

# Tails

A newsletter promoting compassionate and responsible relationships between humans and animals

## Pandemic Creates the 'Purrfect' Storm

Just as sure as stick season arrives after the leaves make their final debut in the fall, "kitten season" arrives each spring when shelter staff, fosters and volunteers across the country collectively brace for the inundating number of local pregnant or mothering cats with kittens needing services. Given the longer days, warmer weather and increased access to food sources, kitten season typically lasts from April through October. This year, however, several factors contributed to what has been nationally recognized as an unprecedented year. The mild winter encouraged cats to go out and roam, while pandemic-related restrictions prevented pet owners and organizations from getting owned pets or free-roaming animals neutered and spayed. So far this year, 176 of the 277 cats served by North Country Animal League have been kittens.

Already among the most at-risk pets in shelters, many kittens come with special needs. *Fromage* and her newborns were rescued during a local TNR (trap/neuter/release) mission. Upon arrival, *Fromage* was diagnosed with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV). Although FIV+ cats can lead healthy and happy lives, the stigma surrounding FIV makes it harder for them to find homes. While all her kittens have since found forever families, *Fromage* remains in foster care.



*"It's so important that kittens have a safe home and frequent contact with multiple people," explains Anne Exler, foster mom. "Even kittens with feral moms become attached to us humans during their time with us so they can go on to be loving companion animals. My favorite is getting to midwife the kittens into the world. Most of us who love cats can't adopt as many as we have room in our hearts for. I always tell people it's the best volunteer job in the world!"*

In addition to local kitten intakes, NCAL continues to receive hundreds of more cats and kittens who arrive on lifesaving transports from overburdened shelters in the south.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

TAILS is published by NCAL and welcomes letters and questions from its readers. If you have a query or thoughts to share, please email [info@ncal.com](mailto:info@ncal.com).

### Board of Trustees

John D. Miller Jr, *President*  
Lynne Eyberg, *Vice-President*  
Jessica Russell, *Treasurer*  
Terry Itameri-Kinter, *Secretary*  
Holly Berry  
Tom Hubbs  
Maggie MacDonald  
Beth McCormack  
Theresa Meis

### Trustee Emeritus

Lisa Darden  
Beth Gadbios  
Wendy Old  
Annie Strobel  
Donna Wheeler  
Linda Wood

### Administrative Staff

Tracy Goldfine, *Executive Director*  
John Decker, *Development Director*  
Carlee Brion, *Programs & Outreach Manager*  
Lusana Masrur, *Communications Manager*  
Rini Mayer, *Administrative & Finance Coordinator*

### Pet Adoption Center Staff

Jamie Dutil, *Director of Operations & Medical Care*  
Emily Peterson, *Customer Care & Adoptions Manager*  
Angel Mitofsky, *Animal Care & Behavior Manager*  
Jess Mcleon, *Animal Care & Adoptions Associate*  
Schae Wolff, *Animal Care & Adoptions Associate*  
James von Hollen, *Animal Care Associate*  
Sophia Kourkoulis, *Animal Care Associate*  
Marisa Collins, *Animal Care Associate*

### Equine Center Staff

Becky Wheeler, *Equine Care & Facilities Manager*  
Nina Matt, *Equine Programs & Communications Manager*  
Mindy Hinsdale, *Riding Instructor*  
Sadie Rock, *Equine Care Associate*

### Mailing Address

16 Mountain View Meadow Road  
Morrisville, VT 05661  
(802) 888-5065 phone  
[www.ncal.com](http://www.ncal.com)

### Pet Adoption Center

To schedule an appointment, please call  
(802) 888-5065 x 101.

Printing by L. Brown & Sons Printing

Letter from Executive Director

## Dear Friends,



Every day, North Country Animal League cares for the neglected, abandoned, surrendered and needy animals right here in our community.

Our compassion extends as far as our resources allow and we often find ways to go far beyond that to protect those most vulnerable. In an ever-changing world, we understand the vital role that animals play in our lives - providing us with much needed comfort and companionship through uncertain times. NCAL's mission to foster compassionate and responsible relationships between people and pets has never been more important - we need animals as much as they need us!

Earlier you read about Fromage and her kittens, who came to NCAL in great need during an unprecedented kitten season. Fromage's second chance, and that of hundreds of other vulnerable animals like her, is only made possible through the support of friends like you. NCAL has just launched our Annual Fund drive to raise vital funds that provide shelter, warmth, vaccines, medical care and spay/neuter for the vulnerable pets we serve. In addition to providing lifesaving second chances for deserving animals, these donations support efforts to enhance the bond between people and pets. This includes programs like NCAL Meals - free pet food assistance for local families in need, and our humane education programs, which foster a growing community of young animal advocates.

The pandemic challenges us constantly, requiring inventive and creative approaches to staffing, logistics, healthcare for the animals and all other aspects of NCAL's operations. We have seen great changes in our operations over the past year as we've faced new and increased demands. Our shelter is now near capacity with animals, and our dedicated staff work tirelessly to find new homes for the hundreds of dogs and cats we care for.

**In the spirit of giving, we invite you to join us in generously supporting NCAL's 2021 Annual Fund.** Please consider making a year end gift today and help provide a second chance for wonderful pets like Fromage and hundreds of others who deserve to live healthy and happy lives.

On behalf of all of the homeless animals who need our help, we thank you for joining us to save lives.

Sincerely,

Tracy Goldfine  
Executive Director



## Meet John Decker, NCAL's New Development Director!

In October, we welcomed John Decker as NCAL's new Development Director. In his role, John looks forward to strengthening community relationships and building on the longevity of our programs so that every animal that arrives at NCAL's doors can be served with individualized quality care for years to come.

A Pennsylvania native, John moved to Vermont in 2010 and fell in love with the Green Mountain State. A former business owner and entrepreneur, John and his family call Morrisville home now.

He has always been a lover of animals and an advocate for their wellbeing, *"I am coming to NCAL with a passion for animals and animal rights,"* says Decker, *"As an active community member, I look forward to connecting with others through this work. NCAL is dedicated to providing second chances for homeless pets in need and I could not be more proud to join this mission."*

## Leave a Legacy

Turn part of your life savings into a lifesaving gift for the animals through your IRA, will, trust or other financial and estate plans. With such a gift, you will make an impact that will grow and last into the future. To talk to us about the many opportunities for charitable giving that can help us save and transform countless lives for years to come, **please contact Tracy Goldfine, Executive Director, at 802-888-5065 x 114 or [tracy@ncal.com](mailto:tracy@ncal.com).**

Thank you for joining us as we create a safety net for companion animals in our community, across Vermont and beyond.



## Sit. Stay. VOLUNTEER!

Whether you are young or retired, a dog person, cat person or people person, we need your help! Volunteer positions at NCAL include dog walkers, kennel assistants, customer care support, NCAL Meals delivery route drivers, junior volunteers, volunteer leaders, and more. Join our team and play a vital role in enhancing the lives of hundreds of pets and people!

**Learn more or apply at:**  
**[ncal.com/volunteer](http://ncal.com/volunteer)**

# Looking to Adopt from NCAL?

Here are some tips from Emily Peterson, Adoptions and Customer Care Manager:



*"If you are in search of your next best friend, please consider adopting from NCAL; you will help us save more than one life by making room for more!"*  
- Emily Peterson, Adoptions and Customer Care Manager

- To keep our community and staff safe during COVID and in the interest of better serving the animals that come through our doors, the NCAL Pet Adoption Center remains closed to drop-in visitors and is open by appointment only.
- Pay attention to our online gallery of available cats and dogs - [visit ncal.com](http://ncal.com)
- Once you find someone you like, or if you have an idea of the kind of pet who would be a good fit for you, make an appointment by contacting **802-888-5065 x 101** or [info@ncal.com](mailto:info@ncal.com).
- During the appointment, an Adoption Counselor will work with you through our matchmaking process and introduce you to the available animals who meet your needs.
- If you find "the one", our staff will guide you on how to proceed with the adoption process.
- If you do not find your match, we will continue to work with you until the right animal is found. Continue to check the NCAL website - our gallery of adoptable pets is updated daily with the status of our animals. The next one could be who you have been waiting for!
- In the meantime, make preparations in your home and your lifestyle while you wait for the right dog or cat to come along.

Questions? Call 802-888-5065 x 101 or email [info@ncal.com](mailto:info@ncal.com)

## Adopting a Pet from NCAL Guarantees:



- Spay/Neuter
- Microchip
- NCAL ID tag
- Vaccinations
- Deworming
- Flea preventative
- Temperament testing
- Heartworm test and preventative
- Complimentary local vet exam
- Feline leukemia and FIV tests
- Ear cleaning
- Nail trimming
- Physical exam upon intake
- Dental cleaning or extractions (if needed)
- Additional testing for senior pets
- Emergency medical care (if needed)



## CONTINUED FROM FRONT COVER

### Pandemic Creates the 'Purrfect' Storm

*“When the pandemic began, shelters and TNR organizations suddenly had less access to veterinary care, particularly routine surgeries like spay/neuter. The timing of shut downs occurring in the spring of 2020 paralleled the beginning of kitten season”, says Jamie Dutil, Director of Operations and Medical Care. “Cats who remained un-fixed had litters, whose litters then had litters, and it created a profound ripple effect. Now in 2021, we are witnessing the consequences nationwide. Some of our shelter partners continue to find themselves caring for over 1,000 kittens at a time. They need urgent help from northern shelters like ours that have a higher demand for adoptions”.*

NCAL and thousands of other shelters across the country continue to provide vulnerable pets urgent medical care, behavioral and social enrichment, necessary veterinary procedures including spay/neuter, and any other lifesaving interventions. While kitten season in Vermont is just ending, our partner shelters in the south are still working against the clock to care for pregnant cats, nursing moms, newborns and orphaned kittens and sending them north to make room for more. Our fight to save these tiny lives is a tall order but we know that as long as we keep working together, every life is worth saving - no matter how small.

### Recognizing the 'Special' in Special Needs Pets

Often overlooked due to age, medical or behavioral issues, special-needs pets typically wait much longer to be adopted - for reasons beyond the animal's control. Like Sutter and Raine, who have since been adopted, many dogs need behavioral enrichment. They require time to build trust and confidence in humans, consistent structure and routine, and basic obedience training. These animals must be matched with adopters who are committed to supporting their needs and can continue helping them become their best selves. Every special needs cat or dog is first and foremost a pet... just as capable as any other of fulfilling our need to love and be loved.



*“**SUTTER** is always impressing us. He's made leaps in bounds from where he started, and we could not be more proud! He is fully adjusted to his home, loves getting his zoomies out, going for rides, walking in the woods, playing with his favorite golden retriever cousin, and stealing the occasional cucumber from our garden. We are so happy to have him as part of our family and cannot thank you guys enough for bringing us together!”*

**RAINE** came from an overburdened shelter in the south where she was surrendered. Extremely nervous, she bolted while on a walk within days of her arrival after getting spooked by a loud noise. Thanks to the perseverance and teamwork of our staff and volunteers, we were able to catch her. The very next day, she went home to a family who had been rooting for her all along, who continue to help her become braver each day.



**BANKSY** is a special-needs cat still on the hunt for his forever home. He has a larger-than-life personality and is always up for a conversation with anyone willing to listen and chat back. Currently on anxiety medication, he will likely have to be on a prescription diet for the rest of his life. Adopting Banksy will take effort and dedication, but it will also be an incredibly rewarding experience for the special person willing to take that chance on him!

Especially vulnerable pets like Banksy need to stay at NCAL longer and receive specialized services. **To sponsor and allow special-needs animals to keep moving towards the bright future they deserve, visit: [ncal.com/sponsor-animal](https://ncal.com/sponsor-animal)**

# One Hoof in Front of the Other

## *Nurturing Compassion through Humane Education*

Just as quickly as the ground freezes and winter sets in, summer camps and Fall Afterschool Horsemanship programs zoom by at the NCAL Equine Center and at the Pet Adoption Center. Thankfully we have photos to look through and remember the fun we have had!



*“Learning to care for and nurture horses teaches responsibility in children. It enables them to face and overcome their fears and builds confidence,”* says Mindy Hinsdale, Riding Instructor at NCAL's Horsemanship Camps, Afterschool and Riding Lesson Programs. *“Riding helps strengthen their legs and their core, hand-eye coordination and motor skills. Most importantly it teaches them to believe in themselves. Just think of a young child building a relationship with and working in harmony with an 800 pound horse - it is very empowering!”*



*“It’s been a privilege to further nurture the empathy inherent in all children at these camps,”* says Lusana Masrur, Communications Manager and Humane Heroes Camp Director. *“At NCAL we want children and youth to realize that they are never too young to be change-makers and act upon their beliefs. While they care for orphaned kittens, learn from shelter and local experts, train and groom dogs, pet reptiles and partake in other camp activities, they also equip themselves with knowledge and the tools of advocacy to be a voice for the animals.”*

# For the Love of Keeping Families Together

NCAL Meals, a free pet food assistance program, helps local families in need feed their pets and ultimately reduces the number of animals having to be surrendered to local shelters. Partnering with Meals on Wheels of Lamoille County and Lamoille Community Food Share, over 8,749 lbs of food have been distributed to under-resourced households in Lamoille County through NCAL Meals as of November, 2021.

*“Through NCAL Meals, we are able to reach and impact the lives of so many animals and pet owners in Lamoille County,” says Carlee Brion, Programs and Outreach Manager. “Our goal is to be a resource for our community members and provide support where it is needed most. The last two years have given us the opportunity to learn about the hardships that many pet owners face today and how necessary a support program like NCAL Meals is to continue keeping animals in their loving homes. NCAL Meals is more than providing pet food - it's a program that has allowed us to build deeper connections and relationships with our neighbors that have been invaluable.”*

This collective effort to provide food security for the pets of our neighbors is only made possible due to the generosity of our community.



**To support NCAL Meals, pet food donations can be dropped off at NCAL's Pet Adoption Center. Additional pet food drop-off locations include: Tractor Supply and Menard's Family True Value in Morrisville, as well as Shaw's Supermarket, Mac's Market and Dogs Etc. Grooming & Daycare in Stowe.**



## Volunteer Spotlight

The success of the NCAL Meals program is largely dependent upon the generosity of community members and hard work from volunteers like Ava Benoit, who shows up at NCAL every week with her sleeves rolled up. *“I chose to volunteer and help with the NCAL Meals program because I love working with animals and it allows me to fulfill a need in our community,”* says Ava.

Since the program started in January, Ava has been maintaining inventory and packing over 800lbs of pet food every week that provides for 60 community pets each month!



16 Mountain View Meadow Road  
Morrisville, VT 05661  
802-888-5065  
[www.ncal.com](http://www.ncal.com)  
[info@ncal.com](mailto:info@ncal.com)



## Parker's 'Happy Tail'

Of the hundreds of animals saved at NCAL each year, most need time and special care before being adoption ready. Others, who are unwell or have suffered trauma, like Parker (pictured), need even longer. Today, Parker is ready for anything with his tail wagging and ears perked, and his forever family by his side.

Thank you for making Parker's second chance possible.

**To give many more homeless pets the care and kindness they deserve, please visit:**  
[ncal.com/donate-online](http://ncal.com/donate-online)