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How the Sandy Hook Tragedy Inspired Me

Fri, 2012-12-28 12:15 — Robin Olson

NOTE TO READERS: *It's been a week since I wrote this post, but I felt it was still worth sharing. This is a behind-the-scenes look at the birth "Kitties for Kids" and its initial flowering. I hope it inspires all of you that next time you get an idea that rises from your heart, you just go with it. You may change the world, or only a small part of it or just your own soul. Whatever comes of it, do it. The world needs you.*

My Mother used to say to me: "Never wish for anything. You're liable to get it."

A week ago I wished I could pay my mortgage, find more donations for Kitten Associates and get the kittens adopted so I could finally take a MUCH needed break from fostering. Things were looking up. I had good possible adopters for Coco, Fred & Barney, Nico and Willow. That left me with Latte and George & Bongo (who are still down in Georgia).



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *The size of the memorial grew every day until the sidewalks were jammed with toys, flowers, candles and messages of love.*

Then the world stopped spinning and the tears began to flow after the vicious rampage and mass murder at our local elementary school. The following day, Saturday the 15th of December, an idea blossomed. I'm not one to sit idly by when something bad happens. I need to take action on some level, in some way. Maybe running a cat rescue predisposes me to be the type of person to run TO trouble, instead of AWAY from it?

There are so many times when I believe I have a good idea, but never act on it. There's always a reason to watch more TV or to not bother because it would take too much time and keep me from other things I've made a commitment to already. **Between tears I said to Sam that maybe we should open up the foster kitten room and invite the children of Newtown to come here and just pet the cats.** We knew the effect playtime would have on the kids. I'd seen it many time before-their eyes lit up, twinkling, giggling like mad, their voices rising in glee. I thought if I could help them, even for a short while it would be worth it.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. So many candles. So many tears.

I knew I couldn't take away their pain-or frankly, anyone's here in Sandy Hook, CT for that matter, but I HAD to try. **I feel very protective of the people in this town-which surprises me because often I feel like an outcast.** Sam and I don't have any children together so we miss out on a lot of things since Newtown IS very family focused. **Some times I resented living in a bedroom community where we didn't drive an SUV or go to soccer games. I found my way to fit in through my love of animals and now I get to do something with that love that might be of some benefit on a grand scale.** I've always wanted to make a difference. Maybe with this little idea to help the children I COULD.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. The note reads: "Sandy Hook Elementary. With all my love and lots of Hugs. Sandy Hook Class of 1972."

I called the program **Kitties for Kids** ^[1] (though looking back on it I wish I called it Kitties for Kiddies, but it's too late now) and put together a mental picture of how it would work. I bounced the idea off Sam and he said; "Go for it." He didn't find any serious issues with doing it and I was so energized by my need to help that I sat down and started making lists. **I went online and added a number of plush cat toys to our Amazon WishList. As I do with every adoption event or promotion I went online and told my Facebook fans, both of Covered in Cat Hair** ^[2] **and of Kitten Associates** ^[3], **my non-profit cat rescue organization.**



I thought that after the kids came to visit, I'd give them a plush cat toy because I feared they would either not want to go home after 30 minutes OR not want to go home-EVER. **Perhaps getting a parting gift of a plush cat would help soothe them and remind them of the nice time they had.**

I got a text message from my foster mom down in Georgia. "Where were the plush cats on the list?" She didn't see anything.

Neither did I.

All the plush I asked for were purchased in less than an hour.

I added more and they, too, were gone in minutes! I began getting emails from folks asking how they could help. One woman, who created [K.T. Cat](#) ^[4], an adorable plush toy designed to help young children talk about their feelings, offered a donation of her plush.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Every day the UPS driver kept bringing us packages. It was like Christmas for days and days!

She offered 50 K.T. Cats and I gladly accepted. **I knew a special therapeutic plush like this could REALLY make a difference.**

I was stunned by all the sudden activity and interest in my idea. I started to worry about what-if's: **What if I don't have enough space to store all these boxes of plush cats? What if no one shows up? What if TOO MANY people show up and I can't take them all on for fear of stressing my kittens? What if we have to rent a haul and a storage container? What if I RUN OUT OF FOSTER KITTENS?**

By Sunday I was in full "WTF-mode". I didn't care if it doesn't work out, if I flop on my face, if we get robbed or a cat gets dumped by our front door. I was going to make this happen come what may.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Sorting out what we have and trying to keep it all away from inquisitive cats.

My dear friend Mary, of [The Word Forge](#) ^[5] LOVED the idea and offered to help write a Press Release. Another friend, Irene, my super-volunteer offered to come over and help me clean out the foster room and go to Target so we could get some things to cheer the space up a bit (even though i really wanted to completely re-do the room there wasn't time). **It seemed as though EVERYONE I told about Kitties for Kids LOVED the idea. Their enthusiasm kept me going.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. A huge box of plush ready for the children to take them home.

By Wednesday, a few days from the birth of this idea, our story was reaching NATIONAL MEDIA OUTLETS already and the plush cat toy MOUNTAIN was growing bigger every day! I believe that for once my timing was right on and my idea was appropriate and needed which made it an easy thing for the media to want to cover.

I got very little sleep and barely ate. There was a lot of time spent answering calls and emails. **Kitten Associates was FINALLY starting to become known in Newtown, something we've been very weak on since being established in 2010 and the word is spreading about us beyond the borders of the USA.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Blitz and his plush counterpart, both offering comfort to those effected by the Shooting in Sandy Hook.

And then the phone started to ring. The people I needed to reach were getting the message and wanted to book an appointment. Kitties for Kids was really happening. Now it was time to find out if my idea was a good one.

Next up-"Media Mayhem," followed by "Terror-tourists GO HOME!", then we do a wrap up with an update on how the Kitties for Kids program is doing along with some very special photos.

For more information about Kitties for Kids, or to find out how you can visit our kitties visit [Kitten Associates](#) ⁽⁶⁾!

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Comments

Fri, 2012-12-28 13:34 — Irene S (not verified)

aw it was my pleasure to help you out ^[15]

this is a wonderful thing you're doing. Those kids need a break, between the freaked out parents/media/international spotlight. A little kitten time is good for what ails you, you've touched these kids' lives and hearts

Fri, 2012-12-28 14:55 — CJ (not verified) ^[16]

Amazing! ^[17]

What an amazing thing you are doing! We had to put our munchkin down yesterday and our remaining cat has been a huge source of comfort! You are doing a great thing!

Sat, 2012-12-29 00:02 — Robin Olson ^[18]

I'm so sorry for your loss. ^[19]

Oh CJ, I'm so sorry. We're sending lots of comforting purrs and hugs your way during this very sad time.
Sat, 2012-12-29 16:13 — jmuhi (not verified)

RE: KITTENS FOR KIDS ^[20]

How absolutely wonderful, Robin! I'm hoping and praying that the increased exposure for Kitten Associates will mean more good, loving, forever homes for the kittens!

Sun, 2012-12-30 10:24 — Caroline (not verified) ^[21]

I personally love the name ^[22]

I like Kitties for Kids WAY better! Don't lament the name. If you are saying it aloud, you say "kitties for kiddies" and it would be confusing. Is it Kitties for Kitties? Or Kiddies for Kiddies? This way you know - it's adorable sweet kitties for adorable sweet kids. Wonderful work and can't wait to read the next posts to hear how well it's gone! xoxox

Mon, 2012-12-31 12:54 — Barbara Ray (not verified)

Giving Kitties ^[23]

Spay them please. Shelters are over run. But love the idea.

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Links

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