

MARCH VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH SUSAN PORTER



What I like best about volunteering at Colony Cats:

With my regular volunteer gig as an off site/pet store adoption coordinator, as well as random one-off projects, I love that I can put my crafty talent and professional experience to work to make cats' lives better. I also write some of the cat bios. I love having the creative outlet to tell their "tales."

My pets at home: We have two Colony Cats alums:

Livvy (6) is super shy. She hid for over a year while at the adoption center, only to pop out when my daughter and I came in to find a cat. While she is still super shy and very particular, she knows we love her and she is a cuddle bug, on her own terms.

Miles (4-5) is my PetValu foster fail. He came in filthy, kinda sick, and a real mess. Bless the volunteer who trapped him and saw past all of that. After giving him a bath in the dog wash, loving on him for a summer, and trying to arm-twist several friends into taking him, I took him home. It was meant to be. One afternoon before I left for college, my grandmother (who died during my first year of college) told me a fantastical story – part fiction and part actual family story. She ended it with "a very special buff cat will cross your path – he will connect your future and your past, you must give him a home." Until Miles I had never crossed paths with a buff cat – *and* he was trapped in the same neighborhood my grandparents first lived in when they moved to Columbus. He connects me to her (my past), and a chunk of my future, being a voice for the homeless cats in my community.

What I'd like you to know about me:

I hold an advanced degree, used to work in finance, and was climbing that corporate career ladder. Then I had kiddos and I shifted my world view. Ever since, I have used my privilege for good – holding several executive board member positions at various non-profits, and freelancing in the areas of copy writing, bookkeeping, and social media marketing. I am trying to be the change I want to see in the world. I want the world to be kinder and gentler, and to make a space for all.

Where you can find me when I'm not volunteering for Colony Cats:

At home – cooking, chasing my teens around, and maybe doing some yoga.

Dogs or Cats Rule?:

Cats. Cats totally rule. That said, while I do not want to have a dog, I am totally willing to dog-sit or walk friends' dogs.

What's your advice to a new Colony Cats volunteer?

1. Yes. Yes the number of cats at the AC is overwhelming. That's why we volunteer.
2. Ask questions – no one expects you to know everything.
3. Learn as you go. Look, I was convinced I could not possibly trim nails without some special skill set or extensive training. Then one day I decided I would convince one of our crabbiest PetValu residents to let me – and what do you know, I've been doing cat mani-pedis ever since.
4. One hour or one hundred hours, one dollar or one hundred dollars, it all makes a huge difference and is much appreciated.

Your unique Q&A, thoughts, or favorite saying:

So how did you start being a "Cat Lady?"

I did not grow up having pets. When a stray cat followed the kids and I home from the park I thought finding it a home, or an organization to help, would be easy. I had no idea how many homeless cats there were, how many people are blind to their suffering, and how difficult it would be to find help for a stray cat. I did what I could for her and she became our "outdoor cat". I didn't think much about volunteering anywhere until I met a dedicated Colony Cats volunteer. She opened my eyes to the complexity of the homeless cat problem.

Also, as someone who was convinced she was allergic to all cats I thought I could not take in a stray (we did and I adjusted). And that is how it all started – from making a difference in one cat's life, to now making a difference in lots of cats' lives. I truly believe their humans are out there somewhere – they just need our help to find them.

