



## College News

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### **Cornell Feline Health Center addresses feral cat overpopulation in memory of Dr. Jim Richards**

Forty-three feral or barn cats were spayed or neutered during the inaugural feral cat spay/neuter clinic sponsored by the Feline Health Center (FHC) in conjunction with Ithaca's Shelter Outreach Services (SOS).

The clinic was held in memory of Dr. Jim Richards, former FHC Director killed in a motorcycle accident while trying to avoid a feral cat. Eight veterinary students from the Feline Club at Cornell University's College of Veterinary Medicine, FHC Co-Directors Drs. Paul Maza and Christine Bellezza, Dr. Kim Snedden of SOS, and a team of volunteers from the Central NY Spay/Neuter Assistance Program (CNY SNAP) participated in the clinic.

An estimated 87 million free-roaming cats exist in the US. More than 6 million of these animals end up in shelters where most are euthanized. In addition to being in poor health generally, free-roaming cats also negatively impact wildlife and public health.

"Free-roaming cats can spread diseases such as feline leukemia and feline immunodeficiency viruses to domestic cats and rabies and ringworm to humans," said Bellezza. "They also prey upon songbirds and small mammals. Tragically, free-roaming cats live tough and often short lives, punctuated with illness, fear of abuse, and a constant search for food and shelter."

Few agencies have comprehensive programs designed to decrease the number of feral cats in their communities. Trap-Neuter-Return projects have emerged as useful tools for control of feral cat populations. With continued funding, the Feline Health Center plans to offer additional clinics.

"We're happy to have played a role in making sure that at least 43 cats will no longer contribute to the feral cat overpopulation problem," said Maza. "It was a long but fulfilling day for all of us, and a way for us to honor Jim's memory."

For more information, contact the Feline Health Center at 607.253.3001.