

“My mission is to save as many cats and kittens as I can.” — April Blankenship

Care

Continued from A1

weight of 2 pounds each, qualifying to go to Homeward Bound's clinic on Evans Street to be spayed or neutered, tested for feline diseases, microchipped and vaccinated. By now, some have gone to permanent homes; others will be offered through the adoption programs.

It's always bittersweet to say goodbye to the little ones, Blankenship said. She wants them to have happy lives with loving owners. But she misses the individual personalities she's watched develop over several weeks.

“Those four just purr and purr,” she said about half of the gang of eight that was tearing through her living room during a recent photo session. “Those four are more interested in chasing things.”

Blankenship has been fostering for Homeward Bound for more than three years. In that time, she's helped raise more than 100 kittens.

“Chaotic, but fun,” she said.

Blankenship said she sought out volunteer work because she struggles with PTSD. “I needed purpose in my life,” she said.

She started out cleaning the cat building at Homeward Bound's no-kill shelter on Loop Road. Then she heard about the need for foster caregivers.

“A week later, I had my first kittens,” she said.

She soon realized that as much as she was helping the cats, they were helping her, as well. “Fostering turned my life around,” she said.

To qualify as a foster care provider, Blankenship filled out paperwork and went through some training. She had to show that her own cats were up-to-date on their vaccines, too.

Homeward Bound agreed to provide food, kitty litter and medication. She agreed to provide whatever care the foster kittens need.

In addition, she had to have a designated space in her home where the mothers and kittens could have private quarters. “At least one room,” she said, noting that she had fostering in mind when she looked for a new home last year.

Her kitten room is not only separate from the rest of the house, it's also set up to appeal to cats. Toys, climbing structures and soft sleeping places fill the room,



Amber Blankenship's foster kitten Sage batters at a shiny toy. Rusty Rae/News-Register

FOSTER VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Volunteer foster care providers at Homeward Bound Pets help raise kittens or puppies until they are old enough to be put up for adoption.

Fostering is a big commitment and a lot of work, according to Amber Blankenship, one of several people who work with cats. But it's well worth it, she said; she loves spending time with the animals and watching them play and grow.

To become a foster care provider, applicants need to have a separate room dedicated to the animals. Their own pets must be vaccinated and treated for fleas,

If the applicant is a renter, he or she must

have an authorization document from their landlord, stating that animals are allowed.

Volunteers must be able to transport the animals to the vet and to the shelter as needed. Those who foster dogs need to have a fenced yard suitable for the animals to play in.

Homeward Bound Pets provides food, medical care and blankets for the animals. The nonprofit also provides kitty litter for cats.

The no-kill shelter also has volunteer opportunities at its shelter, in its thrift shop and at its spay and neuter clinic, as well as openings for people to help with fundraisers.

For more information, contact Homeward Bound Pets, hbpets.org.

— Starla Pointer

which she calls a “kitten Disneyland.”

She just added a “cat super highway,” comprised of several small platforms mounted along one wall — it allows cats to move around without returning to the floor.

A baby monitor keeps her informed of what the kittens are up to in their room.

As kittens become more independent, she lets them out of their room in the evenings, allowing them to play throughout the house. “They love it,” she said.

She plays with them, of course, helping them learn to socialize with humans. “I'm with them a lot. I sit with the mama, talk softly, handle the kittens a lot — most moms are okay with that.”

She also takes kittens to visit people.

She may load kittens into a special stroller and walk downtown with them, for instance; one Halloween, she dressed kittens in tiny pumpkin costumes for a Halloween walk.

A couple times a month, she takes kittens to visit residents at Brookdale senior living center; the joy is mutual. Blankenship's own pets,

Gumby, 11, and Pokey, 9, are fine with having the kittens around. “Gumby, especially, does so well with them,” she said. “He gives the kittens baths and cuddles with them, especially with the ones without moms.”

Pokey, who is recovering from losing his back leg to bone cancer, is a little shy. “But he plays when he gets to know them,” she added.

Sometimes Blankenship takes charge of female cats that are about to give birth, becoming a midwife as well as a caregiver. Other times, the kittens are a few days to a couple weeks old when they arrive with their mother; they may not even have their eyes open yet.

About half the time, she receives orphaned kittens. Many are old enough to be eating on their own, but some are so small, they need bottle feeding. Occasionally they still have their umbilical cords attached, she said.

“They need round-the-clock care. I have to feed them at 3- or 4-hour intervals,” she said, noting that she doesn't get many vacations or days off.

survival rate. Blankenship said she realizes she cannot save them all, but it still hurts when a kitten dies.

The first litter she cared for had two kittens; one survived. Most litters average five kittens; some have included as many as 10.

“You can't save every kitten, so this is not for everyone,” she said. “But I can't imagine my life without fostering.”

She focuses on the ones that make it.

“It's a joy when they thrive,” she said. She loves to see them open their eyes, grow and become aware of and fascinated by the world around them.

She recalled saying goodbye to that first healthy kitten.

“When it was time for it to go to its forever home, I broke down crying,” she said.

She's become used to sending kittens off into the world, but it's never easy. She often keeps in touch with the people who adopted them, and has made many friends that way.

“I want to know they're going to good homes,” she said, noting that she recommends that people adopt two unless they already have a cat; kittens do better in pairs.

“They're hilarious, they're fun, they're companions for life,” she said.

She's gotten used to saying goodbye, though she still misses the patter of tiny paws. But every time a group of kittens leaves her care, there's another on the way.

“My mission is to save as many cats and kittens as I can,” she said.

Starla Pointer, who believes everyone has an interesting story to tell, has been writing the weekly “Stopping By” column since 1996. Contact her at 503-687-1263 or spointer@newsregister.com.

EVENTS CALENDAR

TUESDAY, JULY 12

Park concert: Collective Notion performs in the next installment of McMinnville Parks and Recreation's Summer Fun concerts in the park, free, 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, July 12, in City Park.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13

Summer Fun: Wednesdays at Wortman Park, 2250 N.E. McDaniel Lane, continues with Emily Blue and Squatchie, 2 p.m., Wednesday, July 13. The event is free. Bring your brightest most “rainbowtastic” clothing to go with original songs and stories.

THURSDAY, JULY 14

Art in the Park: Enjoy chalk art in partnership with McMinnville Education Foundation's “Chalk the Walk” fundraiser, 6-8 p.m., Thursday, July 14, McMinnville City Park, free.

MILESTONE

BIRTHDAY



RACHEL JOHNSON 50TH BIRTHDAY

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CORRECTIONS

■ Relay For Life participant Melissa Hernandez was misidentified in the July 6 article on American Cancer Society event. Also, organizer Missie Kallunki's last name was misspelled.

■ City council member Jim Maguire's last name was incorrect in the July 8 article on Dayton city leadership positions up for reelection. Also the article should have stated that the mayor's term is for four years.

■ A June 17 article on the Third Street Improvement Project misstated two aspects of the plan that is in development: first, the city intends by this fall to procure engineering services to produce construction documents for the project, following McMinnville City Council approval. A construction date has not been determined, and will depend upon funding and coordination with the downtown community.

Also, the article should have stated that this spring's community survey responses on Third Street design options favored a linear tree design, with 53 percent support, compared to 47 percent for the grove-style concept.

PLACES OF WORSHIP

WORSHIP SCHEDULES PUBLISHED EVERY TUESDAY. EXPANDED INFORMATION AVAILABLE ON THE 3RD TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH.

AMITY

Amity Christian Church
1305 Goucher Street
503-835-2551
Sunday School: 9:15 am
Sunday Service: 10:30 am
www.amitychurch.org

Amity United Methodist Church
203 Nursery Street
503-835-1207
Pastor: Ken Johnson
Thursday Bible Study: 2:00pm
Sunday Service: 1:00pm
www.amityoregonUMC.com

CARLTON

Resilient Hope Fellowship
Pastor John Schmidt
158 E Main St
Free Community Dinner
Every Tuesday night, 6pm
www.ResilientHopeFellowship.org

DAYTON

Dayton Pioneer Church
300 Church Street
503-864-3338
Sunday Service: 10:30 am
pioneerevangelicalchurch.org

Unionvale Countryside Church
18725 Wallace Road SE
503-864-4864
Sunday Service: 11:00 am

LAFAYETTE

Lafayette Community Church
365 3rd Street
503-864-8409
Sunday Service: 10:00 am
lafayettecommunitychurch.org

McMINNVILLE

First Mennonite Church
Fellows & Cedarwood
503-472-0217
Sunday Service: 11:00 am

First Christian Church
1300 Brooks Street
503-472-7227
Sunday Service: 10:00 am
disciples@frontier.com

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of McMinnville
“Spirituality Beyond Dogma”
Sunday Service 10:00am
McMinnville Grange
1700 SW Old Sheridan Rd
www.macuuf.org

Creekside Community Church
333 NE Evans Street
503-472-9197
Sunday Service: 9:45 am
www.creeksidemac.com

Abundant Life Pentecostal Church
1145 Wallace Road
503-472-1585
Sunday Service:
10:00 am and 6:00 pm

Baker Creek Community Church
325 NW Baker Creek Road
503-434-5541
Sunday Service: 10:30 am
www.bakercreekcommunity.org

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
1500 SW Old Sheridan Road
503-472-7841
Saturday Service: 10:45 am

First Baptist Church (American Baptist)
125 SE Cowls Street
503-472-7941
Sunday Worship: 10:00am
In-Person AND Streaming Live on
facebook.com/firstbaptistmac
www.fbcmac.org

Rivers Edge Seventh-Day Adventist Church
1349 NW Elm Street
971-760-0440
Saturday Service: 9:30 am
RiversEdgeChristian.org

St. Barnabas Episcopal Church
822 SW 2nd Street
503-472-5831
Interim Rector:
Rev. Betty S. McWhorter
Sunday service:
9:30 am

Services are also live streamed & recorded on St. Barnabas YouTube channel
www.stbmac.org
Office is open Tue–Fri, 9am–2pm
The Soup Kitchen @St. Barnabas
Monday–Friday 4:00pm–6:00pm
To-go meals only
503-472-3711

McCabe Chapel United Methodist Church
13150 McCabe Chapel Rd.
Sunday Service: 9:00 am
mccabechapelumc.org

Valley Baptist Church SBC
2631 NE McDonald Lane
503-472-8924
Sunday Service: 10:45 am
www.macvalleybaptist.com

Oakgrove Community Church
Grand Ballroom
325 NE 3rd Street
Sunday Service: 10:30 am
oakgrovemac.com

St. Francis Prayer Chapel
1300 SE Brooks Street
503-435-9493
Sunday Service: 10:30 am

Northwest Christian Church
2831 NE Newby St.
503-472-1843
Sunday Worship:
9:00am and 10:30am
www.mynw.cc

The Potter's House Christian Fellowship
205 NE Galloway St
503-435-2151
Pastor: Kevin T Foley
Worship: 10:30 am and 6:30 pm
Wednesday Worship: 7:00 pm
Youth Crew
Jail Ministries
Nursing Home Ministries
Neighborhood Bible Studies
Marriage Counseling & Retreats
LIVE STREAM
pottershousemac.com

Pacific Baptist Church
Red Lion Inn
509-439-1456
Sunday Service:
11:00 am and 6:00 pm

First Presbyterian Church
Please join us for worship on Sunday mornings at 10:30am in person or online/livestream by going to our website, fpc-mac.org

390 NE 2nd Street
503-472-6256
Sunday Service: 10:30 am
www.fpc-mac.org

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