

I am the General Manager at the Comfort Inn in Blacksburg, Virginia. Upon my arrival to the property a year ago, it didn't take me very long to find that I had a colony of feral cats living in the nearby woods. They were in the dumpsters, hungry and multiplying!

I didn't know what I was going to do, but I knew I had to do something. To the horror of my staff I started by feeding them and giving them fresh water. Comments such as "They won't ever leave" – "More will come" - "They spread disease" on and on were hurled in my direction. I fed them anyway!

And then I got lucky! I met a wonderful lady, Betty Bartschmid – with Animal Hope Alliance. Betty immediately got started, and with the assistance of Dee Dee Dudley, they trapped and had all of my kitties spayed or neutered, treated for fleas and they got their vaccinations!

I learned that Betty and Dee Dee were feeding another colony of feral cats at a real estate agency not far from the hotel. They gradually moved the feeding dishes closer to the hotel and I am now the caregiver for those kitties as well. I have 11 healthy, happy cats here at the hotel.

Each morning when I go outside to feed them I call to them "where are my babies?" and they come running! Frequent guests at the hotel look out their windows to watch them in the mornings and late afternoon. We even have food donations for them.

I have learned so much from these little creatures. How they love each other! Now that they do not reproduce they do not fight – they simply take care of each other. When winter was approaching, the Chief Engineer at the hotel (who was once a nay say-er – turned cat lover) Ron Morris, put cedar bedding and crates underneath our storage buildings, so that they could be protected from the cold and ice. They huddled together and kept warm and dry and they all lived through the winter.

Feral Cats do not "talk" I am told – but these are learning to! After a year of sweet talking to them, several of them meow to us now and 2 will let us pet them. On days that I am not here we have specific assignments "who is responsible for the cats" - Ours are lucky! They are loved and cared for and they bring such happiness to so many people. My heart breaks for the ones that are not so fortunate.

I am so grateful to Betty, DeeDee and to Angels of Assisi for all that they do to save these wonderful little lives.

Sincerely

Lynne Laidlaw
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