

2016

Annual Report



The Merrimack River
Feline Rescue Society
Caring for Cats in Need



**“True giving happens
when we give from
the heart.”
Muhammad Ali**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Our Mission and Commitments . . .	1
Adoption Program	2
Spay/Neuter and Low-Cost Programs	6
Veterinary Assistance Programs . . .	8
Other Programs	10
Thank You to Our Supporters . . .	11
Financial Report	12
Staff and Board of Directors	13

Our Mission

The Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society is a nationally recognized, nonprofit, volunteer-driven organization committed to ensuring the health and welfare of feral and domestic cats and kittens by promoting proactive, compassionate, no-kill programs.

Our Commitments

- We will be strong, passionate advocates for the humane treatment of cats.
- We will treat cats in our care humanely, and with compassion.
- We will respond to requests for assistance from our colleagues and communities promptly and courteously, and provide as much support as we can.
- We will ensure that confidential information about adopters, staff, volunteers, and supporters is kept private and is shared only to the extent necessary.
- We will support and celebrate the activities and successes of our colleagues.
- We will regard our mistakes as lessons that give us the opportunity to improve our ability to achieve our mission.
- We will share our knowledge of MRFRS operations, policies, and history freely with our colleagues, so as to improve operational efficiency and each other's skills.
- We will be sensitive to the impact of our words and actions on each other, on the reputation of the MRFRS, and on the ability of the MRFRS to accomplish its mission.

Through your support, 639 cats and

Adoption Program

Our Adoption Program takes in homeless cats and kittens and places them into loving homes. In FY 2016, MRFRS took in 619 cats and kittens. All were checked for wellness prior to adoption, treated for any medical conditions — and 100% were vaccinated and spayed or neutered before adoption. MRFRS is especially well known for our ability to find loving homes for older and special needs cats and kittens. Since our inception in 1992, the Adoption Program has placed over 20,138 cats and kittens.



kittens found new homes this year.

◀ Noelle

When Noelle arrived at MRFRS as a transfer from a veterinarian, she was one very sick kitten. It was later determined that she had a nasal polyp, which was successfully removed. Despite her a rough start in the world, Noelle was energetic, playful, and active at the shelter. Her adopter fell in love with her, and soon after Noelle went home, she sent us this very sweet update:

“Thanks for calling to check in on Noelle! We actually call her Dennis now — Dennis the Menace. You weren’t lying about her high energy levels! It took about a week or so for her and our other cat to get truly familiar, but they play often now and are always chasing each other around. Dennis also plays fetch — she actually is quite like a dog. Her cozy/soft side outweighs her crazy side!”

Casino ▶

Caught on satellite camera, Casino was showing up at all hours of the night on his ultimate adopter’s feral feeding station. He wasn’t the intended target of her trapping, but she ultimately caught him, after learning from her neighbors that he had been left behind by summer renters. Casino came to MRFRS initially, but was adopted by his trapper. Casino’s adopter sent us this wonderful update:

“Casino is great. We call him Kevin now and he is such a love bug! He spent the first couple days in the closet of a room upstairs or under the bed but now he is very comfortable exploring the whole house. He gets along well with Emoji whom we adopted from MRFRS in September 2015. We are so happy to have Kevin!”



Through your support, 639 cats and



Hoarding

On Wednesday, November 25, we embarked on the one of the biggest challenges we've ever faced: rescuing 67 cats and kittens living in a desperate hoarding situation in a Salisbury trailer home.

We were informed about the problem by an anonymous individual, and immediately reached out to Animal Control to confirm the report.

With so many cats needing to be removed—and Thanksgiving approaching—we needed every pair of hands possible. Our Shelter Manager Brit Fox Hover headed up the rescue effort, noting, "the response from our staff and volunteers was amazing."

kittens found new homes this year.

Complicating matters, the cats were terrified and difficult to catch, and conditions in the house were extremely dangerous and unpleasant for both the humans and the cats.

Once safely removed from the home, our attention quickly turned to ensuring the health and welfare of the 41 adult cats and 26 kittens. We worked quickly to have every animal examined by our vet, vaccinated, as well as spayed or neutered if they were large enough and healthy enough. Happily, for the most part, the entire group of cats was friendly and healthy, despite the fact that they had been living on macaroni and cheese.

This effort generated significant attention from the community, including a feature on the WBZ Evening News, and an outpouring of generosity in donations of funds and supplies from the community, as well as offers of foster homes. In addition, we were able to assist the homeowner with getting the help he needed. The ultimate happy ending is that all of these needy cats and kittens found forever homes where they now live healthy and happy lives in conditions they deserve.



With your support, 7,154 cats we

THE CATMOBILE

MRFRS's two mobile low-cost spay/neuter clinics for cats, Catmobile 1 and Catmobile 2, serve Eastern and Central Massachusetts, traveling as far south as Attleboro, as far west as Gardner, and as far north as Salisbury. Each vehicle is staffed by a veterinarian and technician, and can accommodate up to 30 cats per day. Since the inception of the Catmobile program in 2008, we've spayed or neutered just shy of 50,000 cats (49,934)! The Catmobile program serves owned cats, shelter cats, and unowned strays and ferals, all at discounted rates.



Praise from a Catmobile client:

"Walter visited the Catmobile this past year for his neuter. We got Walter from my sister back in April. Her friend had found him wandering around a pond in a wooded area with no houses around for a few miles, but could not keep him.

My sister had him for a month or two, which he spent hiding under furniture because the other cat was bullying him. When she had to move and could only take one cat, I took Walter.

He appeared to be pretty young because he was playful, but he had obviously not been neutered judging from the smell emanating from the box!

We decided to call Catmobile because the surgeries for our other two cats went well, and these people obviously care a lot about the animals with which they are dealing. Since we have 4 other cats, ranging in age from 2-15, we rather need to try to keep vet costs under control. All of the cats treated by Catmobile are happy and healthy kitties. Because we have so many, Catmobile has been a HUGE lifesaver for us financially!

I give you all the credit in the world, you have such a loaded schedule, and work long days providing this service. Thanks again!"

Amy B., Athol, Massachusetts

Other Spay/Neuter and Low-Cost Programs

Sunday Spay/Neuter Clinics & TNR Assistance

MRFRS's monthly spay/neuter clinic for feral cats, held in partnership with MSPCA Nevins Farms, are free to trappers and are run entirely by volunteers. Since 2000, these clinics have sterilized nearly 13,000 cats. In addition, MRFRS rents out humane traps for the purpose of TNR (trap-neuter-return), and will gladly provide instruction and advice on trapping, referral to low-cost or free spay/neuter services, and colony management tips. MRFRS volunteers also feed several managed feral cat colonies in the greater Salisbury area.

Mentoring "Primer Grant" Program

This past year, the MRFRS mentoring program assisted small groups around the country with growing and developing their fundraising programs, allowing them to fund targeted spay/neuter projects. Each organization received a small matching grant upon successful completion of a new fundraiser, and a mentor to help guide them through the fundraising and spay/neuter projects. This past year, MRFRS assisted 11 groups in seven states, and the funds raised will allow more than 900 cats to be spayed/neutered.

Low-Cost Rabies Vaccination and Microchip Clinics

MRFRS offers low-cost rabies and microchipping clinics to the local community three times a year. Run by shelter staff and volunteer veterinarians, the clinics are open to cats and dogs, and help ensure that everyone in our community has access to low-cost rabies vaccinations—which are required by law in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire for public health reasons. In FY 2016, we vaccinated 259 animals and microchipped 52. Since this program started in 2009, over 1,900 animals have been protected against rabies, and more than 330 have received permanent identification by microchipping.



Your contributions helped 116 sick or

Veterinary Assistance Programs

Feline Assistance Resources and Support (FARS)

MRFRS's FARS Program assists low-income pet owners when their cats need medical care for injuries or illness. FARS's goal is to give loving cat owners the chance to keep their cats, rather than surrender them to a shelter or be forced to decide to euthanize. The program is funded solely by grants and donations. This past year, these generous grants enabled us to assist 90 cats from 37 towns in Massachusetts and two towns in New Hampshire.



Captain Courageous Fund (CCF)

MRFRS's CCF was founded in memory of a feral cat named Captain, who passed away as a result of severe injuries. In his honor, the CCF assists caretakers of feral and unowned cats in getting the medical care these cats need when they are injured or ill. We helped 28 cats in these situations last year.

injured cats get the care they needed.

◀ Sheldon

In December 2015, FARS received this email from Liz E.:

"I am writing to see if you can offer any guidance or assistance in regards to my baby Sheldon. He's just turned 5 and although he seems to be happy for the most part, I've noticed he's been losing weight and seems to have increased thirst. I believe he may be developing Diabetes but I cannot afford to get him to a Vet at the moment. I'm a single Mom of one who just started to work again and money is very tight but I do not want him to suffer or get in worse shape if he is indeed sick. Sheldon is my mine and my son's world and we would be devastated if something were to happen to him."

We were able to qualify Liz for our FARS program and get Sheldon to a veterinarian, where he was diagnosed with hyperthyroidism, a disease that is generally fairly easy to control with inexpensive medication. We received the following wonderful note from Liz after Sheldon's visit:

"THANK YOU THANK YOU!!!! I'm so very grateful to you. Please know how much stress you have lifted from my shoulders!!!! Honestly I feel lighter already!"

Kyler ▶

When another area rescue group contacted CCF about an FIV+ stray cat they had dubbed Kyler, we knew we had to help. Badly injured in an attack by another unknown animal, Kyler was suffering from serious lacerations, and the rescue group was running out of funds to get him the treatment he needed. Not only was CCF able to step in to make sure Kyler's bills were covered, MRFRS was able to take him into the adoption program. Kyler was adopted this fall.



A Special Story from Our Bridge Program

MRFRS's Bridge Program assists cat owners who find themselves in difficult life situations—homelessness, domestic violence, hospitalizations, house fires or other issues—through foster care for their beloved pets. The duration of foster care ranges from several weeks to several months, and all pets are spayed or neutered, microchipped, and updated on vaccines during that time.

This past year, the Bridge Program was able to assist a woman named Aurora and her cat Mazda. In the midst of this past New England winter, Aurora unexpectedly found herself homeless. Terrified of losing Mazda and unwilling to turn him loose on the street, Aurora was living in her car with Mazda until she called MRFRS for help, initially to inquire about getting Mazda neutered. Once the Catmobile hotline staff heard Aurora's story, however, they told her about the Bridge Program. With transport help from staff and volunteers, we were able to pick Mazda up on the South Shore and get him into a foster home. This allowed Aurora to focus on finding herself safe, warm shelter; applying for jobs and looking for permanent housing. While in foster care, Mazda was neutered, received his vaccinations, and enjoyed a warm, toasty place to crash. We are thrilled to report that in May, Aurora and Mazda were reunited and are now living happily in Aurora's new apartment.



Thank You

The Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society is grateful to the following foundations, whose generous grants of services and funds have helped us fulfill our mission and commitments to cats and their guardians during this fiscal year:

Ahimsa Foundation

Animal Welfare Fund (CFC)

Banfield Charitable Trust

Bernice Barbour Foundation

Best Friends Animal Society

Bissell Pet Foundation

Carlee Charitable Trust

Foundation M

Fuller Foundation

Harpley Foundation

Institution for Savings
Charitable Foundation

Katharine Bradford
Foundation

LeBaron Foundation

Mason Foundation

Massachusetts Animal
Coalition

Newburyport Five Cents
Savings Bank

Massachusetts Animal Fund

Partners for a Better World
(COMECC)

PetSmart Charities

Red Acre Foundation

Steward Family Fund

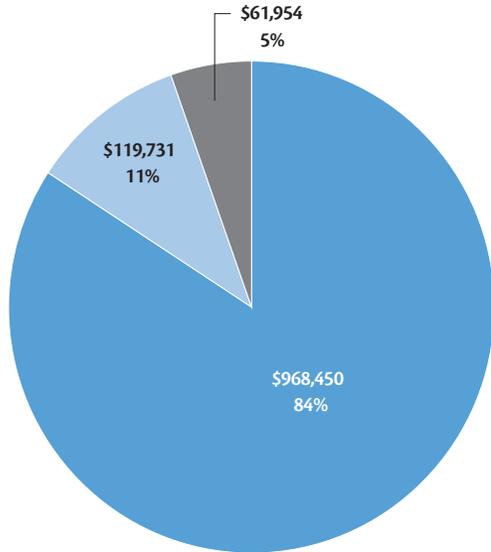
Worcester Community
Foundation

We would also like to thank the many organizations and individuals who support our annual fundraising events through sponsorships and in-kind donations of services and auction items, as well as our Founders' Alliance donors, who represent our most loyal and generous supporters.

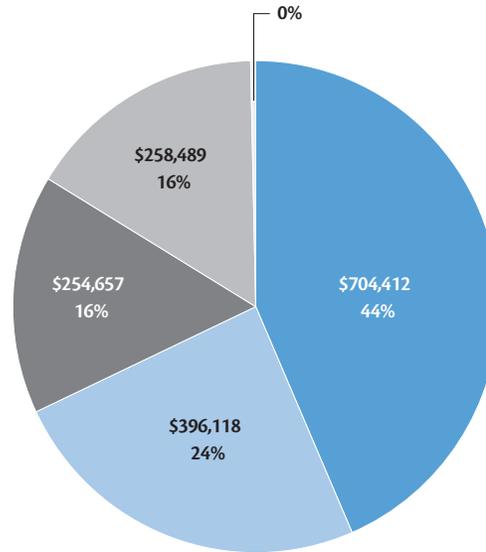


Year-End Financials

2016 Operating Expenses



2016 Contributions and Income



Staff

Executive Director

Liz Pease

Catmobile Veterinarians

Dr. Deborah Brady

Dr. Elizabeth Helton

Operations

Cindy Bernard

Jennifer Biddiscombe

Nancy Bowes

Jane Carolan

Britney Fox Hover

Kerri Gigliello

Patty Lyon

Stephanie Lyon

Sara Morandi

Gaye Piechowiak

Janet Rogers

Jennifer Sanchez-Gaudet

Maryann Skinnion

Jamie Viator

Melissa Witherspoon

Board of Directors

Adrienne Linnell, President

Lisa Finkel, Vice President

Lynda Schnare, Treasurer

Mary Kilpatrick, Clerk

Stacy LeBaron, At Large

Tara Becker

Joe Bell

Jennifer Hickman

Patte Grimes

James Lagoulis

Gail Lynch

Melissa Mack

Scott Mattheson

AJ Nadkarni



To our Loyal Donors and Supporters,

We are pleased to share these program and financial results for FY 2016 with you. By a number of measures, we had a successful and productive year, with adoptions experiencing a 28% increase, our Catmobiles nearing the milestone of treating 50,000 cats, and a generous bequest bolstering our financial stability.

I am continually gratified and humbled by the commitment and passion not only of our staff, Board, and volunteers, but also of our many supporters in the community. Last year, thanks to your enthusiasm on social media, we won 10,000 pounds of kitty litter in a contest where we competed against a significantly larger organization! That litter went a long way toward making life better for our kitties...and toward reducing our expenses for the year. We were amazed, too, by the outpouring of donations that followed the story of the large hoarding case we discovered on Thanksgiving Eve (see page 4). To have all of those cats find supportive and loving new homes so quickly is truly a testament to the open hearts of our adopters.

As we head into our 25th year, we pledge to continue to do all we can for cats and kittens in need, as well as for the people who love and care for them. With your support, we can continue to make the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society one of New England's most effective feline welfare organizations.

On behalf of all of us—including the cats—thank you!

Sincerely,

Liz Pease

Executive Director

PS. We have some exciting things planned to celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2017...stay tuned for details!

MRFRS was founded in 1992, in response to the growth in the free-roaming cat population along the Merrimack River in Newburyport. We began a trap, neuter and return (TNR) program for these cats with feeding stations where they were fed twice a day. The 300 cats originally living on the waterfront have today dwindled to just a handful. In 1993, we opened our first adoption center and then, in 2003, moved to our current cageless facility. In 2000, we started offering free monthly spay/neuter clinics for feral cats, and in 2008, we launched our Catmobile program to provide convenient and affordable spay/neuter services in over 30 locations across Eastern and Central Massachusetts. All told, MRFRS has helped more than 109,000 cats and kittens in our 24 years of work.



**63 Elm Street (Route 110) • Salisbury MA, 01952
978-462-0760 • info@mrfrs.org • www.mrfrs.org
Catmobile Hotline: 978-465-1940 • www.catmobile.org**