

INSPIRE ATLANTA

Extraordinary people and uplifting stories that bring out the best in all of us



Chuck and Radar are part of a colony of feral cats at the Shadowood Office Park on Powers Ferry Road. The management team at the park has made sure the cats have been spayed or neutered and are current on their vaccinations. PHOTOS COURTESY OF ATLANTA PROPERTY GROUP

Cobb office park has become a sort of cat sanctuary

Alas, ownership change means free-roaming cats now need homes.

By Laura Berrios
For the AJC

Office workers at a Cobb County business center must say their goodbyes to four friends. As is the case when property changes hands, not everyone stays around.

In this transaction, though, it's the furry friends who are leaving.

Lucy, Sally, Chuck and Radar are free-roaming cats who live and thrive on the grounds of Shadowood Office Park, a multitenant complex in the Cumberland/Galleria area near Truist Park.

Shadowood, long owned and operated by the Atlanta Property Group, has changed ownership, and the outgoing management team is seeking homes for the four adult cats under its care.

Five years ago, Shadowood's management team discovered a large colony of feral cats on the property after one of the adult cats wandered close to the buildings on Powers Ferry Road. Around the same time, six kittens were found near the dumpsters, said APG partner and senior property manager Sarah Stevens.

A feeding station was placed nearby to monitor cat activity and identify the number onsite. Then, the team used the trap-neuter-return method to manage the cat population humanely.

TNR is universally used to safely control feral outdoor cat populations by ending the breeding cycle. Cats are captured in animal cages, called live traps, transported to a vet to be spayed or neutered and vaccinated, then released back into their natural habitat. Some cats also have their ears tipped so they later can be identified.

Since discovering the Shadowood colony, about a dozen cats have been trapped and vetted. The adult cats have returned to the wild, and the six kittens have found forever homes. None has been sent to animal shelters.

It's a true TNR success story, with a stable and healthy "community cat" population living at the property for the past few years, says Stevens, who oversaw the property management team at Shadowood.

Shadowood tenants supported the cat initiative, with many employees at the office park adopting kittens and helping to socialize the adult free-roaming cats.



Scooter, with Max Rodbell, the son of the co-founder of Atlanta Property Group, and Little One, with Cindy Worley, a longtime tenant at the office park, are part of a colony of stray cats at the Shadowood Office Park that have been cared for by property managers and tenants over the past five years.

HOW TO HELP

Those interested in adopting one of the Shadowood cats, or finding out more, can contact Sarah Stevens at sarah.stevens@atlantapg.com.

To learn more about managing community cats through TNR (trap-neuter-return), visit LifeLine Animal Project at lifelineanimal.org.

Some come by the management office every day to pet the cats. Stevens said the APG team is working hard to find them appropriate homes.

"While I know people on the site will miss seeing them, they will be very thrilled to know that they're going to the perfect stable long-term homes — once we find those," Stevens said.

The APG team cared for the community cats, providing daily feeding and veterinary care. One cat received medical treatment during his stay.

Stevens said the goal always has been finding permanent homes for all cats. But that's not always possible for older felines who started in the wild.

"Once they reach a certain age without having had much socialization with humans, their instincts make it hard for them to let their guard down," Stevens said. "That's why trapped-neuter-return is the go-to practice for feral population

control. If they're not young enough to home, we want them to be healthy and no longer reproducing."

Stevens said they are looking for patient or experienced cat adopters, so the transition to a new home can be slow and successful.

"With rescue groups and shelters currently overflowing in the Atlanta area, it is up to us to place Lucy, Sally, Chuck and Radar in the best possible homes," she said, noting that all four are well-fed and up-to-date on their vaccinations.

The APG team will continue to feed the cats at their current Shadowood home until permanent homes can be found. Partners of the management group have absorbed all the fees associated with the cats and their veterinary care.

The APG team always has had a special place in its heart for rescue animals. Over 68% of the 54-person APG team have pets (80 dogs and cats in total), and 56% are rescue pets.

In this spirit, the team is donating \$2,500 to Atlanta-based LifeLine Animal Project — a nonprofit that aims to end the euthanasia of healthy and treatable animals.

"Both inside our office and in the communities of the properties we manage, we strive to demonstrate strong stewardship and a commitment to supporting others around us," Stevens said. "We hope to find our Shadowood cats the perfect homes with an abundance of the love and comfort these animals deserve."

THE UPLIFT



Jose Garcia's 50 goats were hours past their milking time because of a snowstorm that shut down a Utah interstate.

COURTESY OF LISA FERNANDEZ

Strangers help milk goats stuck in traffic

Desperate farmers on way to California get help in snowy Utah.

By Cathy Free
Washington Post

Jose Garcia was hauling a load of goats to his California dairy farm when he hit a huge snowstorm as he drove through Utah. Traffic was at a standstill.

He felt panicked when there was no sign of movement on the freeway on the night of March 2. The goats needed to be milked every 12 hours or their udders would become painfully swollen and possibly infected.

"I was right on the 12-hour mark," said Garcia, 40.

He and his uncle, Bartolo Garcia, had planned to find a freeway rest stop where they could milk the 50 goats Jose Garcia had purchased in Minnesota to add to his herd of 500 in Merced County, California.

"I kept praying the traffic would get going because I knew how uncomfortable the goats were," he said. "They're high-producing animals, and they really can't go much beyond 12 hours without milking. I was getting ready to lace up my boots and milk them in the trailer when things finally started moving."

They had been stuck in the storm for more than five hours, and Garcia said was relieved when he learned there was a livestock supply store in Stansbury Park, Utah, about an hour's drive away.

Lisa Fernandez was preparing to close shop for the day at the Tractor Supply Co. store when Garcia rushed in, visibly worried.

"Have you ever milked a goat before?" he asked her, explaining the situation.

The answer was no.

"He said, 'If you'd like to try, I can show you how,'" recalled Fernandez, assistant manager of the farm supply store.

She agreed to help him, but he still seemed desperate. He had another request.

"He asked if I knew of anyone else who might want to pitch in because all 50 goats needed milking," she said. "He said he could use any help I could find."

Fernandez and another manager quickly called some of their employees and asked if they would help. One employee posted a notice on the Lake Point Crew private Facebook page, asking for all available hands.

"My boss is trying to find people to help these farmers for about an hour ... to get these goats through the night," Tosha Carter posted. "Would anyone be interested in helping?"

Within 30 minutes, about 40 people showed up to help on a chilly night, even though the vast majority never had milked a goat before, Fernandez said.

Garcia showed her and the other volunteers how to milk the goats in the parking lot and get a steady stream going.

Garcia said he was stunned that so many people dropped what they were doing on a cold Saturday night to milk goats for a stranger. "The parking lot was full of people wanting to help," Garcia said.

By 11:15 p.m., all 50 goats had been milked, and he and his uncle were able to get back on the road to California, he said.

"It would have taken me hours to do this alone," Garcia said. "They got me out of a huge jam, and I now consider them all friends. I told them to come visit my goat farm in California any time."

HELP US INSPIRE ATLANTA

We recognize a big part of our journalistic mission is to shine a spotlight on wrongdoings and to hold our public officials accountable.

But we also understand the importance of presenting uplifting stories that celebrate our region's moments, milestones and people. We hope you enjoy our weekly feature, Inspire Atlanta, which appears in Sunday's Living & Arts

section and our daily feature, The Uplift — a regular dose of touching stories from around the world. We've also expanded that concept with our ePaper-only Inspire Atlanta Extra on Fridays.

Know someone who inspires you or makes metro Atlanta a better place for others? Email us at AJC-InspireAtlanta@ajc.com.