

Kitten's life saved through kindness

■ Feline receives medical attention at UI animal clinic

By ANNE COOK

News-Gazette Staff Writer

CHAMPAIGN — No one knows how long the 7-month-old kitten lay injured beside an Indianapolis highway before someone stopped to help her.

Meredith's story and her new life started with that act of kindness. Today, the white-and-tabby kitten is recovering at the University of Illinois, thanks to a network of animal welfare volunteers who took her situation to heart and found help for her.

UI veterinarians Tuesday operated on Meredith's pelvis, which was fractured in several places, and Roy Barnes, her primary surgeon, said she'll eventually recover almost completely, ready to go to a home where people can take the loving little animal under their wing.

Barnes, like all veterinarians, has seen animals he could probably save put to sleep because the cost of doing so would be high, and he said that fact makes Meredith's story particularly rewarding because animal lovers and the college are coming together to help her.

"It's very gratifying because I like to be able to give animals the benefit of a doubt, to try to do everything I can to save them," he said. "We've had help from rescue groups and some wonderful donations, including one from an internal fund called Harriet's Fund to help offset some of the costs."

Susan Norris, a volunteer for a local organization that helps people who can't afford to pay to have a pet spayed or neutered, said giving up on Meredith was never an option, even though the initial cost estimate for the surgery she needed was \$3,500.

"She's a nice cat who has a great spirit," said Norris, who works with Champaign-based Prairieland Anti-Cruelty Program. "She spent some time on the road alone, but she never gave up. She deserves a chance. She's just a baby."

Norris brought Meredith to the UI after she was contacted by Barbara Wills, a friend who runs an Indianapolis shelter called Cats Haven.

"Meredith was found Sunday night



News-Gazette photo by Vande Bidwell

Rebecca Patterson, a fourth-year veterinary student at the University of Illinois, holds Meredith at the UI Small Animal Clinic on Wednesday.

(Oct. 13) and was taken to an emergency clinic where she was stabilized," she said. "They called Barbara, she took Meredith to her veterinarian and she said she couldn't do all the surgery she required."

The two had cooperated across state lines earlier this year to get help at the UI for another cat, so Wills called Norris.

"I worked out arrangements Friday with (UI veterinarian) Sheila McCullough. I met shelter volunteers halfway at Crawfordsville Saturday, and they were expecting me back at the UI that afternoon," Norris said.

Wills used shelter funds to make the \$1,750 down payment, and UI veterinarians planned her treatment.

"She had bilateral pelvic fractures that caused her pelvis to compress into the internal organs," Barnes said. "She could walk, but it was excruciatingly painful."

But the internal organs seemed to be functioning normally, and UI veterinarians decided Meredith had a chance.

"It's hard to say what her range of motion will be, but there's a good possibility for a good recovery," Barnes said.

"She'll never be 100 percent normal, but with a cat, what's normal?" Norris said.

"It's nice when you can help a cat with such a nice personality," said Beth

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attend a class in the Education Building, he couldn't find a wheelchair-accessible entrance, so he spent his class time outside seeking donations for the fund-raiser.

He has found the reaction of others to his wheelchair has varied.

"Some people won't look at you, and some are really courteous," Auguste said.

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Lewis, an intern who assessed Meredith's situation in the emergency room. "She's very easy to work with."

Both Cat's Haven in Indianapolis and Prairieland have set up funds to collect donations to help pay the rest of Meredith's medical bills and to field calls from people who might give her a home after she's recovered.

On Wednesday, the little cat meowed loudly when she saw

Norris, who will provide foster care for her while she recovers on cage rest for six to eight weeks.

"The surgery was long, almost two hours, but we've corrected the misalignment and stabilized the pelvis," said Barnes, who performed the surgery under the supervision of orthopedic specialist Ann Johnson.

"She's young, and she's a healing machine. It's good to see her do so well."

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approved a measure that would make an increase on riverboat gambling taxes only temporary, after his proposal to set a two-year expiration date on the cigarette tax increase was denied a hearing, as was his proposal to repeal the gambling law altogether.

Despite his outrage over that incident, Black said he regretted quitting and said "it was not my finest hour."

"I really have mixed emotions about that," he said. "I felt very strongly about what happened. The amendment was absolutely wrong."

When he announced that he would remain in the General Assembly after all, Black said he believed his supporters would understand and that it would not hurt his credibility. In fact, his passion for the job is one thing that endears him to many of his constituents.

"I tend to overreact and I tend to be emotional, but that's what makes me me," Black said at the time. "I'm not a cool, buttoned-down, scripted politi-

With Black, one never knows, but more probable scenario is that Black would make a well-thought-out decision to step down before the end of the two-year term he is seeking in order to run for mayor of Danville.

"I've got to tell you, that's very appealing to me," he said. "Is it in the cards for me to run? It's something that I wrestle with every day. I'm thinking about it. I'm thinking about every day."

But Black also said there are some very good people already running for mayor, and he still has a lot more people to talk to and factors to weigh before he can make a decision.

It has been an unusual campaign far, in that while Black has been accessible, he has not spent 18 hours a day this fall rushing from event to event courting voters as he has in the past.

Black said his lighter campaign schedule does not mean he does not take Mattis seriously. It is just that in the wake of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, he has come to realize that content thing