



# Small Boy, Big Heart

SIDHANTH SINGH may be just 11, but he's already learnt (and demonstrated) the importance of caring for animals. For the past four years, he has helped stray cats in his estate and community — from finding homes to petitioning for spaying. We speak to the Canadian International School student about his efforts and what keeps him going.

## **When and how did you start taking care of the cats in your community?**

During my summer break in 2013. A mother cat walked onto my patio with five kittens in tow and I decided to feed them. Over time, it became a regular thing and the kittens became close to me.

## **What are some challenges you faced?**

A few people weren't supportive of the stray cats being fed and some also felt that they were a bad omen. Cat traps were put up and many animals were put to sleep due to a lack of adopters. The mothers left behind many kittens. Through Facebook, my mum and her friends managed to find some mother cats with new litters, and some of these cats accepted the kittens as their own.

It was also difficult to get the cats ready for sterilisation. We had to stop them from eating before the procedure, and then place them in cat carriers. They would meow all night, keeping us awake. Thankfully, my parents and helper are really supportive and don't complain. They and my friends also help me by taking the cats to the hospital, looking for them when they go missing and cleaning up after them. Some residents in my condo have also signed my petition to save the cats.

## **What do you love the most about taking care of the cats?**

The fact that I can do something for them where they need my help the most. I get to learn more about their behaviour and personalities. They also show their love to me in many ways; once when I was sick, one of the cats, who I call Spooky, stayed by my bed the whole night — she did that for two nights until I got better.

## **We often hear about news of mistreated animals in Singapore. How does that make you feel?**

It makes me feel sad and guilty; before urbanisation, animals used to roam around freely without being hit by cars or taken away to be killed. We have taken a lot away from them so I feel that it's our responsibility to take care of them. It's important to care for these animals as they are a part of our ecosystem and planet. Every living thing has a role and the right to live.

## **How are your efforts going so far?**

My friends and I have been able to raise a petition to save the cats in my condo and get them spayed. We've also had 18 kittens adopted and I keep track of how they are doing with my mum's help. I plan to join animal welfare organisations like the Cat Welfare Society to help cats around the island.

## **If there is one thing you'd like to tell our readers, what would it be?**

Be a voice for stray animals — they need help and compassion. *✍*

To find out how you can help cats in Singapore, visit the Cat Welfare Society website, [catwelfare.org](http://catwelfare.org).