

Shelter Offers Home to Senior Cats

The National Cat Protection Society in Spring Valley, Calif., features a feline “retirement center.”

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C. Richard Calore loved cats since childhood. His love for cats was strengthened after his Army tour in France during World War II, when a cat curled up with him in his foxhole. Inspired by that experience, Calore founded the National Cat Protection Society 40 years ago in Long Beach, Calif., the San Diego Union-Tribune reports.

Calore opened a second facility in Spring Valley in 1975, and the shelter established a “retirement center” for senior cats there in 2000. Today, Calore’s widow, Gerri, continues to offer older cats a place to live out their golden years. The cats come from various situations: owners too old to care for the cats, new living situations for owners that don’t accommodate cats, or the death of an owner that leaves the cats without care.

Today, the retirement area of the shelter is home to 30 senior cats, who spend their days relaxing in the sunshine of the playroom or snoozing in the bedroom. They might take a stroll through the shaded, screened patio, or enjoy the gentle petting from a staff member or volunteer.

Many of the cats are at the shelter courtesy of its Lifetime Care program. For a one-time fee of \$5,000, cat owners can establish a permanent, loving home for their pets in the event they should pass away before their animals. The program provides the cats with individual diets as well as dental and medical care — and of course, attention from staff and volunteers. One such volunteer, Inge Meister, spends three hours twice a week mostly holding and petting the cats throughout the shelter.

Soon, the retirement center will undergo what Gerri Calore calls environmental enrichment. Bob Walker, known for his home affectionately called “The Cat’s House,” will redesign the senior cats’ living space with a tropical theme. Palm trees will be wrapped in rope to use as scratching posts, and cutouts shaped like fish will give cats places to hide. The project is a natural evolution of the shelter, designed to improve the lives of cats.

And that’s what Gerri Calore vowed to do when her husband died. “It’s a natural thing to continue on behalf of the animals,” she said. “We have to care for and protect them.”