

## Cat Lovers Named Hero Finalists

**Nine draw honors as runners-up in Animal Planet's Cat Hero of the Year award.**

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Animal Planet recently named Jacci Moss the 2008 Cat Hero of the Year, an award co-sponsored by the makers of Fresh Step Litter that recognizes an outstanding activist working on behalf of cats.

Nine women from throughout the United States placed as finalists for the Cat Hero award. Learn more about these cat activists: In the past nine years, Debi Bagley of Connecticut has helped find good homes for approximately 900 cats and kittens, as well as trapped, neutered and returned almost 500 feral cats. As president of Connecticut Association to Assure Love and End Suffering (CATALES), Bagley works to assure that the stray, abandoned and feral cats of Middletown and Cromwell, Conn., receive necessary care.

The feral cats that live on campus at the University of Georgia can thank finalist Kelly Bettinger for establishing a group to help care for them and control their numbers. Along with Lisa Lowe, Bettinger created Cat Zip Alliance/Campus Cats to trap, sterilize and vaccinate cats living on campus. The group then finds homes for tame cats and kittens.

Finalist Judie Brown has a soft spot for hard-luck cases, providing a high quality of life for 220 cats at Caroline's Kids Pet Rescue in Mayfield, Ohio. As founder and executive director, Brown operates the sanctuary that houses cats normally considered unadoptable: ferals, cats with FIV and FeLV, and elderly or handicapped cats.

In 1993, Faye Bunk helped establish Community Animal Programs to offer low-cost spay/neuter services and find homes for hundreds of animals. Ten years later, she helped found Helping Animals Live Organization (HALO), a cage-free, no-kill sanctuary in Little Falls, N.Y., that is home to more than 100 cats.

After many years of rescuing abandoned, abused and homeless cats on her own, Trudy Charette founded Community Cat Connection (CCC) in 2004. The mission of the group is to alleviate the feral cat overpopulation problems in Massachusetts through trap-neuter-return (TNR) programs and adoption of tame homeless cats. Through Charette's vision and leadership, CCC opened a shelter in June 2007 that has helped even more cats find homes.

Cathy Conhein's cat, Henry, may have only three legs, but with Conhein's help he spreads the message of courage, acceptance and giving to both adults and children through books, e-mails and personal appearances. In the last three years, Conhein has shared Henry's view of his own physical disabilities through a book, "Kibble for Thought," and by answering letters and e-mails from children and adults also facing health challenges.

A longtime animal advocate from Whidbey Island, Wash., Linda Fauth was instrumental in establishing the Whidbey Island Improvement Foundation (WAIF). Fauth helped guide the animal shelter in its early days, establishing a policy that required all animals be spayed or neutered before being adopted and even helping with many of the surgeries.

To help the Brown County Humane Society in Indiana manage its homeless cat population, Jody Rainbolt provides foster care and adoption services from her own home. She often cares for more than 15 cats at a time, housing them in her garage and a spare bedroom. Kaaron Spotts, the shelter manager and Rainbolt's nominator, estimated that Rainbolt finds homes for 300 cats a year.

Called an animal angel by nominator Sherry Sylar, Dorian Rence founded the Artemis Project, a nonprofit foundation for the rescue of cats and dogs. Artemis works with Lincoln Square Veterinary Hospital in New York City to spay and neuter, vaccinate and provide medical care for stray and feral cats, with the goal of finding each animal a loving home.