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FieldHaven sends its greetings

By: Lien Hoang, The News Messenger

Like a month-old kitten, the new greeting card service at FieldHaven Feline Rescue is still exploring its environs and learning how far it can stretch its paws.

Joy Smith and Alice West, the main brains behind the project, design cat-covered greeting cards and sell them to support the non-profit rescue and adoption center.

Long before the birth of the greeting card idea, Smith began taking photos of cats at the shelter, which she founded four years ago. An amateur photographer since her teens, Smith takes the cats out into her garden, where she puts their furry faces to film.

"That's my trademark," she said of the ecological backdrop.

She then hands the photos over to West, who sorts through them "like an addictive video game," before assembling the cards.

West is also charged with marketing the product by figuring out which cards are popular and where to sell them. Most of the already 115 sold went to shoppers at the farmers' market or any kith who saw West carrying her basket of goods.

"I felt like a Girl Scout," said West, who is now looking for ways to expand, whether it's setting up a table outside Raley's or stocking the cards in local shops.

Even as the women sat down for an interview with the News Messenger on Friday, they would bounce marketing ideas off one another - a signal that the business is clearly still in the brainstorming stages.

"We haven't put together a business plan, but I didn't have one with FieldHaven either, and it's taken off," Smith said. "It's about the creative energy, and the business will follow."

The duo was originally a trio, but Georgia Bockoven, who originally initiated the venture, is now taking time off to work on a novel. That left West to take on much of the production.

At two for \$5, or \$3 apiece, the cards have generated about \$250 so far. West intends to set a monthly goal and possibly earmark funds for specific needs around the shelter. She's already allocated the first round of income for Samson Winchester, a cat who was shot in the leg and will need \$600 in veterinarian expenses.

The cards are just the latest fundraiser that FieldHaven has devised, joining such efforts as ink cartridge collections and barn sales (essentially garage sales). But the most successful undertaking is the shelter's biannual book sale and open house, which will be happening on Saturday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. And, of course, aside from thousands of books, the cat-themed greeting cards will be available for visitors at the event as well.



FieldHaven co-founder Joy Smith, above, captures the playfulness of two 6-week-old kittens the Field Haven Adoption center just received and will use the photos for cards to sell as a fundraiser for the center. Karina Williams/The News Messenger