

Halfway House for Pregnant Cats

Healing Touch Massage

Pet Publishing Presents

Cats & Kittens

www.catsandkittens.com

British Shorthair

Working Class Hero

Feline Geniuses

Manipulative Rulers

Maine Coon

Distant Eulogy

Million Dollar Shelter

Honors New Jersey Tabby

Alternative Waters

Canadian Cat Laps Up Cure

Cholla

Feline Ballerina

Bound & Burnt Survivor

Cat Teaches Kids to Break the Cycle of Violence

November 2003

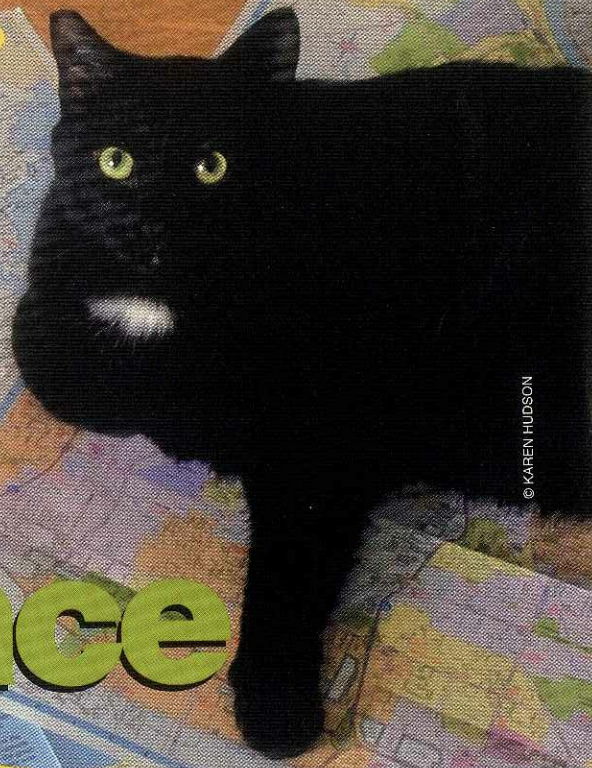


0 74851 08118 1

USA \$4.99 CANADA \$5.99

Breaking the Cycle of Violence

by Amy Morgan



© KAREN HUDSON

evie Swarts retired from her job as a biology teacher and went straight to the local Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA). She earned her wildlife rehabilitation license, and works in surgery preparing animals for procedures and monitoring them afterward. Her educational background and love of animals proved to a natural fit for a humane education program she developed for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The lessons are targeted at developing a sense of compassion and justice for animals and people and demonstrate how to build trust, respect, and empathy.

"You immediately have the audience's attention when you bring an animal into a classroom," Swarts says. "There is a strong bond between people and animals, and I want to show children that a practiced method of dealing with animals through respect, understanding, and positive feedback is a life skill they can apply to all areas of their life."

In September of 1998, Swarts was volunteering when a woman called the SPCA to report she'd found a cat that had been tied to a tree and burned. This event was

the impetus for Swarts' lesson "Breaking the Cycle of Violence." At the time, she didn't know how important the injured 3-year-old cat would become to her, or that the lesson would be her favorite and most gratifying to share.

When Swarts walks into a classroom, the students attempt to peek at what's in the pet carrier. She purposefully places it on the floor behind the table. "I'm here today from the SPCA to discuss violence toward animals and how we all have the power to stop it. My cat Burnie, who's in the carrier, came to the SPCA shelter a few years ago after she was hurt by some people."

Swarts brings out a picture of Burnie taken the day she came to the shelter. It's not graphic of her injuries, but Burnie looks out from the photograph with eyes wide with fright and confusion, the tip of her left ear missing, and black fur that's terribly matted. They aren't told that Burnie was tied to a tree and burned. They can't see the burns on her ear or the pads of her feet, the wounds along her left side, down her left foreleg, her stomach, and armpit area. They don't know that her right hind leg was lame and her toes would curl under so that when she walked, she

dragged that leg behind her. As the picture is passed, Swarts asks, "If Burnie could talk, what do you think she'd be saying?"

The responses come fast. "I want a Dad! Somebody take me home. Play with me! Feed me. Change my litter box!"

"Do you really think she's worried about her litter box? Do you think she feels good enough to play?" Swarts asks.

The children look at the picture again. Slowly, quietly, a few more answers come. "I'm hurting. Ouch. Take care of me."

The word "empathy" is introduced and the class talks about how important it is to consider how people or animals may feel or think. "Empathy," Swarts tells them, "is a critical step in breaking the cycle of violence."

The class is given a second picture of Burnie to pass around. Swarts explains this is a picture of her after she healed from her injuries. Her face is calm; her fur is shiny, thick and well taken care of. The children are relieved and amazed at the difference in the pictures.

The lesson progresses with a description of Burnie's recovery in the time span between the pictures. Her recovery began the moment the woman found the

cat and felt empathy for her, much like the class had after they'd looked at Burnie's picture. After the woman called the SPCA and the cat arrived at the shelter, wildlife administrator Joel Thomas, a licensed veterinary technician, evaluated the cat. His decision to treat the cat was based on two questions. First, would it be a responsible thing to do to prolong the cat's life and second, would the cat have a good qual-

ity of life after it healed? He felt the answer to both questions was yes.

As Swarts helped care for the cat during the next month, she named her Burnie. Physically she was healing well, but she wasn't happy. She was scared and in a lot of pain — she'd been hurt, and didn't know who to trust. Thomas suggested Burnie be placed in the SPCA's foster home program to help her learn to

trust again. Swarts agreed to take her home.

During the next few weeks, it was still necessary to wash Burnie's wounds daily with soap and water and apply the topical medicine. Burnie would scratch and hiss at Swarts whenever she came near. "Sometimes she even drew blood," Swarts says to the students. "What do you think I did to Burnie when she did that to me?"

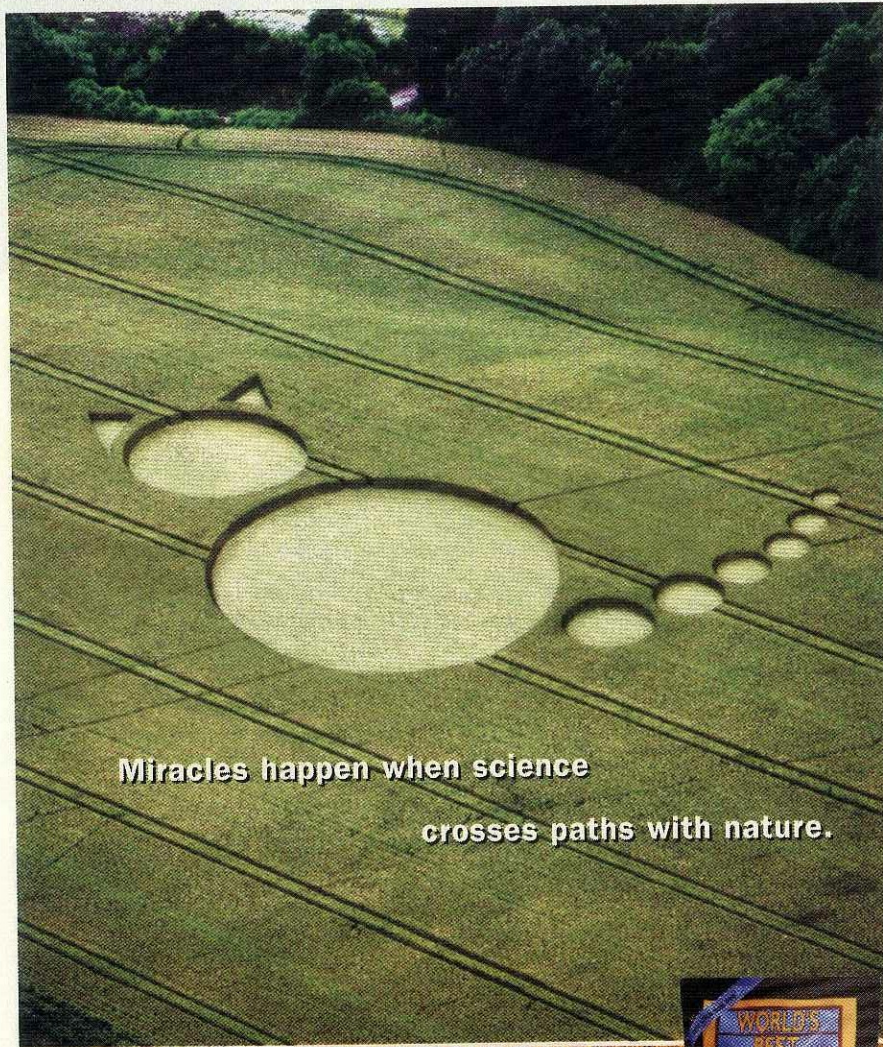
"You smacked her nose. You scratched her back," come the responses.

"No," says Swarts. "I never hit her." Then she asks them, "Do you think I wanted to hit her?" When they say, "No," she boldly responds, "Of course, I wanted to hit her. She hurt me. But I never did. It would have made things worse."

"We needed to break the cycle of violence," Swarts explains. "She needed to learn that I would only react to her if she acted positively toward me and that I would ignore her if she reacted negatively. Every time I treated her wounds I gave her a little affectionate tickle under the chin when I was done. She would scratch and hiss at me, and I would back off and ignore her. Then the next time I treated her I gave her the same little tickle. When she hissed or scratched, I backed off and ignored her again.

"Eventually, during the next few weeks, there was once or twice when she didn't hiss or scratch and I would continue to tickle her chin and began to pet her. After a couple of months, she learned to trust that I wouldn't hurt her, but she also learned that when she hissed or scratched at me, I wouldn't pay her any attention. It took a long time, but she began to show affection toward me and would sit on my lap or rub against my leg. I practiced kindness, over and over, and she learned to trust me."

Swarts holds up the first picture of Burnie in one hand. With her other hand



Miracles happen when science
crosses paths with nature.

One of the great unsolved mysteries has now been solved. Because Horizon Products has produced a revolutionary, odor-eliminating cat litter. That's right. No odor. It's an all-natural, scoopable litter made from specially processed whole-kernel corn. The very definition of easy maintenance, it takes no time at all to clean. Most importantly, it contains no perfumes or chemicals, because its microporous structure eliminates odors naturally. It's also biodegradable, stays fresher, and lasts longer. So take a hint. Because all signs point to World's Best Cat Litter™.



The Litter That Works Naturally.®

Ask for it at your local pet store or call 877-367-9225. www.worldsbestcatlitter.com

she makes a clockwise circular motion through the air. "So what's happening here? Someone hurt Burnie. When she came to my house, she tried to hurt me even though I wasn't the one who hurt her. Why did she do that? What's going on here?"

"It's a pattern!" one cries out. "It's a cycle!" another one replies.

"Yes." Swarts tells them. "It is a cycle, and it happens with animals and with people in everyday life. Someone pushes you into a locker, a brother or sister hits you, or a friend on the playground yells at you. You may want to strike them back, or kick the dog, or hit the cat, but you don't do it. You have the power to break the cycle of violence. If we strike back, if we don't feel empathy for others, the violence continues. You have the power to stop it by feeling empathy, speaking up about violence, practicing kindness and using positive feedback."

At the end of the lesson, Swarts lifts the pet carrier onto the table. She reminds the class that loud noises and sudden movements scare animals, especially Burnie. They need to practice respecting what Burnie needs to feel safe.


Swarts opens the carrier door and slowly Burnie starts out. She stops to smell the air and look around before continuing to the middle of the table to sit.

The class is eager to pet and hold this beautiful, black cat whose thick fur covers the scars of her burns and who's regained the use of her lame leg. Swarts acknowledges their staying calm and quiet, and congratulates them for making Burnie feel comfortable by their good behavior. It's their first positive feedback from today's lesson.

"Ninety-five percent of the time Burnie comes out. Every time I teach this lesson I hope Burnie will feel comfortable enough to come out into the

unfamiliar classroom setting," says Swarts. "I'm thrilled for the class when she does. It's important for them to see how well she's recovered and how loving she truly is now." One by one the children are allowed to pet her if they want. Swarts tells them, "Look at this

cat, and how her life has turned around. A lot of people worked with her and broke the cycle of violence in her life."

"It's a big concept for this age group to grasp," Swarts says, "and a lot to get into one lesson. Yet it's a powerful lesson and Burnie is living proof that it works." 

 **No More Odor!** www.purrfectlyfresh.com



BETTER ODOR CONTROL FOR YOUR PETS? BELIEVE IT!

You've heard it before. Many products claim to get rid of pet odors, but once the perfume fades the bad smell is back. But now there's Purrfectly Fresh[®], a proven, power-packed pet odor eliminator from Calgon Carbon.

Purrfectly Fresh[®] eliminates odors associated with all pets. If you think all pet odor removal products are the same, try Purrfectly Fresh[®]. You won't believe your nose!



MANUFACTURER'S COUPON

EXPIRES 08/31/04



on 9-oz. or larger package of Purrfectly Fresh[®] pet odor eliminator.

RETAILER: You will be reimbursed for face value plus 8 cents handling, if submitted in compliance with our redemption policy, incorporated herein by reference. Void if reproduced, restricted, or prohibited by law. Mail to: P.O. Box 888293, El Paso, TX 79858-0293.



CALGON CARBON CORPORATION

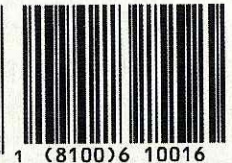
75¢ OFF

DO NOT DOUBLE. This coupon good only towards purchase of product indicated. Any other use constitutes fraud. COUPON NOT TRANSFERABLE. LIMIT ONE PER PURCHASE.

100166



5 63386 15275



1 (8100)6 10016