

'Kitty Courtyard' to be built at veterans' home

Because of the \$21,500 grant awarded to AFF by the Cumberland County Improvement Authority (CCIA)

, the cats and kittens at the N.J. Veterans' Memorial Home in Vineland will soon have their own "kitty courtyard," and many feral cats in the county will be spayed or neutered.

Here's an update on how grant funds will be used:

- \$10,000 for a "Kitty Courtyard" project at the New Jersey Veteran's Memorial Home. All materials purchased must be made out of recycled materials. AFF has contracted with Fordville Crossing, LLC, to construct a

12'x16' octagon-shaped gazebo that is fully handicapped accessible.

There will be a ramp with railings and wide openings to allow wheelchair access. The gazebo will be custom fitted with bench seats with the lower sections functioning as cat shelters and food storage areas. There are approximately 10 cats currently living

in an old greenhouse on the property. The residents have spayed/neutered all the cats and seen to it that they received veterinary

care when needed. The current greenhouse shelter will remain standing until the new gazebo is situated nearby so the cats will have continuous shelter.

A dedication ceremony for the Kitty Courtyard Project has been tentatively planned for the middle of May.

Spay/neuter surgeries are ongoing. AFF anticipates 225 cats will be spayed/neutered/vaccinated. As of press time, 125 cats had been spayed or neutered.

Spay/neuter surgeries are currently being done primarily at the Animal Alliance of Cape May County's low cost clinic in Cape May Court House.

- In addition, \$10,000 is designated for spay/neuter/vaccination costs for approximately 225 stray/feral Cumberland County cats. These are

cats who are currently being cared for by county residents and by spaying and neutering them, the overpopulation problem of cats in our community will begin to be addressed. Vaccinating will also lower the incidence of disease.

- A total of \$1,500 was included for newsletter design and distribution.

More details on how the grant money will be spent:

"Kitty Courtyard" at Veterans Home:

The veterans have a brand new facility to replace an out-dated complex of disjointed buildings. The recreation area will be for residents, visitors and staff.

Spay/neuter/vaccination of stray cats:

This is a proven method of reducing the outside cat population over the long term. If cats are merely removed and taken to shelters and euthanized, the "vacuum effect" happens and other cats move into the area to continue to feed off the food source that was present. A colony of cats is territorial and does not allow new cats into the area. Eventually the cats in the original colony die off due to not being able to reproduce.

Newsletter design and distribution:

AFF is committed to being respectful of the environment and has always been mindful of recycling and using re-cycled products whenever possible.