

# Sisters resident assists with feral-cat trapping

By Jodi Schneider McNamee  
Correspondent

Some 2 percent of the 30 to 40 million community (feral and stray) cats in the United States have been spayed or neutered. Unneutered outdoor cats produce around 80 percent of the kittens born in the U.S. every year. And these cats are roaming the parks, parking lots, backyards and back roads of America.

That includes Sisters Country.

The more folks understand community cats and the complicated issues related to them, the more effectively they can help them by reducing cat overpopulation. Local residents can make a difference helping control the community cat population by Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR).

TNR is the humane and effective approach for stray and feral cats. It's been in practice in the U.S. for decades. Scientific studies show that Trap-Neuter-Return improves the lives of feral cats, improves their relationships with the folks who live near them and decreases the size of colonies over time.

Community Cat Program Volunteer Elaine Gilbert of Sisters has been helping control the feral cat population through TNR for 20 years.

"I started doing Trap-Neuter-Return when I lived in Napa, California," Gilbert said. "I used to drive by a warehouse on my way home from work and see kittens everywhere. Then one day I stopped, because I love cats, to find out why there were so

many cats roaming around the warehouse. The workman told me that they were feeding a few feral cats that hung around and they ended up with kittens and just kept reproducing. Nobody knew where to take the cats to be neutered and didn't have the money to get all the cats fixed at that point."

Gilbert did some research and found a nonprofit spay/neuter clinic in the Napa Valley area that was devoted to the rescue of feral cat and kittens. They practiced TNR.

"An attorney had started the clinic who felt passionate for feral and stray cats. I contacted her and they supplied all the traps and I ended up trapping out there for well over a year," Gilbert told *The Nugget*.

In 2004 Gilbert moved to Bend, and in 2005 she joined forces as a volunteer with Bend Spay & Neuter Project (BSNP).

When Gilbert began her volunteer work with BSNP, it was still in its infancy and they were working as a clinic out of a garage.

It was about four years earlier that Sara Dice, founder of BSNP, began her crusade to control the cat populations with the help of Dr. Byron Maas when they realized the magnitude of the overpopulation of cats in Central Oregon.

"I volunteered in the clinic on Saturdays in the recovery room," said Gilbert. "I helped cats recover after the surgery by taking their temperature, pulse and monitoring their vital signs."

Gilbert took a hiatus from

her volunteer work because she was working full time. But a couple of years later when she returned to BSNP she asked to do the trapping.

"We trap, neuter and return them to that location. It's very stressful for a feral cat to be relocated. It's a community issue," said Gilbert.

So the volunteers call it The Community Cat Program.

"The Community Cat Program has been providing free spay/neuter and vaccinations for outdoor and stray cats throughout Central Oregon for over 10 years," said Megan Gram, executive director of BSNP.

She said that their volunteers have trapped over 18,000 cats using TNR.

"The success of this program is dependent upon the kindness and generosity of volunteers like Elaine Gilbert who are willing to give so much to help us control the population of outdoor cats. It is inspiring to see someone who refuses to leave even one kitten behind; her passion and dedication has made a huge impact on the lives of so many, both cats and their caretakers, over the years," Gram added.

While TNR helps stabilize the colony and keep the cats healthier, there are times feral colonies need to be removed from the area where they've chosen to make their home.

"When a cat or cats are in a bad situation when we take them out to be neutered, we have a list of people who have



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Cats that have been through the trap, neuter, return program are marked by a clipped ear tip.

contacted us needing a barn cat," Gilbert said.

"The two reasons why we would relocate a neutered feral or stray cat is if they had been in an unsafe situation such as if someone was poisoning cats in that area. And if the cats are in a very rural area and nobody is feeding them, then we will relocate them because they will starve."

Many residents in Sisters Country live on acreage with horses or other farm animals and have a definite need for barn cats.

"Recently I have become the barn cat liaison that checks out the barn homes before placing a cat, just to make sure the barn is secure and to talk to the people about our criteria for taking in a

barn cat," Gilbert said.

Each person looking for a barn cat must be willing to keep the cat closed in the barn or shop etc. for three to four weeks. After that initial period with food, water, and a litter box the cat gets used to his area and knows that is where he will live and be fed. Once the new owner releases the cat after that period, the cat must have access to food, water, and shelter.

If you know of any community cats that need to be spayed/neutered to reduce cat overpopulation, please contact BSNP at 541-617-1010. Leave a message for Elaine Gilbert.

BSNP is looking for volunteers in the clinic and to help trap community cats.

**THE GALLERY**  
RESTAURANT AND BAR

'tis the season...  
...for Pumpkin Pie!



**SOUP OF THE DAY**  
October 19th - October 25th

Wed .....	Cream of Broccoli	Sat.....	Chicken Noodle
Thurs .....	Meatball	Sun .....	Vegetable Beef
Fri ..	Clam Chowder & Vegetable	Mon.....	Mexican Chicken
		Tues .....	Beef Noodle

Orders to go welcome

Breakfast & lunch 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.  
Nightly dining until 10 p.m. (21 & over)

171 W. Cascade Ave., Sisters | 541-549-2631

Connect with us for great specials!

## Dine For The Cause

Every Tuesday this November, 10% of the gross sales from lunch & dinner will be donated to Furry Friends!





501(C)(3)

THE OPEN DOOR

| WINE AND ART |

Open Mon. - Sat., 11:30 a.m. to close  
Located at Clearwater Gallery | 303 W. Hood Ave.