



Danielle Harding

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Founder "Paws and Mittens" Cat Rescue, Essex

As well as working full time as a teaching assistant in a local school, Danielle runs and operates Paws & Mittens (www.pawsandmittens.co.uk), a cat rescue centre for the re-homing of cats in her local area.

What does an average day look like, in the managing Paws and Mittens?

The majority of the day is largely taken up with cleaning, feeding and medicating any sick cats. I do travel a lot also, with vet runs, home checks, taking cats to new homes and collecting cats that have been surrendered into care. Of course, the best part of each day is the cuddle and playtime with the cats! Not only is this the fun part, but also a very important aspect of rehabilitating many of the cats in our care, who sadly too often, have been abused or neglected by their previous owners or circumstance.

What sacrifices have you had to make in bringing Paws and Mittens into existence?

Caring for the cats is a full time job, 365 days a year. With so many cats in care, with very different needs and characters, at any one time, it is very hard to get away on holiday for example. The cats need care every day, so I find socially, I've had to sacrifice a lot of personal time.

What are the rewards of your job?

Each and every single cat comes into our care with a different story, background and nature, but they all have one thing in common, they are at that time, without a home and a family. I can provide the love and care, but once I have been able to find them a forever home and family, to complete the package, there is nothing more rewarding.

Is it difficult justifying a job which, despite the personal rewards, offers no financial incentive?

At times it can be. Of course, the main purpose most people work for is to earn a living, and pay the bills. But I do believe that gaining satisfaction from your work is just as important. The satisfaction I receive from the rescue is enough to outweigh the lack of financial incentive.

How has running a rescue centre effected your moral values? People can be cruel but people can be incredibly compassionate, and you must see both sides ?

Oddly enough, seeing so much cruelty and sadness as we do, it has in turn made me almost more compassionate and understanding of people. A huge amount of the sadness we see, is a result of not people's characters, but more often so, a lack of education, or ignorance. And not all cases are those of neglect, some cases are incredibly saddening, and humbling, when people are losing everything, (for one reason or another), not only their pets, but their homes and jobs for example. Also, faith in humanity; each day can present me with some of the most horrendous scenes of cruelty, but too, with colleagues and friends in the rescue world, wonderful acts of kindness and compassion.

What three things do you feel most passionate about?

The development of the rescue, and the learning I undertake each day, has extended my passion towards humanity and the world in general. Animal rights and their needs, the environment and the world we live in, and human rights.

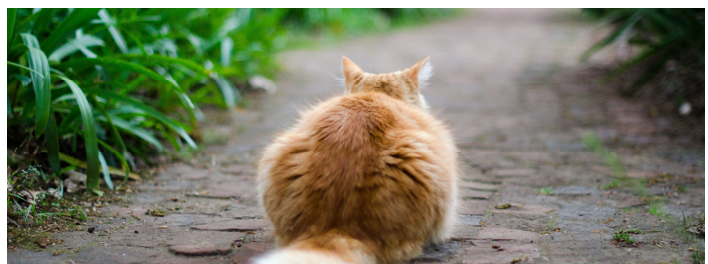
To what extent do you need to have developed 'self-understanding' in order to work in a job which motivates you and which you enjoy?

Throughout my working life, I have always been "lucky" enough to have had careers where my role has made a difference to someone, a cause, or, like now, my passion. Whilst the main reward we seek is the financial gain to work, carrying out a role where your actions positively effect someone or something, only heightens, for me, the benefits and the fulfilment in that role. Work then not only satisfies the need to earn a wage, but additionally, and equally, provides the daily awareness, and pride, of having "made a difference"

What advice would you give to anyone considering a career in something they are passionate about?

Having passion in the work you do can almost be a guarantee to finding your career rewarding and enjoyable. But I Would also advise to stay open minded and willing to learn and develop; being passionate about something doesn't always mean we are an expert in the field, and part of the journey, and reward is expanding your knowledge.

Other questions you think I could have asked?



Paws & Mittens was established in 2012 when Danielle, an avid cat-lover, took on a family of feral kittens, along with their mother. The centre soon grew as the need for the rehoming of cats in her local area became apparent.

Running solely on generous donations, small adoption fees and fund-raising events the centre now rehomes over 100 cats annually. Danielle is a single mother with one child, Alfie. In addition to running Paws and Mittens she also works full-time as a teaching assistant in a local school.

Paws and Mittens is funded entirely from the generosity of the general public, so donations (no matter how small) are greatly appreciated. If you would like to make a donation you can do so by using the Paypal button on the website pawsandmittens.co.uk.