



THE KITTEN POST

The National Kitten Coalition Newsletter

SPRING 2021



KITTENS GIVE LIFE: A FOSTER'S STORY

"After I retired as a physical therapist, I still felt I needed to find a way to help others. I always loved animals, but nothing I tried, including farm animal advocacy and fostering 'pit bulls,' really made sense to me in this stage of my life. Then I found kittens."

"Through research, I discovered the Animal Welfare League of Arlington's Kitten College and The National Kitten Coalition (NKC) around the same time. Fostering kittens, especially ones as fragile as these babies are, immediately seemed to click as what I wanted my focus to be in retirement. It just seemed meant to be and that feeling has only grown stronger over time. This has become a way to give back, a main purpose in retirement."



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A FOSTER'S STORY, CONTINUED

"But I needed to learn how to do it [foster]. I took a series of NKC workshops and worked hard at improving my hands-on skills, largely based on what I have learned from The NKC. What I learned, and continue to learn from The NKC is invaluable, knowing they take into consideration the newest research."

"Every kitten is different and even though you have learned something once, as you gain experience with kittens, the depth of what you take in increases. I so appreciate all the NKC resources, information sheets, taped videos, and live events during the pandemic."

"Becoming more knowledgeable and skilled helps at those times when the kitties aren't doing well. It can definitely be stressful, but the kittens also bring such joy. They are now my passion."

Lisa C, Arlington, Virginia



CALLING ALL VETERINARY PROFESSIONALS!

Speaker proposals are being accepted through Monday, April 5th for the second Annual National Kitten Coalition Veterinary Conference to be held online on September 19, 2021.

All kitten-related topics will be considered including (but not limited to) social, behavioral or physical development; deep dives into medical conditions; treatment protocols for illnesses or injuries; surgical procedures; unusual cases and/or creative solutions; cooperative community relationships to help kittens; and current or recent kitten research in any of those areas.

Veterinarians, PhD researchers and credentialed veterinary technicians are invited to apply. Click [here](#) for more information and to submit your proposals.

Know someone who may want to speak? Please share this information.

FIRST STEPS WHEN YOU FIND A KITTEN

On February 15, The National Kitten Coalition presented a virtual workshop called “Basic Immediate Critical Care for the Kitten,” led by the NKC's Director of Neonatal Programs, Susan Spaulding.

Among the topics covered were steps to take when kittens are initially found. Susan explained that at times, although it may go against one’s instinct, it is important to leave kittens alone if they are clean, their immediate environment is clean and they are quiet. These are signs that mom is probably still nearby and will return to the nest. Kittens have the best chance of survival with their mom. She keeps the nest clean and kittens stay quiet to keep predators away.

Kittens whose mom has gone missing for several hours may need to be removed, especially if they mew a lot and their nest is messy. Additionally, and most importantly, if the kittens are showing signs of illness or injury, they will need immediate help.



Another topic raised during the webinar was caring for premature or “preemie” kittens. This is a kitten population that requires much more specialized care than your average neonatal kitten.

Incubators provide preemies with optimal warmth and humidity for healthy development. However, if an incubator is not within a foster's budget, fosters can construct their own incubator using a top-loading carrier, a clear plastic bag and a heat source. Covering the carrier loosely with the plastic bag keeps the warmth and humidity more consistent. Lastly, all kitten care, from feeding to weighing, should be done in the incubator to keep the kittens warm.

This recorded webinar can be found on NKC's website and is a must view for anyone who is in the position to care for this fragile population of kittens.



NKC'S KITTEN NURSERY CONFERENCE IS THE PLACE TO BE!

The NKC is hosting an online conference focused on new developments in starting and running kitten nurseries. It is taking place in three sessions over three Saturdays.

Starting and Running a Neonatal Kitten Nursery without Walls took place March 27 with over 170 attendees from across the United States and around the world. It focused on foster-based nurseries.

Upcoming sessions, for which you can still sign up, are:

Starting and Running a Kitten Nursery with Scarce or Challenging Resources, April 10, 4-6 pm EDT. Speakers are Maggie Smith from Austin Pets Alive! and Nicole Wisneskie from Best Friends-Los Angeles.

Dealing with Curve Balls, April 24, 11 am-1 pm EDT. Speakers from St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center, the ASPCA® and the San Diego Humane Society will discuss how kitten and human pandemics impact kitten nurseries.

The cost to attend each session is \$15. Click [here](#) to register.



SAVE KITTENS EVERY MONTH!

Want to save kittens but can't foster? A donation to NKC of \$15 a month -- 50 cents a day! -- saves a litter of five kittens every month. What a powerful and easy way to save kittens. You can set up your monthly donation by clicking on the Donate link below. Thank you for helping to save kittens!

[PLEASE DONATE NOW!](#)

FAREWELL, MY LOVELY

BY BATYA ERICKSON

A few years ago, I fostered a kitten named Amelie. She was a petite tortie with a sweet disposition. The day arrived when a young woman came by my apartment to adopt her. Based on what she was looking for and what Amelie needed, they seemed absolutely perfect for each other. After their meet and greet, I picked up Amelie and, as I gently put her in the carrier that would take her to her forever home, I whispered, "I hope you have a beautiful life." I then promptly burst into tears. I barely got through reading the adoption agreement aloud to Amelie's new mom.

Clearly, I became very attached to my foster during her few months' stay at my home. In fact, some individuals may find the notion of becoming attached to their fosters too daunting or even traumatic and may not undertake fostering at all. Nancy Peterson, retired registered veterinary technician who serves on the NKC Board of Directors, used to be that person. "I was afraid," Nancy told me. For years she avoided fostering kittens because she was afraid of becoming too attached to them. And then she was presented with a litter of kittens in desperate need of a foster. Nancy rose to the occasion and the litter became the first of many in her fostering career. "All those years, I said I couldn't do it, but I did it, and I love it, and can't wait for the next litter."

Laura Baughman, the NKC Director of Development, relates the emotional struggle of letting go of foster kittens. She said, "I do get weepy, with some even sobby. There are some that really capture your heart."

Kitten fosters know that there is a strong possibility of growing attached to their fosters and have devised different ways of coping with saying goodbye. "I allow myself a good cry," Laura said, "And, if at all possible, I get another foster litter right away! Ideally, on the trip back home, I have more in the car!"

Another way fosters cope is by adopting a mindset that keeps things in perspective. "Remember that you are saving a life and if you don't do it and there's not enough other people out there to take your place, a kitten can literally die," Laura told me. "You will get over the pain of saying goodbye, but there are so many other kittens out there who need you; keep thinking about them." Fostering is a critical role in the chain of events to save kittens' lives and fosters are always needed.

Despite the feelings of loss that come with saying goodbye, both Nancy and Laura, as well as many other kitten fosters, continue to take in litter after litter. Knowing the important role that fostering plays in the lives of these kittens inspires them to keep coming back for more. "I have volunteered at shelters that did not have enough trained kitten foster homes to send kittens to and watched as they got euthanized. That broke my heart harder than saying goodbye to any particular foster kitten," Laura said.



There is, of course, always the "foster fail" route, in which a foster kitten is made a permanent addition to the foster's family. "Temperament [of the foster] has a lot to do with it. If you get so attached that [letting go is] so traumatic for you, the worst thing is that you'll be a foster failure," suggests Nancy.

For both these kitten fosters, the joys of fostering outweigh any sadness that comes with goodbyes. "The kittens give me a lot: a lot of laughter and the satisfaction that comes from solving a behavioral or medical issue," Laura said. "Caring for them teaches me a lot."

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UPCOMING EVENTS

NKCKittenNurseryConference/2021

April 10, 11 am-4 pm EDT, Starting or Operating a Kitten Nursery with Scarce or Challenging Resources

April 24, 11 am-1 pm EDT, Dealing with Curve Balls

Register [here](#).



Online Behavior Day

April 17

This annual Conference from The Community Cats Podcast is a great opportunity to learn from leading cat behaviorists to better understand cats and our relationship with them. As a Community Cats Podcast Affiliate, we have an opportunity to earn a little extra money for our mission! Just enter code NKC into the coupon box at checkout, and The Community Cats Podcast will donate a portion of your registration to The NKC to continue our programs!

Register [here](#).

Ask Kitten Mom!

May 26, 6-6:30 pm EDT

Ask the NKC's Susan Spaulding, aka 'The Nation's Kitten Mom,' your burning questions about bottle-feeding neonates during this live webinar. We recommend that you watch our archived webinars about bottle-feeding kittens ahead of time too!

Register [here](#).

Online Kitten Conference

June 11-13, 2021

The Online Kitten Conference is back in 2021 for the third consecutive year! The virtual conference is jointly hosted by The Community Cat Podcast and The National Kitten Coalition and will again feature amazing speakers and a wide range of information all about kittens. Speakers will be announced in the coming weeks. Early-bird discount is \$60 through April 15.

Register [here](#).



National Kitten Coalition Veterinary Conference 2021

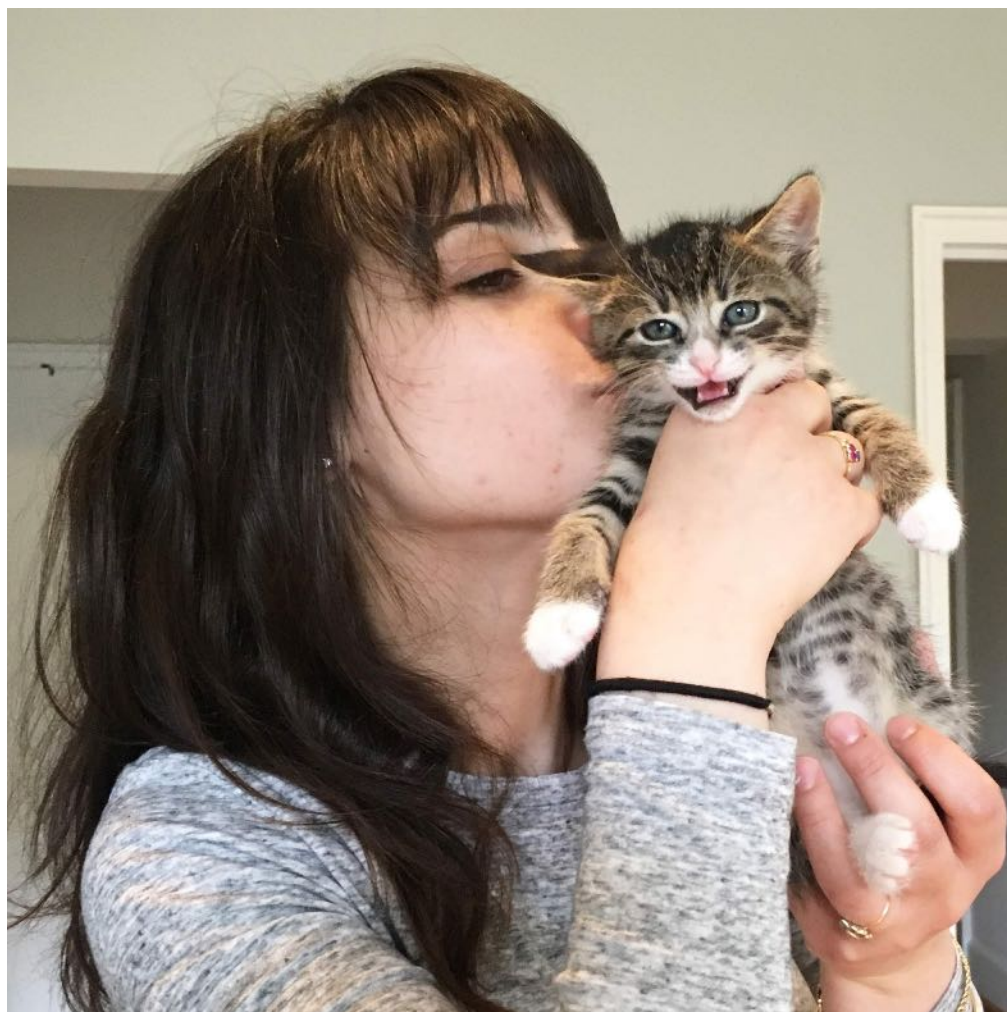
September 19

Save the date! Registration details to follow.



FAREWELL MY LOVELY, CONTINUED

The day after Amelie's adoption, her new mom sent me a photo of her adjusting to her new home. It was around Christmastime. Amelie was enamored with the Christmas tree and made her mom's pillow her personal bed. Seeing how she was adjusting to her new home was a comfort to me and helped me realize that she is exactly where she needed to be. For kittens in foster, saying goodbye gives them a loving home of their own.



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