

# COMMUNITY CAT HERO AWARD

Charity founder Kirsty Wrightson with Millie.



# Helping home and away

We're delighted to bring you the next winner of our brand new Your Cat's Community Cat Hero Awards!

**T**his award acknowledges those cat lovers who have gone above and beyond in their communities to make the lives of their local cats better.

After we posted an appeal on social media for our online followers to nominate their community cat heroes, we received more than 1,000 nominations from all across the UK, ranging from dedicated cat rescues to individual cat lovers who just try to make a difference in their communities.

This month's Community Cat Hero Award goes to the team at Helping Dogs and Cats in Hampshire. The charity was founded in 2018 by Kirsty Wrightson after the sad death of her dog Millie, who died in 2017 aged 15.

Kirsty explained: "I was heartbroken to lose Millie, however, she was my inspiration to start working in rescue and in 2018 Helping Dogs and Cats UK Rescue (formerly Helping Dogs UK Rescue) was launched in her memory."

## NOMINATION:

Helping Dogs and Cats was nominated for a Community Cat Hero Award by Thelma Pugh, who said: "I rescued my cat Pyewacket from them in July 2021. This non-profit charity goes above and beyond to rescue, rehabilitate, rehome, and provide shelter and medical attention to abandoned small animals both here and overseas.

"As their name suggests, they not only rescue cats from the UK but also rescue and rehabilitate cats and kittens from Romania before finding them forever loving homes in the UK.

"The charity is also involved in collecting donations for both the animals and people of Ukraine. They continue to collect items and plan regular trips to Ukraine.

"The rescue is run entirely by volunteers who do a fantastic job day in and day out. I am proud to be one of their supporters."

## HELPING HOME AND AWAY

Since its inception, Helping Dogs and Cats now boasts a dozen volunteer team members who take on a range of tasks, from admin to events management and social media.

Helping Dogs and Cats initially started as a dog rescue, until Kirsty was approached by a farmer who had a feral cat on his land who was constantly mating with cats in the area. Kirsty and the volunteers ended up taking seven cats away from the farm, some of which were a result of the mother cat mating with her own kittens and producing hermaphrodite kittens.

Happily, all the kittens were rehomed, but mum was too feral to be socialised so she was spayed, vaccinated, and treated for fleas

and worms before being returned to the farm.

Helping Dogs and Cats not only takes in and rehomes cats and dogs in Basingstoke, Hampshire, and the surrounding areas, but also rescues and rehabilitate cats and kittens from Romania before finding them loving homes in the UK, either as a foster situation on a temporary basis or with the view to adopting them.

Kirsty said: "The shelters in Romania are not like those in the UK; they are filthy and riddled with disease. We support individual rescuers in Romania, working alone with little support or financial backing, who are making a real difference to the lives of the animals they save.

"We help by promoting the animals they have available to rehome and support with spay and neuter campaigns which is ultimately going to be the best long-term solution to this problem."

Next month, Kirsty will be heading to Romania to bring back a number of cats who have been left at shelters with a high kill rate, with the view to bringing them back to the UK for rehoming. "It's lovely to see these cats adopted after being given a second chance," she said.

## RESCUE MISSIONS

Helping Dogs and Cats run a trap, neuter, and return programme to return feral cats to the areas they came from, but Kirsty said they will always try to socialise the





Dave was rescued by the charity as he was going to be put to sleep as he was born without a foot.

**Did you know?**  
Our Community Cat Hero Award has been running since the December 2021 issue.



**HELPING DOGS AND CATS RESCUE**



Holly and Bruce, just two of Helping Dogs and Cats' successful rehomes.

“We don't just give up on them.”



The kittens rescued from a burnt-out house.

cats if they respond positively. “We do try really hard to rehabilitate our cats,” she said. “We spend weeks with the cats to see if they will respond but sometimes, they just won't have it and it becomes cruel to keep trying.”

Some of their feral cats have gone on to become farm cats and work as mousers, which is the best of both worlds to keep the cats in a safe, warm environment without too much human interaction.

One of their biggest missions was when the rescue team had been alerted about sightings of cats in an abandoned house. The house had previously been involved in a fire and was severely damaged. With permission from the police, assistant rescue manager Hayley Doyle set out to help the mother cat and her kittens. When

she entered the property, there was clear evidence of hoarding. The property was in a horrific state, with filthy cat boxes and litter piled floor to ceiling high. On top of this, there was visible evidence of dead animals in cages and on the floors.

After six days, multiple attempts and the laying of humane traps, Hayley finally managed to rescue the mum cat Jolene, along with her kittens Todd, Elijah, and Gypsy who were named by the public. All were in an appalling state and were quickly taken to the local vet, who provided urgent medical care and treatment they so badly needed. The kittens are being socialised by volunteers and will go to their new homes when they are old

enough to leave their mum. “Jolene was very feral when we rescued her and we thought we'd have to neuter her and return her, but she's slowly coming round so we're going to continue to work with her to see if we can socialise her,” Kirsty said, “We don't just give up on them.”

**How you can help**  
Helping Dogs and Cats' biggest mission yet is to find a piece of land where they can build their own purpose-built cattery so they can help even more cats. Kirsty explained: “We'd just need a small space that we can rent and build a cattery with an isolation pen for our ferals as we can't put strays in with other cats until they've had blood tests.”

- Find out more...**
- If anyone is able to offer land to rent to Helping Dogs and Cats, call 01256 593 373 or [enquiries@helpingdogsandcatsuk.org](mailto:enquiries@helpingdogsandcatsuk.org) to discuss further.
  - Donations are always welcomed by Helping Dogs & Cats, and can be made online by visiting [helpingdogsandcatsuk.org/donate](http://helpingdogsandcatsuk.org/donate)