



## FieldHaven Feline Center

*“For every Cat in need, a Solution”*

### Kitten Sitters!

#### Program Update Year End 2020

The Kitten Sitter program was launched in early April 2020 to ease the burden on FieldHaven’s kitten foster program due to lack of staff, volunteers, and financial resources resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.



**SEEIN' KITTENS?  
START SITTIN'**

**BUT DON'T KIT-NAP  
FROM MOM!**

Mom may leave kittens for hours at a time. Don't assume they're momless. She'll probably return soon.  
Only help if they are orphaned, injured or ill.

The idea was to shift the burden of managing 150+ kittens in foster care at any given time (our normal kitten season capacity) to the community, engaging them to help. The alternative would have been to severely limit the number of kittens in foster. After analyzing the resources we would have using the limited staff and volunteers who stepped up to help, we determined our capacity of in-house foster kittens is 60-70, less than 50% of our normal capacity.

This document is a report of the nine months of the year 2020 Kitten Sitter program.

With any new program, especially one launched during an emergency situation, there were adjustments to the procedures and protocols as the program evolved. The most challenging obstacle was the definition of a “Kitten Sitter” vs a kitten taken into our foster program. It took several weeks for that definition to evolve and, due to the nature of the program there’s always a “grey area”.

#### **Defining what a Kitten Sitter is**

For tracking and data collection we launched an online form for Kittens Sitters to complete when they found a litter and were willing to care for the litter. We repurposed our Marysville TNR Squad Facebook page to be for Kitten Sitters (since TNR is at a

minimum right now), giving us a common area to communicate with Kitten Sitters. About five weeks into the program we refined the definition of a Kitten Sitter. This [definition is pinned](#) to the top of the page to define a Kitten Sitter vs a foster kitten.

Our staff, volunteers and the general community are always a few keystrokes away from assisting Kitten Sitters with questions and concerns. To minimize person-to-person contact we make every effort to provide support virtually. If hands-on assistance is needed we practice safe social-distancing guidelines.

### Kitten Sitter Locations

In the first year of the program we processed 138 Kitten Sitter registrations. While we focus on our geographic boundaries (Placer County, Wheatland, Marysville city limits), we did assist in other areas in 15 (10%) of the cases. Of those out-of- area cases, 11 (69%) were in other Yuba/Sutter county areas for which we know resources are extremely limited.

Submission Date	#
April	7
May	13
June	16
July	25
August	23
September	17
October	19
November	5
December	13
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>138</b>

Origin of Kitten Sitter	#
Antelope	1
Auburn	2
Browns Valley	2
Citrus Heights	2
Foresthill	1
Grimes	1
Lincoln	6
Live Oak	1
Loomis	3
Marysville	52
Modesto	1
Nicoluas	1
Olivehurst	21
Plumas Lake	5
Redding	1
Rio Oso	1
Rocklin	5
Roseville	6
Sacramento	9
Strawberry valley	1
Wheatland	14
Yuba City	11
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>147</b>

## Outcomes

Of the 138 registrations in April – December 2020 below is the listed outcomes.

Outcome	Number of kittens found	Number of kittens helped
All kittens given to Placer SPCA	3	3
All kittens intook to FH	112	112
All kittens placed by KS	74	74
All kittens transferred to another organization	49	49
All kittens transferred SPCA of N. Nevada	7	7
All kittens transferred to Front Street Shelter	7	7
All kittens transferred to HSSV	25	25
All kittens transferred to Itsy Bitsy	5	5
All kittens transferred to Mission Meow	3	3
All kittens transferred to SPCA of N. Nevada	1	1
All kittens transferred to SSPCA	2	2
All kittens transferred to Yuba County Animal Service	2	2
Kitten died	1	0
Outcome unknown, KS did not respond	70	0
Returned to source of origin	26	0
Some kittens place by KS, others transferred	21	21
Some kittens placed by KS; others FH intook	22	22
TNR	13	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>346</b>

In several cases (23) FieldHaven's efforts did not result in a kitten "helped". For example, some Kitten Sitters registered their litters with us then never responded to efforts to contact.

We intook 124 kittens into FieldHaven from Kitten Sitters. The kittens were intook when they either became of age for adoption or when, for various reasons, it was not possible for the Kitten Sitter to continue caring for them. Those reasons ranged from personal situations or where a kitten became ill, needing veterinary care.

In 35 cases (95 kittens) the Kitten Sitter placed the kittens or adopted them into their family. Forty-five (45) cases (101 kittens) were transferred to FieldHaven partner organization's adoption programs. In three (3) cases (13 kittens) the kittens did not meet social guidelines for adoption programs and were TNR'd.

In total 346 kittens were helped. The kittens that were brought into our adoption program (47 cases) were a major relief to our foster program because the Kitten Sitter provided the care for the kittens during their early, formative weeks.

In 61 cases, the litters had a mom. Of those cases mom was TNR'd in twenty-two (22) cases, three (3) cases the mom was transferred, and the Kitten Sitter adopted in eight (8) cases, twenty (20) cases we do not know the status of mom. Eight (8) moms were intook into FieldHaven's adoption program. Eighty-two (82) cases there appeared to be no mom.

Outcome for mom	#
Intake to FH	8
KS adopted	6
Mom living on property	2
No mom	82
TNR	22
Transferred	3
Unknown	20
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>143</b>

### Program Costs to Date

We estimated a cost of \$37,150 for 9 months of the 2020 Kitten Sitter program. Costs are broken down as follows:

Kittens/Moms intook to FieldHaven (124+8) – We typically use \$350 as the

Kitten Sitter Program Costs	
Cost Category	Cost
Kittens intook to FieldHaven - 124 @\$200	\$24,800.00
Moms intook to FieldHaven - 8 @\$200	\$800.00
Medical Care Costs - non FH kittens (est)	\$1,200.00
Administrative oversight (est \$1k/month)	\$9,000.00
Supplies (est \$150/month)	\$1,350.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$37,150.00</b>

benchmark cost for each cat/kitten we intake. In the case of Kitten Sitters we have reduced that benchmark to \$200 because the kittens are usually only with us for the last part of their foster period, therefore reducing overhead costs for each kitten, or mom cat.

Medical care costs – Veterinary care was needed for several kittens/moms. In some cases, the Kitten Sitters contributed to the veterinarian or did fundraising to cover all or part. We estimated that there was approximately \$1,200 in medical care costs that were paid for by FieldHaven.

Administrative Oversight – Staff oversight and administration of the program is estimated at \$1,000 per month.

Supplies – Fortunately, many of the supplies we distribute (food, litter, bottles, KMR) are donated keeping our cost for supply distribution to an estimated \$150 per month.

## Lessons Learned Thus Far

Kitten Sitters has been a very successful program despite some bumps when it was first launched, mainly in the definition and setting the guidelines of the program. It has saved FieldHaven an estimated \$119,700.00+ over the nine-month timeframe in costs if the kittens had been intaken to our traditional program. In addition to the cost savings there are additional benefits to the program:

- 1) We can help more kittens that otherwise may have gone to animal control or been left on the street.
- 2) We have been able to engage the community in a way that we have not before. These are people that did not know they could “save” a kitten. We are providing them with the support and backup, so they feel empowered to take on caring for kittens. They suddenly feel part of the solution instead of complaining about the problem.

Some of the benefits were unexpected:

- 1) We have generated connections with people who want to volunteer/foster ongoing.
- 2) People who were adamant they could not keep the kittens were cajoled into kitten sitting and they are now believers in life saving.

Areas for improvement:

- 1) Increase communication and access to information with the Kitten Sitters. The program started as an emergency solution to fill in for a program we were not able to provide during the pandemic. With its success Kitten Sitters is a permanent program for 2021. We have plans for branding the program and updating the web page with additional information.
- 2) Funding for better support of emergency medical situations. These kittens do not get sick on a weekday morning when we have access to one of our veterinarians. No, it always happens on a Saturday night when emergency services need to be utilized. We have been working with 24-hour clinics to set expectations on our budget and scope of services we can provide. This helps to keep costs down.
- 3) A very important service would be to provide access to wellness services for Kitten Sitter kittens so they can receive timely vaccinations and parasite control. We would like to have funding to have a veterinarian available for two-hour clinics two to three times a week so we could provide wellness exams, vaccines and parasite control.

- 4) Because of the COVID-caused limitations to spay/neuter we have not been able to impose any requirements on Kitten Sitters to have their kittens altered before adopting out. For 2021 we will implement an agreement for Kitten Sitters that will ensure they get kittens altered before rehoming. We can offer services through Hathaway Spay & Neuter Clinic.

**Thank You  
Alley Cat Allies & Maddie's Fund  
for sponsoring  
Kitten Sitters!**

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