



PET HEALTH

Cat Lady

By Melanie D.G. Kaplan

In February, television personality and animal activist Beth Stern will host the third annual Hallmark Channel *Kitten Bowl*, during which, she says, “macho men will cheer on ridiculously cute kittens.” When she’s not watching felines tackle each other in the end zone, Stern is the spokeswoman for North Shore Animal League America, the world’s largest no-kill animal shelter, and she and her husband, radio personality Howard Stern, are active cat and kitten foster care providers. She’s written two children’s books based on cats, the most recent of which, *Yoda Gets a Buddy*, was released in December 2015. “I don’t have human children,” she says, “so this is my purpose.”



The Hallmark Channel's *Kitten Bowl III* will air on Feb. 7.

What are your next animal projects after the Kitten Bowl?

Howard and I are working on a 14,000-square-foot expansion of North Shore's existing shelter, called Bianca's Furry Friends. The space will allow the cats to live cage-free until they're adopted. Friends have been so supportive—Billy Joel donated over a million dollars, and Rachael Ray presented me with a \$500,000 check on her show. We'll break ground early this year.

Did you have animals growing up?

My parents' firstborn was a collie mix named Susie-Dog. She was our older sister and was treated like one. We also had guinea pigs and adopted cats. We'd transport hurt wildlife. I took a course on how to transport wounded wild animals a few years ago. When an animal's hurt, we don't ignore it.

Who are your rescues?

Apple, Bella, Walter, Leon Bear, Charlie Chunk, and Yoda. Bella was a blind, pregnant cat found in a junkyard, and she was on the "to be destroyed" list at a shelter. North Shore goes to these municipal shelters, and if we have the room—which we did in this case—we rescue them.

How do they get their names?

Whenever a foster comes into the house, Howard will name them. He'll say, "You are Raisin!" "You are Poundcake!" "You are Bagel!" Sometimes I think he's hungry, because so many of them are food names.

Do you have rules about how many rescues you can have in the house?

No. Whenever a cat or kitten needs us, we're there. I think more than 165 cats and kittens have come through our home, and I personally deliver them to their forever home. At one point we had 15 in our foster room. I'll hear about a cat in need, and Howard will say, "Go pick it up!" He's so supportive. He photographs them and has even been known to clean out litter boxes.

Reviewed by **Will Draper, DVM**
WebMD Pet Health Expert