

Against All Odds Rescues

Inspiring stories of everyday heroes who saved cats and gave them good homes.

Winston
Karen Schmidt
Frederick, Md.

It was in the woods behind our apartment building that we first saw a large black cat mournfully wailing as if to say, "I don't deserve this." The most striking characteristic about him was the snow-white band at the front of his neck, like a preacher's collar. Hence the name Preacher Man.

He found refuge in the complex's drainage system that emptied into the woods behind our building. Twice a day, we placed a bowl of cat food, which he readily devoured, outside the opening to the drainage system. His only other food sources were the garbage dumpster and gophers. He had to endure the constant threat of resident foxes. We would often hear his cries at night in the woods. The cries compelled us to rescue him.

Armed with information and a safe trapping cage from a feral rescue organization, we were able to rescue Preacher Man, whose name we changed to Winston. He required a visit to the veterinarian, and a thorough cleaning revealed his many colors. With much patience and the assistance of our resident cat, Snoopy, Winston has made the transition from a feral cat to a happy, indoor cat.

Kitten
Cheryl Kwasigroch
Chicago

I've volunteered for some time at an animal shelter and have always considered myself more of a dog person. One day I was at the shelter when someone brought in a half-pound, 4-week-old kitten they said they found in a garbage can. I asked if they were going to try to foster him. One of the shelter managers said he was so small and sick that they were probably going to euthanize him, but if I would take him home they would give him a chance.

What choice did I have? The staff doubted if he would live the night but instructed me on bottle feeding, keeping him warm and putting medicine on his partially swollen-shut eyes. The kitten refused the bottle and, out of desperation, I offered him dry kitten food. That little fighter gallantly tried to eat the nuggets of dry food that were almost as big as his mouth. I ground the nuggets up with a hammer and he had his first meal. When I held him late that night on my lap he tried to suckle my robe, and, at 5 months old, he still does. Who can give him up? He's mine forever!

Montana
Lisa A. Lardo
New Franken, Wis.

Anyone who loves cats will agree that there is nothing more heart-wrenching than hearing a kitten meow when it is hurt or in distress. That is the sound that pierced the morning of June 23, 2003, a day that I will never forget. We were enjoying a beautiful summer day in Wisconsin when we heard a kitten meowing at the top of his lungs in the field next to our house.

I walked into the field and saw a tiny black-and-white kitten whose eyes were totally crusted shut and couldn't see. He seemed to be saying by his meowing, "Please help me."

I picked him up and tried to get his eyes open with some warm water and immediately took him to our veterinarian. She estimated that he was about 6 weeks old and weighed 1½ pounds. After a FELV test and some eye drops, we brought him home.

Montana is now a healthy 5-year-old cat. He had the odds stacked against him, but against all odds, he ended up in a field next to a house where people love and care for cats.

Spooky
Elisabeth Gambill-Niksich
Roswell, Ga.

I have been rescuing and caring for feral cats for over 10 years. In managing my own colony I can personally attest to the fact that practicing TNR saves lives, reduces the population and provides the cats with a better quality of life.

One day I noticed a tiny black kitten, just barely weaned, scurrying to the feeding station. Since all of my females were spayed I had no idea where he came from. I set my trap with mackerel and watched him from a distance. He was so small that it took his whole body weight standing directly on top of the trap plate to snap the trap shut. I decided to take my chances and reached in the trap to touch him. He must have known I was his savior because he nuzzled my hand and began purring! I raced him to the veterinarian. At about 8 weeks old, 2 pounds, emaciated, anemic and full of fleas, ticks and worms he was only two days from death. Today Spooky is a treasured member of my pet feline family and one handsome cat.

Eileen
Katrina Jenkins
Johnson City, Tenn.

I work in a veterinary hospital in Tennessee. This kitten was found with some type of neck trauma and brought in to the hospital. She was very disoriented and could only hold her head to the right. She looked absolutely pitiful.

The people who found her could not afford to treat her, so I decided to take her in and try to give her a chance. She would stumble and fall, and it did not seem like she could see well, but she was so loving. She was given multiple steroid injections, and I was told her prognosis was guarded. It was very hard for her to eat, and she could only walk in circles due to the head tilt.

I gave her antibiotics and Prednisone daily. She was checked by the doctor every few weeks and gradually improved. Finally, after two months, she was able to stop the medications. She is now the most active of my three cats – she plays fetch and loves to cuddle. We gave her the special name of Eileen (I lean); that way we can never forget what a fighter she is!

Minouchka
Catriona Schwartz
Montreal, Canada

This is the story of Minouchka, my beautiful tuxedo cat. How it came about that I am owned by this former feral is really an “against all odds rescue” story.

Minouchka was the “momma” cat of a small family of cats that had taken residence under a temporary building at my workplace. When the building had to be dismantled, the capture and adoption of the cat family was undertaken.

In spite of being only 2 years old and weighing 6½ pounds, Minouchka had already had two litters of kittens. Because of her age and the fact that she had been feral for two years, she was considered “unadoptable” by the local SPCA.

I decided to adopt her anyway, and on June 1, 2007, this sweet little cat came into my home and into my heart. She stayed in one of the kitchen cupboards for six weeks. It took her another month to venture farther than the kitchen. I even had to teach her how to play and to accept stroking. At times I wondered if this was ever going to work.

Now, one year later, she sleeps with me at night (she is a bed hog); she constantly demands to play (she loves pingpong balls) and she now weighs around 9 pounds.

Star
Sabiha Gokcen
Martinez, Calif.

“I was a small kitten barely old enough to be separated from my mother, when I found myself thrown alongside a two-lane country highway in Oregon. I was scared, so I took refuge in a storm sewer. I got lucky; a family on vacation stopped alongside the road to walk their colicky baby. I cried for help and limped over to them. The mom saw me and picked me up. She petted me nicely and made me feel safe. They took me with them into the car. There was a baby bottle with milk, so I helped myself to it. When the car started moving, I jumped into the baby’s car seat to ride, but the mom didn’t think that was such a good idea. The mom named me Star because the white spot on my forehead looked like a star in the sky. The family brought me home with them, and now I live in Martinez, Calif. I have been living happily with my family for



almost 14 years now.”