

PAWPRINTS

a quarterly publication of The Cat House

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Simba gives Tara a kiss!

Birth of A Cat House

*by Simba, The Cat House
Office Manager*

It was mid-summer of 2003, just about a year ago, and The Cat House, Lincoln's only no-kill cat shelter, was at a crossroads. They had worked with PETSMART's Luv-A-Pet adoption center for five years and had placed over 500 cats in that time. It had been a juggling act for the 5 years, though, with plenty of ups and downs. There had always been a small, but dedicated core of volunteers who helped clean cages, care for cats, staff a phone line, do adoptions, and coordinate bringing in new cats.

The Board of Directors understood one principle: nothing stays the same for long. They wanted to grow, but were concerned about whether they could make the quantum leap necessary to open their own facility. After much debate, caution won out; and in early July 2003, a board majority voted not to expand just yet – maybe next year. But, as with most major changes in life, fate played a role. On July 25, 2003, a typical smoldering Nebraska summer day, Lincoln Animal Control entered the home of a local animal hoarder, and what they found was staggering: 79 cats and 2 dogs living in

appalling, filthy conditions, in a house with minimal food and water and no working air conditioning.

That news changed everything. The group knew they had to do something. A 3-point plan was put into place.

1) Raise public and media awareness about the situation; 2) Contact Animal Control, the Health Department and the Capital Humane Society and encourage everyone to work together for a cooperative solution in order to minimize the number of animals that would be euthanized; and 3) Restart discussions with the landlord of the property the group had found earlier. Over the next 2 weeks, the pieces began to fall into place.

The media had run the story and done a number of interviews and the situation had begun to take on a name – The South Street situation. A meeting was held in the Health Director's office laying out the details of how Animal Control, the Capital Humane Society and The Cat House would work together. Next, The Cat House signed a lease on a facility after running it past the City (for zoning issues) and Animal Control. The lease was signed on August 8, 2003. Then the real work began.

Offers of donations and new volunteers poured in. The group rounded-up a team of workers and on August 9, 2003, the group's "resident" architect, Bill Borner, and "resident" handyman, Leroy Monroe, with the help of innumerable others, designed and built the changes needed to turn what had been a telemarketing office into a cageless cat shelter. So many folks showed up that weekend to help out that they could never be listed individually in this article, but the support and dedication was incredible. Everyone gave 200% and by the end of Day 1, telemarketer cubicles were "rooms" for kitties of differing temperaments. Supplies were donated

from many sources, including a pallet of goods from Petco, which included cat trees, cat beds and toys. The Capital Humane Society donated 40 bags of litter and 40 bags of dry food. A local chiropractor's office donated used towels. Individuals from everywhere came forward with offers of time, money or supplies. It was truly amazing!

The morning of Day 2 – Sunday, August 10th Move In Day – started in a flurry of activity. Finishing touches (OK, some major finishing touches) still needed to be completed. At 1:00 PM, volunteers met at the Capital Humane Society en masse to transport 40 cats to the new facility. The group originally did not plan on taking any cats that were positive for Feline Leukemia, but when it was determined that fully 25% of what had now become known as "The South Street Cats" turned out to be positive, the group had to make a decision.

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Since many of the positive cats were otherwise strong and healthy, and the new location had a downstairs level perfect for segregation, the group decided to take on the challenge. Nine cats and kittens with Feline Leukemia joined the family; a decision the group has never for a moment regretted.

Transporting 40 cats from the Capital Humane Society went amazingly well, and the next priority was getting the cats settled, comfortable, and assessing each individual cat for the type of medical care that would be needed. The next several weeks were a blur. Each kitty was given a name to go along with his or her CHS assigned number. Cats were transported back and forth between All Feline Hospital and the new shelter. Medication schedules were set up. Cleaning and feeding shifts, twice a day, were set up and volunteers assigned. Things continued to fall into place, but one thing was missing...

The facility needed a resident manager. That's where I came in. After a bit of negotiation, and much cajoling, I managed to get the title of "Simba, Office Manager". My first assistant, Brownie, has since been adopted. But I have other assistants from time to time.

Almost a year has passed. The group's volunteer rolls number over 75 wonderful people. New volunteers contact us all the time, and we can ALWAYS use them. Donations have tapered off after the media attention faded, but we have faith in this community – the people of Lincoln and the surrounding areas really came through to save me, and 70 of my housemates. No, not everyone survived. But because of the efforts of The Cat House, and the joint efforts of the Capital Humane Society, Animal Control, and the public, over 60 of the cats and both dogs survived. And while The Cat House's new facility started out housing only South Street Cats, today only a handful of "South Street Cats" remain – the majority of the cats from that fated South Street house have been adopted. As for myself, you'd never recognize me from my "before" picture!

In the past year, The Cat House has worked with CHS on another large situation, as well as working with the

group "Breaking the Link" to rescue cats from domestic violence situations. Those of us who come through these doors are truly the lucky ones! We are all warm, well fed, have LOTS of love and companionship, and are content living here while we await permanent homes. It doesn't get any better than this.

Simba's Story

-Introducing Virtual Adoptions

We'd like to take a minute and introduce



Simba upon arrival at our shelter: his "before" picture.

you to Simba, The Cat House's "Office Manager". Many of you already know of Simba; his reputation precedes him! Simba came to us as one of the "South Street Cats". Clearly he was an old guy. You could just tell. Grumpy, a bit temperamental, moved slowly – not because he was in pain, but because he couldn't be bothered to hurry. Unless, of course, you had food.

Simba manipulated his way into the hearts of all the volunteers. He presented his saddest "I-haven't-been-fed-for-days" look to each shift of volunteers, and his initial gaunt look was soon replaced by a well-fed scowl. Simba has a definite opinion about everything, and particularly, everyone. Some folks he'd rather nip at than be petted by. And he grumbles and growls about just about everything. But he's really all talk. He's been seen curled up in laps purring, and even kissing the young female volunteers. Gotta watch this guy!



As Simba really is the kind of cat that does appeal to many people – those big

Simba's "after picture!"

grumpy old guys – we saw no reason not to adopt him out. But we decided to run a blood profile on him prior to adoption since he was at least 10 years old. While nothing definitive could be found wrong, his results had some irregularities in them, making him not a great candidate for adoption. Of course, that wasn't exactly a crushing blow to either Simba or the volunteers – within a few short months he'd become sort of an "institution" in his own right. So, The Cat House will continue to monitor his health and let him continue to "run" the shelter.



This led to Simba's brilliant idea: why not let folks sponsor Simba, sort of a virtual

Simba and Jesse share a joke that only they get.

adoption? From Simba's perspective, he could "spread the joy" around, where as with a "real" adoption, he would only be able to grace one family with his presence. So, the idea of a Virtual Adoption was born.

Virtual Adoptions Roll Out

The Board thought Simba's idea was a wonderful idea. There are many wonderful cats – favorites of many of the volunteers – who for one reason or another, are not likely to be adopted. They may require very special home situations, medical treatment, or a family that doesn't mind a little outside-the-box behavior. These kitties are welcome – and much loved here – but it costs a lot to maintain these kitties until a home perfectly suited to their needs is found.

Virtual Sponsors will be asked to donate \$10.00 a month, and will receive pictures and updates about the kitty they sponsor at least quarterly. In addition, virtual sponsors who live in the area, or are visiting the area are welcome to meet an adopted pet. We will feature a kitty up for virtual adoption each newsletter, and a more complete list will be available on the website. For more information, or to be one of the first to sponsor Simba, email info@thecathouse.org or call 441-9593.

Linden Street

by Beth Boal

In the largest number of cats ever picked up in the history of Lincoln's Animal Control, 146 cats were taken to Lincoln's Capital Humane Society in August 2004. After a neighbor complained about the smell, Animal Control found nearly all of the 146 cats in a 12 foot by 13-½ foot basement.



Though 54 "Linden Street cats" found homes in the Capital Humane Society's adoptathon, over 70 cats still needed homes. While we knew there was no way we could take in all the cats, The Cat House has taken 43 of the 70 cats that remained. The first eight went to Dr. Arnold of All Feline Hospital where they are available for adoption. One more

went to Pitts Veterinary Hospital for adoption through their clinic. The remainder came to C Street, where they have happily chowed down on canned food, scratched on their scratching posts and used the litter boxes like troopers.



Many of the Linden Street cats have a bit of a "Persian" look. Though the kitties need lots of grooming, they are looking better already. The conditions in which they were living left their coats matted, stained and unkempt. But with just a little brushing – which they seem to enjoy immensely – many look absolutely stunning. After just a few days, they look completely transformed!



Health-wise, these cats are a resilient bunch. Allegedly, all the cats are from an original 4 or 5 cats that the owners neglected to get altered. As the story goes, over approximately five years, 4 cats turned into 146 cats – an extreme example of the importance of spay/neuter! Sadder still, this level of massive inbreeding may have caused as-of-yet unknown health problems.

Dr. Knudsen of All Feline Hospital came to C Street and examined the Linden Street kitties, as two had already turned out to have heart murmurs. Unfortunately, about half a dozen more murmurs were detected, though the good news is that they are mild murmurs. Other health issues included ear mites in virtually every cat, and many cats with teeth and gums needing attention.



The personality of these cats is amazing! Another testimony to the resiliency of cats; these kitties are some of the most affectionate cats around! Once you start petting them, they roll around ecstatic for the attention. All the purring made Dr. Knudsen's job of listening to hearts and lungs a challenge!



Donations – particularly financial – are desperately needed. Although we have taken in nearly one-third of these cats, we do not get a share in any of the over \$10,000, or tons of food and litter, donated by the public in response to the situation.



If you can help in anyway, please contact us! Financial donations can be sent to PO Box 23145, Lincoln, NE 68542. Credit card donations (via Paypal) can also be made through our website at www.thecathouse.org. You can also call our phone line for more information on how to donate or how to volunteer. The Linden Street kitties thank you with their loud, happy purrs!

New Adoption Center

by Stephanie Luther-Dahmke

Thanks to Speedway Properties, The Cat House has a new storefront. For the next six months, at only \$1 per month, The Cat House will be setting up an adoption center at 1820 P Street.



Two weekend meetings gave volunteers an opportunity to see the new facility and discuss what needs to be done. The first task is to construct a new wall to separate the former auto parts shop from the garage space. Cleaning, painting and building of the 9x9x7 foot PVC pipe cages will follow.



A grand opening has been scheduled for October 15. All organizations that donate supplies, services or volunteers will receive free advertising with stickers, flyers and posters.

The new adoption center needs:

- New front window
- Cleaning supplies (paper towels, bleach, plastic spray bottles, etc)
- Cellular or Internet service
- Fire extinguishers
- Desk
- Chairs
- Cat food
- Litter
- Cat trees, condos and toys
- Litter boxes
- Pet beds

All donations can be sent to The Cat House by calling 402-441-9593 to set up an appointment.

Volunteer Profile

Stephanie and Doug Kielian

by Wilma's Mom



What we do for The Cathouse: Clean C Street, upstairs and down, every Sunday morning; Make catnip mice and fish for sale at the Haymarket Farmer's Market (Stephanie); On call as needed; "Whatever, get cats out of the ceiling."

What we do with the rest of our lives: Co-owners of Auto Kraft Body and Paint, 712 West Cornhusker Highway. Doug started it in 1990, Stephanie began working there after they started dating.

The cats in our lives: Sam, who turned 10 this year. We got her before we got our house, so she's become the shop cat. She sleeps on Stephanie's desk and runs the place. Cassie, who joined us 3 years ago. Kind of aggressive but sweet.

Bob, who came after Cassie, a big, fluffy Maine Coon. Rocky, found by one of our friends sitting in the middle of O Street. He'd been hit and his pelvis was fractured in three places. We took him to the emergency vet and he recovered nicely. "You'd never know he had anything wrong."

Other animals and humans in our lives: "Just Doug and I and the four kitties."

How we got started at The Cathouse: Stephanie picked up information at PETSMART, then contacted The Cathouse after reading about the South Street cats. She started in September 2003, Doug joined her shortly afterward. "We work together all day long. Sometimes it's nice to do something that has nothing to do with cars. ... It's been a lot of fun."

Why The Cathouse: We both had cats growing up. Our plan for retirement is to run a cat sanctuary, where they could live out their lives. A dream vacation would be to visit the Best Friends animal sanctuary in Utah. We haven't been there yet, vacations are hard when you own a business.

Favorite parts of volunteering: Lying on the floor and letting the cats walk around and over us. Having the kittens play all over us.

Have You Heard of The Cat House?

by Stephanie Luther-Dahmke



Volunteers Jody Lewis & Alma Vlasak

From mid-July to the end of August, Cat House volunteers invited people to learn more about The Cat House at a booth at the Haymarket Farmer's Market in downtown Lincoln.

Volunteers educated people about Lincoln's only no-kill cat shelter, shared pictures of cats available for adoption and handed out Stephanie Kielian's handmade catnip fish for a dollar donation.

People who stopped at The Cat House booth asked questions about how to donate items, how to volunteer and even how to stop a cat from urinating outside the box.

Cat wind chimes, cat picture frames and Norma Patzloff's cat carrier pads were sold helping to ensure that at least \$100 was taken in each Saturday for The Cat House. Next year volunteers will once again be down in the Haymarket from 8:00 am to noon on Saturdays telling people about The Cat House.

In Memory and In Honor

The following recent donations were made to The Cat House in memory of loved ones:

Vicki Blattert: In memory of son Jason, age 24, and his cat Maconity, age 11.

Kevin Geddes: In memory of all his beloved pets.

Renate, Gary and Leland Jacobs: In memory of Becky Jacobs, who loved all things living.

Joan Reist: In memory of Ashby.

Martha Stoddard: In memory of Virginia Robertson, who joined her beloved cat, Malcolm, in heaven.

Jo Ann Workman: In memory of her dear friend, Allie.

Stephanie Luther-Dahmke: In memory of Curie. You'll forever be in my heart.

The following recent donations were made to The Cat House in honor of loved ones:

Melody Hobbins: In honor of Sue Smith

Cindy Kaliff & Floyd Sylvester: In honor of Barb & Christina Fechner, and Marian Coleman & Sue Palmer.

Lynn Roper: In honor of Christina Gottschalk



Cat Profile

– Tidy Girl

by Rachele Walter



Picture by Jody Lewis

About two years old with a sweet and friendly temperament, Tidy Girl came to The Cat House from a home where her human mother suffered from domestic abuse and eventually lost her life. Tidy Girl, her two adorable kittens (two others were previously adopted) and ten other cats were rescued from the home.

Beautiful, petite with coloring between that of a calico and a tabby, Tidy Girl has a unique physical appearance. Besides her coloring, she is missing about 2/3 of her back leg and part of her tail as a result of a tangled umbilical cord at birth. This does not slow her down, nor stop her from being a fabulous mother. She was very protective of her babies when they were young.

Now they are adolescents and almost ready for adoption and Tidy Girl is ready for her own home. She loves to play, chase feathers and laser pointers, and will jump up on chairs, but isn't much of a climber. She loves elevated spaces (as all cats seem to) and a moderately sized cat tree where she can perch will help her feel safer in a new environment.

After living with more than ten other cats at her previous home (and more at The Cat House), Tidy Girl gets along fairly well with other cats. Of course, there's a little initial grumpiness that comes with a new adjustment, but a slow introduction should ease the way for Tidy Girl – or any cat. The best way to do this is to give the cat her own “room” for several days - with her own food, water, litter – this helps her normalize the smells of a new home, companion pets, and lets her feel that she has her own place where she can

return to feel safe after integration into the entire home. It also gives any other animals the chance to become accustomed to her scent and makes it feel more gradual rather than an abrupt change to routine.

The injuries to her leg and tail are old and do not cause any problems or require special care, however she should not be declawed as she needs her remaining front and back claws for extra balance and help in getting around as well as she does. She does not use her claws inappropriately, and a scratching post in a new home should be enough to prevent any scratching issues. She is spayed and current on her shots. All she needs now is a home to call her own.

Adoption Information

Adoption Fee: \$75

Includes: Spay or neuter, vet exam, testing for Feline Leukemia, rabies vaccination and FVRCP vaccination.

Adoption applications can be found at PETsMART, 5200 N. 27th and mailed to The Cat House, PO Box 23145, Lincoln, NE 68542 or faxed to 888-210-7008.

Applications can also be completed online at www.thecathouse.org.

Successful Adoptions

My Year in Review

by Topper Cameron



See me (and read more) at my website - <http://mykids.cameroncomputingservices.com/>

My life began July 25, 2003, when I was rescued from the home of a cat collector. Thanks to the combined efforts of The

Cat House and the Capital Humane Society, I was given a second chance. I was known then as 45JF until it was discovered that my given name was Chocolate Lover. Mom heard through an e-mail that there were Rex's in the raid. She immediately sent the e-mail to dad (who'd always wanted a Rex).

A couple of days later, an introduction was made. It was an introduction that mom & dad will never forget. Raffie, another Cornish Rex from the raid, and I were housed together at The Cat House. Raffie introduced herself to mom by climbing her chest and perching on her shoulder. Just as mom and Raffie were becoming friends, Raffie sneezed and pooped all over mom's left arm. Following a short cleanup, it was my opportunity to charm mom & dad. It was love at first sight. I nuzzled and pawed my way into their hearts. Mom & dad visited me almost daily after that while I built up my strength. When it was finally time for me to go home, I was excited to be with mom & dad full time but I was also a little sad to be leaving my "brothers in arms" who I'd been through so much with.

A year has gone by since my rescue. I've settled in nicely in my new home and have even taken up a profession around the house - I am dad's official barber. I help him stay nice and groomed. Even before his alarm goes off in the morning, I am there licking his hair. By the time he wakes up, his hair looks fabulous and I've saved him so much time. Dad doesn't appreciate my efforts most of the time. Though my kitty spit is all natural and makes for a good styling gel, dad prefers his own store bought formula.

I've experienced so much in such a short time. In September, I walked on a leash for the first time and amazed everyone at PETSMART by not fighting it. In December, I visited Santa for the first time shortly after discovering I had a grade 2 heart murmur. I sleep in bed every night on a pillow above Dad's head and nuzzle softly against his cheek. I live with 2 feline companions (Symyn & Mayzie) and 2 canine companions (Julia & Kane). We all coexist fine and even play together once in a while. Mom likes to say that I'm more of a dog than a cat and more of a child than a pet. I continue

to battle my illnesses that were as a result of being in that filthy, overpopulated home. I've been on Clavamox, Baytril, Amoxicillian, Synotic nose drops, and even nebulizer treatments. I am finally seeing improvement with a combination of Lincocin and Synotic nose drops. Though I was always a happy, loving, snuggly little guy (even when I was blowing snot bubbles all over) I'm fast becoming the bright, active, burrowing Rex that I was born to be.

I will be forever grateful to The Cat House for fighting to save my life. Because of your hard work and dedication to us kitties, I now live with a family who adores me and makes sure I am cared for. They've shed tears when I was in pain and laughed when I was playful. They've held me close and told me how much they love me every day. I spent so long without a kind voice or a soft touch that I never thought I'd know love and safety again. Because of you, I now know that I will be well loved for the rest of my life.

The Power of Language

(an excerpt from article by Beth Boal)

"A picture's worth a 1000 words"; "actions speak louder than words"; "sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me". It seems we continually try to convince ourselves that words are not that important. But in reality, we know that words have power – the power to motivate, to cut to the quick, to persuade.

Among animal lovers, there are often battles on how to refer to one's cat or dog. Are they pets or animal companions? Are we owners or human companions? Words even have the power to divide people. But one thing we can all agree on is that our animal friends are not inanimate "property", but sentient, feeling beings – regardless of what state and local laws may say. Animals feel pain, just as we do. They also have emotions. Maybe not all the emotions we like to attribute to them, but we know they feel fear, contentment and other basic emotions.

Nevertheless, the laws in most locales still consider animals to be property, similar to furniture and other possessions. Penalties for animal related crimes are sadly a slap on the wrist in most cases, as we've seen all too clearly here in Lincoln. That needs to change if we are ever to get a handle of the all-too-common attitude that pets are "disposable" when they become inconvenient. So, how do we change that? Do you have to be a political activist to make a dent in that attitude?

I believe you can begin to change attitudes by simply being aware of how you use language. Five years ago, when I walked into my first meeting with The Cat House, I mentioned someone who wanted to "get rid of" their cat and was met with icy stares. Finally, someone commented, "We don't use the term 'get rid of' when talking about animals..." I had been an animal lover all my life, but in that one split second I realized that for years, by using that expression, I had been fostering the attitude that animals are "property", and disposable property at that. Some may think this is "splitting hairs", but I do not.

Consider the following; which of these sound OK to the ear and which sound absurd:

1. I need to get rid of the old chair in the living room.
2. I need to get rid of that cat; she keeps peeing in the living room.
3. I need to get rid of my grandmother; she keeps spilling her coffee in the living room.

Silly as the example is, the first two are "acceptable" expressions (even if you don't agree with them). However, if someone said the third, you'd think they were nuts. You don't "get rid of" people! What a ridiculous thing to say.

The unconscious expressions we use everyday often convey what we really believe, even if we ourselves are not aware. Being more careful, as well as precise, in our speech not only makes a difference to those around us, but can be a learning experience in its own right.

Celebration and Remembrance

by Wilma's Mom



The first Anniversary Celebration for The Cat House proved to be a day for tears and a day for cheers at Pioneers Park. Tears as we remembered the cats who are no longer with us: Paris, Lucy, Piano Man, Patches and more. Cheers as we looked back on the year before and all the changes it brought.

The mourning took place first, in a quiet ceremony under the shelter of the park trees. Boxes of tissue were put to good use. Then came the celebration, complete with a giant sandwich, a half-and-half chocolate-and-white cake and plenty of salads, fruits, chips and sweet goodies.



More than 30 volunteers, adopters and donors turned out to feast and relax and enjoy the company of fellow cat lovers. One friendly dog even joined the group. In the most formal part of the afternoon, Beth Boal talked about the accomplishments of the past year. They were many. It was a year in which The Cat House became a partner with Animal Control and the Capital Humane Society in saving the lives of dozens of cats from several major rescue operations; A year in which we opened our own shelter to house many of those kitties; And a year during which Lincoln residents increasingly turned out to volunteer and donate to The Cat House.

Mary Batterson, Treasurer, put some numbers to those accomplishments.

Money raised from donations, a garage sale and the Haymarket Farmers Market sales: nearly \$13,800.

Cats adopted during the year: 160.

Cats in care of The Cat House as of that day: 93. That included cats on the waiting list, those at the shelter and PETsMART and those in foster care.

Of course, that celebration came just days before 146 cats were removed by Animal Control from another Lincoln home. The work continues.

Board of Directors:

Beth Boal, President
Debbie Borner, Vice President
Nicole Narboni, Secretary
Mary Batterson, Treasurer
Dr. Rebecca Arnold, DVM
Sandi Nieveen
Evette McPherson

Wish List

Food & Litter:

- ◆ IAMS canned cat food
- ◆ Dry food – Iams, Science Diet & Eukanuba
- ◆ Science Diet A/D
- ◆ Kitten food - Dry and canned, Max Kitten and Eukanuba
- ◆ Non-clumping cat litter

Cleaning Supplies:

- ◆ Paper towels
- ◆ Bleach
- ◆ Clorox Cleanup
- ◆ Plastic spray bottles
- ◆ Antibacterial dish soap
- ◆ Antibacterial hand soap
- ◆ Dishwashing soap holder and scrubbers
- ◆ Sponges
- ◆ Trash bags – garbage and kitchen size
- ◆ Newspapers

Miscellaneous:

- ◆ New or lightly used tall cat trees and condos
- ◆ Waste baskets
- ◆ Pet beds – the deep kind
- ◆ Nail clippers
- ◆ Slicker brushes
- ◆ Tokens for PETsMART name tag machine
- ◆ Toys – sparkle balls, catnip toys
- ◆ Laser pointers & batteries
- ◆ Folding cat cages

And, of course, we always need MONEY.

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If you are interested in submitting articles, taking pictures or helping out with the production of the newsletter, please contact Stephanie Luther-Dahmke at stephanie@luther-dahmke.com.

Donations can be sent to The Cat House at PO Box 23145, Lincoln, NE 68542. Monetary donations can be made online, with a credit card, through Paypal. Or call The Cat House at 41-9593 to make an appointment to meet the cats or see The Cat House.

The Cat House needs your support, so we can continue rescuing and adopting out cats. Please consider donating, or visit our website to learn how you can help!



Please Select Contribution Amount:

- \$10
- \$20
- \$25
- \$30
- \$40

Make checks payable to The Cat House and mail to PO Box 23145, Lincoln, NE 68542

For donations of food, toys or furniture, please call 402-441-9593 for an appointment.

Contributions can also be made with a credit card through Paypal. Visit www.thecathouse.org to learn how.



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