

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.

## Salisbury Adoption Center

63 Elm Street  
(Route 110 East)  
Salisbury, MA 01952  
978-462-0760

## Adoption Hours

Sunday & Monday:  
closed

Tuesday & Wednesday:  
11:00am - 4:00pm

Thursday:  
4:00pm - 7:00pm

Friday & Saturday  
11:00am - 4:00pm

Stop in anytime we're open, or, for an appointment outside of our regular hours, email [adoptioncounselor@mrfrs.org](mailto:adoptioncounselor@mrfrs.org).

Visit our cats online anytime at [mrfrs.org](http://mrfrs.org) - click on Meet the Cats!

## Catmobile Hotline

Monday - Friday  
10:00am - 4:00pm

978-465-1940

or anytime at  
[catmobile.org](http://catmobile.org)  
[catmobile@mrfrs.org](mailto:catmobile@mrfrs.org)

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# Cat Currents

## Happy Tails: Jarvis



In early December 2014, we took in a starving, matted local stray cat. Named Jarvis by staff, we knew this sweet boy was something special when he sat placidly purring as we shaved his matts and gently pulled the burrs from his fur. It seemed that this older gentleman knew he was in good hands with the caring staff and volunteers at MRFRS.

Dr. Sam, our volunteer vet, estimated Jarvis was about 15 years old – and she also discovered that he had hyperthyroidism – a very common (and usually very treatable) condition. We started him on medication and began looking for a home for this wonderful boy. Sadly, even though hyperthyroidism is so treatable, and rarely affects a cat's life span if kept under

control, most adopters simply overlook our older kitties – especially those with health issues.

So, at age 15 and on meds, Jarvis's prospects didn't look great – until Rebecca walked through our door and decided to give this sweet, handsome senior boy a chance! A few months later, we received this awesome email from Rebecca:

"I adopted +15 year old Jarvis about 2 months ago...He is doing well and spends most of his time sleeping (when you said he was a bed guy, you weren't kidding!). If he sleeps less than 20 hours a day, I would be surprised...He particularly likes fuzzy things, putting his nose on them and kneading. I included a picture of him kneading on my son's giant stuffed snake... I think this photo is particularly hilarious because it looks like the snake is licking Jarvis.

The kids (4 & 6 years old) were very excited to 'save' him and give him a good home for as long as he has. My daughter wanted to name him Fluffy but my son insisted that was a girl-cat name, so they compromised on Mr. Fluff. It seems to fit him actually, considering his love of all things fluffy. Also, it is cute and dignified at the same time, just like he is.

Thank you for all the wonderful work you do helping cats like Jarvis/Mr. Fluff find homes."

And thank you, Rebecca & family, for giving a cat like Jarvis a chance!

## SAVE THE DATES

- **MAGGIE'S FARM DINING TO DONATE NIGHT: Monday, July 20th, 4:00 – 9:00 pm.**

Bring your family and friends, enjoy a delicious meal, with 10% of the evening's proceeds benefitting MRFRS...there will be a 50/50 raffle, too!

- **FALL YARD SALE: Saturday, September 12th, 9:00 am – 2:00 pm** on the front lawn of the adoption center

- **FALL PLANT SALE: Saturday, September 19th, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm**

We'll have mums galore in gorgeous fall colors, with proceeds benefitting MRFRS.

- **FALL RABIES & MICROCHIPPING CLINIC: Saturday, October 17th, 9:00am-noon** at the Hilton Senior Center, 43 Lafayette

Road (Route 1) in Salisbury. Open to cats and dogs from any town. Rabies vaccinations are \$10, microchips are \$15 (including registration).

- **21st ANNUAL FUR BALL: Saturday, October 24th 6:00 – 10:00 pm** at Blue Ocean Music Hall, 4 Oceanfront North, Salisbury. A festive evening of food and drink plus live and silent auctions. For tickets, visit our website: [www.mrfrs.org](http://www.mrfrs.org).



# Letter from the President

Dear Supporters,

## 100,000 cats and counting!

That's the number of cats on which the Merrimack River Feline Rescue Society has had an impact since our founding in 1992. If you lined up these kitties end to end, they'd reach to...well, we don't quite know, but you'd need a lot of litter boxes! We consider this a pretty amazing milestone. And we are proud that it makes us one of the largest (if not the largest), feline-focused animal welfare organizations in New England.

Every success story begins with motivation and passion. In our case, it was the passion of a few kind souls who cared about the welfare of the feral cats along the Merrimack River in Newburyport. As we progressed through the years, we added facilities and capabilities to help even more cats. We opened our first Adoption Center in 1994, so we could have a physical space for adopting socialized cats; and in 2008 we launched the Catmobile program, providing convenient access to low cost spay and neuter services for residents of Eastern and Central Massachusetts.

In 2011, we merged with two groups: SCFAW, who helped us put the second Catmobile on the road and FARS, whose veterinary assistance program has continued in MRFRS and helps cat owners facing difficult financial circumstances. Most recently, we have expanded our reach outside Massachusetts with our innovative mentoring program, supported by PetSmart Charities, that helps small animal rescues in other parts of the country develop effective Trap/Neuter/Return capabilities.

For every cat we help, there is at least one person to thank. We thank our dedicated staff members who carry out our mission every day, with the wellbeing of cats at the forefront of their work. We thank our volunteers and foster families, who give selflessly of their time. We thank the many businesses and individuals who sponsor our major fundraising events, the Strut for Strays and the Fur Ball. We thank the non-profit foundations who provide us with generous grants that support our annual operating expenses and special programs. And we thank all of our donors...whether you support us through our events, our fundraising appeals, our donation cans, or other ways. We say this often, but we always mean it: we simply can't do it without you.

As we start thinking ahead to MRFRS' 25th anniversary in 2017, our Board and staff are focused on how we can evolve to meet the changing needs of cats and their guardians. There will always be cats in need of our assistance, but the programs, facilities or financial commitments required may be different. We will keep you – our loyal supporters – posted as we work toward our next goal of helping the next 100,000 cats.

Sincerely,



**Adrienne Linnell,**  
President  
MRFRS Board of Directors

## (NOT SO) SMALL CHANGE

Here's a quick quiz for you: how much money do you think that the MRFRS donation cans placed in businesses around our region take in on an annual basis? \$1,000? \$2,500? Maybe even \$5,000?

You'll be astounded to learn that this fiscal year, our donation cans collected \$10,000 in much-needed funds for the MRFRS. All of those pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters add up to a significant contribution to MRFRS' annual fundraising. Pretty amazing, isn't it?

Our wonderful group of fourteen volunteers, led by coordinator Judy Besancon, manages donation cans in 110 locations in and around our home base in Salisbury. Each volunteer has their own "territory," where they take care of existing cans, as well as visit new locations and ask if the business will accept a donation can.

Their goal is to build a strong relationship with each business, so that they take good care of our cans...it really makes a difference if the can is in a visible location, and if businesses put coins in the can when customers say to "keep the change." Volunteers visit their assigned locations once a month to check if the can is full, and if so, collect it and replace with a new one.

If the can isn't full, the volunteer changes out the kitten photo attached to the can. These photos really matter: one of our collectors recalls that when she accidentally put up a previously-used photo, one of the store's customers said, "This is a rerun! I already saved that cat!"

Kudos go to our top three can locations for this past fiscal year: Coastal Green Grocer in Ipswich, The Black Duck in Newburyport, and Dick's Variety in Plum Island.

So, next time you're out shopping, help us out and throw your spare change in our donation can...the cats will thank you for it! In addition, from time to time we need new volunteers for the program. We currently are seeking someone who knows the area covered by our territories and could help by filling in when a collector is away or ill, or with training of new collectors. Please email [info@mrfrs.org](mailto:info@mrfrs.org) if you're interested.



# Staff Spotlight

If you've spent any time at all in our shelter, you've definitely crossed paths with Melissa Witherspoon, our facilities coordinator here at MRFRS!

Melissa started as a volunteer ten years ago at our former PetSmart adoption center, and became a staff member in 2010 as an adoption counselor. Melissa has also worked as a waitress at a private boating club for the last eighteen straight summers, and she worked for many years as an insurance agent as well.



Though she doesn't have much free time, Melissa still manages to see her two young nieces often, and she has had breakfast with her dad every Sunday morning for the last twelve years! She even has her own Etsy shop where she sells her (awesome!) handmade jewelry. Melissa & her boyfriend Julian recently moved into a house in Wenham with their five cats: Tuesday (the Queen Bee of the hive!), Toonces, Ezzie, Jack & Stewie. Toonces (who has epilepsy) and Ezzie (who has hepatic encephalopathy), are both MRFRS alums. Jack & Stewie hail from England originally before they moved to the U.S. with Julian!



Next time you're in the shelter, say hi to Melissa—if you can catch her as she runs around keeping things running smoothly from behind the scenes!

# STATS AT A GLANCE

Check out the amazing work MRFRS accomplished during our 2015 fiscal year!!

- **6,707 cats spayed/neutered on the Catmobiles**, bringing the program's lifetime total to a truly astounding 43,179 cats!
- **499 cats and kittens adopted out into new homes**, bringing our lifetime total to 19,499...closing in on an amazing 20,000!
- **444 cats spayed/neutered through our Sunday feral clinics**, held in conjunction with MSPCA Nevins Farm, bringing the program's lifetime total to 12,598 cats.
- **45 cats in need of medical care** were helped through FARS, our medical assistance fund for owned cats belonging to people in financially difficult situations.
- **28 stray or feral cats in need of medical care** helped through Captain Courageous, our fund for sick or injured unowned cats.
- **508 cats and dogs were vaccinated** at our quarterly low-cost rabies clinics, bringing the program total to 1,674 animals vaccinated to date. We also microchipped 81 pets through these same clinics.
- Our innovative Mentoring Program, supported by a generous grant from PetSmart Charities, **trained 22 groups in 9 different states on effective Trap-Neuter-Return processes, resulting in 3,886 spayed or neutered feral cats.** Since the program's launch in 2011, 9,293 cats have been directly assisted.

All of this work, and the cats assisted through the two groups we have merged with (SCFAW and FARS in its previous work as an adoption program), brings the lifetime total of cats assisted by MRFRS to a whopping 101,576!! We sincerely thank our donors and volunteers who made this work possible.

## Fostering Ferals

by Jennifer Hickman

It was the type of call that shelters often receive in the fall: "we have three tiny kittens in our yard that we have been feeding all summer and we don't want them to be out in the cold." The "tiny kittens" turned out to be three, 6-month-old ferals – two girls and a boy.

The word "feral" is often used incorrectly to mean "stray". A stray cat was once owned and may be friendly, or may have become wild after living alone outdoors. However, a feral has never been handled and therefore fears people. Without human intervention, kittens will begin to exhibit feral behavior as early as four weeks of age, so it is important to trap and handle young kittens as soon as they are discovered.

At 6 months old, Harry and his sisters, Rosie and Emerald, would be difficult to socialize. Harry was the most aggressive kitty I'd ever fostered, charging at me while growling and spitting. I sat on the floor with the young cats every day as they ate, inching myself closer to them each time. We had two-hour play sessions each night, ending only when they wore themselves out and fell asleep on the floor. It was a very slow process, but as time passed, the kittens were gradually learning to trust.

Fostering a feral is not like bringing home a friendly kitten; it requires time and patience. Those who foster ferals live for that magic moment when the cat "turns" or begins to trust its caregiver. For Harry, that moment came two months after he was trapped. It



Harry

was breakfast time and I was sitting close to him as he ate. He was a big boy and liked his food, so he barely noticed when I reached out my finger and stroked his back. A bit of a jump, a look over his shoulder and

Harry went back to eating. With each subsequent meal I was able to touch him more, and on the day that I reached 65 strokes, Harry rubbed his head on my hand and purred. Success!

After 8 months of socializing, the kitties were one year old and ready for adoption. Parting ways with a feral is difficult because the many hours spent together create a special bond. Fortunately, their new dad was excited about continuing the socialization process, and three years later, they are best of friends.

So if you love cats and truly want to make a difference in their lives, leave the friendly kittens for others and bring home the ferals. Whether you adopt or foster, the reward you receive when the fear in their eyes turns to trust and their hisses melt into purrs is truly priceless.

# MRFRS Thanks our Generous Strut For Strays Sponsors

Our 20th annual Strut for Strays took place on Sunday, May 31 and, while Mother Nature didn't cooperate with us, we still had a very successful event when measured by the funds raised by our participants for support of MRFRS' programs. Our runners and walkers generated more than \$37,000 on their First Giving pages, which, along with our sponsorships and other donations, made this one of our best Struts ever!

Many thanks to our wonderful Strut sponsors...we couldn't do it without you!

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