

Annex Cat Rescue

Annual Highlights



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About The Annex Cat Rescue

The Annex Cat Rescue (ACR) was founded in 1997 by people living in The Annex neighbourhood of downtown Toronto who had a common interest in the well-being of homeless cats in the area. At first, the focus was on finding homes for the kittens of a group of feral cats, and providing the adult cats with food. As the original volunteers soon discovered, the size of the problem is very large. Shortly thereafter, a network of foster homes was established to take in kittens and stray adult cats and an adoption service was started. In an attempt to cut down on the number of unwanted kittens and breeding stray and feral cats, adult cats were trapped, spayed or neutered and then returned if they were too wild to adopt as pets.

Over the years, the geographic area in which ACR operates, and our volunteers live, has increased. We now look after most of the feral cats in the Chinatown and Kensington Market neighbourhoods, and take cats into ACR care from anywhere in the Greater Toronto Area, as our resources permit.

Since our group was founded in 1997, ACR has fostered and adopted almost 1000 cats and kittens, and helped find homes for many more cats that have been taken in by people who contacted us for assistance.

In 1999, ACR was granted official status as a charity registered with the Canada Revenue Agency. During this process, a Constitution and by-laws were completed, and a board of directors was put in place. At that time, the philosophy and purpose of the ACR charity were formalized. ACR's Canada Revenue Agency charitable registration number is 871653945 RR 0001.

Today, ACR has over 50 active volunteers. They include about 15 foster homes, 15 who work with feral cats (feeding and trapping), eight adoption screeners, six who make catnip toys that we sell as part of our fundraising activities, and others who help with finance and administration. Some of our volunteers fill more than one role. There are also a few others who volunteer for ACR occasionally with other activities such as assisting in fundraising activities and staffing our tables at street fairs.

Our Philosophy

ACR adheres strictly to a "no kill" policy. By this, we mean that no cat coming into our care is euthanized for any reason (other than on purely compassionate grounds, such as severe injury or terminal illness). This policy also means that we occasionally take on responsibility for cats that cost us considerable amounts in veterinary expenses. We have adopted a related policy that if an adoption does not work out for some reason (which is rare), ACR will welcome the cat's return, and place it in foster care until another adoptive home can be found.

ACR does not operate an animal shelter. All of our cats are fostered in volunteers' homes. Through this approach, we ensure that the cats live in a normal home environment before they are adopted. This prevents many behavioural problems that can develop when animals are caged for a long time. This way, our foster volunteers gain an understanding of the cat's individual temperament, which is extremely useful when we match potential adopters to available ACR cats.

ACR also has a strong commitment to local community volunteerism. While we take in as many needy cats as we have space for and can afford, we also encourage others to get involved in solving cat over-population problems in their own neighbourhoods in a humane and effective manner. Some ACR members are participating in a Toronto-wide coalition of animal rescue groups to persuade the City to focus on spay/neuter programs, rather than euthanizing unwanted cats and kittens. The "trap-neuter/spay-return" (TNR) approach has been very successful in many North American cities in humanely addressing the cat over-population problem. (You can learn more about TNR here: <http://www.alleycat.org/pdf/tnrforaca.pdf>)

Highlights of 2004

2004 certainly was ACR's best year ever! We found great homes for more cats and kittens than in any previous year. We significantly expanded our trap-neuter-return program, and we continued to increase our feral feeding efforts. We have new volunteers, new foster homes, more funding, and...
LOTS MORE TO DO!

Fostering and Adoptions

In 2004, ACR volunteers fostered and found good adoptive homes for 126 cats and kittens. This is an increase over previous years, when we averaged 100 cats and kittens per year.

About half of the cats that were fostered and adopted were kittens of feral and stray cats that were born in garages and under porches where the residents called ACR for help. This continues a decline in the number of kittens from feral/stray cats compared to previous years, due to ACR's success in spaying/neutering the adult members of feral colonies that we manage. There were also about 15 kittens born in foster homes to mothers that were taken in while pregnant.

Most of the cats and kittens that we take into our care would not have lived if they had been taken to a shelter that does not have a no-kill policy. Most of the kittens that we took in had to be treated for respiratory, eye infections and parasites (such as coccidia) before being adopted.

ACR also helped find homes for stray cats and kittens that other people took in and asked us for help to find them good homes. In many cases, we covered the veterinary costs for these cats before they were adopted.

Some of the kittens that we rescued needed socialization with humans before being adopted. These were kittens that were somewhat older at the time they were taken in (usually trapped, in these cases) and had not had any prior human contact. In some cases, the socialization period extended to a few months before the kitten was considered "adoptable". Most were adopted fairly quickly.

Nine of our more difficult-to-adopt cats were adopted in 2004. Three of these were "less than tame" cats who required considerable adjustment. This is the more challenging rescue work that many shelters cannot do. Some were older cats and three of them had Feline Leukemia — a contagious but manageable condition. ACR's policy is to provide all the medical information we have about our cats to potential adopters.

Seven cats who were adopted through ACR came back into ACR care in 2004, mostly due to circumstances in the adoptive home (such as allergies, incompatibility with an existing pet, or the owner's death). Four of them have been adopted into great new homes. The remaining three are in great ACR foster homes waiting for another chance for a permanent, loving home.

Currently, we have 46 cats (15 kittens and 31 cats) in 15 foster homes — we need more foster homes! Most people who stop fostering for ACR do so because they adopt their foster cat or because they are going through transitions in their lives (such as moving). We have not lost any foster homes due to dissatisfaction with the ACR foster program.

We have a few cats with severe medical problems. They are receiving the best veterinary care possible, thanks to our dedicated veterinarians who provide their services to ACR at greatly reduced fees, and thanks to our devoted volunteer foster homes.

There are photos and stories about a small sample of the cats and kittens that ACR helped in 2004 at the end of this report.

Feral Cat Programs

Trap-Neuter/Spay and Return (TNR)

In 2004, ACR doubled the number of cats that we trapped-spayed/neutered-returned (a process called “TNR”) over previous years. This was possible, in part, because ACR received a grant from PETsMART in 2004 to help with our spay and neuter program. This grant had to be used only for homeless cats.

In previous years, the spaying and neutering of feral cats had been done on an *ad hoc* basis, as the need arose and as ACR’s funds permitted. Under our PETsMART grant, our goal was to spay/neuter 100 feral and stray cats. The ACR/PETsMART TNR program began in the spring of 2004, and we are delighted to report that ACR spayed or neutered 110 cats through our PETsMART grant. Twenty-five of those cats became ACR foster cats and most of them have now been adopted into loving homes.

None of this great work would have been possible without our dedicated volunteers.

Since ACR has stabilized the population of the feral colonies that we manage, we were also able to assist more callers who look after other feral colonies. Many of these non-members donated the cost to have these cats spayed or neutered.

Feral Colony Feeding Program

Again in 2004, there were more volunteers working with feral cats. ACR currently looks after more than 50 feral cats in Toronto. ACR volunteers distributed over 2,500 kg of dry cat food and 300 cases of canned cat food to feral colonies during the year. Usually, our dedicated volunteers contribute most of the food themselves.

Fundraising and Publicity

We use several approaches to raise funds and to increase public awareness of ACR and cat welfare issues. These efforts increase our number of adoption calls, but also greatly increase the number of calls from people asking for help with stray and feral cat colonies. ACR volunteers help in these situations as much as we possibly can, within our financial and volunteer resources.

Grants

In 2004, ACR volunteers were successful in obtaining two significant grants — one from PETsMART for our trap-neuter-return program (discussed under “Finances”, below), and another from the Donner Canadian Foundation for essential operating expenses.

In addition, Bell Canada provided a grant in recognition of two of their employees who volunteer for ACR. Allstream, another ACR volunteer’s employer, also contributed a corporate donation as part of their community support program.

A summary of financial information is provided later in this report.

Ongoing fundraising

ACR volunteers make, by hand, several hundred catnip toys and a few dozen catnip pillows ("Purr Pads") every year. Our volunteers place catnip toy baskets and donation boxes in veterinary offices and gift shops, then monitor these locations throughout the year. Catnip toys and Purr Pads are also sold at fundraising events.

ACR's board and numerous volunteers organized a "Well Groomed" raffle for four prizes donated by Toni & Guy hairdressing salon. Hundreds of tickets were sold and ACR earned \$915.00, plus lots of good word-of-mouth publicity.

Events

In 2004, ACR participated in several fundraising events where many of our volunteers raised some money and, perhaps more importantly, raised awareness of ACR and cat welfare issues.

- May 1, 2004 weekend: A Cause 4 Paws
- June 6, 2004: Festival on Bloor
- August 7 & 8, 2004: A Taste of the Danforth Festival
- September 11, 2004: Cabbagetown Festival
- December 12, 18 and 19, 2004: Annex Christmas Market

Sometimes the amount of money raised at events may not seem like much (ranging from \$45 to \$880, less registration fees, if any), but these events provide good opportunities for our volunteers to discuss our programs with members of the public. Many volunteers have joined ACR through these events.

Website

The ACR website (www.annexcatrescue.on.ca), which became operational in 2000, has become a major source for adoption inquiries. This has allowed us to reduce our reliance on newspaper advertising, which is important because advertising costs continue to increase. The ACR website is still maintained entirely by volunteers.

ACR also has a mini-website at Petfinder.com, a website that showcases pets that need homes. ACR is located under the "Shelter and Rescue Groups" section.

Posters, and more...

In the spring of 2004, we updated our adopt-a-kitten poster with new photos of rescued kittens. The new poster has been distributed, along with ACR brochures, to pet supply stores, vets' offices and neighbourhood stores by volunteers.

We recently completed an "Information Kit" about ACR designed for volunteers, the media, the public, and for fundraising purposes.

We regularly place classified ads in the Annex Gleaner, which are free, and in the Toronto Star, at a reasonable cost.

And we continue to distribute ACR's brochure through vets' offices, gift shops and many other locations.

Administration

The only significant administrative expenses we have are a telephone number with voice mail and hosting of our website. These items help us find foster and adoptive homes. We also occasionally incur small expenses for postage and annual meeting room rental fees. (For example, the Tranzac Club meeting room, which we use for annual members' meetings, costs \$32.10, including GST.)

ACR's Board of Directors recently obtained significant rebates from the federal government for the GST that our charity had paid on various expenses since 2000.

Financial

ACR volunteers raised considerably more funds in 2004 than in previous years, mostly through donations and grants from PETsMART and the Donner Canadian Foundation. The vast majority of our expenses are for veterinary services. We are fortunate to have four caring veterinary clinics that regularly provide their services to ACR at significantly reduced fees.

Shown below is a summary of revenues and expenses for 2004, with figures from previous years for comparison.

Revenues	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000
Donations & grants	\$52,857	\$24,487	\$22,585	\$19,700	\$12,400
Membership Dues	260	200	290	320	120
Money boxes	6,659	4,396	3,819	1,700	660
Fundraising	3,198	2,812	4,230	5,150	4,600
Adoption Fees	8,720	6,610	6,305	7,340	2,610
<i>Total Revenue</i>	71,694	38,505	37,229	34,210	20,390

Expenses

Administrative*	\$643	\$862	\$670	\$515	\$200
Advertising	1,071	888	762	575	375
Veterinary Services	50,164	23,145	31,162	23,900	13,430
Fundraising Expenses	2,231	1,150	1,538	1,160	900
Feral Cat Supplies	1,050	1,496	2,500	2,220	1,600
Fostering Expenses	8,510	6,539	3,382	2,600	1,020
Miscellaneous**	1,270	650	592	115	50
<i>Total Expenses</i>	64,939	34,730	40,606	31,085	17,575

FOOTNOTES:

* Includes bank charges, postage, telephone and internet.

** Includes transportation, miscellaneous expenses and equipment depreciation.

MEET SOME OF OUR RESCUES!

Perhaps our most moving 2004 story involves **Big Mac**, who was ACR's very first rescued cat, back in 1997. We found him a home with a wonderful woman. She adored Mac, who is one of the most loving cats we've ever met. Sadly, she called us last year to say she was dying of cancer and asked us to find Mac a new home.



Since Mac was now about 12, we weren't sure how easy this would be, but we promised her that Mac would be taken care of for as long as he lives.

Big Mac was adopted a few months later by a man who already had a cat. Unfortunately, Mac is very assertive, and it was not a good match. The other cat stopped eating and was quite stressed. When the new owner returned Mac to us he had tears in his eyes because he'd grown so attached to him. So Mac went into a foster home, with a man who had lost a cat two years before and still didn't feel ready to commit again. Fostering was a good solution. But when someone called a few months later about possibly adopting Big Mac, the foster parent realized he had fallen for Mac and couldn't part with him. Each had lost a life companion, then found a new one, so it's a happy ending for both Mac and his human!

Donner was found wandering the streets when he was about 8 years old. He had been de-clawed and had lost half of his body-weight when he was taken into ACR's foster program. He has a heart murmur, which made it more difficult for him to be adopted. Donner's foster home took great care of him while he recovered from near-starvation and a severe case of ringworm. Donner was adopted within two months of being rescued and he is now a happy boy.



Gorgeous **Sassy** was found roaming the streets after getting lost during the shuffle when her owner moved to a nursing home. After living on the streets for a month, Sassy was rescued and brought into the ACR foster program. Sassy is an extremely gentle and beautiful cat. She had major dental work last summer, which made her a much happier kitty. A woman who had previously adopted a cat from ACR adopted her. Sassy is very happy in her new home, enjoying her enclosed sun porch.

Amber and Dora were rescued at an early age and have blossomed into two very sweet little kitties. Amber is an absolute beauty, with white and brown tabby markings and a very, very pretty face. She is super-sweet and playful, and enjoys lots of attention from her foster folk and her other cat companions.



Amber's favorite pastimes are playing tirelessly with her sister Dora, and climbing on her foster parents' lap (especially her foster dad's) for little naps and lots of purrs. In fact, her purrs are louder than her meows. Her latest favorite thing is watching the Olympics - and she especially enjoys gymnastics.



Dora fits her name very well as "the explorer". She is very curious, outgoing and full of energy. A fearless little girl, Dora thoroughly enjoys wrestling with her sister Amber or her feline foster friends. Dora is also very affectionate and she spends her quiet times snuggling up with her sister or her other cat pals.

Mallory and Truffle were very young and very sick from parasites and bacterial infections when they were rescued by ACR. Both were born in the same room that their mother had access to from the outside, although they are not siblings. Both needed to be hand-fed food and medicine for the first few weeks and they are still small for their ages.

After all the attention, now that they are healthy, they are very well-socialized and love the attention of people and other cats. Mallory is a pretty girl who is very active and likes to climb anything she can, including people!



Sodapop and Lorenzo were born in a storage shed that was accessible from a hole in the wall of a building in an alley. Both were very playful little characters in their ACR foster home.



Francis is now doing well. As a five-month-old kitten living on the mean streets of North York with his two brothers, Francis was hit by a car in November 2004.

A kindly human, who had been feeding the trio, called ACR. Francis was taken for emergency care. He had sustained severe injuries to his hind-quarters but avoided internal injuries and damage to his upper body, which saved his life.

Francis needed immediate surgery to stabilize his legs. After two months (and just as his hair was growing back on his bum!), Francis needed more surgery to permanently stabilize his hip joint, which had been crushed, affecting his long-term ability to use his leg. Francis was a trouper throughout the whole experience, purring as he was handled by veterinary technicians and ACR volunteers. He became a favourite at Dundas-Euclid Animal Hospital.

After his surgery, Francis went to his foster home with strict instructions for a long confinement in a dog crate. However, he engineered several escape plans with his new friends, Holstein and Osiris, who sat outside the door of his room and wailed plaintively for the humans to come and let Francis out to play! (This strategy proved effective.)

Soon, the recovery rules were bent a little and a well-exercised Francis was ready to go to his new home. Francis acclimatized immediately (this is not an exaggeration!) and he quickly ruled the roost.

Despite his life-threatening injuries, he manages to climb and jump and hunt toy mice and maul the “turbo-scratcher” with great enthusiasm. His agility is astounding, assisted by his compensatory upper-body strength and his monkey-like hand-arm dexterity.

Generous donations to ACR and the ACR Kobi Memorial Fund have almost covered Francis’ vet bills.



Aren't they all such lovely creatures!