



CATS' AID NEWS

Spring 2008

LADIES' MINI-MARATHON



Are you taking part in the Ladies' Mini-Marathon this year? It takes place on Bank Holiday Monday, 2 June 2008 and the first entry form will be in the *Evening Herald* on Thursday, 28 February 2008. Entry is also available online at www.florawomensminimarathon.ie from 29 February 2008. The closing date is Tuesday 24 April or when maximum number of entries is reached so get your entry in early. If you would like to raise funds for Cats' Aid please leave your name, telephone number and a short message on our helpline 01-6683529, or email us at catsaid@gmail.com and you will be provided with a t-shirt and sponsorship forms. Please help us to continue with our vital work helping cats and kittens.

WORLD VEGETARIAN DAY FAIR 2007

Vegetarian Day, on October 6th last, turned out to be a great success despite a change of venue and roadworks all around us. The day dawned bright and sunny in an autumnal way which, in some way, compensated for the difficulties mentioned above. Ann and Doreen, our 'early morning larks' found their way in to set up laden down with all sorts of wonderful Cats' Aid merchandise. We were very happy to see that there were two other animal welfare groups represented as it really is an opportunity to make your presence felt with the general public. The room was bright and spacious and there was a genuine 'feel-good' buzz around the place. Obviously there were lots of other related/interesting tables promoting their particular interests e.g. various vegetarian cooking, chrysalis (health,

retreat), recycling groups, eco-organisations and talks about the benefits of being vegetarian.

Margaret and Deirdre took over come lunch time and soldiered on until closing time by which time Cats' Aid had taken in €472 so, as they say, 'every little helps'. Maeve, the taxi-driver, gave her services free-of-charge – thank you Maeve. I definitely think that the organizers of Vegetarian Day should go 'all out' next time to promote the event. **AW**

YOU'RE EXPECTING A BABY – CONGRATULATIONS: BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO PART WITH YOUR FAITHFUL FELINE COMPANION

Like many cat rescue organisations, we are having more and more cats being handed in for rehoming due to pregnant women fearing for their health and that of their baby. This is a very exciting time for the mum-to-be, but not so happy for the, often elderly, cat suddenly homeless after years of being a loved and loving companion. The following question and answer is taken from the "Ask the Vet" feature of *The Cat*, winter edition 2007 (magazine of Cat Protection UK). We hope that it will dispel fears and allow for more considered decisions to be made, based on fact rather than misinformation.

Q I have been advised that I should give up my cat because I am pregnant and there is a risk of contracting toxoplasmosis. It is such a dilemma because I have had my cat for eight years and she has been a devoted companion. Of course, I am also worried about the health of my unborn baby. What can I do to prevent catching this disease?

A Understandably, this is an area of concern to all pregnant mothers. It is thought that most cases of toxoplasmosis occur following the ingestion of undercooked, contaminated meat, unwashed fruit and vegetables or inadvertent soil ingestion when gardening.

Certainly cats are a vital link in the transmission of the disease. However, if a cat does contract the disease, the infectious cysts are only shed in cat faeces for a short period, after which the healthy cat generally has life-long immunity from re-infection. There really isn't any need for you to part with your cat because you are pregnant as there are a number of precautions you can take to minimise any risk:

- Only eat meat that has been thoroughly cooked through – eating raw or undercooked meat is the most common cause of getting toxoplasmosis.
- Wash your hands and all cooking equipment and surfaces after preparing raw meat.
- Wash fruit and vegetables thoroughly to remove all traces of soil.
- Always wear gloves and don't put your hands to your mouth when gardening – after gardening wash your hands and gloves carefully.
- Always wear rubber gloves when dealing with a cat litter tray or its contents. Wash your hands and gloves when finished. If possible, get someone else to do this job.
- Avoid cured meats, unpasteurised goat's milk and products made from it.
- Wash hands thoroughly after any contact with sheep and avoid handling newborn lambs.

We are indebted to Cat Protection UK for allowing us to reproduce this excellent and informative answer to a much asked question. Further information can be obtained from the following websites:

- For a balanced view on toxoplasmosis, have a look at Tommy's the Baby Charity's website on www.tommys.org
- The Cat Group, which is a collection of professional organisations dedicated to feline welfare, have produced a policy statement on toxoplasmosis and discusses recent research and methods of prevention of infection. See their policy statement on www.catgroup.co.uk

BIRTHDAY GIRLS

Caitriona Bourke (11), Emily Costello (12) and Dervla Hughes (12) had a joint birthday celebration and asked their friends for donations to Cats' Aid rather than presents. They sent us €330. Though addressed to Cats' Aid correctly their letter and cheque went to the Den, RTE (the vagaries of our postal system) and they were featured on the programme (see photograph which Caitriona gave me on the day of the Christmas Sale – great to meet you, Caitriona). Thank you so much, girls, for your generosity and selflessness. Our feline friends are most grateful. **MB**

PIKI



On 18th July 2007, we had to say goodbye to Piki, the most beautiful, crazy, fluffy, sweet, tortie Piki...not just 'a cat' but, at the risk of sounding like one of those mad cat women, my little babygirl!

I will never forget the night Piki came into my life – Eileen and Jan brought her to our apartment in Milltown, and I had no idea what this 'rescue cat' looked like. I didn't even know then what 'tortie' or 'tortieshell' colourings meant. Now I know they mean the beautiful mixture of black, peach, orange that Piki was. Eileen opened the cat carrier, and out popped this curious looking kitty, a most unusual colour, and



with the hugest green eyes that turned black with curiosity mixed with fear. Within a few minutes she was off sniffing and exploring the corners of the room, and that night as I went to bed, and left Piki in the sitting room (the advantages of a two room apartment – no cat ever feels too lonely!), I thought about this new arrival with excitement. Animals had always been a part of my life and, even as a child, I felt a special affinity with cats and dogs. I was hoping Piki was okay in the sitting room, and not cold, and not frightened. At 3 a.m. that night I woke up, I suppose the 'maternal instinct' kicked in, and I went into the sitting room to check on her. She was perched up on the top of the couch, and the moment she saw me, she came over and started purring loudly. It was at this moment, I

knew I was 'in love!'. It was an indescribable feeling, and from that night on, Piki was part of my life and heart.

For the past two years, through the ups and downs, and even after we moved house, Piki continued to surprise, delight and amuse us with her personality and quirks. Whether she was marching up to the top of the bed at 5 a.m., flirting with any boy that showed an interest in her (human, not cat!), staring at me for no reason whatsoever, miaowing in a soft high pitched voice only when she knew I was opening a tin of tuna, or the back door into the garden, Piki was one in a million, and irreplaceable. Even the neighbourhood stray Big Boy aka Twinkle (aka Ireland's largest cat) grew to love Piki. And even Piki, who never liked other cats (or so we thought), grew to be fond of Big Boy! Everyone commented on her elegance, fluffiness, softness, and, in some cases, tendency to put on weight. I often joked that if Piki got any fatter she would get a heart attack climbing the stairs. How ironic and cruel that earlier last year, she fell ill and lost so much weight so rapidly and became so small and skinny, it was hard to imagine her as the fluffy tortie we had for two years.

Between March and July of 2007, Piki fought hard to stay alive, and tried to please me by eating little titbits. Eamon, our vet, worked so hard to give her the best treatment, but in the end, when it became obvious she could no longer do much but sit in one spot, and when she looked at me on 17th July as if to say 'mom, I'm tired', I knew then that it was time to let her go, to free her from constant

BORIS

Boris's first days in our household didn't go too well. I was looking for a cat as our beloved pet had died of old age and I decided to look up the Cats' Aid website. I wanted to give a good home to a cat who had little chance of being adopted. When I read that Boris only had one eye and that his one eye only offered him partial vision, I thought he was the cat for me. I picked him up at Doreen's house one Sunday evening in January 2006. He looked so cosy in his basket surrounded with all the other cats that I felt bad about tearing him away from the heat and his familiar surroundings. He cried for the whole drive to Kilkenny.



When we got home, he went straight behind the sofa in the conservatory and no amount of calling would make him budge. He would only come out to eat when the coast was clear. And in order to find out if the coast was clear, he would use his sense of smell by sniffing in an exaggerated fashion. The days passed and there was no change. I was disappointed because I had naively assumed that, from day one, I would have a cat sitting on my lap next to the fire! And I was devastated because I could see that Boris was terrified. On the few occasions that he had left the safety of the back of the couch and climbed on the windowsill, I had seen him trembling with fear. Because he was nearly blind, he felt very vulnerable. He couldn't see where the danger was coming from (I was the danger as far as he was concerned).

On reflection it must have been a traumatic experience to go from the one house he had known all his life (he was two and a half), full of cats and having enjoyed a close relationship with his mistress, Doreen, to a very quiet house with no other cats and a new set of humans with strange voices. A few days later Doris phoned me and I told her that Boris wasn't settling in. She was surprised as he had been a very sociable cat when living with her. I started thinking that I would be doing him a favour by bringing him back to where he

medicines and pills and eye drops, and to let her sleep peacefully. The next morning, she spent the whole day sitting in my piano teaching room, at the foot of the piano, she wasn't even sleeping, just lying there as I practiced William Byrd's *First Pavan* – an appropriate piece of music for how I was feeling that day. At about 6 p.m., I opened the back door, and Piki made one final dash for the garden, to smell the grass, and breathe in some fresh air, but even that was a huge effort, and when I let her back in, she almost walked into the cat carrier with no struggle at all. Stephen and I brought her to Eamon, and I held her in my arms as my little baby girl went from being a living breathing creature, to falling asleep forever. The next few days passed by in a blur, as we struggled to cope without Piki. Now, several months on, the pain is still there, though the raw grief has been replaced by some consolation that my life was enriched by this little cat, and she didn't even know how happy she made me! I hope I can someday wake up and not feel pain and sadness when I think about her being taken from me after such a short time, she was only six years old, and I only had the joy of knowing her for about 2 years. But then I realize that the pain I am feeling is only because I miss her selfishly – I miss the unconditional love, the purrs, the warmth, the craziness and the affection, but I don't miss having to watch her sick, dying, in pain and in discomfort.

So run free little Piki, we'll never, ever forget you, and hope to see you soon. Love, crazy mom **K**

had been so happy. When Boris had been with us for a week my husband and I put bamboo slats on the roof of the conservatory, thinking that the brightness might stop Boris from feeling at home. We were trying to recreate the cosy atmosphere of his Dublin home. Considering Boris is nearly blind, I doubt if it made any difference to him. But we were ready to try anything. The following Tuesday, I told Doreen that Boris still hadn't settled in and she was upset about it, since he had looked like a good candidate for adoption in view of his amiable nature. We decided to give it a few more days. My husband had told me not to leave the turkey slices in his bowl and get Boris to eat from my hand and thus accustom himself to my presence, but I eventually got tired of waiting.

Thirteen days after Boris's arrival, I was watching TV with my son when my husband burst into the sitting-room shouting: 'We have a breakthrough!' He had managed to get Boris to eat off his hand and thus get used to his smell. It had required a lot of patience on his part. We were ecstatic! The next day, Boris ventured into the sitting-room. At the end of the week, he went on a tour of the house. Eventually, he became brave enough to jump on my lap and curl into a ball while I watched TV. He went back to being the affectionate cat that Doreen had promised me.

He loves the company of humans and whenever we are in the kitchen he sits on the internet radio (see photo). It is next to the heater and the sound of voices flowing from it reassures him. The highlight of his day are the three wafer-thin turkey slices I give him every morning. At night fall he goes mad, tearing around the house like a Formula One car racing in Mondello Park and you can hear his (rather long) claws screeching on the wooden floor as he careers through the house. He doesn't act his age and I don't think he ever will. My son adores him and enquires after him the minute he gets home from school. He has charmed everybody, especially Laura, who looks after him in her cattery when we have to go away. It was all worth the wait. **MD**

Department of Agriculture Grant

Cats' Aid acknowledges, with thanks, the generous grant of €15,000 received from the Minister for Agriculture towards our work. This enables us to help with the ever-increasing demands for our help, especially with regard to spaying and neutering feral colonies. **MB**

Cats' Aid Core Group

Maeve Bradley
Maureen Bristow O'Connor
Muriel Davidson
Lesly Field
Doreen Grant
Margaret Hopkins

Deirdre McCormick
Eileen Penston
Cyrileen Power
Eileen Warren
Ann Woulfe

Would you like to see your rescued cat's story featured in the *Cats' Aid News*? If you enjoy reading the stories of rescued cats in the newsletter, then why not let everyone else know about yours? Have you an opinion about something feline which you would like to share with us? Write to us along with a photograph and we'll do our best to publish it. Please write to: The Editor, Cats' Aid News, P.O. Box 2874, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4. It would be a big help to us if you could enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of your photograph. Alternatively you can email your story and photographs (marked for attention of the Editor, Cats' Aid News) to: catsaid@gmail.com **MB**

CATS' AID HELPLINE:

01-6683529: messages for Cats' Aid may be left on this number. The helpline is checked daily.

CATS' AID ON THE WEB:

www.catsaid.org

Christmas Sale 2007

Once again we were extremely lucky with the weather for our Christmas Sale



on 1 December last. It remained dry until mid-afternoon which

made a huge difference to the numbers attending. We raised €6,725 which sum included donations/memberships of €2,018.

Grateful thanks to all who made the event such a success – our ever



faithful helpers and those who donated goods/money. Those present at the end of the Sale joined with Margaret and Eileen in celebrating their birthdays with a lovely cake big enough to give everyone a slice. A good day was had by all. **MB**