

## Cat people

The Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon, with a little homo help, coughs up Furball to help feline friends

BY STEPHEN BLAIR

**P**olish your dancing shoes and pick out some swinging threads for the first Furball, a benefit for the Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon. The event, featuring swing dance lessons by Swing Out Productions and music by Lily Wilde and her Jumpin' Jubilee Orchestra, will unite supporters of the coalition for what will likely be a perfectly merry evening.

Five veterinarians seeking to reduce the feral cat population founded the Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon in 1995. Feral cats—unlike squirrels and other animals that can survive by instinct in the wild—are untamed domestic pets that face adverse living condi-

Drs. Jim Sampson, M.D., and Geof Beasley, M.D., are honorary Furball co-chairs. The couple has been living in the Portland area since 1980, all the while earning outstanding reputations in their professions and in the community.

"They're definitely philanthropists, and they love animals," Kraus offers, explaining why the doctors were chosen as co-chairs. "And we wanted to have someone, or in this case a couple, that's well known in the community, that's well respected, and that can help our cause. They liked what they had heard about our organization and agreed to be honorary co-chairs."

Sampson and Beasley, who have donated to animal causes in the past, say the coalition has done an exemplary job in addressing a problem that many would just as soon ignore. Sampson further applauds the group's dedication and its positive physical presence in the community.

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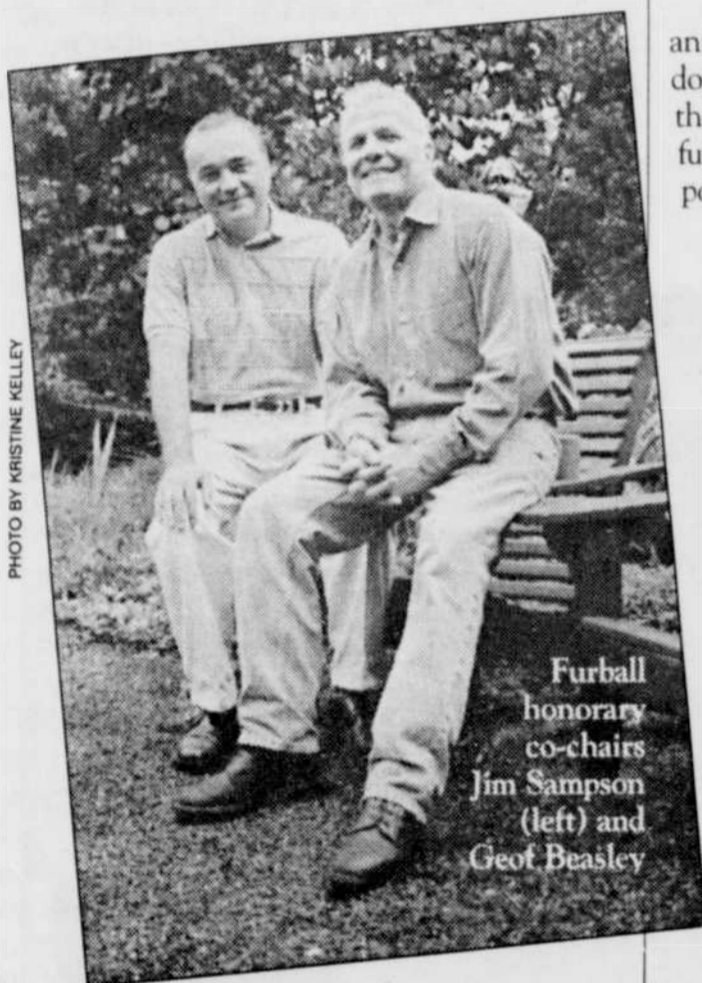
Besides supporting animal causes, Sampson and Beasley enthusiastically support the arts. "In general, we have a lot of attraction for animals and animal causes, and the arts. These are the two things that we're most interested in, in terms of being a part of the community," says Sampson, adding that he's looking forward to the Furball, an event that will certainly incorporate several of his interests. He will even get a chance to practice the dance moves he once learned at the Crystal Ballroom. ("It's much, much harder than it looks," he politely warns.)

Though Sampson and Beasley have actively supported political causes crucial to lesbians and gay men, they also participate in causes that are not specific to the queer community. Lesbian and gay visibility, they say, should permeate many different social, cultural and political arenas.

"In the years we've been in Portland, there have been lots of opportunities to be benevolent and to give money and to work for causes," Sampson explains. "A lot of this in the gay community has seemed to revolve by necessity around political causes, which I think are extremely important. I think it's also critical that gay men and lesbians have involvement in causes that are quite a bit apart from the things that tend to galvanize us, like ballot measures."

He cites the Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon as a noteworthy and positive example of such causes.

■ The Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon presents FURBALL from 7 to 11 p.m. on Friday, June 4, at the World Forestry Center, Miller Hall, 4033 S.W. Canyon Road in Portland. Tickets are \$50 in advance, available from the Feral Cat Coalition at 797-2606.



Furball honorary co-chairs Jim Sampson (left) and Geof Beasley

tions and short life spans due to communicable diseases and lack of proper shelter and nutrition. The problem of feral cats is aggravated by the failure of pet owners to spay or neuter their cats, and by the all too frequent abandoning of cats by delinquent owners.

The primary goals of the coalition are to educate the public about these issues, and to mitigate the problem by holding spay and neuter clinics for feral cats throughout Oregon.

"The Feral Cat Coalition of Oregon is the first in this area to take a lead in bringing the whole idea of feral cats to the surface," says Karen Kraus, the coalition's director of development. "For a long time, nobody even thought about it, or knew about it."

What's New Pussycat, the group's 1998 benefit, raised \$30,000, which helped support the coalition's 28-foot mobile hospital. The money also helped the coalition expand its mission to Hood River, Cannon Beach, Eugene and other Oregon cities.

The Furball, organizers predict, should prove to be equally, if not more, successful. Reed Coleman and Randy Querin of KOIN-TV will host the festivities. Sponsors for the event include Gardenburger, Tazo, Elephant's Delicatessen, Lange Winery, and Parkway Veterinary Hospital. Apart from swing dancing, the evening's events include a silent auction and a raffle for a \$500 gift certificate to Nordstrom and a \$300 gift certificate for two at Couvron restaurant.

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