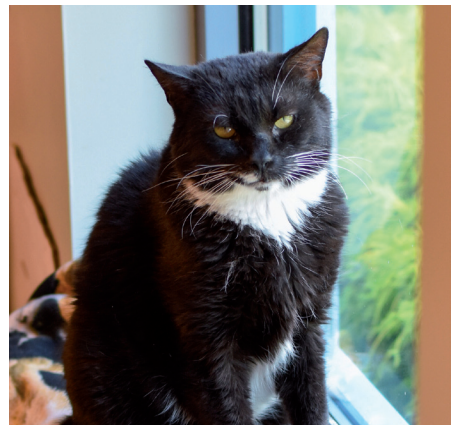
Sponsor a Sweetheart

You can virtually adopt one of the neediest cats at Tabby's Place when you become a Special Needs sponsor. Each month, your donation will provide life-saving care for a lucky little one. We'll send you regular email updates and photos of your special cat.

Two of our cats are especially eager for your affection. Shifty and Tux are still awaiting their first sponsors. Will you be the one who steps up to support them?

Click on each of these sweet boys' names (below) or their photos to learn more about them – and to

change their lives starting today. Thank you for loving our Special Needs fellas. - A.H.



Tux has heart disease, a pelvic fracture and chronic constipation



Shifty has severe dental disease and diabetes Shifty has severe dental disease and diabetes

Most Common Special Needs

The term sounds scary. But you just might have more room in your heart, home and budget for a "Special Needs" kitty than you think.

"Special Needs" encompasses a spectrum of situations. Consider these common conditions, the most frequent claims for a large pet health insurance company in 2018:

1. Intestinal issues: Say the very word "gastrointestinal," and most adopters shake their heads. We understand; the prospect of explosive diarrhea is less than enchanting. But cats with chronic GI issues can live happy, healthy (and tidy) lives with proper care. Even a troubling-sounding diagnosis like inflammatory bowel disease can be regulated with a prescription diet and/or affordable medications.



Abe
(Intestinal Issues)

2. Diabetes mellitus: We won't downplay it; diabetes is one of the most costly, labor-intensive conditions to manage. Between blood glucose monitoring, insulin injections, and prescription food, diabetic cats require labors of love. But a diabetes diagnosis is not a formula for heartbreak. With proper care, diabetic cats can live long lives; we've known many who have lived well for 10+ years after diagnosis. Although most diabetics require carefully timed insulin injections twice each day, some go into remission, thriving on prescription diets alone.



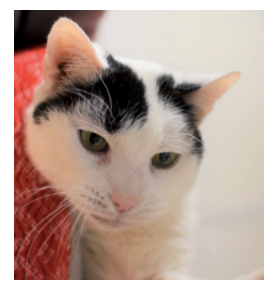
Reese
(Diabetes mellitus)

3. Hyperthyroidism: By age 10, over 10% of cats will join the hyperthyroid club. Fortunately, this common disease is very treatable: a daily pill, which can also be compounded into an ointment applied to the ear, successfully regulates the thyroid. Cats can also have a one-time radioactive iodine treatment, which permanently cures the disease.



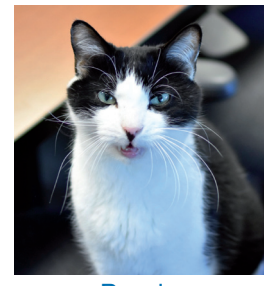
Denni
(Hyperthyroidism)

4. Urinary issues: Like intestinal matters, pee problems tend to send adopters fleeing. While we understand that most folks won't choose a cat who avoids the litter box, many chronic urinary issues are easy to handle. The cluster of conditions called Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) can often be managed with a strict special diet that prevents the formation of urinary crystals. Most of these cats will require no medication or surgical intervention, and treating their condition will usually resolve their litter box issues.



Angelo
(Urinary Issues)

5. Lymphoma: The most common form of feline cancer, lymphoma is caused by a proliferation of lymphocytes, cells that occur in the immune system. Cats can



Puzzle
(Lymphoma)

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develop lymphoma in almost any organ, most commonly the chest cavity or intestines. Lymphoma is often treatable. Many cats respond well to chemotherapy and enjoy a good quality of life throughout their treatments.

It takes an extraordinary person to adopt a cat battling cancer, but the bond you share will be everlasting.

If you've ever thought, "Only heroes adopt Special Needs cats," maybe it's time to reconsider your own valor. - A.H.

Special Seasons: Kittens & Seniors

Certain life stages find cats especially vulnerable. At Tabby's Place, we consider early kittenhood (under 8 weeks) and age 12+ to be Special Needs unto themselves.

Newborn kittens' cuteness makes them a magnet for love – and that's a good thing, since they're desperately delicate. That fragility can be devastating for kittens without their mamas. Mortality rates for orphaned kittens are estimated at 15-40%. This dreadful statistic rises over 60% for kittens with low birth weights.

That makes "bottle babies" a major category of Special Needs cats at Tabby's Place, where our staff works around the clock to nurture newborns. Tending to orphaned infants involves feeding



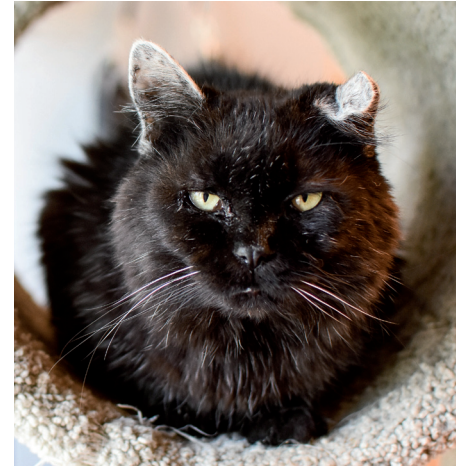
Newborn kittens like Dahlia are almost as fragile as they are cute

them via bottle or tube; keeping them clean; and helping them to eliminate waste.

Since tiny kittens can quickly go from "A-OK" to "acutely ill," our staff must also be vigilant for the slightest signs of illness before they turn deadly. Quite simply, keeping kittens alive is a 24-hour-a-day job. During the frenzy of "kitten season," it's typical to see both love and weariness on the faces of our foster parents.

Kittens who conquer the perils of babyhood can look forward to many easier years. They age out of their "Special Need" for the next decade or so, rejoining the Special Needs crew in old age. Different veterinarians choose varying milestones, but at Tabby's Place, we consider 12 years to be "elderly."

Thanks to improved nutrition and veterinary advances, cats can enjoy many happy golden years. (The current record for "world's oldest cat" stands at 38 years.) We're unapologetically partial to seniors at Tabby's Place, where



Jupiter is a beloved Tabby's Place senior

snuggly oldsters fill our Lobby – and any visiting human laps – with love, mellow good spirits, and a surprising amount of feisty fun, too.

Like kittens, elderly cats need extra monitoring for the merest signs of illness. Cats are notoriously stoic, hiding treatable issues like hyperthyroidism and kidney disease until they're well advanced. It can save them suffering and extend their lives to know the subtle symptoms of age-related diseases, such as weight loss and increased thirst and urination. In addition, a vet visit every six months, with annual blood work and X-rays, can be life-saving.

Age is not a disease, but it can be demanding. Your generosity helps to meet the darling "demands" of every Special Needs cat at Tabby's Place.

If you have a special heart for our kittens or seniors, please sponsor the Kitten Fund or Elderly Care Fund. We'll send you updates on different babies or oldies each month, and your kindness will help cats to thrive in every age and stage.



Elder statescats like Jimmy benefit from more frequent blood work and check-ups

Special Needs for Seniors

It's easy to think of Special Needs cats as "needy" – and they do need extra care. But our bravest cats regularly remind us that they're also in the business of meeting needs. Truth be told, Special Needs cats nurture us more than we could ever repay.

One fabulous cadre of Special Needs cats hits the road on a mission of love every week. Tabby's Place's Aged to Purrfection Program brings cats like Anka, Carrot and Rose to nursing homes and rehabilitation centers to deliver mega-doses of joy and encouragement.

It leaves us speechless to see how these "imperfect, needy" cats

can break down walls of pain and loneliness. Stafford, an elderly tabby with diabetes and FIV, is gifted at seeking out lonely, sorrowful nursing home residents. One more than one occasion, a downcast face has lit up with delight once Stafford settles into his or her lap.

Meanwhile, Anka excels as a comedian, his Disney-character face and frantic antics drawing belly laughs from friends who haven't guffawed in a long time. Although he was struck by a car and lost the use of his back legs, Anka is so full of fun, he simply must share it.

Tabby's Place never forgets that we only exist because of love – yours, and that of the extraordinary



It's always a special day when our [kittens](#) visit the senior homes

cats in our care. Please donate, or, even better, sponsor an Aged to Purrfection kitty by clicking on one of their photos. You can keep the kindness flowing from cats to humans and back in an endless circle of love. – A.H.



[Carrot](#) is a tender friend to all he meets



[Anka](#) is a special favorite among many residents



[Rose](#) is gifted at bringing joy

Forever Loved

Forever Loved: [Juliana](#)

Jonathan Rosenberg, Founder & Executive Director

Juliana was an elderly, tiny lady who paced around the nursing home endlessly, complaining all the while about the other residents. What? How did this find its way into the Tabby's Place Newsletter?

It is natural for humans to anthropomorphize, and we do it frequently at Tabby's Place, usually imagining that we work in a senior living facility. Sammy was ancient and obviously the "old guy walking around the Lobby with his IV pole in tow and his bathrobe carelessly open." Hillary, a feisty 21 year old,

was the tough grandmother, who "sat on the porch chewing tobacco and badmouthing the kids who were visiting."

And, you have met Juliana. She was a crusty gray and white cat who lived in the Community Room. She spent many hours circling the large table in the middle of the room, grumbling loudly to herself. Her grumbling would diminish as her path led her away from other cats, only to increase as she rounded the table and the cats, once again, came into view.



Loud, lovable [Juliana](#)

I always imagined that she was angry with us for the other felines in the building, and that she treated

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each loop as an opportunity for us to “get it right.” But, as she came back to her starting point, she was once again disillusioned and disappointed to find that there were still cats in the room.

She eventually moved her pacing from the floor to the top of the conference table, at least while we were holding meetings. She also softened her complaining, since there were people who could give her attention. She would move from

person to person, bestowing treasures to each of us as she saw fit.

Most often each of us received a small “nose kiss,” though sometimes she would pass people by (not worthy?) or stop to sample some food. It was difficult to have a serious meeting, though the atmosphere was very enjoyable.

I wondered whether board and political meetings wouldn't be improved by a “Juliana,” but I guessed that cats weren't welcome in, say, the GM board room or US Cabinet

meetings. Oh, well. Their loss.

Juliana's energy seemed endless. But it wasn't. She started to slow down as her kidneys failed. I think it was fortunate that her decline was rapid. She was not particularly stoic and did not appreciate being “cared for.” After all, that treatment was for the “old cats” who needed it.

Juliana left us in April of this year. It was discomfiting to see her drained of energy and at peace. I miss her every day. Our meetings have become quite boring.

Ask the Behaviorist

Special Social Needs: How We Tame Feuding Felines

Nancy Meyer, Feline Behavioral Consultant, [Volunteer](#), [Benefactor](#) & [Adopter](#)

The wild ancestors of domestic cats were solitary hunters, so it is not surprising that tensions often arise among cats living together. Free roaming cats have large territories to disperse into if tensions build. Cats in Tabby's Place suites don't have that option.

In some cases, aggression becomes a “Special Need” unto itself. Cats like [Rufus](#) and [Knickers](#), for instance, require both behavioral medication and interventions to prevent serious fighting. Inter-cat violence can jeopardize a cat's chance for adoption and create a tense, unhealthy environment in a suite.

To make an accurate assessment of a cat's behavior, it's nec-

essary to have as much data as possible. We have forms located throughout Tabby's Place, which our staff and volunteers complete for later review and addition to a cat's record.

Fortunately, there is “treatment” for social Special Needs. At Tabby's Place, such treatment includes:

1. Natural, pharmaceutical and pheromone therapies: We install plug-in pheromone [diffusers](#) in areas where we see conflict. Calming [collars](#), which contain natural substances such as lavender, are a good first line of defense when dealing with feline aggression. If we see that additional help is needed, we might add in pharmaceuticals.

Medications such as clomipramine and fluoxetine are valuable tools to put a cat in a more relaxed frame of mind. In some cases, this is the only way we can get the cat to be more relaxed in his environment, so he will be able to accept behavior modification.

2. Timesharing: On a rotating basis, our aggressive cats enjoy brief stays in a small solo suite. Giving cats alone time can help make



He was once one of our most aggressive cats, but today [Knickers](#) is thriving as an only kitty in his forever home

them less reactive when returned to their suite.

This room also allows us to introduce these cats to potential adopters in a peaceful, distraction free environment.

Cat-aggressive cats tend to be quite intelligent and interactive with humans. When a cat is in our timeshare suite, we take advantage of this one-on-one time for training purposes.

3. Behavior modification: This complex topic merits its own article. We'll tackle training thoroughly in our next issue.

Like any Special Needs, behavioral issues require patient, personalized treatment. We're grateful to be able to help these complicated, charming cats.



Medication and behavior modification are helping [Rufus](#) to live in peace with his neighbors

Happy Endings: Athena

Rose Womelsdorf, [Adopter](#)

Editor's note: Tabby's Place was blessed to have over 40 of our phenomenal adopters submit their "true love" stories to Petco's 2018 "Home for the Holidays" contest. Two of those stories were selected, winning \$35,000 in life-saving funds for the Tabby's Place cats. We featured the first winning story last quarter, and we're honored to share the second here. – A.H.

It was about three in the morning when I found Athena. At the time, I was working nights for Amazon, packing box after box after box after box in the sprawling warehouse just outside of Allentown, Pennsylvania. My nights off felt long, lonely, and isolating. Working the night shift will do that to a person. For fun, I would often drive around on back roads by myself, alone with my thoughts and my headlights, surrounded by dark and endless cornfields. One night, instead of my usual long drive, I scrolled through a pet adoption site.

I tweaked the filters to see only senior cats, ones with Special Needs. Then her picture stopped

my scroll. She was beautiful, with expressive eyes and striking tabby marks, but she had a grim, determined look. Almost mean. Like she'd been hurt, she expected to be hurt again, and she was through with being sad about it and had switched over to being angry.

According to the description, this cat had been at the shelter a few years, and was about 13 years old. When I went in to meet her, some of the well-meaning volunteers exchanged looks. "We've got so many cats, even if you don't like her... maybe a younger cat? A more playful cat? This cat... well, she bit one of us once... and the vet can't figure out why she has such terrible stomach problems..."

I brought the cat home and she growled constantly. She did not want to be touched. She did not want anyone within ten feet of the little cardboard box I set up for her in the bathroom, lined with a soft towel. But every night, I was there and she was there. Her GI issues cleared up on their own. She gained weight. I started to pet her. A few minutes here, a few minutes there. Gradually, she stopped growling and tensing up her body when I walked by. Slowly, she started venturing out of her cardboard lair.

I changed, too. Left the warehouse, and started a business. Reunited with the kindly man who'd been patiently waiting for me to quit it with my own version of growling. These days, Athena sleeps with us. She demands to be petted the

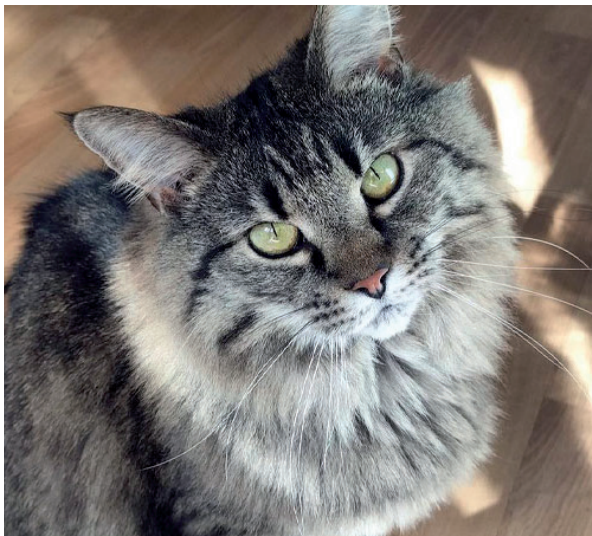


[Athena](#) and her adoring mom

second we come home. As you can see from the photo, she still won't really let us pick her up... but she purrs non-stop when we brush her soft fur.

Athena was the little friend I needed in a dark time. It's been such a joy to see her blossom late in life into a friendly, loving creature who could trust again. Watching her gradual transformation over the years has given me hope, and made me believe that with enough time, patience, and love, things can change for the better. Cats and people alike.

Athena is seventeen now, and I know she won't last forever. But the things she taught me will. Keep your heart open, and good will come to you. It might not come immediately, but it'll come: with time, patience, and love.



Beautiful [Athena](#), formerly known as Rosemary

