

This book is dedicated to Janet and Susan of the Marin Friends of Ferals, for all their untiring efforts in helping feral cats. It is also dedicated to all those people across the world who work to reduce the suffering of innocent sentient creatures.

This book is also dedicated to the real Dan, who was willing to feed the real Dot, Sylvester, and Danny, his namesake.



Dear Reader:

This story is about Fairminded Fran and how she learns about community, or feral, cats. Fairminded Fran is good at thinking and also fair. At the end of the story you can read about Fairminded Fran as well as two other characters— Selfish Sam and Naïve Nancy. All of us are sometimes like Fairminded Fran, sometimes like Selfish Sam, sometimes like Naïve Nancy. We can create the best possible world when we all try to be like Fairminded Fran.



Happy reading,
Linda Elder





Fairminded Fran is walking behind her school one day when she sees three small black cats hiding under a dumpster.

She calls to them, “Come here, kitty.”

But they run away.

Fran can’t understand this because her cats at home always come when she calls and are never scared of her.



The cats look hungry and scared. Fran thinks that if they were in the dumpster looking for food, they probably don't belong to anyone. No one is feeding them. No one loves them.



“Fran, I think these are community cats,” says Mr. Moseby.

“Community cats!” exclaims Fran. “What’s a community cat?”

Mr. Moseby explains, “They are cats that are born outside to a mother who has probably always lived outside. They are naturally afraid of most things, including people. And they often don’t live very long if they aren’t being fed by someone because it can be hard for them to find food. So they are often weak and sickly. They look for mice and rats and food from dumpsters. Community cats are not tamed cats. They are feral cats.”

Fran asks, “Why don’t we take them home and make them into house cats? I can talk to my mom about it and see if she will let me keep them.”

Sighing, Mr. Moseby says, “That won’t work for these cats because they will always be too afraid of people to live inside. Feral kittens have to be rescued and adopted before they are about 10 or 12 weeks old. If they aren’t, they will probably always have to live outside because they will be afraid of people.”





How this book came about...

Author Linda Elder became involved with community cats several years ago while playing tennis at her local high school. She noticed three small black cats, almost, but not quite, kittens. She inquired as to what was being done about the kittens and the principal of the school told her that they had tried to catch some of the kittens but without luck. Dr. Elder called her local humane society and from there she was introduced to the Marin Friends of Ferals (marinferals.org), a community cat rescue group. That began her journey to understand and help care for feral cats in her community. Dr. Elder decided that one way to help people understand the problem, and the plight, of community cats, was through educating young children about community cats, about their needs, about their realities. Thus, this book was written.

This is the story of Fairminded Fran and her experience in learning about community cats. On her journey, Fran must try to convince Selfish Sam to help with the cats, Sam, who cares only for himself. She must also convince Naïve Nancy to get involved, Nancy, who doesn't want to make waves and always goes along with the crowd. Fran, Sam, and Nancy are creations originally of Dr. Richard Paul, international authority on critical thinking. These characters

were developed to help young children understand the importance of not only critical thinking, but fairminded or ethical critical thinking. In the past 20 years, Dr. Elder and Dr. Paul have developed a number of publications and materials to help educators and parents understand how to foster critical thinking in children (as well as in older students and adults). *Fairminded Fran and the three small black Community Cats* adds to this library of materials. It can be used in the classroom to help students understand feral cats and how best to help them; it can also be used to help students understand the importance of critical thinking in that process.

Visit our website: Fairfranscommunitycats.org



Dot eating from a feeding station made by a kind volunteer