

The 'Cat Man' of Pittsgrove Township

Editor's Note: In the next few newsletters, AFF plans a series of articles about responsible caregivers in the area. Our first features Charles B., a gentleman who is fighting cancer but who has arranged for the spay or neuter of more than 40 cats with the help of AFF and other organizations.

About a year ago, his medical condition dramatically changed Charlie B.'s life. It also changed the lives of some feral cats living in the woods in Upper Pittsgrove Township.

When Charlie moved from his own home to his brother's house, his

white tuxedo cats and one calico. Before Charlie got the colony under control this past summer, several litters arrived that featured white kittens. Some were deaf and two had one blue eye and one gold eye each. All 12 kittens have been placed, Charlie said.

"Pops prefers the blue label," Charlie said drolly as he spooned food onto a plate. Once the cat finished eating, he headed to the door, where he waited patiently for Charlie to let him out.

Others in the colony include Panda, a laid-back tuxedo who spends her time on a pillow on the steps, and several other white cats who are less inclined to socialize with humans. Charlie has arranged spaying or neutering for the cats using vouchers from AFF and Animal Oasis and estimates he has another four or five to go.

"That doesn't include any newcomers," he said. "But they'll all be fixed eventually."

After a recent bout of upper respiratory infections, the entire colony is in top shape. Charlie established a "MASH" unit in the carport, where he dosed each cat on individual schedules with appropriate antibiotics. Charlie only took a break recently when he was hospitalized and had a feeding tube put in. His brother tended the colony in his absence. A non-nonsense guy, he said it's not so bad but he does miss barbecues.

Charlie has assembled extensive records for each cat, complete with photos and medical histories. He has drawn up charts to help him keep track of their everyday activities.

"That way, I know when someone's missing," he said.

Although the cats benefit greatly from his love and care, Charlie pointed out that they've helped him too.

"They keep me going," he said, referring to his ongoing treatment for cancer.

Charlie, who is in his early 70's, was recently honored with a certificate of appreciation from AFF. Carolyn Vinci, AFF president and her husband Lew, AFF's treasurer, visited him to thank him personally for his hard work.

"We really need more people like Charlie," Carolyn said. "His planning, hard work and perseverance have made a world of difference for these cats."



Charles B. with "Pops," one of the many cats under his care.

independence was compromised just a bit. But his drive and independent spirit were not. In that short year, Charlie has managed to have more than 40 of the cats spayed, neutered and vaccinated. He has constructed two shelters, established a feeding schedule and brought the group successfully through an epidemic of upper respiratory infections.

Charlie's new home is a small sitting room attached to the large carport next to his brother's house. The carport serves as the dining room and general purpose room for the cats. Behind it, Charlie has constructed a three-level shelter which features several doors, numerous "hidey-holes" and comfy straw bedding throughout. Behind the house, closer to the woods, he's also converted a camper into another shelter, this one divided into two floors. He designed both shelters and built them with the help of his brother.

Charlie's colony includes several white cats, a few ginger tabbies, some black and

"The white ones go fast but I made sure they all went to good homes," he said. He works with area shelters and private individuals to ensure the cats will go to responsible owners. The area is apparently known for its white cats, said Charlie.

Unfortunately, it doesn't keep irresponsible people from continuing to drop cats off near his home. One, "Pops," was abandoned in May right in front of his house. A large, long haired tuxedo cat, Pops has been dubbed "The Attack Cat" due to his ornery nature.

"Pops does not suffer fools," Charlie said. The cat has commandeered Charlie's small sitting room. "When Pops is in the building, he rules."

Pops demonstrated this during a recent visit. Sauntering into the room, he immediately took up a position in front of a shelf of cat food. He pawed at a particular can and meowed until Charlie got up and opened it.