HABIT

Human-Animal Bond in Tennessee

"A program of the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine"

SPRING 2009

Smudge is a Big Hit at Shannondale

One of my early experiences as a HABIT Coordinator was a visit to Shannondale Nursing Home with Clare Scully and her feline partner Smudge. Clare is a student at the University Of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine, and Smudge is her laid-back, eighteen pound cat. Smudge might walk in the door on a leash, or he might choose to be carried high up on Clare's shoulder. It's all the same to him, as long as someone will pet him when he gets where he's going. He also likes for someone to use a lint roller on his back. He'll probably stretch out and get comfortable if there's a lint roller around. Or, he might just stretch out anyway since he's pretty comfortable wherever he is.

I spent an hour with Clare and Smudge as they visited the folks at Shannondale who particularly like cats. At eighteen pounds, Smudge gets attention wherever he goes and brings smiles from most. But the ladies and gentleman who are on Smudge's regulars list are delighted to see him and hear Clare's cheery "hello." Then Smudge allows himself to be admired and stroked; it's good work if you can get it. Some of the regulars are asleep or not feeling like a visit, but others are excited by the "surprise" visit. We enter the room of one aged but very alert lady who is dressed head to toe in purple, as is her bedding and curtains. Aside from the purple, which is remarkable, her room is full of plush toys in the figure of cats and kittens. When Smudge is brought to the door, she breaks off a chat with a relative to beam with pleasure at the sight of a live cat. She explains that dogs are nice, but they just don't make her feel the same way as a cat. Looking around, we can see that she has tried to simulate that feeling with stuffed toys, but we know that we have made her day, perhaps several days, by bringing Smudge to see her. Smudge is happy to settle on the bed beside her and receive his tribute. It's such an easy gift for him to give, being as special as he is.

As we move through the halls, it's clear that Smudge has fans who are not residents. The staff at the nurses' stations calls out for him to visit, which he is happy to oblige, especially if the lint roller is being used. Working in a large nursing facility, the staff deals with sickness, depression, and death on a daily basis, not to mention mundane stressors like schedules and staff turnover. The friendly therapy on offer from Smudge and his HABIT compatriots is just as beneficial to them as it is to the residents. I'm glad to see that they take advantage of the completely stress free encounter with our handsome feline fellow. Those folks who aren't crazy about cats give him a wide berth or go on about their business. And Smudge and Clare are careful not to overstay their welcome.

Since Clare is a student at The College of Veterinary Medicine, she has a very heavy schedule and can't visit with Smudge every week. That's why Shannondale is a great facility for them to visit. There are several HABIT volunteers who visit at Shannondale; so if Clare isn't able to get there one week, there are plenty of other HABIT volunteers and dogs that will. But no other cats. It would be hard for another cat to fill Smudge's shoes, so to speak, but there is room for other cats gifted with a visiting personality. You might take your cat's easy-going temperament for granted, but it might just make the entire week for a resident in a cat-free world.

By Ruth Sapp



Clare and Smudge visit with residents of Shannondale Nursing Home.



2407 River Drive, Knoxville, TN 37996-4543 • Phone (865) 974-5633

H.A.B.I.T.' Reminders

When on a visit with your H.A.B.I.T. dog, you must always have it on a short leash; a flexi lead should never be used.
Treats should never be given to your animal by the clients that you are visiting.
Always remember to sign-in, sign-out, and record how many contacts you made during your visit. A contact is any one that interacted with your animal while on the visit. If you forget to record your visit, please email the time and number of contacts to the H.A.B.I.T. office, HABIT@utk.edu.
H.A.B.I.T. animal volunteers must be clean, smell fresh, and look well cared for when they go on their visit; while on the visit, the H.A.B.I.T. scarf must been visible.
If your PMC or Monitor calls you and leaves a message, they are just checking in and want to make sure that you are enjoying the visits and that you are still active. Please call them back so they know how things are going.
If you would like to become more active in the program, please feel free to contact the office and talk to either Ruth or Karen about additional opportunities.

Here we are again with Spring (and warm weather) coming. Of course with this season comes the banquet. The Banquet Committee, under the direction of Sue Beverly, is busy making plans for the event. We hope you will join us for a wonderful evening of fun and friendship.

The Ruff Read program is in good hands under the direction of our newest staff person, Ruth Sapp. Ruth has taken charge of the local programs, as well as expanding the program to other East Tennessee counties. The Ruff Read program does so much more than teach reading skills. Children learn good behavior when around animals and also how to care for them. Often a teacher will ask the HABIT volunteer to work with a child on skills other than reading. The HABIT volunteer is there to enhance the child's learning experience, and this has been made it such a successful program.

Thanks to all of you, we continue to grow and improve our services to our communities.

Joan Cohn

Ways That You Can Further Help the HABIT Program

1. *For $300 you can sponsor a program.*
2. *Volunteer to serve on a* **HABIT** *committee.*
3. *Put your name on a list of volunteers who will work at special occasions, either with or without your* **HABIT** *animal.*
4. *Volunteer your talents and abilities. If you have a talent for writing you can help with the newsletter. Do you enjoy taking pictures? Volunteer your time to go with* **HABIT** *volunteers and take pictures of* **HABIT** *visits.*
5. *If you are a member of The Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, Garden Club, PTA, or a church organization which needs speakers for a meeting, let them know that* **HABIT** *is always available to speak and spread the good news of* **HABIT**.

"Fifty-eight"

The following is one of the many responses that we received after asking you to tell us how you got your H.A.B.I.T. animal. If you story has been not used yet, please keep watching, it will be used.

By Gayla Cutler

When my husband I relocated to the Knoxville area from Dallas, TX. in 2000, I decided to retire and began doing volunteer work. In April 2001, I read with interest a News-Sentinel article entitled "When Cuddling Calls, Volunteer Rabbit Hops to it" about a rabbit named "Harvey" and his owner, both of whom were volunteers in a program called H.A.B.I.T. At that time we had 4 cats and 2 dogs but none with the temperament required for a therapy animal.



In September 2002, while riding my bicycle along a highway near Kingston, I came upon a thin black dog who looked to be 6-9 months old, foraging for food in front of the refuse facility on Gallaher Road. We reached my car, and on the ride to Roane County Animal Control, I was already thinking of a name for the sweet little dog looking up with adoring eyes. That was when I spied the black and white State of Tennessee sign for the highway that we had been traveling: Highway 58. That, I decided, would be her name if no one claimed her from Animal Control.

The rest, as they say, "is History." I adopted "Fifty-eight" and enrolled the happy puppy in obedience training. On March 25, 2003, my small lab/terrier mix passed her H.A.B.I.T evaluation, and we began regular visits to Jamestown Assisted Living in Kingston, and later to Roane County Medical Center. "Fifty-eight" loves absolutely every human she meets, as well as her big mixed breed boxer "sister" and 7 feline family members. She lays her head in the laps of the people she visits, giving her "big puppy eyes". At one facility a resident who had previously refused to speak began talking about dogs that she had owned as a child while massaging "Fifty-eight's" head. She seems to know which person in a group needs her the most as she goes about making friends. Her energy and sparkling eyes warm the hearts of everyone including her "Mom" and family.

Save the Date

This year's H.A.B.I.T. Volunteer Banquet will be held on May 5, 2009. The event will once again be held at the Buddy's Banquet Hall in Bearden. The speaker at this year's event will be Mr. David Hunter. Mr. Hunter is not only a columnist for the Knoxville News Sentinel, he has also written over 15 books, both fiction and non-fiction.

ESTATE PLANNING / GIVING

For those preparing or updating their Wills, Trusts, Etc., please consider a gift to H.A.B.I.T. to sustain our programs for the future. Any size gift is appreciated by all those who are involved as volunteers and/or recipients in the H.A.B.I.T. programs. If you have any questions, please contact the H.A.B.I.T. office @ 865-974-5633.

Cats are not Short Dogs

By Karen Armsey

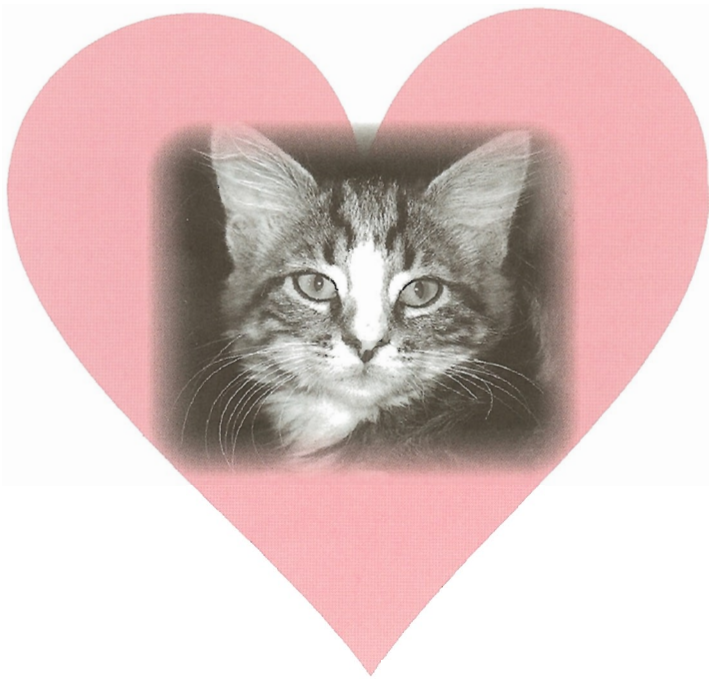
As a "dog person" who also shares her home with a cat, I have learned that H.A.B.I.T. cats are not short, funny-looking dogs. The cats that pass H.A.B.I.T. evaluation do work and touch hearts that can't be reached by even the most charming H.A.B.I.T. dog. "Cat people" are almost as particular as cats themselves. Sure, they can appreciate a nice dog, but will it cause them to speak in that particular voice they use with cats? Will a wagging tail and a good "down, stay" cause them to break into smiles like a cat purring quietly in their lap? No. Cat lovers, you know what I'm talking about.

Cats make up a very small percentage of H.A.B.I.T. animals. It is rare to find a cat that likes to go on car rides and enjoys exploring new places and meeting new people. Most cats would rather stay home in their comfort zone, on the back of their favorite chair. H.A.B.I.T. cats, however, don't get sick or upset in the car and are curious about people and places they can meet out in the wide world. They see each trip as an opportunity to spend time with people who are not only happy to see them, but who are happy to pet a special kitty as long as the kitty is willing.

Clients who have shared their lives with cats and love them find a visit from a H.A.B.I.T. dog is ok, but they long to see and pet a cat. A visit from a H.A.B.I.T. volunteer and feline companion can cause memories to resurface of special moments and a specific comfort that can change their mood for a day, or as much as a week. If you ever have the opportunity to observe a H.A.B.I.T. cat at work, I recommend that you do and watch the faces of the clients they visit. Some of our cats are trained to walk on a leash. The look of delight on people's faces and the smile that appears as their eyes work their way down the leash and find a cat can be priceless. Even if the cat is not on a leash, but rides in his companion's arms or a cat carrier, the excitement is obvious. H.A.B.I.T. cats do the same good work, maybe with a different style, as do the more often seen H.A.B.I.T. dog.

Aside from riding well in a car, what is a H.A.B.I.T. evaluator looking for in an approved cat? Just as with dogs, we're looking for cats that like to meet people and aren't stressed by new environments. When a cat is evaluated, the observer gives the cat time to check out the room, and then watches the cat as it is approached. We check the cat's tolerance of being handled and if kitty enjoys being petted or stroked. The evaluator will put the cat in her lap to see how it will react; there will also be a toe-pinch and a noise test. Other observations will be made about temperament: does kitty seem playful; seek attention; appear aloof, apprehensive, calm or affectionate? Cats who like to walk around and check things out are acceptable, as are cats that like to settle down and be petted. Either way, it's an exceptional cat that can maintain its sweet feline demeanor in a strange place.

So, even a dog lover has to give the H.A.B.I.T. cats their due. What they lack in number, they more than make up for in kitty magic. We all have preferences, and lifelong cat lovers are no different. If you have that special, curious cuddler, consider putting them to work for H.A.B.I.T. There are plenty of folks who are waiting for your special cat to brighten their day.



Cats are not Short Dogs

By Karen Armsey

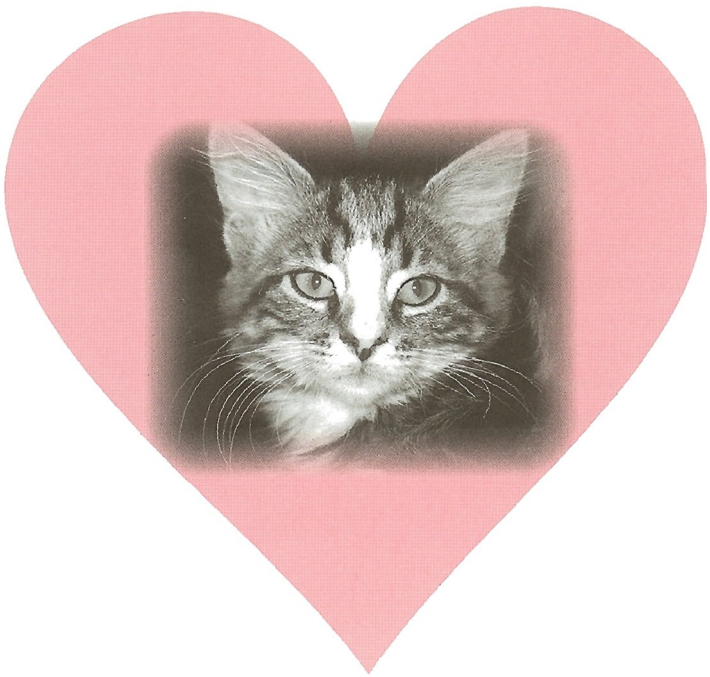
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School Happenings

Since our last newsletter, we've had some exciting developments in HABIT's Ruff Reading Program. We've continued to add school programs, and necessarily, we have had some volunteers take on additional responsibility to become school monitors. We wanted to take a moment to share information about our expansion with our membership, in case you might have an interest in volunteering at any of our newer schools or new areas next fall.

In **Loudon County,** we opened a new school program at Lenoir City Middle. Ms. Ann Schraw, who has been a school volunteer and monitor for us in past years, agreed to monitor this school so that we could open our first school in Lenoir City. We began to visit a special needs classroom there in January 2009.

In **Blount County** in the Friendsville Community, we are approved to open a program at Union Grove Middle School, serving a special needs classroom, in fall 2009. Kat Perry, who monitors and volunteers at Union Grove Elementary School, has included UGMS in her monitoring responsibilities enabling us to open that program.

In **Knox County**, the HABIT Board of Advisors recommended that we open a new program at Ritta Elementary. Mrs. Jane New, who monitors at Chilhowee Intermediate and East Knox Elementary, agreed to monitor Ritta Elementary, enabling us to open that program. This program will serve the guidance office and will become active in fall 2009. Brickey-McCloud Elementary has turned in an application, and we expect to be active with that school in fall 2009. Mrs. Donna Ault, who volunteers at Grace Baptist Church in their Grief Ministry Group, has agreed to monitor at Brickey-McCloud, which allows us to open that new program.

In **Claiborne County,** we are very excited to have opened our first school program at Midway Elementary in the Clouds Community. Ms. Leslie Roden, who has been volunteering at and serving as PMC for two nursing homes in Claiborne County, has agreed to add Midway Elementary to her responsibilities. Visits began in the last week of March. We are also preparing to open a program at the Tazewell-New Tazewell Elementary School in time for their summer school program. Ms. Roden has agreed to monitor there for us, as well.

Finally, in **Union County,** we are in early discussion about opening a Ruff Reading program at the Maynardville Elementary School. We will need a monitor and volunteer to open this program. Please feel free to contact Ruth Sapp at (865) 974-5633 or (865) 755-4482 if you would be interested in either role.

Norwood and **Pleasant Ridge Elementary** in Northwest Knox County have been inactive this past year, and we would like to place volunteers there in the coming school year. Gary Greenwald, who volunteers at the Ben Atchley State Veterans Home, has agreed to monitor those school programs, which gives us a leg up on becoming active there in the fall.

Thank you to all of our volunteers every day for all that you do to keep the HABIT mission moving forward, and thanks especially to Ann Schraw, Kat Perry, Jane New, Donna Ault, Leslie Roden, and Gary Greenwald for helping to bring our school program to more children in East Tennessee.



HABIT School Cats are Purrrfect Listeners

Dogs usually take the spotlight in the Ruff Reading School program, but there are some cool cats in the classroom, too. This year we've had three cats in our reading program; Search at Boyd's Creek Elementary School in Mrs. Clark's room, Monroe at Carter Middle School in the Guidance Office, and Ross in Ms. King's preschool class at Greenback Public. Just recently, I had the opportunity to observe Search and Monroe at work. Since they can't be "Ruff" readers, Susan Hutsell, Monroe's companion, calls them Purrrfect Listeners, which sums up their work perfectly.

Suzie Ferguson visits Mrs. Clark's second grade classroom with her German Shepherd Dog Schatzie and Schatzie's friend Search, the cat. Suzie trains her dogs for search and rescue activities, thus the two cats she found at the Sevier County Fairgrounds are named Search and Rescue. Suzie found the kittens when they were very young which enabled Schatzie to develop a very special relationship with Search, in particular. Schatzie raised the kittens as if she was their mother, which was very noticeable during the visit in Mrs. Clark's classroom. Search, now a full grown brown tabby, still head-butts Schatzie and curls up next to her, while Schatzie grooms Search's coat and sniffs him as dog and cat moms do. For the children in Mrs. Clark's room, this is a fascinating spectacle to observe during and after their reading sessions. Search walks up to the students and brushes against them asking for attention. And, like a cat, when he has had all he wants, he walks away to explore the area adjacent to the reading corner or into his carrier. When Search visits, he shares his special relationship with Schatzie the GSD and adds a special thrill to the students' day with the soft touch of his fur and nudge of his nose.

Monroe, who visits at Carter Middle School, is another great listener at work in Robin Nelson's Guidance Office. Monroe spends his day in the confines of an office, visiting with students who come to speak with Ms. Nelson. Susan Hutsell, Monroe's companion and the Assistant Principal at Carter Middle, found Monroe on the side of a road in Monroe County (great HABIT animals come from all sorts of places.) The morning I was there, he had four friends to admire and pet him. When I asked the girls what they liked about visiting with Monroe, answers ranged from "he's fluffy" to "it's cool to chill with a cat." One of the girls commented that it's good to be with Monroe when you're having a sad day. Monroe is content to sit in the floor and have his long, fluffy fur stroked as the girls relax and begin to unload their concerns. Robin Nelson, the guidance counselor, explains that the students understand when Monroe needs space because "they need space sometimes, too." He's free to retreat to a space away from the visitors when he's had enough attention, as his comfort is just as important as theirs.

There are not as many HABIT cats as there are dogs, but the work they do is just as magical. Those of us who share our home with cats know that not every cat is a HABIT cat. First, a visiting cat must not mind travel and all that goes with it: a cat carrier, stroller, or leash. Second, a HABIT cat must enjoy the attention of people, even ones they don't know very well. Third, confident curiosity rounds out the HABIT cat's mandatory traits. They are unique creatures even in the cat world. Those of you who visit with a cat know that only softly furry, purring machines will reach a real cat lover. But, even those who don't consider themselves "cat people" may succumb to the charms of special fellows like Search and Monroe.

Ruth Sapp



Schatzie and Search share a special moment with a student in Mrs. Clark's second grade class at Boyd's Creek Elementary School.

How I got my H.A.B.I.T. dog

After having cancer 7 years ago I decided I'd better do some things I'd wanted to do. At the top of my list was to get a dog. I knew I wanted a golden retriever but I didn't know if I should go to a breeder or do a rescue. As fate would have it, I found a great breeder and my little girl Molly pranced into my life. I worked hard with her to get her ready to be a therapy dog with HABIT. She failed her first test. Being a teacher myself, I was more than a little embarrassed. In 6 months, though, she'd grown up quite a lot and had no trouble passing her test the next time. Always, however, a little seed of doubt was in the back of my mind about the little rescue dog I never got. It occurred to me then, that I could still get my rescue pup. I knew I wouldn't mind at all having two dogs. And so the long journey looking for just the right dog began. I'd visit the various shelters around town to see who was available. I knew I could trust my heart to find the right one. I'd see a promising one (aren't they all promising) then go home and get Molly. Molly and I would be escorted to a room with the new dog to see how they'd get along. Now, it's important to understand that Molly believes everyone loves her and most do. So she's one of the best natured dogs around. But when we'd get into that room with a new dog, Molly became an entirely different dog. We'd quietly leave the shelter with my embarrassment at an all time high. After several attempts turning out this way, my heart was breaking and I was beginning to relinquish that dream of a second dog. The holidays were swiftly approaching. My best friend had already chosen a rescue dog for her mother for Christmas. I decided one Saturday to come along to help pick up the dog. As so often happens, I brought Molly along for the ride. We ended up a local vet's office that often sponsored the different rescue groups around town. On that particular day one of the local rescue groups was there with many of the dogs they had available for adoption. I saw them all there but felt nothing more than a twinge of regret that none of them would be mine, or so I thought at first. Christmas was coming. I was going to travel and Molly wasn't going to be happy about it anyway. Molly was in the car while we were in the office as my friend was filling out some paperwork. I went to get Molly to let her walk around a bit and get a drink of water. I remember looking away from the store front. But I did hear the front door open. The next thing I knew my arm was being jerked out of its socket. Molly pulled me across the parking lot to get to this beautiful black and tan Australian Shepherd mix puppy that was coming out the door with her foster mother at that exact moment. Miracle of miracles, there was Molly just loving this wonderful puppy. Several people there knew I had been looking for a dog for several months. They all came running out of the office to see what was happening. The end result was that my dog Molly took control of the situation by picking out our new dog herself. Apparently, she knew what we needed and decided to take matters into her own paws. We went home that day with our new pup, Bett, who is now a therapy dog herself. That little twinge of doubt that had plagued me for so long evaporated away and the pieces of my heart were complete. Now I'm blessed to be the mom of two wonderful companions who each provide blessings to so many others by the therapy visits they make through HABIT.

by Sue Bartlett



The Back Page

In Memory

Johnny C. New, Sr.
by
Wendy Hendricks
Nora Slifer
Kathleen & Dennis Hayward
Vicky Crosetti
Karen Scott
Becky Connelly
HABIT Board of Advisors:
John Roszell
Vicky & Thomas Anderson
Sue & Michael Beverly
ASPCA Members:
Pam Burney
Stephen Zawistowski
Julie Morris

"Cinnamon"
by
Joan Cohn

"Campbell" Corey
by
HABIT Office
Louise & Fred Conrad
Vicky & Thomas Anderson
Donna Terzak

"Frosty" Parkinson
by
Marilyn & Edward Carlin

In Loving Memory of
"Cherokee" Ferguson
by
Roy & Suzie Ferguson
Vicky Anderson
Suzie Stooksbury

"Angel" Dreyer
by
Bob & Betty Dreyer

Evelyn Hodges
by
"Flower" & Carol Nickle

"Buddy" Stulberg
By
Ed and Marilyn Carlin

"Moxie" Ramsey
by
Northshore Animal Hospital Inc.

In Memory

"Stevie" Baughcum
by
Linda & Wayne Fogle

C.J. Kennedy
by
Peggy Gripshover & Tom Bell

Ruth Leek
by
Mary Leslie & David Dotson

Alf
by
Jennie Ritchie

Brian L. Houser
by
Anna & Johnnie Vannatter

"Otis" Tanner
by
M.L. Tanner

"Buford" Armsey
by
Nancy Hugh
Kathy & Tony DiValentin

"Agatha" Fronczek
by
Elaine & Stanley Fronczek

Rafe
by
Mari DeCuir

Mrs. Henrietta Baughcum,
Mother of Denise Frazier
by
The Powell Family
Lennie Ruth Byers
Christine White and Family
William and Margaret Snedaker

"Cinnamon", "Sugar" & "Spice"
by
Dwight Giles

Hyram Kitchen
by
Yvonne Kitchen

"Lucy"
by
Yvonne Kitchen

In Memory

"Henry" Delap, who was a former
HABIT dog,
who left this life to join his "Dad",
Jim Delap.
Now they are making their rounds in
Heaven.
by
Ann Delap

"Sallie" Wheeler
by
Jeanne Sharp

Chelsea Frey
by
Janine & Vey Nordquist

"Dollar" Gibson
by
LeAnne Duffey

"Chichi" Johnston
by
Cheryl Johnston

Dolly
by
Jada Williams

In Honor of

Wayne Fogle's Birthday
by
Denise Frazier

Joan & Steve Cohn
by
Marilyn & Edward Carlin

Phyllis Hirsh's Birthday
by
Joan and Steve Cohn

Phyllis and Ken Hirsh's Anniversary
by
Joan and Steve Cohn

Ken Hirsh's Birthday
by
Joan and Steve Cohn

In Honor of

Marilyn and Ed Carlin's Anniversary
by
Joan and Steve Cohn

Marilyn Carlin's complete recovery
by
Joan and Steve Cohn

Peggy and Julie Howard
by
Karen Armsey

"A.J." and "Romeo" Hayward
By
Virginia Kiefer

For a speedy recovery of Andy Steinberg
by
Marilyn & Edward Carlin

Mary B. Trivett
by
M.L. Tanner

Joan Cohn
by
Elaine Freeman

Marable Wilson
by
Lorrie & Joseph Johnson

Rosie Smith
by
Kathy & Tony DiValentin

Casey, Simba & Tober
by
Vinyard Floor Covering Co, Inc
The Wright Family

Jo & Ark
by
Nancy Neilsen & Peter Nerzak

HABIT
Human-Animal Bond In Tennessee

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