



# Catalyst for Cats

A Non-Profit Organization Dedicated to Altering the Future for Ferals

## NEWSLETTER

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### About the Founder

## A full life devoted to making things better for cats

**C**atalyst for Cats' founder and its driving force for over 30 years, Randi Tangvall Fairbrother, passed on November 14, at the age of 93. Her passionate concern for the lives of all animals, in particular feral cats, was all-consuming and led her to devote the entirety of her life after a career in nursing to helping mitigate the suffering of cats without responsible owners, often referred to as "strays."

At the age of 60 Randi learned about TNR (trap, neuter and release) as the most effective and humane solution to the problem of feline overpopulation. Feeling certain that she could make a difference by concentrating on the needs of unowned, unsheltered, but not unloved cats, she launched *Catalyst for Cats, Inc.* in 1990, starting out in Santa Barbara, then expanding to Carpinteria, the Santa Ynez Valley, and finally to North County. Never taking a salary from the nonprofit, Randi spent decades in the quest to improve the lives of cats. She was, in addition, a pioneer advocate for early spay/neuter and established a relocation program of feral cats as mousers—practices and programs that have since been actively implemented throughout Santa Barbara County.

In 1992 she was named a Local Hero by the *Santa Barbara Independent* for forming *Catalyst for Cats*

with the goal of eliminating Santa Barbara County's overwhelming stray cat problem.

A long-time resident of Montecito and Goleta, Randi was born in Brooklyn, NY on September 21, 1930 to Norwegian immigrants Marie Tangvall and Haakon Foss. She grew up in Pearl River, NY, a hamlet (population 4,000) on the outskirts of New York City. There

she attended kindergarten through high school. She went on to earn an RN degree from Mt. Sinai Hospital School of Nursing in NYC. Leaving New York, Randi arrived in Los Angeles with her RN license in September of 1952.

While attending an evening course in Philosophy in Literature at UCLA that year, she met a tall, blond, handsome man named Edwin Fairbrother. He was a graduate of Harvard and USC School of Dentistry. They married the following spring at the Presbyterian Church in Montecito.

In 1954 they embarked on the SS France passenger liner for a four-month trip to Europe, visiting more than a dozen countries. She

said she remembered rubble from WWII bombings still remaining in London and Berlin. The couple enjoyed visiting Randi's relatives in Norway, where her mother's birthplace was still standing and the family carriage was still in the barn.



*Catalyst founder Randi Fairbrother*

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# Taking part in humane community is the Catalyst approach

Working with like-minded individuals and organizations has always been a large part of *Catalyst for Cats*' approach to getting things done.

## Beat the Heat

Partnering with Santa Barbara County Animal Services (SBCAS) and C.A.R.E.4Paws, ASAP Cats helped provide a low-cost spay/neuter clinic on November 5th.

With increasing numbers of stray intakes and an overpopulation of cats in Santa Barbara neighborhoods, providing affordable options for cat care is paramount to our mission.

This clinic served to give necessary medical attention to local cats, including spay/neuter, microchipping, rabies treatment, FVRCP, flea treatment, and deworming. We treated 8 publicly-owned cats and spay/neutered 42 others.



## New C.A.R.E.4Paws Mobile Clinic

*Catalyst for Cats* joined C.A.R.E.4Paws in August to celebrate the official unveiling of their new 37-foot mobile clinic, a key element in C.A.R.E.4Paws' Mobile Community Medicine & Spay/Neuter Outreach program.

*Catalyst* provided a significant sponsorship for the mobile clinic, which allows C.A.R.E.4Paws to help many more cats and dogs with spaying/neutering and medical care throughout the county.

"It also helps our team function better as they have more space during a surgery day—and the animals have more space too," wrote Executive Director and Founder Isabelle Gullo in thanking *Catalyst* for its sponsorship. "We are so grateful for the incredible support from *Catalyst for Cats* for the new clinic!"



*Catalyst's Vice President Belinda Burns highlights our participation in community outreach.*



# Catalyst's founder—from childhood in NY to SB “Local Hero”

From page 1

The couple arrived in Santa Barbara in the spring of 1956 with their six-week-old first born, Russell.

Randi recalled Santa Barbara was a most pleasant town then, with its locally-owned family shops and small cafes, State Street lined with Christmas trees for many blocks, Fiesta, and shops such as Ott's, the Children's Shop, Holiday Hardware, Ambrose Lumber, and TG&Y on Milpas all giving it a decidedly small town feel.

Her children always wore handmade Halloween costumes, and they had great fun trick-or-treating in Montecito. Randi sold Christmas trees at the Montecito YMCA and volunteered at Montecito Union School as well as Franklin School.

After raising the children, Randi returned to nursing in 1979, working at Cottage Hospital for many years.

Taught the love of animals by her mother, she grew up with cats and kittens in the days prior to popular awareness about spay/neuter. Randi never lost the desire to change that, having seen what Ninny, her mom cat, went through having litter after litter, year after year. Randi also never forgot the pain of seeing Thumper, the neighborhood tom, covered with snow and ice stoically waiting for Ninny to come out through a cat door cleverly rigged up by her mother for Ninny's convenience.

Randi is survived by her children Russell and Kaia, grandchildren Amanda and Leah, and great-granddaughter Annora. Her youngest son, Byron, preceded Randi in death in March of this year.

In lieu of flowers, donations to *Catalyst for Cats, Inc.* would be welcome.

## Maggie and Barney's Love Story, a Final Note

By Marci Kladnik

In July of 2007 I joined the ranks of Catalyst volunteers. I was living in Los Alamos, where I began trapping the many feral cats and kittens that lived there.

My very first solo trapping experience netted a fierce 10-week-old kitten. Unable to get him to the foster caring for the kitten's littermates caught two days prior, I took him home for the night. That's when fate took over.

Some of you may remember “The Kitten Whisperer” that I wrote for the fall newsletter that year. It was the story of how Barney, this feral kitten, imprinted on Maggie, my Scottish Terrier, and was INSTANTLY tamed. (You can find it on our website under the Newsletters tab, Fall 2007.) Their love story was subsequently broadcasted around the world when it appeared in the January 2012 *Guideposts Magazine* and read by

more than ten million subscribers. In 2020 I rewrote and published it as the children's book *Maggie Adopts a Kitten*, followed by a second book *Maggie and Barney and the Allergic Photographer*.

Cat and dog maintained a close bond for eight years until Maggie passed suddenly in 2015. Barney actively grieved along with me for months, searching high and low, inside and out, for Maggie. He lived another eight years, even moving with me to Wisconsin in 2020.

He passed this year at the age of 16, and in honor of their love story, I mixed his ashes with Maggie's and buried them together in the backyard under the Pussy Willow gifted to my by *Catalyst*. I also had a small amount of their mixed ashes enshrined in a beautiful blown glass light catcher to keep with me always.

Their interspecies love story brought joy to many, and their passings much heartache.



*Rest in Peace: Barney and Maggie's remarkably instant bonding is the stuff of story books—literally, but that tale is now finished.*



*Catalyst for Cats, Inc.*  
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**Every litter adds to the problem**  
**Every spay/neuter adds to the solution!**