

## Activist calls for help in dealing with Marina's homeless cat problem

Self-described animal rights activist Melya Kaplan received a phone call a few weeks ago from a woman who was "mobbed by nine or ten starving, screaming kittens" on her way to dinner in the Marina.

"She called me, very upset, and I was horrified," Kaplan says. "I cancelled my plans and went right over there."

What Kaplan found was, as she calls it, "a terrible problem in the Marina. The docks and waterside restaurants of the Marina are flooded with homeless and hungry cats and kittens."

She claims these abandoned animals are the products of many boat owners' unsterilized cats.

"Litter after litter is born, then abandoned and left to die either of starvation or of exposure," she says.

Kaplan, who has been working for animal rights in Los Angeles for the past two years, decided that she needed to put

out a personal call for help to local residents concerned about the lives of these cats as well as to those people who have unsterilized cats in the Marina.

"My mission is, one, to help the existing cats, and, two, to try to get the others sterilized," she says. "Through the city I am able to provide these cat owners with cost-free sterilization and shots."

She adds that summer is peak season for breeding and that the vouchers she can provide for sterilization will most likely run out by September.

"I even have students from a school in Santa Monica who will come to the boats, pick up the cats and take them to the vet for the owners," she says.

As far as the wilder cats are concerned, Kaplan says she plans to trap them and take them to the vet to be sterilized. Those that are tame will then be placed in homes.

Some of the cats have already

lost all trust in humans, but even in those cases, Kaplan stresses, "we do not kill." Rather, she works with area businesses and tries to convince them of the importance of developing feeding stations for the starving and abandoned animals on their property.

Kaplan says she has been working a great deal with PM Realty Group, which manages property in the Marina, and specifically Guy Robinson, who has been feeding the cats and assisting Kaplan with her work.

Kaplan says there really is not much excess effort required on the part of a company to help the cats and lists a number of positive effects helping the cats can have on employee morale.

"When employees are faced with all these starving animals and are told they can't feed them, there is often depression," Kaplan says. "When you give a solution to them, allowing the cats to live out their lives, then



**HOMELESS CAT IN MARINA**  
(Argonaut photo by Melya Kaplan)

people feel good about it.

"Helping the cats also provides a good corporate image, and it has been shown that employee morale goes up."

Kaplan acknowledges that "red tape" often makes dealing with businesses difficult.

"Doing it is the hard part, and

convincing people that it's important is difficult," she says.

"But these poor cats need help, and I want to help them."

Kaplan is also accepting cash donations to be used for food, litter and additional vet bills for the cats.

Information, 399-8928.