



NKCKittenNurseryConference/2021

Schedule and Session Details

Please note that this schedule is subject to change.

Saturday, March 27, 2021

4-6 pm EDT

Starting and Running a Neonatal Kitten Nursery – with No Shelter/Rescue Facility

- Simone Kelham, Founder and President of Newborn Kitten Rescue
- Susan Spaulding, Vice President/Senior Neonatal Foster, NC Paws Rescue and Director of Neonatal Programs, National Kitten Coalition
- Marnie Russ, National Kitten College Program Administrator at the Animal Welfare League of Arlington
- Moderator: Laura Baughman, National Kitten Coalition Board Member

Session Description:

How do you save at-risk kittens, particularly neonates, when the shelter or rescue you work or volunteer at has no space for a nursery? Our speakers do just this, in different ways.



Newborn Kitten Rescue is a nonprofit dedicated to rescuing orphaned kittens that would otherwise die or be euthanized. Simone Kelham became aware of how vulnerable these kittens were as a volunteer at her local animal shelter in 2016. She started NKR to coordinate the care of the most critical neonates using a small home-based nursery and team of trained, highly skilled fosters. Kittens come to NKR from several partner shelters. Simone will tell us how you can run a home-based kitten nursery using a team of 40 fosters who each care for one at-risk neonate or one small litter of neonates.



In addition to teaching for National Kitten Coalition, Susan Spaulding fosters kittens for NC Paws Rescue, a small foster based rescue focused on orphans and special needs kittens and cats. They have a small, well trained group of fosters caregivers helping as many small local rural shelters as possible. Their foster homes often have multiple litters during the height of kitten season, literally becoming “mini nurseries.” Susan will tell us how, partnering with several different organizations, they maximize the number of lives saved by training shelter personnel and using each foster home’s specific skills and equipment.



Marnie Russ developed the National Kitten College Program into a foster-based kitten care model for mid-size municipal shelters streamlining their efforts to save kittens. She saw that this approach to establishing a kitten nursery would work best at AWLA and similar shelters whose only on-site space available for a nursery was a closet. The Kitten College uses an enthusiastic team of nearly 300 kitten fosters that last year saved 1,278 kittens. Marnie will tell us how to manage a large group of fosters to save bottle babies and other at-risk kittens.



Speaker Bios

Simone Kelham

A law graduate, Simone previously worked in marketing until moving to Arizona in 2016, when she began fostering and volunteering with Arizona Humane Society (AHS). Simone quickly became focused on saving the lives of critical care neonates and joined the employees of the bottle baby team at AHS, later progressing to the role of kitten counselor, training and coordinating the bottle baby fosters. Simone's experience at AHS led her to realize the overwhelming need for more organizations to become involved in the mission. Believing collaboration with shelters was key to saving more lives led her to devise the SKIP (Saving Kittens in Partnership) program, which in its first year saved 140 kittens and gained grant support from Best Friends and Orphan Kitten Club, among others. In 2020, NKR rescued 353 at risk kittens working with several partner shelters that manage surgery and adoption. Partnership and a focused approach allow the rescue to save the maximum number of kittens possible given capacity and resources.

Susan Spaulding

Growing up on a small farm, Susan has been surrounded by animals her entire life. Though she began fostering dogs in Northern California, her passion for kittens began in South Texas in 1994 when a box of 13 underage kittens was brought to the animal shelter thrift shop where she volunteered. Learning that they would immediately be euthanized at the shelter, she took them home to foster and never looked back. Susan moved to Northern Virginia and in no time was fostering 200-300 kittens annually. Because many veterinarians did not have the training or hands-on experience with these tiny babies, and most of the information available was incomplete at best, she began researching and contacting veterinarians nationally, building up a vast body of kitten care knowledge, particularly for neonates. Working with veterinarians, Susan developed cutting edge protocols for successfully treating upper respiratory infections and Panleukopenia. Known widely as "Kitten Mom," Susan has advised national organizations as well as dozens of local shelters and rescue organizations on neonatal issues and received numerous awards for her work from the shelter, rescue and veterinary communities. She co-founded National Kitten Coalition and is one of NKC's lead instructors.

Marnie Russ

Marnie started her career in animal advocacy at AWLA in 2000 when she began volunteering in the cat room and was one the shelter's first neonatal kitten fosters. A lobbyist at the time, she turned this passion into lobbying for the ASPCA at the state and federal level and eventually co-founded the National Kitten Coalition, where she participated in the preparation of NKC's kitten nursery manual. Marnie has spoken at conferences, shelters, and universities across the country on neonatal kitten care and advancing shelter and foster care for at-risk kittens. Marnie developed the Kitten College at AWLA which opened its doors in July of 2017 and has quickly become a model program for mid-size municipal shelters streamlining their efforts to save kittens using an enthusiastic team of nearly 300 kitten fosters.

Laura Baughman

Laura started fostering kittens for local animal shelters in 2010, and began advocating for a new kitten nursery at one of them in 2012. There was nothing "out there" about how to do it and what it would cost, so she approached The National Kitten Coalition about putting that information together in a "best practices" manual, became Project Leader, and in 2017 NKC published *Launching and Operating a Successful Kitten Nursery*. When she's not helping folks explore kitten nurseries, Laura is an economist researching the impacts of trade. And fostering kittens.