

## Case Study

### Alley Cat Allies Establishes Trap-Neuter-Return Program on Atlantic City's Boardwalk; Boardwalk Cats Project is Born

No one knows when the feral cats first appeared on Atlantic City's Boardwalk. For years, they coexisted with residents, mingled with tourists, and were generally tolerated by city officials. So when animal control ordered that the Boardwalk cats be trapped and killed in 2000, Alley Cat Allies stepped in to save them—and their longstanding relationship with the city and its visitors.

Shortly after learning of the order, Alley Cat Allies formed the Cat Action Team with Atlantic City's Health Department, the Humane Society of Atlantic County (HSAC), and local advocates. Under Alley Cat Allies' leadership, the group began a highly successful pilot program using Trap-Neuter-Return, community involvement, and public education to save the lives of the 200 cats then calling the Boardwalk home.

In June 2000, Alley Cat Allies staff began trapping and transporting cats to HSAC on a monthly basis to be neutered. More than half the cats trapped were young kittens or cats socialized enough to be placed up for adoption. The rest were returned to the Boardwalk sporting "ear tips," indicating they were neutered and vaccinated. As TNR took effect, births of new kittens at the Boardwalk gradually ceased.

Now formally known as the Boardwalk Cats Project, the project receives



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**Alley Cat Allies has been caring for cat colonies along the Atlantic City Boardwalk since the year 2000.**

outsoken support from Atlantic City's local government, as well as many local businesses along the Boardwalk. The public has also responded positively to the Boardwalk Cats Project through frequent donations of cash and cat food.

Since Alley Cat Allies interceded on their behalf, the Boardwalk cats' lives have improved dramatically. Virtually every colony has been completely neutered. Spared from being killed by animal control, they were also relieved of the toll breeding can take on a cat's health.

The Boardwalk Cats Project is still going strong. The Boardwalk is home to

roughly 175 neutered cats living in stable colonies and monitored by devoted caregivers.

Shelters and feeding stations keep the cats warm and dry. As an added bonus for the community, volunteers help beautify the Boardwalk by regularly hosting clean-ups. To support caregivers, Alley Cat Allies devoted a part-time on-site staff coordinator to the Boardwalk Cats Project and other local programs. Signs posted along the Boardwalk discourage feeding the cats by anyone other than project-coordinated volunteer caregivers; they also explain the laws and penalties around abandoning pet cats at the site.

In fall of 2008, Atlantic City joined Alley Cat Allies' Every Kitty-Every City program ([www.alleycat.org/EveryKittyEveryCity](http://www.alleycat.org/EveryKittyEveryCity)). This program rallies support, raises awareness, and provides resources for implementing Trap-Neuter-Return and accessible, affordable spay and neuter services for all cats citywide—pet, stray, and feral.

Thanks to Alley Cat Allies, the cats who live under Atlantic City's famous Boardwalk are co-existing harmoniously with the city's people, providing living evidence that Trap-Neuter-Return works—and that no municipality should ever turn to killing cats.