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Kitties for Kids is a WINNER!

Thu, 2013-03-28 15:13 — Robin Olson



On December 14, 2012, after my town's heart was broken, I sat on the sofa watching the news in tears. I couldn't just sit there and do nothing. I didn't have much to offer, except a house full of cats and foster cats. I realized not everyone knows what it's like to be in the company of so many cats at one time and perhaps there was something about the wonder of living with cats that I could share with others. I knew we couldn't take the cats out into the public because that would be a hot mess. I left that job to the therapy dogs.

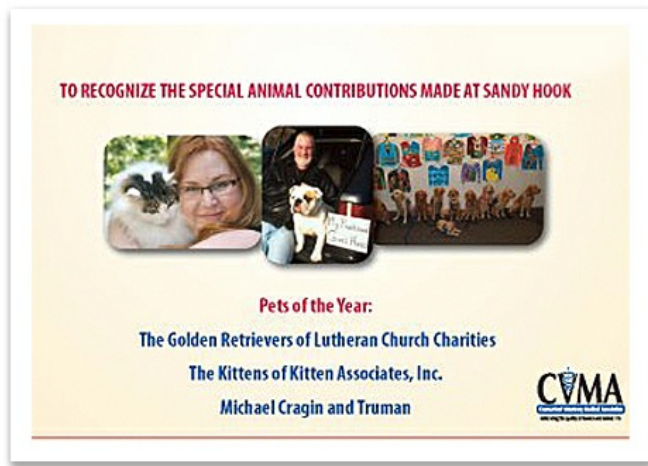
I worried about opening up our home to the residents of our town. Could they spend time with our cats without it turning into a big liability? What if someone was bitten or scratched? Would I lose the house if someone got hurt? How could I protect my cats and our visitors or was this just a stupid idea? I thought about it for a few minutes, realizing I had to take the chance. I needed to help my neighbors. It was worth the risk. That night Kitties for Kids [1] was born.

I've written more about our program (you can see the post [HERE](#) [2]).



The invitation to the 2013 CVMA Awards.

But what I've been keeping secret for a few months is that our program was chosen by the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association [3] to receive their Pet of the Year Award! This special award is given to honor our FOSTER KITTENS for their outstanding achievement in helping our town's kids find their smiles again.



When I was first contacted about this award I thought it was a joke. I called my vet and Dr. Larry said he'd been part of CVMA for years and that CVMA has been around since 1884 and was a very distinguished organization. Wow.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. I was a bit sad that no one jumped into the fountain at the Awards Banquet, but there's always next year.

On Tuesday, March 26th, Sam and I drove to Hartford, CT to the [Wadsworth Atheneum](#) ^[4] to attend the Awards Banquet. **Now any of you who have read this blog before, know that I've been the President & Founder of [Kitten Associates, Inc.](#) ^[5] for almost three years. To be in a room FULL OF VETERINARIANS was a DREAM COME TRUE! I felt like a kid in a candy store! I wanted to run up to every Vet and make friends with each one. The heck with the award, I need to find more vets to work with (at a discount, of course!).**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Yes, the cauliflower is naturally purple!

Part of me worried that if I found a cute single Vet I might be tempted to leave Sam behind and run off, but the thrill of the evening and the upcoming award forced me to *(sort of)* temper my enthusiasm.

The Wadsworth is a gorgeous Gothic Revival styled Art Museum. We couldn't explore the galleries, but were kept to a large courtyard with a lovely fountain in the center of it. We hadn't taken more than a few steps into the room, when we were greeted by Dr. Chris, the former President of CVMA. **He warmly welcomed us and thanked us for being such an inspiration to others. Who us? What? I couldn't believe it.**



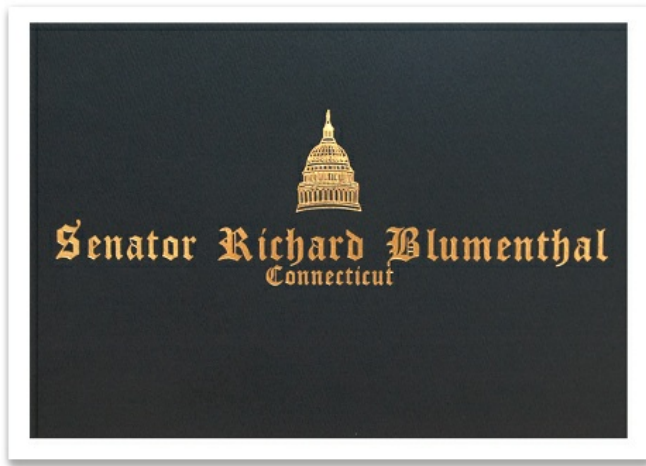
©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. This is Addie the Comfort Dog ^[6]. She is clearly excited about winning her big green ribbon.

Dr. Chris is an emergency room Vet. He likes the thrill of not knowing what's coming in the door next and works and sleeps at the hospital for four days in a row, then takes a few days off to be with his wife, two kids and their menagerie of animals he's taken from owners who could no longer provide care for their animals. **This guy has a heart of GOLD and it was very clear he had a passion for caring for animals.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Senator Blumenthal ^[7] gives his acceptance speech.

We also met with TD Bank sponsors, who were also gracious and friendly. They were chatting with our co-recipients from the Golden Retrievers of Lutheran Church Charities who had brought their dog, Addie with them. We sat down and chatted about, what else, dogs and cats. It was a pleasant start to the evening.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. The cover of our Certificate from Senator Blumenthal.

Chris came over and told us that Connecticut Senator Richard Blumenthal, who has been a hero of mine for years, was going to be attending the banquet and that in addition to his receiving an award, he had insisted on giving US a Certificate of Special Recognition for the work we do!

I was stunned and thrilled. **A certificate from our own Senator meant the world to me. This accolade was from our STATE, where I've lived most of my life.** This sort of recognition was something I could have only dreamed of and here it was about to happen.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. My pride and joy.

A few moments later, Senator Blumenthal entered the room. **He gracefully made his way around the room, shaking hands and taking photos with people. I knew we would get to meet him so I tried to ready myself for the moment. He shook my hand and thanked us for our service to the people of Newtown. I quickly said a few fumbling words and before he could leave I gave him my card and I asked for a photo. I kept thinking, this man has been to the White House. He knows the President of the United States. Wow.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Proof! Senator Richard Blumenthal and Robin A.F. Olson (me!).

Dr. Chris made the opening remarks and introduced Senator Blumenthal. The Senator gave a very moving, well articulated and heartfelt speech. He had no notes. I thought about how many speeches he must have given over the years and that it was probably second nature to him. **I was glad I didn't have to give a speech that night because I doubted I could do as good a job-even with notes.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. A close up-I'm so honored!

Dr. Chris returned to the podium and began to talk about Kitten Associates and our Kitties for Kids program. I'd sent CVMA information about us and thought I'd hear back what I'd written, but **Chris had his own special commendation for us. Hearing it made me blush with joy. I couldn't get over that this was our moment in the spotlight. All we had to do was get up, walk across the room and accept our plaque and certificate.**



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Our CVMA Pet of the Year Award.

BUT I WAS WRONG!

Chris handed me the awards and he whispered to me to go ahead and say a few words. WHAT?! Make a speech? NOW?!

I had NOT prepared a single word, but I pulled myself together and I knocked one out of the park. Thank goodness I didn't flop in front of all those juicy Veterinarians!

I was buzzing from all the adrenaline coursing through my veins. The rest of the ceremony flew by and no sooner than it was over, the Vet of the Year, Dr. Eva Ceranowicz of Bloomfield Animal Hospital ^[8], came over to introduce herself to us. Again, I was floored to get this sort of recognition when I was planning to introduce myself to her.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. We did it!

She was delightful and charming. We had a quick, intense conversation, then she was off to talk to more guests and we followed suit.

I got to talk shop with a few Vets who were clearly amused by my knowledge of all things de-wormer related. I tried to make quick BFFs for future reference, but most of the Vets I spoke with had their Practice too far away from Newtown.

The evening was winding down and just as Sam and I were going to leave a gentleman introduced himself to us. **He said his name was Gordon and turns out he's the Executive Director of the Connecticut Humane Society!** [9] **As if talking with a room full of Veterinarians and meeting Senator Blumenthal wasn't enough, here was someone I admired from the rescue side of things and he's a GUY. A GUY WHO DOES RESCUE...**(who is also adorable, but I didn't say that to his face). Wow again!



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Wendy and Sam really had fun taking part in our Kitties for Kids program (with Barney in the background).

We had a lively conversation and I hoped we would be in touch. He was glad to work with us and vice versa (in our small capacity). **Of everything that happened that night, this was definitely a highlight.** We shook hands (he has a nice, warm, strong handshake) and said goodnight. I walked out into the cold night air, floating on cloud nine.

I never expected the night to go so well or to be so honored for our Kitties for Kids program, but I learned that if you follow your heart, it will take you in the right direction.

And now if you'll excuse me, I have another family coming to visit our kitties and I need to get the room ready!

Make sure you LIKE the [CVMA Facebook page](#) [10]. It's embarrassing that they only have 141 likes!

Also, make sure you visit the [Connecticut Humane Society FB page](#) [11] and say hello from Robin, but don't tell them I have a crush on their boss.

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Comments

Thu, 2013-03-28 16:15 — [Stephanie Newman \(not verified\)](#) ^[21]

Congratulations ^[22]

Congratulations, Robin! I'm so happy for you. Recognition you receive for all you do is well-deserved. When faced with the most horrible of nightmares, you more than rose to the occasion. I, too, think highly of Senator Blumenthal. What a thrill and all the more meaningful coming from your Senator who's such a fine man.

Fri, 2013-03-29 10:53 — [Clea \(not verified\)](#) ^[23]

WELL DESERVED CONGRATULATIONS ^[24]

Robin - You so deserve this! You're so generous. Congratulations!!

Fri, 2013-03-29 11:04 — [Bernadette \(not verified\)](#) ^[25]

Con-cat-ulations! ^[26]

Following your heart always leads to the right places. So glad you did last December! I hope it also brings long-lasting assistance to Kitten Associates.

Fri, 2013-03-29 13:41 — [Barbara UK \(not verified\)](#)

Well Deserved!or you. ^[27]

Brilliant Robin and well deserved. SO ple

Fri, 2013-03-29 13:42 — [Barbara UK \(not verified\)](#)

Well deserved ^[28]

Brilliant Robin and well deserved. I'm so pleased for you.

Barbara UK

Fri, 2013-03-29 14:27 — [jmuhj \(not verified\)](#)

RE CONGRATULATIONS ^[29]

Echoing Stephanie Newman's sentiments above, and adding my own congratulations -- it looks like it was an exciting event and you very much deserve accolades for putting your caring into action for sweet cats and for the healing of your town's little hearts and souls. May your efforts increase caring, responsible, permanent adoptions of the nation's and the world's most beloved companions -- CATS -- as well!

Fri, 2013-03-29 20:12 — [Bobbi Hahn \(not verified\)](#) ^[30]

Congratulations! ^[31]

Robin, congratulations again! I enjoyed hearing about your exciting evening and all the people you met. I hope you're feeling better . . .

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Robin @ [Google+](#)

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Links

[1] <http://kittenassociates.org/content/come-visit>

[2] <http://coveredincathair.com/content/how-sandy-hoook-tragedy-inspired-me>

[3] <http://www.ctvet.org/>

[4] <http://www.thewadsworth.org/>

[5] <http://kittenassociates.org/>

[6] <https://www.facebook.com/AddieComfortDog?fref=ts>

[7] <https://www.facebook.com/SenBlumenthal?fref=ts>

[8] <http://www.bloomfieldanimalhospitalct.com/>

- [9] <http://www.cthumane.org/site/News2?id=14257>
- [10] <https://www.facebook.com/CTVMA>
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