

Smol2Swol

2023 Annual Newsletter

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.



Thank you for a wonderful 2023!

2023 was a year full of surprises for Smol2Swol! We hosted only two classes with a class leader, and the rest of our training time was spent with swolcialization classes, young adults, and even a hospice kitty/resilience coach. This year pushed our course staff to develop new skills and expand their petagogical approaches to students with special kneads.



We hope you enjoy this year's Swolstice Mewsletter, which contains only the finest in fun feline features. S2S hisstorians' extensive records of the training progress of each class are 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 specialized in supporting pregnant cats, and in 2022 expanded into support of orphan kittens as well, but in 2023 we hosted almost entirely orphan classes. We aim to raise our kittens to know a world that has only shown them kindness.



Upcoming Events

In 2024, Smol2Swol will expand our students' cultural horizons, through culinary, cinemeowtic, and even transit-related aspects of catdom.

Meowvie Night

Purrspective adopters are invited to join us in viewing a classic mousterpiece. This year's showing will feature "The Cat Who Wore Sunglasses", a favorite of the 1963 Canned Food Festival.

Calling All Pet-rol Heads

Roll up to our outdoor pavilion to see a collection of the greatest pawtomobiles in the world. Attendees can view Furraris, Purrsches, and classic Bugcattis at this high-octane event.

Kitty Cousine Workshop

Learn to cook your favorite dishes from scratch. Instructors will demeownstrate a pawsta dish, a no-knead focattia, and a toebeans purrito with guacaswole.



Training tip: Identifi-cat-ion

Very young kittens with similar coat colors and patterns can be difficult to tell apart, but daily weigh-ins are critical to monitor their health, so their identities must be known. Innovative trainers have developed methods to distinguish even newborn students, including applying dots of lipstick to their earflaps and nontoxic markers to the paw pads. However, these solutions are not tenable with a class leader present – she keeps the kittens sparkling clean, and will not tolerate any marking or material for long. Our instructors, faced with the six identical Candies, ended up using a different solution: nail polish! The S2S cosmeowtology team regularly applied quick-dry polish to the Candies' claws, noting the challenge of painting claws an eighth of an inch long on a wiggling kitten.



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

SPOTLIGHT ON: FIV



One of our classes of 2023, the Potatoes, was hosted by Smol2Swol after a dozen other foster homes would not take them – because they were testing positive for FIV. FIV, or Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, is a widely misunderstood disease that can lead people to needlessly reject, abandon, or mistreat animals who are testing positive – and who may not even have it.

The FIV test detects antibodies in the cat's blood. These antibodies can come from the body's immune response to a true infection, the immune response to a vaccination, or from mother's milk. In almost all cases, kittens who test positive will do so because they received antibodies from

their mother, and they will test negative within a few weeks to months after weaning after those maternal antibodies fade away.

FIV in adults is typically passed from saliva to blood, so the main source of contagion is vicious fighting that causes deep bite wounds, which primarily occurs among intact tomcats fighting over territory. This means that it is very rare for FIV to be passed among cats living peacefully even in very close quarters, such as in a house.

What are the risks?

There are no risks to people from FIV, because the virus cannot infect humans. There is very minimal risk to other cats in the household from a cat who has FIV.

How can I protect my cat?

An FIV vaccination used to be available, but was withdrawn from the market in 2017 for two reasons. First, the odds of the virus spreading in a household environment among spayed and neutered cats is extremely low. Second, the vaccine worked by training the cat's immune system to produce FIV antibodies, so a vaccinated cat may test erroneously positive for months to years after vaccination, making it very difficult to understand if a cat is actually infected. You can best protect your cat the same way you can protect the rest of the ecosystem: by keeping your kitty indoors.



Meowntor cats can safely instruct FIV-positive kittens.

Alumni Meowntoring Purrogram Update

Meowntors Theodore Roosevelt and Mr. Marshmallow were kept very busy this year thanks to an abundance of leaderless classes. They shouldered many roles in S2S this year: greeting committee, babysitter, trainer, etiquette instructor, pillow, PT leader, and more. The meowntors even recruited a temporary deputy, Empurror Clawdus, to assist in their duties. Clawdus, having experienced firsthand the benefits of feline meowntoring, was happy to assist later classes who were in need of play.

Theodore and Mr. Marshmallow, often addressed as Uncles in a nod to their avuncular approach to their tiny fuzzy charges, embody different attitudes towards their responsibilities. Uncle Teddy emphasizes the more active side of training, including instruction in hunting, pouncing, and kitty jiu-jitsu, while Mr. Marshmallow

focuses more deeply on the restorative aspects of feline behavior, such as stretching, snoozing, and cuddling. Neither cat limits himself to those activities – see Uncle Teddy pictured above engaging in mindfulness training, and Uncle Marshmallow is no stranger to rumpusing – but both meowntors are careful to tailor their instruction to the specific kneads and ability levels of each of their students.



Uncle Theodore leading a mindfulness meowditation session with Clawdus.



Above: Uncle Marshmallow demonstrating proper stretching technique during a guided lounging session. At right: Apprentice Meowntor Clawdus tending to Rudolph Valentiny-o of the Silent Film Stars while his siblings were receiving meowdical care.



ASK A KITTEN TRAINER

A reader asks: is it hard to say goodbye?

Visitors often say “I could never foster kitties, it would be too hard to let them go!”

We view the goals of fostering as twofold: first, to save tiny fuzzy lives, and second, to send them out into the world to bring love and companionship to their forever families. Keeping our students would prevent fulfillment of our second goal: other families deserve to have wonderful kittens in their lives, it would be selfish of us to keep them.

While we do miss our students, and often wish that we’d kept them all, knowing that they’ve graducatted into loving forever homes that they are filling with happiness is well worth it.

It also helps to remember that once we bid farewell to a class, our furrilities are freed up to accept the next class. There will always be more kittens who need love!



Smol2Swol and the Arts

Nature documeowntaries are an art form that simultaneously educate, entertain, and expand the intellectual horizons of our students, many of whom have spent their entire lives in the Smol2Swol furrilities.

However, we must be mindful of the limitations of digital media and the potential for tragic miscommunication: Tater Tot is shown at right, possibly concluding from apparent evidence that he is as large as a crocodile and thus could take one in a fight.

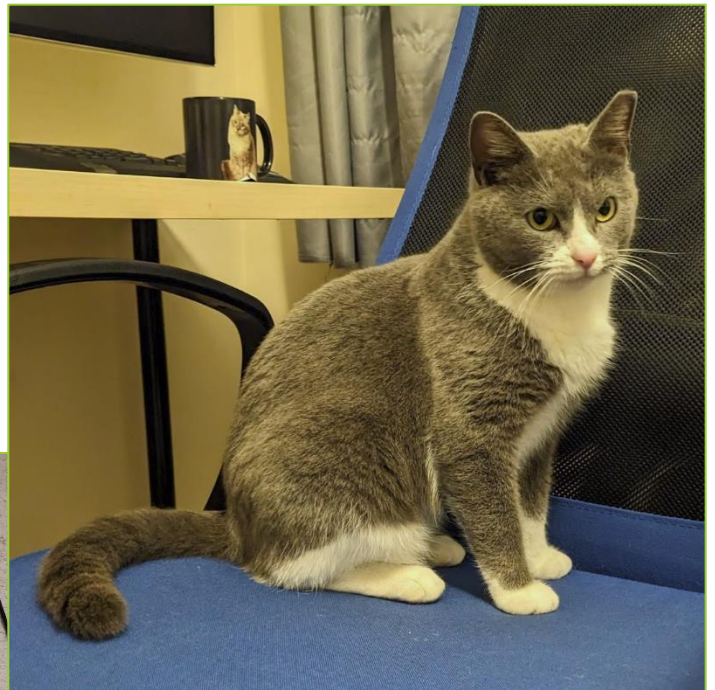
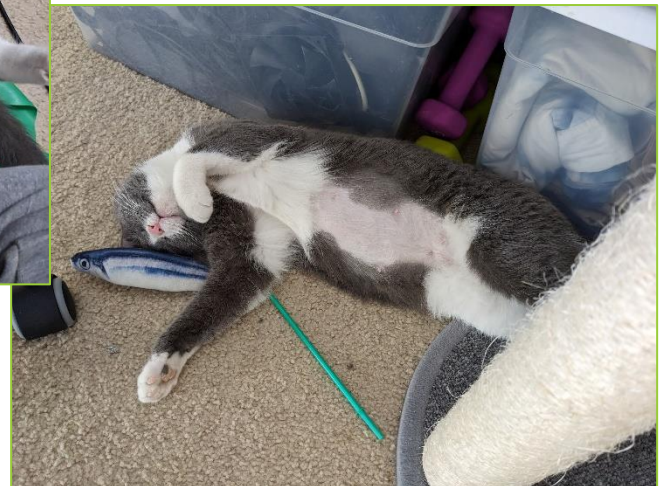
No Potatoes were harmed in the making of this photograph.



Class Photos

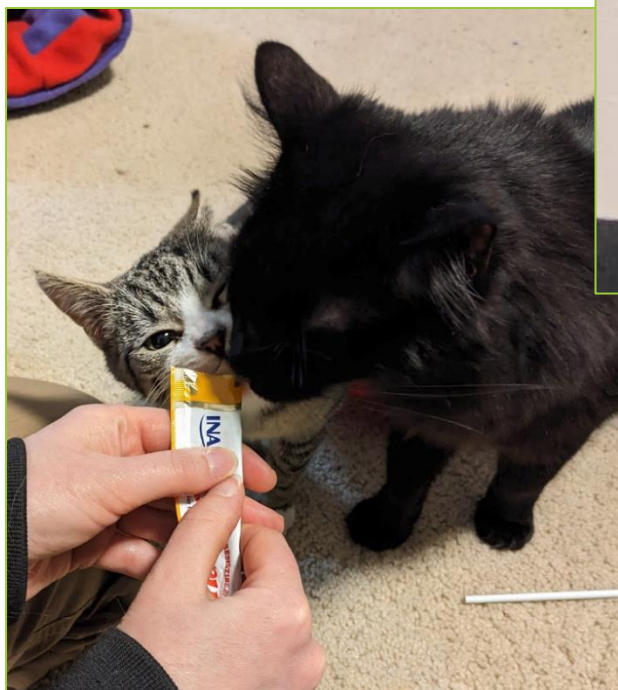
On the following pages are brief descriptions of each of S2S's classes of 2023, highlighting their greatest achievemeownts, as well as photo spreads illustrating their incredible photogenicity and cuteness. In-depth records are available in each class photo album at tinyurl.com/Smol2SwolClassAlbums.





Margaret

Margaret arrived just before the new year, terrified but desperately wanting affection. She spent a few weeks in the S2S annex, receiving a daily ration of cuddles, and blossomed into a total snugglebug. She graciously joined S2S staff's zoom meetings, charming attendees with her plush fur and desire for tummy rubs.



Meatball

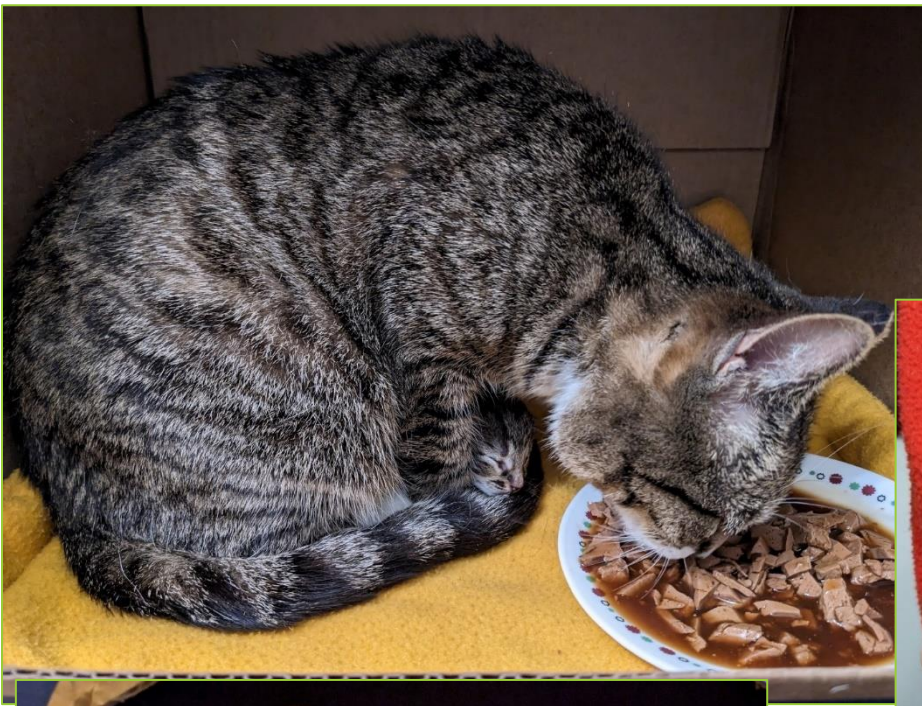
Sweet Meatball joined S2S as a single student, nearly identical in appearance to her presumed cousins from 2022's Dumplings class. She was injured, stressed, and anxious about interacting with human staff. Meatball rested and healed under the watchful eyes of both of our Meowntors, who helped her overcome her fear of people and also fulfilled her deep need for play. Their training set her up for successful, healthy relationships with her new siblings in her forever home.

Evelyn

Evelyn was rescued by Liz and Lew in 2022, after a very difficult time on the streets. She was tough as nails and sweet as pie through a lengthy bout of pneumonia, a rare fungal infection, and finally cancer, serving as S2S's Resilience Coach throughout. We said goodbye to gentle Evelyn in May 2023, sorrowful but grateful that we had several months to shower her with love and comfort, and that Small Miracles could grant her a peaceful, painless end.



Evelyn recovering after surgery and after-care by the loving Small Miracles meowdical team.



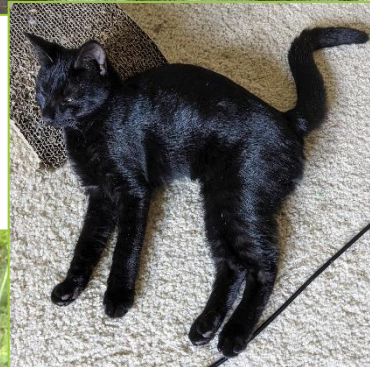
The Romans

Gentle Lady Antonia arrived at S2S with just one surviving week-old baby. Little Empurror Clawdius turned out to be a sturdy fellow, and flourished under his doting mother's care. Big-hearted Antonia then welcomed a tragic orphan, Fortuna (Lucky), into her family without hesitation, and Clawdius blossomed in his new role as big brother, playmate, and guardian of his sister. The Romans' generous, compassionate treatment of their new family member in her hour of need can inspire us all to greater kindness.



Lucky

Baby Lucky was the only surviving kitten of her litter, surrendered to Small Miracles because her momma was too sick to care for her kittens. She had a constellation of physical symptoms, poor vision and hearing, and difficulty controlling her body, but also a powerful will to live despite the hardships of her early life. She high-stepped her way directly into course staff's hearts, and became a beloved presence in their lives. Lucky and big brother Clawdus graduated together after an extended study program, during which Lucky grew into a confident, loving, and endearingly wobbly cat.



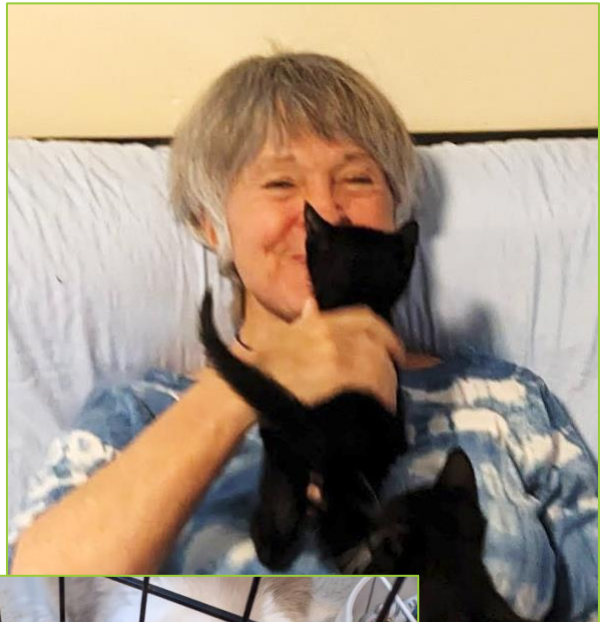
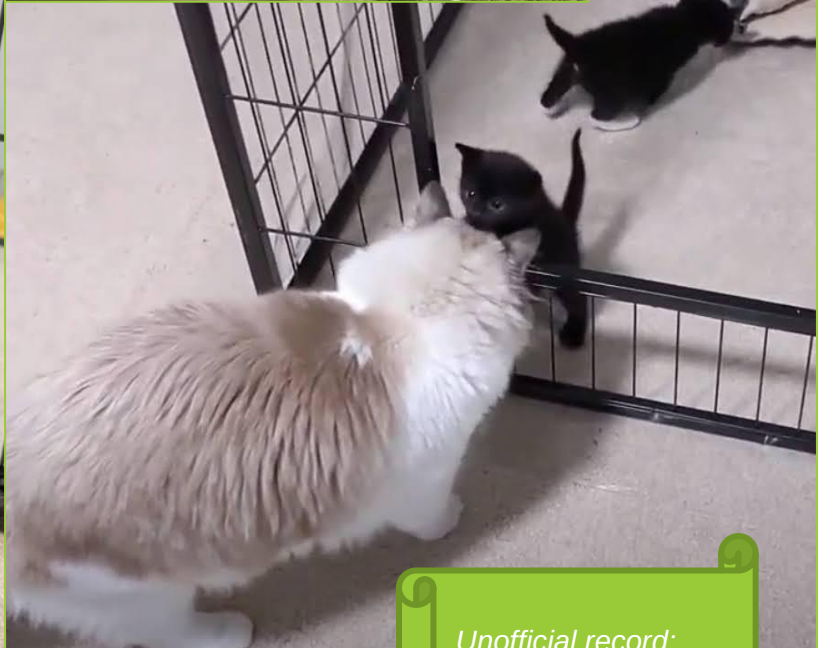


The Peppers

S2S Transport Services picked up the Peppers from a holding cage at Small Miracles that had a sign taped to it: "DO NOT TOUCH! WE BITE!" Their names captured their initial spiciness levels, from gentle Poblano and Cayenne to the hissy Chili and Ghost. Through an intensive regimen of cuddles, snuggles, and smooches, their spice mellowed into sweetness, and they graduated as cuddly, loving companions.

The Potatoes

Spud and Tater Tot astounded S2S staff with their energy, friendliness, and desire to be as close to you as possible by sticking their noses up your nose. These potato-shaped friends completed the majority of their training with S2S, then transitioned to another foster home for their Commencement Exercises so that their training furrclility could be used by the next class in need.



Unofficial record:
Tater Tot, most
enthusiastic cuddler

The Silent Film Stars

Clara Bow, Rudolph Valentino, Charlie Chaplin, and Buster Kitten came to S2S as a class of four out of a total batch of twelve from Pennsylvania, all in need of socialization. They were sick and very uncertain at first, but grew into some of our most affectionate, outrageously purry kittens ever. They also extended welcoming paws to older guest student Boo, who was comforted by their company during his short stay in the furrlicity.



Camellia S. and the Teas

Chai, Earl Grey, Lady Grey, Matcha, and tiny sibling Jasmin(iatur)e were rescued with their momma from a hoarding situation. Camellia arrived absolutely exhausted, and quickly took advantage of S2S's supplemental feeding program. Her kittens grew into cuddly, plump, and absurdly cute cups of tea. Sadly, not long before graduation, we had to say goodbye to tiniest teacup Jasmine, whose zest for life was unable to overcome the odds so severely stacked against her by a congenital heart condition.



Hallie and the Candies

Hallie (short for Halloween) arrived looking like she'd eaten a bowling ball, but enjoyed S2S spa services for another week before welcoming her seven nearly identical kittens. Sadly, tiny Twix was not quite ready and passed after a few hours being safe and warm with his family. But happily, Hallie's diligent care led Snickers, Skittles, Twizzler, Rolo, Kitkat, and Jellybean through a healthy kittenhood and on to successful grad-cat-ion just before the new year.



Special Guests

S2S hosted three special guest classes this year: Boo, the Caramels, and the V kittens. Special guests are rescued by community members and taken in by Small Miracles. Special guests typically do not require training from S2S, and instead take advantage of our psychological support, full-amenity housing, meowdical monitoring, 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!



Boo was rescued by the team effort of next-door neighbors Eddie and Nancy. His tiny chirping songs and playful nature charmed his furry companions, the Silent Film Stars, just as his friendliness and gentleness charmed our instructors during his short stay with Smol2Swol.

The Caramels were rescued by Phil and Ala, who saw how sick they were and took immediate action to help. Their contagiousness was a risk to the newborn Candies, so they stayed in the S2S infirmary for just a few days before another foster, Lisa, took them in and expertly nursed Toffee, Praline, Caramel, and Butterscotch back to health.

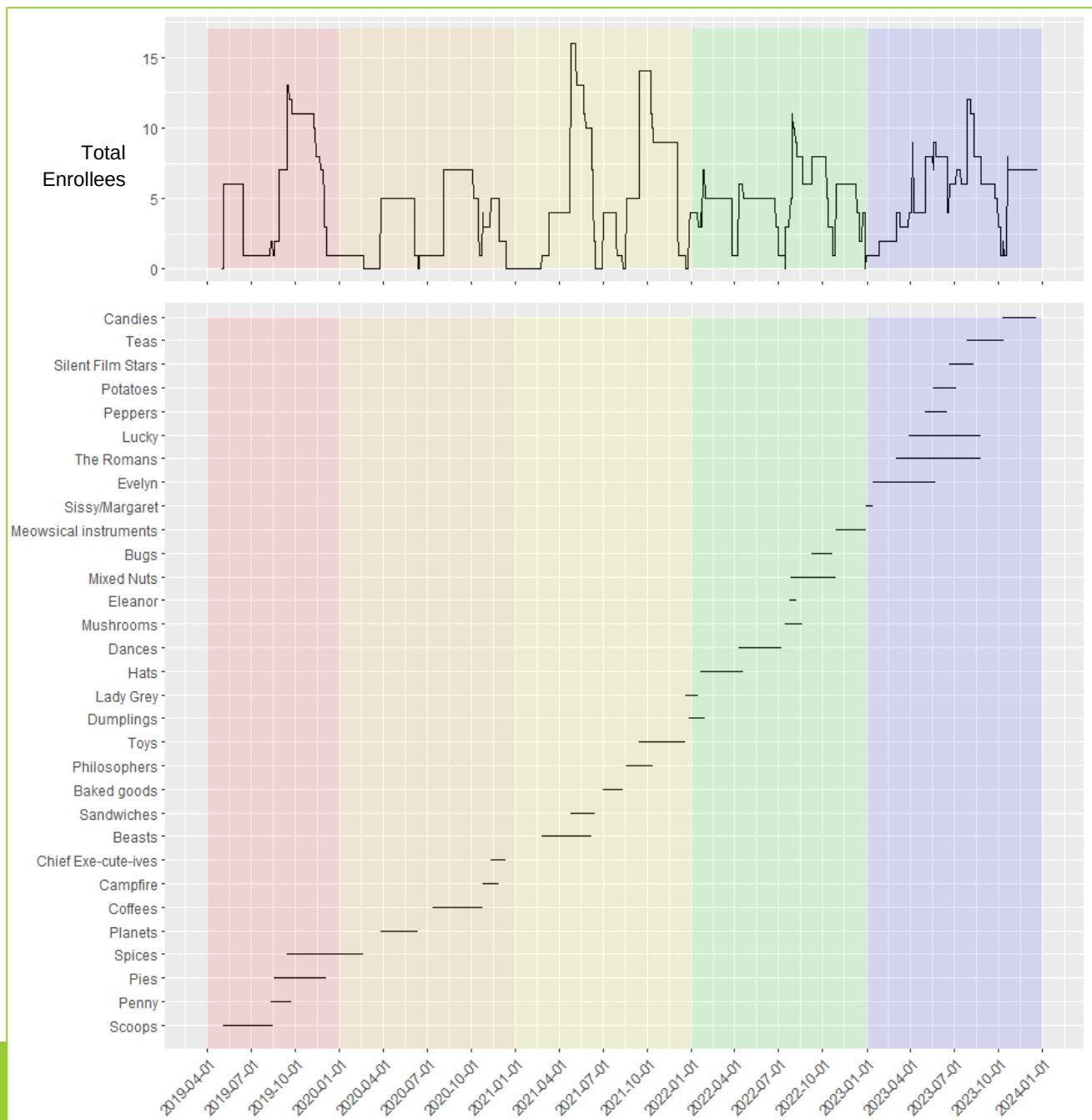


Vonnie and Vespa enrolled in our weeklong Meowdical Workshop two days before Christmas 2022, to ensure that they received needed medical care over the holiday. They attended a few socialization seminars during their stay, and completed the workshop as purring, comfortable kitties.

Catistician's Corner

Furrcility Population

The S2S Analyticats Dept. is always on the prowl for new visualizations to help meownagement monitor the state of the purrogram. Below, each colored column delineates an FY (Feline Year), from 2019 (red) through 2023 (blue). The upper panel shows total enrollees over time, while the lower panel shows a line for each class that spans the duration of their stay with S2S. This was quite a year for Smol2Swol: we had students on deck the entire year, typically four or more, and two classes whose unusually long duration is clearly visible in the very long lines in the blue panel of the lower figure, compared to most classes' shorter lines.



The Stages of Kitten Development

S2S students progress through a series of developmental phases that are characterized by shape, size, mass distribution, and skill level. These phases are consistent across classes, but are best understood as a spectrum rather than discrete stages. Certain developmental features, such as Triangle Tails and Concerned Eyes, may span multiple stages. The stages are described below, with estimated age ranges, and illustrated at right by Empurror Clawdus (with a body double for the earliest stage, which the Empurror had grown past before arriving at S2S).

1. Tiny Bean Stage: no eyes or ears. They can only wiggle, cuddle, and eat, and they look like tiny bears. (0-2 weeks)
2. Bobblehead Stage: famous for an uneven distribution of mass, weighted toward the head. (2-3 weeks)
3. Potato Stage: students tend towards very round shapes, still with an oversized head but balanced by a fuller rear ballast. (3-5 weeks)
4. Boinga Stage: students reach full ambulatory capability, and are beginning to pick up speed. (5-7 weeks)
5. Miniature Cat Stage: fully-featured cats, but scaled down in size and degree of capability. (7-9 weeks)
6. Lanky Teen Stage: locally elongated limbs, ears, nose, tail, and trunk, in preparation for impending global increase in mass. (9-11 weeks)

Below: beginner (Tiny Bean Stage, left) and more advanced (Bobblehead Stage, right) kittens showing classic Triangle Tails.



Left: Clawdus in an exemplary Potato Stage, with Concerned Eyes.



EATING: THE SOUL OF SWOLE

Many are surprised to hear that the most fundamental skill of a growing student is a *learned* skill: eating!

A kitten's job in early life is to suckle to get their momma's nutrient- and antibody-rich milk. Once their teeth appear at around four weeks old, they can begin to eat solid food. But a kitten who has mastered suckling may be mystified by chomping!

Biting, chewing, and gnawing are not necessarily intuitive for creatures who have only ever drunk milk. Students often need one-on-one training with an instructor to really get the hang of eating, but once they do, it's full speed ahead towards the Swole Goal!



Supporting Our Students: The Welcoming Committee

Smol2Swol's furrilities can be overwhelming to a new class, especially if they arrived from the wild, like the Silent Film Stars (shown at right). New arrivals may feel anxious, but often Uncle Marshmallow can ease their transition with his calm, comforting, cloud-



like presence. He also assists with transport preparation for veterinary visits, reassuring students that all will be well by snuffing them and keeping them company as they wait for transit.

Mr. Marshmallow's welcoming efforts were even accepted by a class leader this year! Class leaders typically do not permit strange adult cats around their kittens, even if they are as friendly as the S2S Meowntoring Team. But Lady Antonia welcomed Uncle Marshmallow's presence, enjoyed his babysitting and kitten-soothing services, and was even purrsuaded by him to come out of hiding after her tiny family moved from the temporary auxiliary wing to the main S2S accommeowdations.



Literature Review

Smol2Swol is an evidence-based organization that strives to adapt its training meowthods to the latest in scientific research. S2S research staff keep up on the latest public-cat-ions to ensure that the purriculum is grounded in the bigger picture of feline studies. Below we review articles focusing on the topic of their fuzzy widdle faces.

Development and application of CatFACS: Are human cat adopters influenced by cat facial expressions?

The Cat Facial Action Coding System (CATFACS) is a comprehensive cat-alog of movements that feline facial and ear anatomy can produce. CATFACS was used to explore the frequency of facial expressions in cats in shelter environments, and conformed



S2S staff's long-held suspicions about the expressiveness of their students (see blissful looks by Meatball and Uncle Marshmallow, above). The CATFACS system and certification process are made available by the authors at https://animalfacts.com/catfacs_new.

Caeiro, C.C., Burrows, A.M., & Waller, B.M. (2017). "Development and application of CatFACS: Are human cat adopters influenced by cat facial expressions?." *Applied Animal Behaviour Science* 189: 66-78.

Feline faces: Unraveling the social function of domestic cat facial signals

In this paper, the CATFACS system was used to explore the function of facial expressions in communication among cats in a Cat Café environment. The authors found that certain aspects of facial expressions were indeed valuable for social bonding, suggesting that domestication has improved the domestic feline catpacity for intra-species facial communication.

Scott, L. & Florkiewicz, B.N. (2023). "Feline faces: Unraveling the social function of domestic cat facial signals." *Behavioural Processes* 21.

In the Mews

A patient getting a checkup was given very wise doctor's orders to get a flu shot, a coronavirus shot... and a cat. The Washington Post reports that "In this instance, [my doctor] also treated my heart." Read more at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/2023/10/18/cat-prescription-virginia-doctor-wellness/>.

S2S Research

S2S conducts regular internal trials of our educational meowthods, as well as appurroaches to screen potential adopters for those who appreciate cat puns.

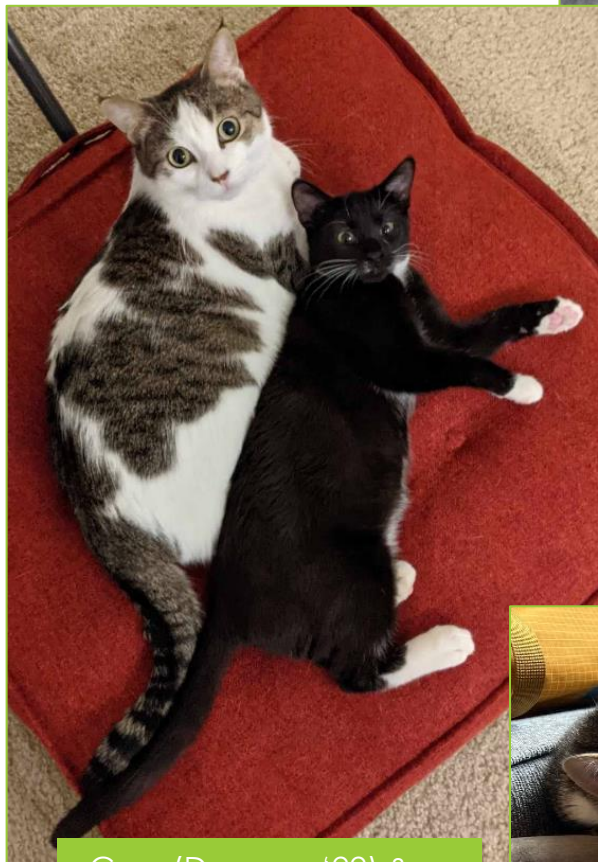
These studies are not considered Feline Subjects Research per the Common Rule exemptions (45 CFR 46) and as such are not subject to Institutional Review Board oversight. However, S2S is careful to maintain purrmits and documeowntnation as needed to comply with all feederal, state, and local regulations and ordinances regarding the training (and study) of our students.



Where are they meow? Cross-Class Cuddlers

S2S students may be adopted into homes with other cats, dogs, bunnies, children, or even no other small creatures – though if there's no sibling ready for them, they must be adopted in pairs so that they have a friend to sate their deep need for play and companionship. On very special occasions, our students may find a forever home with a family that has adopted from Smol2Swol before! Course alumni make wonderful older siblings for younger graducats, providing them with loving (yet firm) continued swolcialization and some of the most rewarding cuddles ever, a few of which are shown below.

Bonnet (Hats, '22) &
Tater Tot (Potatoes, '23)



Cory (Dances, '22) &
Clara (Silent Film Stars, '23)

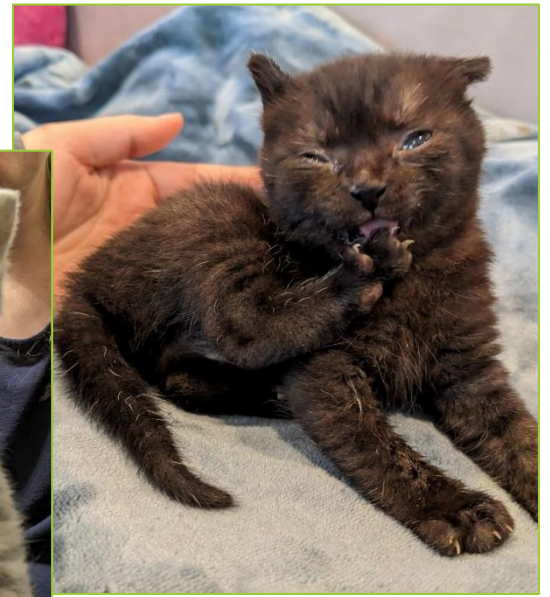


Ping Pong (Toys, '21) &
Wonton (Dumplings, '22)



Candid Catmera

S2S course photographers are very serious about their responsibility to document the training process. However, comprehensive documentation will necessarily capture some.. perhaps less noble moments in our students' lives. Enjoy these behind-the-scenes looks at Smol2Swol!





A meowssage from our Nommunications Director

The Winter Swolstice is the celebration of a significant astro-nom-ical event: the midpoint of winter, when the days begin to grow longer. As such, it is a time for both reflecting on what was and anticipating what may be.

On behalf of the S2S Preditorial Staff, Purrmeownent Catdre, and our ever-expanding Pawxillary, we want to thank our kitten enthusiast community for your support of our mission. You joined us for long hours as guest instructors, donated critical supplies in the form of toys and cat treats, and encouraged our staff when the training cycle challenged our skills and resilience.

We wish you and yours a happy and healthy Swolstice, and close with the immortal words of Leo-nardo da Vinci: "The smolest feline is a meowsterpiece."

HAPPY SWOLIDAYS!