

The Cat Whisperer

By Alvaro C. Macias

It was almost 40 years ago when Ascentra Credit Union Senior Account Officer Joni Kaasa received a very special gift from her parents when they moved to the country. They gave her a cat that kept her company in the sparse country landscape. Joni didn't like being alone and somehow felt that she had a natural gift for helping cats. Today Joni has 13 cats at her place just outside Davenport, but has had well over 30 cats at her place at one point.



“I live just outside the city limits which people think is a perfect place to drop off a cat or cats,” Joni explains.

While Joni is not professionally trained or certified to treat animals she has a natural way with cats and many years of experience helping rehabilitate cats that are abandoned.

“Some need medical attention and some need to be taught social skills,” she explains. “The vet will sometimes let me pick medications without bringing the cat in to save me an office visit.”

She gives her time to get them back in shape and spends her own money to get them medications and pay for their visits to the veterinarian. With the help of other Ascentra Credit Union employees she has helped about 30 cats find homes.

Joni has a special memory of a pregnant cat that was dumped by her home. After the cat gave birth to the kittens she socialized them but after a few weeks she noticed something odd.

“I noticed holes near the mother cat's stomach; I thought maybe the kitties' sharp teeth had done this,” Joni said. “I noticed infection setting in on the mother cat and took her to the vet. It was discovered that someone had shot at her and because it was a buck shot gun powder exploded throughout the cat causing nine holes.”

The cat had surgery and was kept in ICU for a week. After coming home the cat was very grateful and rarely left the deck. Ascentra staff offered to take the five kittens. Call Center Supervisor Donelle Lineburg took two kittens, Mortgage

Department Supervisor Sue Fear took two, and Account Officer Kevin Fox gave the last one a new home.

Another fond memory that involved the Ascentra staff came about when one of her cats gave birth to several kittens and abandoned the batch of four at birth. Before she headed to work Joni tried getting the mother back by them but she was not having it. She heated towels in the dryer to keep the kittens warm and would leave work as soon as she could to go care for them.



“The girls at the 53rd St. [Ascentra, Davenport] branch helped me take care of the kittens although two of them didn’t make it past two weeks; the two that did are doing great and look like twins,” Joni said.

Joni has one and Mortgage Processor Dawn Dillon took the other one.

“Funny thing is both cats were named dog names. Dawn’s is ‘Dog’ and mine is ‘Scooby.’ He’s quite curious,” Joni said.

Joni wishes people realize what they are subjecting their pets to when they decide to dump them off just because of their financial situation, if the animal is pregnant or if they simply don’t want them any longer.

“I have found more than 30 homes so far after I spent a lot of money on them to get them fit and back up,” Joni said. “It’s frustrating and heart wrenching, but I just know at least for a little while they were cared for.”