

NEWS LOCAL

Operation Catnip hosting workshop to teach people to trap, neuter and release the homeless cats of Peterborough



By Jason Bain, The Peterborough Examiner
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A cat lounges in an outdoor shelter in the city provided via Operation Catnip in this undated photo. The organization is hosting a workshop at Kenner Collegiate on Sept. 30. SUBMITTED PHOTO

A non-profit group addressing the homeless cat population in the city is hosting a workshop later this month that will give participants a look at its operations.

Operation Catnip, which works to humanely limit the number of feral and abandoned cats by trapping, neutering/spaying, vaccinating, ear tipping and returning felines to where they were found, will host a trap-neuter-return workshop on Sept. 30.

The workshop is taught by volunteers from Community Cats Toronto, a long-established organization devoted to reducing the number of feral, stray and abandoned cats in Toronto through spaying and neutering, organizers said.

The grassroots, volunteer-operated group, which has sterilized 625 cats since its inception in 2012, works with 175 colony caregivers who look after feral cats in and around Peterborough, spokeswoman Jan van der Eyk said.

Caregivers, after completing an interview and signing an agreement with the group, continue to provide food and outdoor shelter - such as wooden cubes or plastic or rubber containers filled with straw to keep the animals warm and dry.

Operation Catnip works with nine local veterinary clinics who perform the surgery, as well as provide pre-and post-operative care. Trap-neuter-return is the most widely implemented method of managing cat populations, as it stops the expansion of colonies.

Trapping a wily feral cat is no easy task, van der Eyk explained. Caregivers must keep the animal on a regular feeding schedule, so that when the time comes to trap it, food can be put inside to try to lure the hungry animal inside.

The traps cannot be left alone, so volunteers monitor them at all times. Trapping a cat can take as many as three or four hours - some cats will even lie on top of the metal device. Once a cat is inside, volunteers rush to cover the trap with a blanket to reduce stress on the animal.

This summer has been particularly busy, van der Eyk said, adding that the group is not sure why, but this past season has been dominated by female cats and kittens.

The workshop takes place Sept. 30 from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Kenner Collegiate at 633 Monaghan Rd. S. The cost is \$20.

The organization is looking forward to engaging community members at the event who may be interested in volunteering, van der Eyk said.

While it has received funding from the city's Community Fund, it relies mostly on donations and fundraising efforts, such as yard sales hosted by its members.

To report a cat, or for more information, call the Operation Catnip hotline at 705-760-9055.

More information, including how to donate, can also be found at www.operationcatnip.ca or at www.facebook.com/Operation-Catnip-TrapNeuterReturn-of-Feral-and-Abandoned-Cats-334317889922650/

Donations can also be made to P.O. Box 703, Peterborough, Ont., K9J 6Z8.

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