

Tabby's Place®

A CAT SANCTUARY



A Note From the Editor

Dear Tabby's Place family, there's no way around it: we (feline and human) miss you terribly. As we yearn for your smiles and pray you and your families are safe and healthy, we want to invite you into what life has been like at Tabby's Place during these strange days. It's thanks to you that we're here for the cats through the siege of COVID-19. We will never forget your friendship, and we can't wait 'til we can all be together again. Meantime, we hope you enjoy this virtual visit to Tabby's Place under lockdown. – A.H.



Olive and Cotton demonstrate appropriate social distancing measures at Tabby's Place

New Beginnings: Mitzi

Angela Hartley, Development Director

When the global pandemic struck New Jersey with terrible force, Tabby's Place had to adapt – quickly.

For over 100 cats, we are very much an “essential business.” Even under lockdown, we were committed to being here for our residents with the same love and stellar care as always. But, to keep our Tabby's Place family safe, we suspended on-site volunteering. Then came the economic impact of the pandemic. We were forced to pause our cat intake, to continue providing the best for the cats we already had.

Mitzi never got that memo.

A long-term member of one of our Trap-Neuter-Return colonies, Mitzi had been spayed and microchipped, and she'd been living a happy life in her well-cared-for colony. But, when Tabby's Place

conducts TNR, we promise every cat that we will always be here for her, should she need us in the future. Mitzi came to call on that promise.

At the peak of the pandemic, Mitzi arrived for her daily meal in a dreadful state. Emaciated and elderly, she'd suffered a speedy decline due to diabetes, kidney disease, and a severe upper respiratory infection that left her dehydrated. She needed immediate, life-saving treatment, and ongoing intensive care.

It wasn't a “convenient” time... but Mitzi needed us. It's our mission and our joy to be here for cats in the world's most desperate circumstances. And, thanks to you,

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Mitzi on arrival at Tabby's Place



Mitzi thriving at over 7 pounds today

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Tabby's Place could turn the world right-side-up for Mitzi.

After spending time at the emergency vet and in the home of our Senior Veterinary Technician, Mitzi has recovered from her infection and is well-regulated with insulin. She's gone from under five pounds to a beautiful 7.2 pounds (and rising). Although she's timid, there's nothing "feral" about our faithful old friend, who has come to love familiar embraces.

Was Mitzi lucky to come to Tabby's Place? Some might see it that way, but we know the truth: we're the rich ones to be blessed with this sweet, gentle girl. The future is bright for Mitzi, and we can't thank you enough.

Life During Lockdown

Jonathan Rosenberg, Founder & Executive Director

*"This ain't no party, this ain't no disco,
This ain't no fooling around"*

- Talking Heads, "Life during Wartime"

Ok, I'm being overly dramatic. This ain't wartime, and we're technically not in "lockdown." But, it is certain that there is no "fooling around" with COVID-19.

For the past 12 weeks, I have been eating, sleeping and breathing COVID-19. (That's a terrible choice of words for an infectious disease, but you know what I mean.) This is, of course, all in an effort to do what's best for Tabby's Place: not only the "institution," but the cats, employees, volunteers and the



Rosita and all our residents are keeping our spirits up

public.

These 12 weeks have seen Tabby's Place operating under severe restrictions. We created three independent teams of 4-5 people who worked only together and handled all tasks. This made for long, strange days working in a largely empty building, and avoiding other people when possible. I washed my hands so much they became raw, but it no longer bothers me. I think they have become calloused.

On the days I'm not cleaning at Tabby's Place, I am monitoring finances carefully and staying on top of research and guidelines for the novel coronavirus. We suffered a hit from the economic disruption, but through careful resource management and the generosity of our donors, we bypassed serious consequences. We look financially



Cotton and Rose evaluate our floor signage...and the door from whence wet food (still) comes on time every day

stable for the remainder of the year, though not at the capacity we would like, due to the continued reduction in income.

But, there is light at the end of the tunnel. We have created a detailed "Plan for Reopening" and have just entered our first stage. The building is less of a ghost town, though still with far fewer cats and people.

As far as ramping up our capacity, we are moving slowly, and I have no doubt that our donors will help us attain the volume and rate at which we "save cats from hopeless situations." Stay tuned for more info on this.

Stay safe and thanks for listening.

What is it Like Working Through a Pandemic?

Denise Jeffries, Senior Veterinary Technician

To the cats, the pandemic means nothing: they still need to be fed, medicated and loved.

For me, it is a little more complicated.

To be responsible for the medical care of so many cats is challenging enough on a normal day. We are accustomed to having a lot of eyes on the cats every day, with the smallest of concerns reported to our staff.

But when a “stay at home” order was put in place for New Jersey, our



Walter, one of the many residents to enjoy a stroller walk in the midst of lockdown

team was whittled down to the essentials. This meant a lot less eyes on the cats. The few people in the building have a lot of work to accomplish, and we are trying to pay as much attention as possible to the cats for health checks and socialization. Honestly, it has been exhausting, stressful and frustrating.

Working from home is not easy in my position. I have animals of my own, and a child demanding my attention. The animals walk all over my computer, my child doesn't understand why mommy can't play, and terrible cell coverage in my house has me running outside every time my phone rings -- which is a lot!

I try to be an optimist, so there are some positives. I have learned how much I value my job and the connection with the people I worked with every day, both staff and volunteers. I've worried about them;



Tiny Tempura arrived in June, with Special Needs that have our vet team working harder and more tenderly than ever

I've missed them.

Twelve weeks ago, this was all unknown territory. Yet I saw a group of people come together to do what was right to protect all involved and provide for the cats. We were/are tough and determined. Every life, animal and human, matters and determines every decision made.

Tabby's Place is my second home and family, and I believe we will be closer and stronger after going through this together.

Mondays in Paradise

Jae Hoff, Sanctuary Associate

Never in my life did I think I'd utter the phrase, "I can't wait for work on Monday!"

Indeed, these are strange times for a multitude of reasons:

- All sorts of wild creatures have been found roaming the now quiet neighborhoods of some cities.
- The canals in Venice are clear and free of turbulence, and the Himalayas are visible in Punjab, India for the first time in decades.
- People want to talk to you when you're out on a walk - from a safe distance, of course - because

they're deprived of human interaction (when normally us Northerners don't do much more than give a tense smile).

- Cats around the country have found their homes invaded by lazy, noisy humans who want to smother them with too much attention at all hours.
- I really, really, can't wait for the weekend to be over so I can go to work on Mondays.

Mondays are now a wonderful and welcome day of the week, because Monday means I get to

finally leave the cozy blanket cave I've made in my room and go to Tabby's Place. As someone who does not enjoy being cooped up for long periods of time, this whole quarantine thing has started to make me go a little crazy. Thankfully, I have the much-needed reprieve of a legitimate reason to leave the house during this pandemic: cats.

Crazy cats, lazy cats, oh-my-God-I-love-you-so-much-I-need-to-climb-all-over-you cats, shy cats, grumpy old cats, silly young cats, healthy and spry cats, Special Needs and especially delightful cats - at Tabby's Place, we've got it all. And

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Gentle, elderly Hobo, one of our mid-pandemic new arrivals, settling into his loving foster home with Jae

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thank goodness for that!

Every day we walk through those doors, we embrace all our wonderful residents, knowing that we are their connection to the outside world. In the age of shutdown, there is no constant stream of visitors and volunteers. It's just a few faithful staff and core volunteers trying to keep it all together and joyfully taking on that burden.

As much as it's tiring to spend our days cleaning messes, scooping litter pans and lugging litter, we're grateful that Tabby's Place is doing fine. Our cats are safe. Our cats are loved. Our cats are still receiving all the care and attention they require. We will make it through this together.

Even though most of you can't physically be with us, we never enter

our sanctuary alone. We appreciate your online outpouring of love. We cherish every heart-react on Facebook and "like" on Instagram. We acknowledge every view our videos get on YouTube. We read all our messages across all platforms with glee. Our doors are locked, but you are with us in spirit.

So that, in short, is how Mondays have become my favorite day of the week. Going in on Mondays is not about just getting the basics done; it's not about all the cleaning, the feeding, and the medicating. It's about the connection with our cats, our staff, and our community. Without you, there is no Tabby's Place and no happy Mondays.

Thank you, thank you, thank you.

A Complicated Ache

Sheila Smith, Board Chairperson

Ah... it's early Sunday and I hear a familiar beep: my 7:15AM phone alarm, reminding me to head to Tabby's Place for my volunteer shift, the highlight of the weekend.

The beep causes my heart to smile! But for three months now, my heart has instead been sad and heavy. Tabby's Place has not had regular volunteer staff on site since the early March NJ stay-at-home order.

It's a complicated ache we feel. We know the cats get all the care they need from a tiny staff of heroes working long and tireless days. And yet, we grieve the loss of our love connection with each special furball who has stolen our hearts. As said by A.D. Williams, "When I look into the eyes of an animal, I do not see an animal. I see a living being, I see a friend. I feel a soul."

We miss giving our love: pets,

combings, play time, quiet talks, and snuggles. Equally, we miss getting back unconditional love: head bonks, chirps, meows, swishing of tails, grooming we didn't know we needed, and those unsanctioned



Residents like Pepita long for our volunteers as much as the other way around

love bites. We even crave the hard work we do—the feeding, cleaning, laundry, and dishes—and the immediate satisfaction of knowing how it helps the cats.

We wonder if the cats miss us or notice we are gone. They must, right? And we wonder just how different the sanctuary will be when we return. We move between minor feelings of sadness to times of outright agony in pining for the place that feels like our second home.

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Under lockdown, stroller walks have been sanity-saving for social cats like Adam, with sane being a relative term

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Despite the staff's incredible efforts to keep us connected—the daily videos and photos, the outreach chats, the suite-by-suite walkabout videos, the stories of cat antics and wonderful virtual

adoptions—it won't be until we walk in the door and see our special kitties that our hearts can fill the hole that has grown deeper with each passing day.

Tabby's Place is a haven not just for hopeless cats, but for all

of us who know the comfort and love of a fantastic family of felines and incredible humans. The day I can return and reconnect with each beautiful feline and with the staff will be one glorious day. My heart will burst with joy!

Adoption in the Time of Pandemic

Tae Ellin, Adopter

Toward the end of last year, my husband and I decided we would adopt two or twelve (depending who you spoke to) cats in late March, on my birthday. I grew more eager as the day came closer, but then the pandemic arrived, and many of the shelters closed.

As we sheltered in place, I mentioned once or twice a week (OK, hour) how I wished I could get my "birthday kittens," and wouldn't they love the sun coming in the window, and there could never be a better time to adopt since we were home all the time, etc. Until one day I read a [story in Vice](#) about a couple who adopted a cat online. Game



Regal Katie



The girls

changer!

Even though Tabby's Place had posted they were closed to the public, I emailed them, crossed my fingers, and held my breath. Director of Operations Danielle wrote back within a day to share that, indeed, they had just started to offer "Web Adoptions," and outlined the ten-step process: from an online application and video virtual meeting with the cats, to the paperwork and no-contact pick-up procedure.

My husband and I filled out the application and interviewed with Danielle on the phone. Then she said, "Would you like to meet some cats?" Would we ever! We connected on FaceTime, and Danielle first introduced us to a vivacious two year old named Katie and Katie's friend Gretchen. We were smitten out of the gate. Danielle did her due diligence, and we "video dated" all of the cat candidates, but we knew immediately Katie and Gretchen were the ones. How Danielle picked the two perfect cats for us right away must be some kind of superpower.

My husband and I rolled up to Tabby's Place a few days later, opened the car doors, and stepped aside. Wearing masks and gloves, Danielle and a colleague came out and placed two cat carriers in the back seat. We got back in the car, and the four of us came home.

It has been nearly



Katie and Gretchen
adore each other

five weeks. Katie is a beautiful, sleek, jewel-black house panther who demands attention every time she's in the room. She's also a little bit of a hot mess, as she invariably has some food on her face or lint on her ears.

Gretchen is a stunning storm-cloud gray, who started out shy and frightened (she had been found only last February, tangled in barbed wire). Each day she lets us pet her and play with her a little more, and now she can yell for food with the best of them. Katie watches over Gretchen, making sure she feels safe, and they have very vocal conversations while they explore their new domain together. Watching Gretchen open up, and gaining her trust, has been an incredible experience.

Nothing is normal these days, including pet adoption. This adoption certainly didn't go as I had imagined, but it worked out better than we could have dreamed.

Offsite, But All In

Angela Hartley,
Development Director

“At last I have found my vocation. My vocation is love.”
- St. Thérèse of Lisieux

I’m not on the front lines. I’m not one of the essential, hands-on cat-wrangling, cat-medicating heroes. I’m just the Development Director.

This job is the joy of my days, my vocation and calling. In these past 120 or so days of strangeness, it has put a lump in my throat, but a feisty song in my spirit.

I can do most of my work from home. Between that and the inconvenient fact that Type I diabetes makes me a “high-risk person,” I have been working remotely since March 13th. I miss



Bucca assisting Angela in simpler times

my Tabby’s Place family more than I can express. You – feline and human – are my inspiration, my flame, my kindred spirits.

Speaking of kindred spirits, there IS one critical component of my job I can’t do from home: loving a certain swirly-eyed, sweet-as-pudding, strong-willed marvel.

Nineteen-year-old Bucca has been my office mate for over four years. Although the first of those years involved her sitting behind my computer monitor and uttering unrepeatable things at me in the language of Growl, we have since formed a bond that strains the power of language to describe. Bucca has been my muse, my best friend, the warm anchor purring in my arms and steeling my determination to give my all for this strange, wonderful place.

Today, I yearn for Bucca like the sea yearns for the moon. And I ache for you, too,



In the feline equivalent of trashing one’s hotel room, Bucca and roommate Ronnie express their feelings about Angela’s absence

donors and volunteers and staff and kindred spirits of all kinds.

As we enter the next stages of this strange season, tenacious even on tenterhooks, I will lean into that ache. I will keep singing the songs, telling the stories, loving with you, loving through the unknown, loving this life that puts me in contact with the kindest, most selfless creatures I have ever met.

Love, I believe, is stronger than death. Many waters, much less many months, cannot quench it. We will all be together again, and our joy will overflow. In the meantime, may we be nourished by the bond the cats have given us. I love you, family.

Reopening

“Shutting down” was easy: we saw danger approaching, we formulated a plan. The situation escalated quickly, rapidly firing our triggers. We initiated Level 4: maximum restrictions on humans, while ensuring the cats were cared for. Done deal.

Turns out “reopening” is (way more) complicated. It’s like rebuilding a carburetor¹, or any complex device. Disassembly is easy. Just start unscrewing and removing components. There are only a few choices at any point in time, and order isn’t typically important. It’s hard to go wrong.

But when it’s time to

reassemble...there are many choices, and order is crucial. Choose the incorrect part, and you may have to backtrack several steps to enable forward motion.

The analogy is clear. Where to start? What is the order?

After much thought, we realized the answer lay in our mission statement: “Save cats from hopeless situations.”

We had suspended (e.g., events and tours) or reduced (e.g., number of people in the building) many things to achieve lockdown. We had also suspended the intake of new cats, to reduce possible virus exposure and to reduce expenses (given the impending economic

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Bounty expresses our collective hopes and hesitations for the unknown days ahead

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disruption).

Now we knew where to start. We would, carefully, resume the intake of cats. This is, after all, at the heart of what we do.

More cats meant we would need to ramp up other items. We would need to allow more people in the building and loosen some constraints on interactions among employees, for example.

Now we had our order and could develop a plan. We are currently at the second level of the reopening plan. We are again accepting cats, at a carefully metered rate, while we keep a close eye on finances and

workload, as well as the pandemic status in our area.

The path forward for us will be long, and we will tread carefully. But, it feels wonderful to be accepting cats again.

Thank you for walking this strange road with us. Please continue to keep us – feline and human – close to your hearts. We promise to keep you posted. – J.R.

¹ Some of you are old enough to remember when all car engines had carburetors. For you young 'uns, see this link: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carburetor>



Together with tiny Chewy, we truly believe the best is yet to come

YOUR DONATION WILL BE MATCHED THROUGH 8/10!

Please remember that right now, your donation can go twice as far for the cats...just when they need you most! Tabby's Place needs your help to get back to helping as many cats as we did pre-pandemic. That's why we're excited that your donation will be doubled, but only through 8/10. Please don't miss this chance to do twice as much for cats who need you more than ever.

You can do twice as much...
JUST WHEN THE CATS NEED YOU MOST.

Please help us to climb back to our peak levels of rescuing kitties!

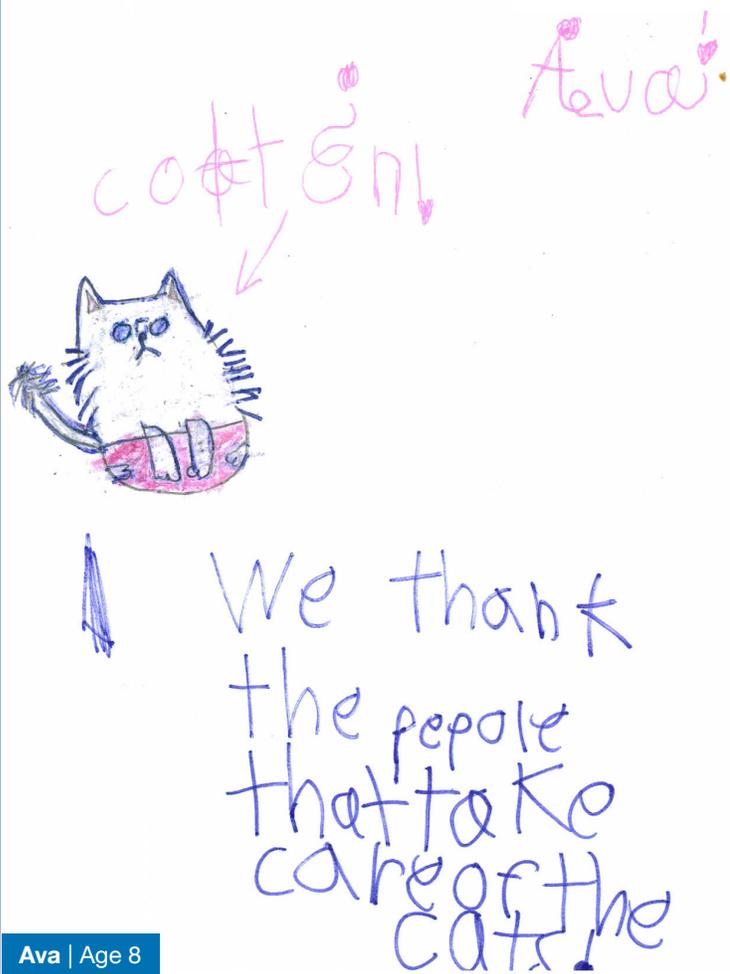
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THANK YOU TO ALL THE
TABBY'S PLACE ESSENTIAL WORKERS!



Ava | Age 8



Sky | Age 13



Olivia | Age 7

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