

Smol2Swol

2022 ANNUAL MEWSLETTER

Wishing you a Happy Swolstice!



**Thank you for
being part of the
S2S community!**

**Our community
helps us find
loving forever
homes for our
graducats**

**With our
deepest thanks
to the Small
Miracles Cat and
Dog Rescue**

**Small Miracles
staff and
volunteers are
the heroes
who make S2S
possible!!**



VOICES OF S2S

The S2S communications strategy is structured around adorable pictures, puns of varying quality, language drawn from elite training units, and fictitious events. Social meowdia engagement is conducted by our Director of Nommunications, Minhisster of Purropaganda, and Chief of Psychological Warfurr. All kiterature produced by S2S undergoes thorough purr review.



S2S would like to give a meowt-out to our colleagues overseas, the Ukrainian Feline Defense Force (@FDF_Ukraine). We stand in swolidarity with those hunting invaders, giving fuzzy comfort to humans, and helping Ukrainians resist.

Thank you for a wonderful 2022!

S2S had our busiest year yet in 2022! We hosted three classes with a class leader, four classes with no class leader, three special guests, and one pauwditor. We also passed a major milestone of 100 course participants! Many foster homes went on overdue vacations this year, so our furrilities often hosted two or even three classes simultaneously.



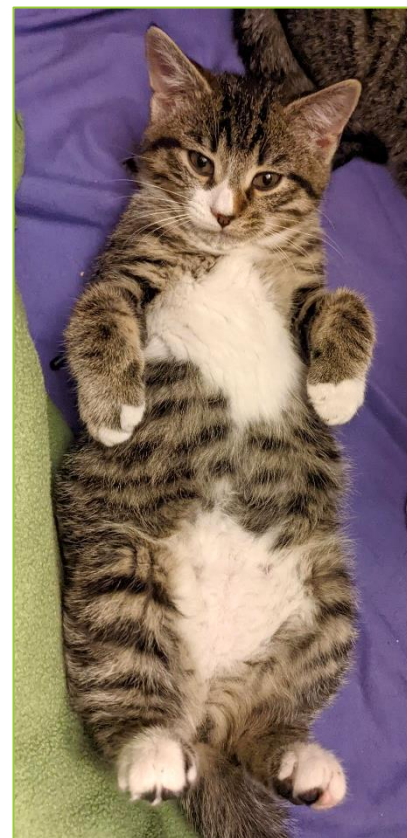
We hope you enjoy this year's Swolstice Mewsletter, which is packed with our most adorable photos and the finest of edu-cat-ional content. Additionally, S2S hisstorians keep extensive records of the training progress of each class, and make those records available here: tinyurl.com/Smol2SwolClassAlbums. We hope that they bring you joy in the dark days of winter.

*We wish you Happy Swolidays
and a healthy New Year!*

Purrogram Philosophy

S2S is a scientifically rigorous, empurrically-based program that aims to save little fuzzy lives and enrich human lives. We foster abandoned and stray cats, teach their kittens to be gentle companions, and then send them to out into the world to bring love and joy to their adopters.

Our instructors/cat doulas originally specialize in supporting pregnant cats, but in 2022 completed an expansion of the purrogram's meowthods into support of orphan kittens as well. We aim to raise our kittens to know a world that has only shown them kindness.



Upcoming Events

In 2023 Smol2Swol will bring our focus back to self-care, inspired by our fuzzy students in topics ranging from exercise, to relaxation, to the arts.

Nap meowrathon

Wondering what's next after the Couch-to-5k? Push yourself to your limits with our Couch-to-Couch training program, culminating in a grueling nap meowrathon. Entrants of all skill levels are welcome, as this 0.0k has a very low risk of injury.



Pileates

Strengthen your core meowscles in this workout series, set to a soundtrack of classic hits from artists like Cat Stevens and Tom Petty.

Weekly Guided Meowditation

Take a paws from your hectic schedule to sooth your mind, calm your breath, and cultivate a pawsitive cattitude. #Nameowste

Book club

Join fellow litter-ature enthusiasts to grow your appureciation for classics like *The Great Catsby* by F. Scott Kitsgerald, *The Caterbury Tails* by Geoffrey Saucer, and *War and Treats* by Leo Tolstoy.

Training tip: the importance of handling

A major component of the Smol2Swol purriculum is training our students to tolerate being handled by humans. This is primarily a safety concern: a kitten that can be easily handled is a kitten that can easily receive both preventative and reactive medical care, a kitten that can be transported in case of an emergency, and a kitten that can safely coexist in a home with children. Our instructors have observed a secondary benefit of our course's focus on handling: our graducats tend to love tummy rubs.



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Candid Catmera

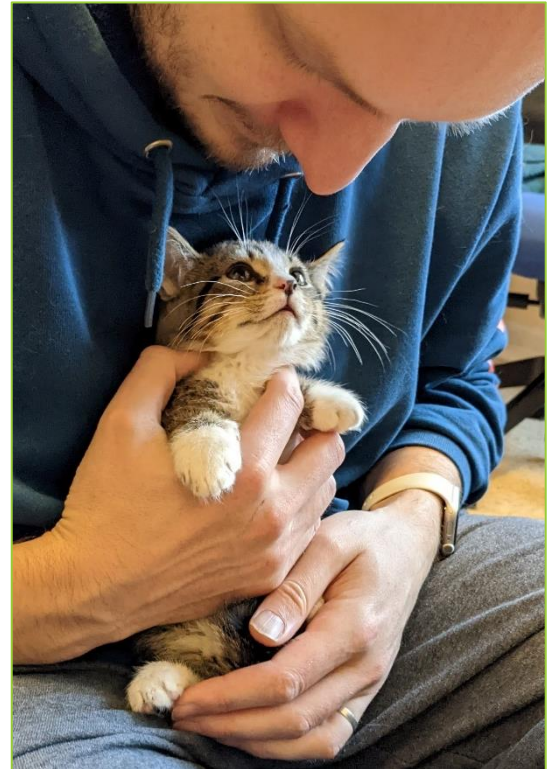
*This newsletter is brought
to you by the Smol2Swol
preditorial team.*

SPOTLIGHT ON: Swolcialization

Our first class of the season, the Dumplings, were named primarily for their incredible roundness but also as a nod to their spicy natures. The Dumplings stacked on top of each other in their bunks to maximize their distance from purrogram staff, while hissing and spitting to communicate their displeasure. Despite their terror, they were quite gentle with staff, and glumly tolerated handling.

The Cuddle Cube

Staff spent many hours in the Cuddle Cube engaging in exposure therapy. The small size of the Cube is strategically valuable, because it forces the students into close proximity to the staff. Every minute that a student spends within range of the human, but not being devoured, is another minute of evidence that humans are not threats. The Dumplings eventually became convinced of the positive aspects of human companionship, and by the time of their graduation they actively sought our company and enjoyed cuddle time.



The role of feline meowntoring

Many fostering purrograms report great swolcializing success by feline staff, who are typically foster graducats themselves, and Smol2Swol is no exception. Theodore Roosevelt, head of the S2S Meowntorship Purrogram, was instrumental in bringing these spicy meatballs out of their defensive postures. In their first days in our furrilities, they periodically went on hunger strike, which is a risky act even for kittens as plump as these. Merely playing a recording of TR's vocalizations persuaded them that the environment was secure, and that they could safely eat. Once they had completed a brief quarantine period and could interact with Uncle Teddy, they found his presence reassuring and followed his lead in interacting with the human staff.

Alumni Meowntoring Purrogram Update

S2S alumnus Mr. Theodore Roosevelt (né Smoke, of the Campfires class of 2020) founded the purrogram in 2021 to provide students of leaderless classes with targeted training, guidance, and a comforting feline presence. In 2022 he expanded the purrogram's impact by recruiting a deputy, Mr. Marshmallow. Together, Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Marshmallow provided essential support to four classes this year: The Dumplings, Mushrooms, Bugs, and Meowsical Instruments all relied heavily on their S2S meowntors to develop into well-adjusted graducats.



Meowntor profile: Mr. Marshmallow

Mr. Marshmallow's deeply gentle nature informs his cuddlier approach to his students. His warm and soft heart is mirrored by his warm and soft coat, which offers mentees the opportunity to be engulfed in a fluffy, warm, purring cloud. His first mentee class, the Bugs, quickly learned to tuck their paws and noses into his incredible fluff for warmth and comfort. Already, Mr. Marshmallow has set the standard for kindness and compassion in the meowntorship purrogram.



When alone, Theodore Roosevelt wisely retreats from a sudden scary noise. But when he's with students, instead he enters the Guardian Pose (at left) on the highest available lookout surface, to monitor the noise as well as to defend the kittens.



ASK A KITTEN TRAINER

A reader asks: are momcats sad when their kittens are adopted?

Momcats feel very differently about separation from their babies at different ages. When the kittens are very young, momcat stays within 3-4 feet of the nest box. Then the bigger her babies grow, the more comfortable she is with being away. Once they're old enough to adopt, she is unbothered by being apart.

Once their kittens are adopted, our momcats are no longer weighed down with the responsibility of being single parents. They become bouncy and relaxed, satisfied with a kitten-raising job well done.



This is a thoughtful and kind question, and our instructors are pleased to reply with a very pawsitive answer: everybody is happy when kittens find forever homes!

Smol2Swol and the Arts



Does life imitate art, or does art imitate life? Appreciation of the culture of catdom is essential to S2S training.

At left: Theodore Roosevelt feeling inspired by original artwork by [Grace Statwick Studios](#), available on Etsy. At right: Truffle of the Mushrooms emulating artwork by Clawed Meownet and [DecoVox](#), available on Etsy.



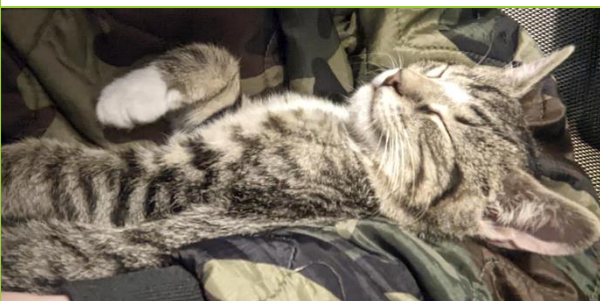
Class Photos

The following pages contain photographic highlights of each class as well as short vignettes about the challenges that they faced, adversity that they overcame, and glorious feats that they achieved.



The Dumplings

These spicy little meatballs were left in a box at Small Miracles the day after Christmas in 2021. Ravioli, Wonton, and Gnocci were enrolled in our focused socialization course for spicy kittens. Despite their terror, and with constant reassurance from their Meowntor, Uncle Teddy, they grew into snuggly, plush, loving kitties.





The Hats

Momma Maddie (the Mad Catter) welcomed her kittens Stetson, Trilby, Beanie, and Bonnet in the main S2S furrclivity in late January. Climate change has extended kitten season well beyond its usual March to October span, and the Hats were our earliest newborns yet. Maddie oversaw a sweet, cuddly, and very successful class that set a new record for chonkiest student.

COURSE RECORD
Swolest Student:
Stetson



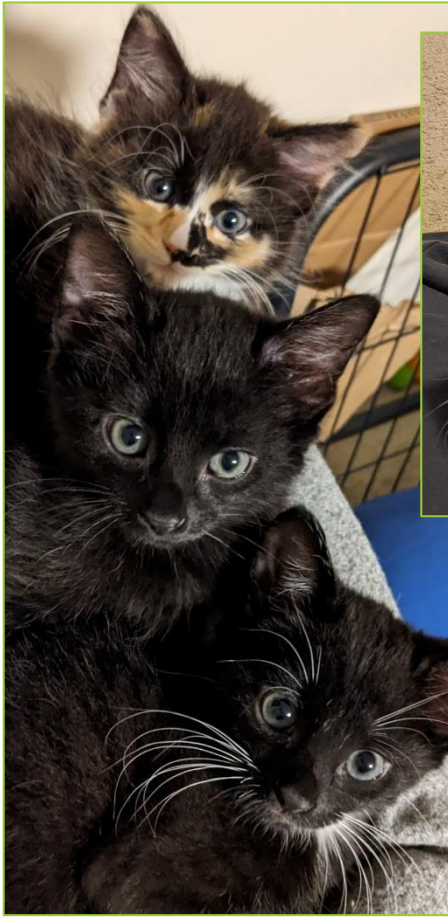
The Dances

Momma Choreographer (Cory) arrived at S2S with newborns Tango, Foxtrot, Jitterbug, and Twist. She arrived so stressed that she didn't blink in the presence of S2S purrsonel for a full week. With heavy support, she eventually relaxed and took full advantage of S2S massage services. Student Twist was our first special kneads student, though he didn't let his rotational tendencies interfere with his training. With his strong drive to succeed, plus the help of physical therapy, Twist graducatted on time and with full independence.

The Mushrooms

Portobello, Truffle, and Button arrived as well-trained students already, so they enrolled in the Advanced Certificat Purrogram. Course staff were thrilled that they took full advantage of meowntorship opportunities with Uncle Theodore, who graciously helped them to refine their skills. They also illuminated the origins of the phrase “cute as a button”.





The Mixed Nuts

Momma Coco(nut) was our roundest incoming class leader ever by far. She raised Peanut, Macadamia, Walnut, Cashew, and Filbert with diligent care, even leading potato-shaped Macadamia to tie the recently set record for chonkiest kitten. The Mixed Nuts' inquisitive, friendly natures and handsome whiskers led them to rapid success in our purrogram.

COURSE RECORD
Swolest Student:
Macadamia



The Bugs

Cricket and Grasshopper arrived as our most pathetic students yet. Rescued from the street (literally) by a former Small Miracles foster, they were tiny and so dirty that it took several baths to reveal their true colors. But they were gentle and trusting, adored by our meowntors, Uncles Teddy and Marshmallow, and grew into tremendous cuddlebugs.

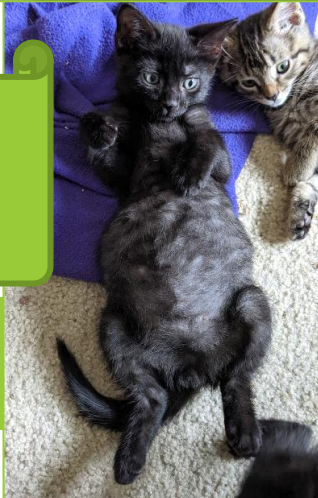


The Meowsical Instruments

The Meowsical Instruments arrived as smol students with no class leader. Tuba, Oboe, Cello, Bongo, Piccolo, and Tambourine overcame early kittenhood illness with fierce determination, and carried that spirit onward in their journey to swolness. Like the Bugs, this class was housed in the S2S Annex, so they participated in many remote meetings and brought joy to all attendees.



Unofficial record:
Cello, Roundest
Student Ever



S2S Special Guests

Special guests Eleanor, Evelyn, and Charlie were rescued by community members and taken in by Small Miracles. Special guest kitties typically do not require training from S2S, and instead take advantage of our psychological support, temporary all-amenity housing, and transport services.

We are grateful to be part of such a caring community, full of people who are ready to leap into action to help creatures in need!



Friendly young adult Charlie was rescued by Eness. S2S brought him to Small Miracles, where he was given medical care and promptly went up for adoption.



Sweet Evelyn was rescued from the wild by Liz and Lew. She was in dire shape – wounded, ill, and covered in matted fur. She was nursed back to health by Small Miracles staff, and is now happily awaiting a furever home.



Plump beauty Eleanor was rescued by Julie and Marie. She found a forever home with the same adopter of Apple Cider, class leader of the Spices (2019), who is her new BFF.



Kitten behavioral training: Basic Principles

Smol2Swol's kitten behavioral training purriculum relies on three core principles: communicating with the kitten using signals that they innately understand, using distraction and redirection to divert the kitten's energy and focus, and maintaining a compassionate and kitten-centered perspective.

Communication: The most important instructor of kitten behavior in the cat world is actually other kittens! Kittens will produce a small squeak, like a high-pitched "ow" sound, to tell their peers "You're playing too hard!" Being adept communi-cat-ors, felines can understand the meaning of that high-pitched "ow" whether the source is a cat or a human, so the human trainers of S2S use these theatrical squeals to teach our kittens to be gentle with people. Kittens play quite roughly with each other, so they're shocked to learn that people need to be treated so delicately. But they genuinely don't want to hurt you when they play, so they quickly learn to interact using soft paws.

Redirection: Much like human children, young felines' chaotic behavior is driven by their boundless energy. Accordingly, stopping a bad behavior is not enough, because that energy still needs to come out! So, also like human children, kittens respond best to interruption of a bad behavior followed by the substitution of a more desirable behavior. For example, a kitten who is chewing on a finger may be interrupted by gently blowing on their face, then the finger can be replaced by a stuffed toy or even a small piece of cardboard, so they can continue to fulfill their need for play.



Compassion: It is important to remember that our students are only babies who have only been in the world for a few weeks at most. They must learn to control the retraction and extension of their claws, all while mastering social skills in learning to interact with their peers as well as people. Patience and regular reinforcement of training concepts is necessary as the students develop and improve.

Top tip: Finally, remember that to a kitten, anything that moves is a toy, including your hands! Discipline on the part of the trainer is essential: stay very still when you deliver training signals, to maximize the effectiveness of the training and to minimize frustration in both trainer and student.

THE PATH TO PLUMPNESS

Weight loss is often the earliest indicator of illness in kittens, so daily weigh-ins are an easy way to monitor kitten health.

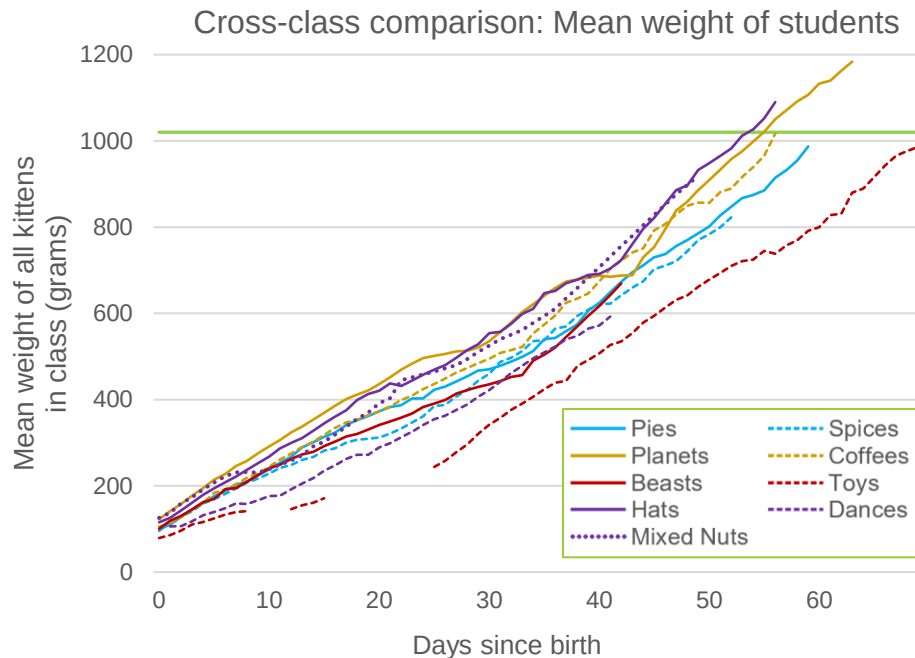
For classes with a known birthdate, weight records can be aligned to observe trends within and across classes. The horizontal line on the Chonk Chart (right) indicates the Swole Goal: the weight at which a kitten is chunky enough to be spayed or neutered, then adopted.

COURSE AUDITS

Course auditors are the “secret shoppers” of the kitten training world. In early 2022 we hosted an auditor, Lady Grey, who conducted a very thorough review of our dining facilities before returning to Small Miracles.



Catisticians Corner

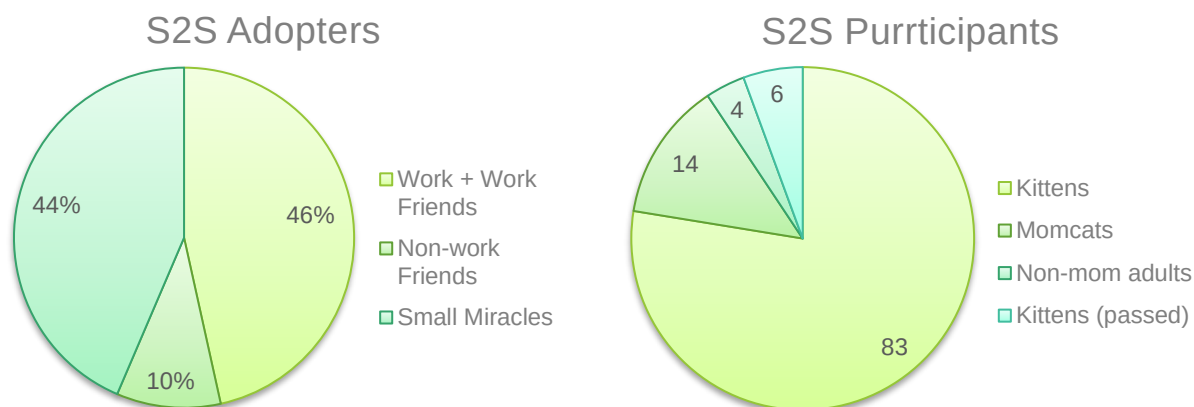


The Chonk Chart

Data notes: The figure above shows the mean weight of all students in each class each day after birth, for the first ten weeks. Short periods of missing data are imputed assuming linear growth per student. The longer periods of missing data in the Toys’ early days are due to limited data collection by their previous foster. In some cases, data collection ended prior to achievement of the Swole Goal (horizontal green line), due to other factors – for example, the Beasts’ data collection stopped abruptly when the direly ill Sandwiches arrived.

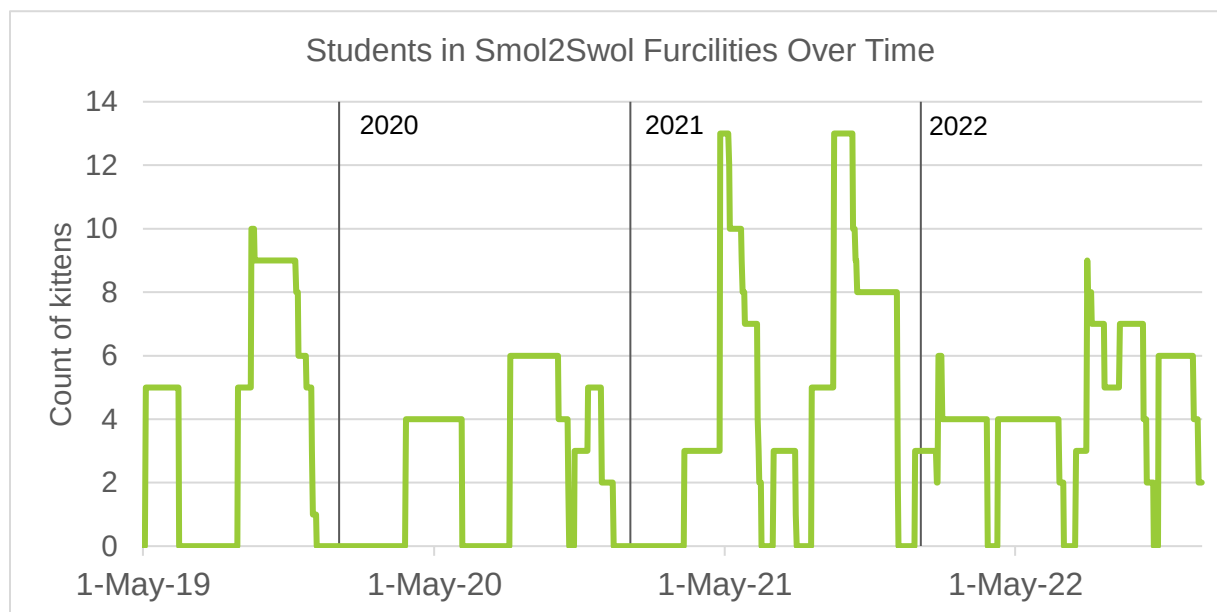
Interpretation: individual variability is lost in this view on the data, but the mean weights of classes still tell interesting stories. First, there’s a clear dip in most of the classes at around 4-6 weeks old, corresponding to the start of weaning, and the difficulties of successfully adapting from a milk-based to a canned-food diet. Second, the rate of weight gain following that dietary shift is more rapid (a steeper slope in the plot), as the kittens discover their unlimited food source. Finally, differences between classes are very clear: the Incredibly chunky Planets and Hats (solid purple and orange) had a much better start than the tiny Toys (dotted red), even though they ultimately achieved similar rates of gain.

Basic stats



Furrcility population

Our catisticians combed through hisstorical records to calculate the number of felines in our care each day. The plot below shows the count of students each day since the arrival of the first class. Cats reproduce seasonally, so that fragile kittens are not born in the depth of winter. “Kitten season” is thus late spring through fall, or roughly March through November in Maryland. However, climate change has been shifting winter to begin later and end sooner, and Kitten Season has expanded as well. This change is visible in just our noisy data: S2S’s kittenless period in Dec- Mar has shrunk each year, from 111 days in 2020, to 88 days in 2021, to just 20 days in 2022.



Where are they meow?

The journey from wee students to chonky grownups

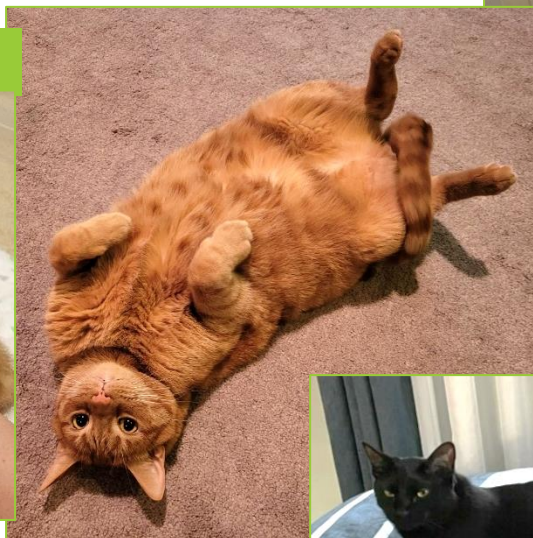
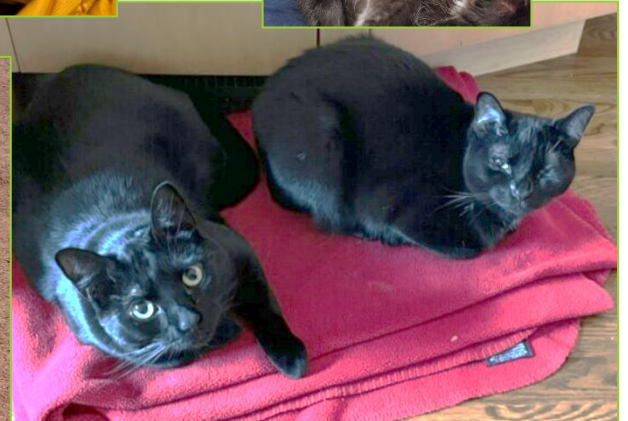
Ping Pong (Toys '21)
& Wonton
(Dumplings '22)



Smudge & Soot (Campfires '20)
& Panther (Beasts '21)

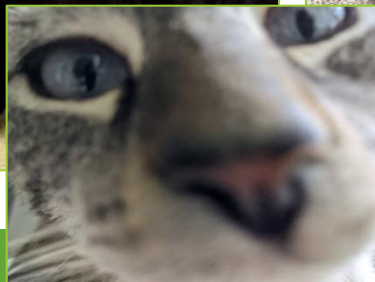


Pumpkin (Pies '19)



Candid Catmera

Smol2Swol's meowdia team strives to truthfully represent our work. We aim to treat our students (and photographic subjects) with the utmost respect, but it turns out that not all of our visual records captured their dignified sides. Here we confess to outtakes, unflattering poses, goofy faces, and other photos that don't quite meet S2S's sophisticatted brand standard.





A message from our course staff

A founding tenet of the Smol2Swol charter is to engage in a practice that is an unequivocal social good. Rescuing kittens from the Hobbesian future of a nasty, brutish, and short feral life and providing them loving homes is such a good. Renowned anthropawlogist Meowgaret Mead once said: "One of the oldest human needs is having someone to wonder where you are when you don't come home at night." S2S furrmly believes that our foster purrgram produces those someones who will wonder where you are when you don't come home at night, and we remain humbled for such an oppurrtnunity. Thank you to our adopters, friends, meowntors, and supurrtors for enabling S2S to continue to prospurr.

HAPPY SWOLIDAYS!