

The Amazing Kit Kat

From the Farm to Guinness Star

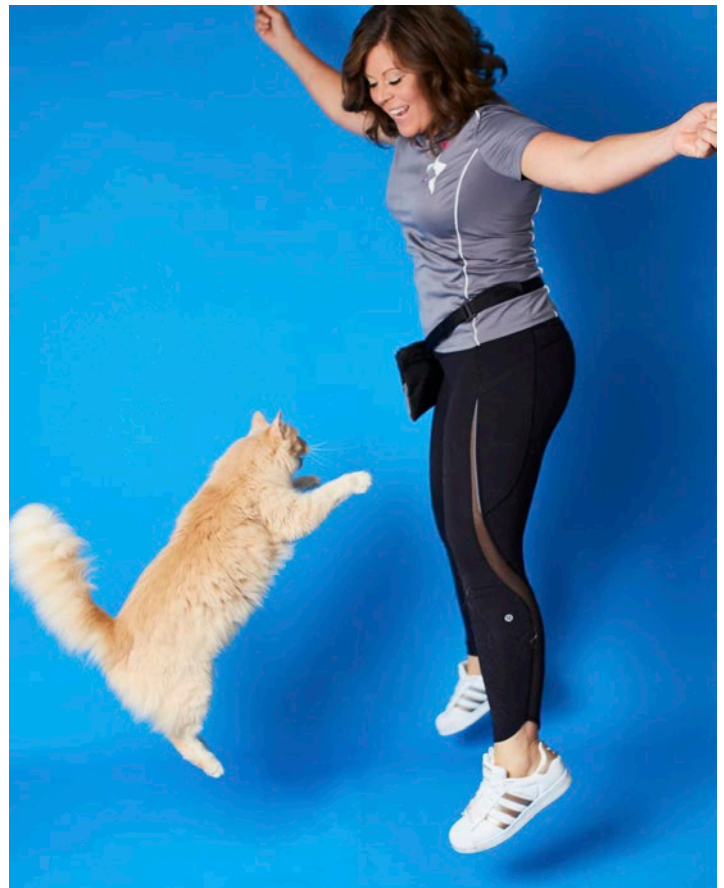
Lucy Drury

Walking into professional animal trainer Trish Seifried's spotless home in Eureka, Missouri, is a pet-lover's dream. Visitors will be greeted by three happy dogs, a chatty green-winged Macaw, and a multi-colored clowder of domestic long and shorthairs, three Siberians, and a macho Bambino, Rogan, who at any moment may launch himself on to your shoulder. The first time I walked into Trish's home to deliver her first Siberian, I was in awe. I had brought Snowball, a 9-month-old blue lynx point and white neuter who would eventually become GP, RW Cyberkoshki Moonlite Imaginations, there for a trial evaluation while I was attending the 2019 CFA Annual. We decided that he would visit her while I was in New York and if she thought he was a good fit, he would stay, if I could take him to shows to finish his Grand Premier title.

A Crash Course in Feline Behavior

I thought I knew cats after owning rescues for over 30 years and Siberians for the last eight years. I found when it came to cat behavior, I knew next to nothing. As Trish introduced me to her cats, my awe increased. I had never seen cats like this before. Many came right up to me to greet me. All of them were trained to do many tricks and behaviors, and many of them had their own, special signature tricks. Foxy, a black domestic shorthair who was featured a few years ago on the cover of *Cat Talk*, would extend his claws on command. Beans, a blue and white longhair, could do somersaults and rub objects on command. Rosemary, a tortoiseshell shorthair, was an expert at weaving through poles and Trish's legs. Jimmy Choo, a brown classic tabby shorthair had a face that seemed familiar; then I realized it was the same face that greeted me twice a day from the can of prescription cat food that one of my retirees needs. Chow Chow, a solid blue longhair could leap off a high tower, tell you his name, or walk backwards to a mark on command. Most of these cats are rescues and have a story to tell. However, none of them can compare with the story of Kit Kat, Trish's cream longhair neuter, who greeted me with purrs and high fives.

I fell in love with Trish's cats, and they with me, but Kit Kat was something beyond special. Trish calls him her angel cat—a gift from heaven—and it wasn't hard to see why. Kit Kat has a heart of gold and a work ethic that would put most people to shame. I soon learned Kit Kat's signature trick is jumping rope and he was also the leader of the CatBoss TV High Five cat team. Over the last few years, I've been privileged to spend quality time with Kit Kat and the rest of the CatBoss TV crew on the road and have learned even more about how amazing they are. So, with the exception of Trish, no one was more thrilled than I was to find out that at age of 13, Kit Kat was given the recognition he so richly deserves. On July 27th, 2023, as documented by the Guinness Book of World Records. Kit Kat officially set the world record for most skips of a jump rope—nine in one minute.



Destined to be a Star

Trish rescued Kit Kat, his mom, and his littermates from a friend's barn when the kittens were about four weeks old. Trish was the lead trainer for the Purina ProPlan Performance Team at the time and knew that Kit Kat and his brother Chow Chow were something special, so she moved them to the Visitor's Center at Purina Farms. Prior to coming back home to Purina Farms, Trish had spent the first ten years of her animal training career at SeaWorld and Busch Gardens, learning her craft from world-class animal trainers Jack Hanna and Joel Slavin. While there, Trish and her team selected hundreds of rescue animals to perform in their popular pet shows, so Trish knew how to immediately spot an animal star. While mom and the rest of the litter were eventually adopted out, Kit Kat and Chow Chow stayed at Purina Farms and were trained by Trish to be part of their small animal show. Between the early exposure to crowds of people interacting with them, to the daily training from Trish, Kit Kat and Chow Chow became rock solid performers, unphased by the noise and commotion of crowds, whether it be a production studio, a shopping mall, casino, or stage. Kit Kat, Trish, and the rest of the Purina Pro Performance Team put those talents on display at the very first cat show at the newly opened Purina Farms Event Center. During the November 2011, Midwest TGIF Fanciers CFA cat show, Chow Chow wowed exhibitors and spectators with his dives off a high jump, but it was Kit Kat who stole the show with his amazing ability to skip rope with Trish. Kit Kat has also competed in the Household Pet division at other TGIF shows.

A few years later, when Trish left Purina Farms to start her own animal talent agency, Got Pet-ential, Kit Kat and Chow Chow left with

her. Their hearts were tightly bonded with hers, and to perform with another trainer was not an option. Kit Kat and his brother, along with the growing Got Pet-ential crew, continued their career as highly sought-after animal actors, including roles as featured entertainers in vendor booths at veterinary and pet product conventions, greeting booth visitors with high fives and performing many other tricks in their portfolio to the delight of the crowds.

What – Cats Can Be Trained???

Trish often receives comments from amazed spectators along the lines of, “I didn’t know you could train a cat!”, or “My cat could never do that, they run and hide when visitors come to our home!”, or “My cat just freaks out when I even try to put them in a carrier!” These comments troubled Trish, as she knew from over 20 years of training dogs, cats, and a variety of other animals including squirrels, foxes, and even a cedar waxwing or a frog in her backyard, that almost all animals can be trained. Especially cats. She wanted to bust that myth that cats can’t be trained, along with the one that cats are solitary creatures and could care less about humans except at dinner time. While Kit Kat and Chow Chow had unusual exposure to crowds at an early age, that was not true for many of her other cats. They came to her at a variety of ages and backgrounds, from the completely feral Malibu Blue she caught while he was dumpster diving behind a local restaurant, who she then tamed and taught numerous tricks, to the pampered skateboarding Siberian Bali, who came to her at the age of 9 months after a brief CFA show career and soon joined his adopted brothers Kit Kat and Chow Chow on set and on the convention circuit.

To combat these myths regarding cats and their trainability, Trish launched her own brand, CatBoss TV, under her parent company in 2017 to change the way people see cats for the better and help them learn how to better manage them at home and away. Under the CatBoss TV brand, she promoted her training and socialization philosophies at conventions and on social media and offered tools such as training marks and socialization hoodies.

Unfortunately, just as the 2020 convention season started and CatBoss TV concept was

well under way, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, shutting down large gatherings and greatly decreasing the number of requests for animal talent. Trish needed a way to keep her CatBoss TV crew on top of their game, so she embarked on a number of projects, including creating a mobile cat training applications which kept feline crew working and in front of a camera, and letting the world know just how awesome a cat Kit Kat is.

Time to Shine

Kit Kat was not the first cat that Trish trained to jump rope. That honor belongs to Friskie, also a Purina Farms rescue whose life was sadly shortened by FeLV. Friskie is believed to be the first cat ever to be taught to jump rope. Trish honored Friskie by teaching his signature trick to Kit Kat, who thoroughly embraced it. Kit Kat’s laser focus on Trish when working made her believe he could set a world record for his signature jump rope trick, and she began learning about the process of submitting an application for a record. The process of submitting and properly validating records is detailed and exacting. Because of the pandemic, some of the rules were modified due to the lock downs, so instead of performing the record in public, Kit Kat’s attempt was recorded in Trish’s home studio with the specified timekeepers and witnesses. Much to everyone’s delight, Kit Kat completed nine skips of a rope with Trish in one minute!

Now came the difficult part—submitting the record to Guinness World Records. Not only did the team have to submit the recording and documentation of the effort properly, with all the attestations of the timekeeper and witnesses, the criteria for the record itself had to be established. That process took well over two years, with some speed bumps along the way, but in January 2023, Trish was notified that Kit Kat’s application for the record had been accepted, and things moved more quickly after that. On July 27, 2023, she and Kit Kat received the happy news that Guinness had validated Kit Kat’s record and Trish’s dream for Kit Kat was fulfilled—he was forever enshrined in the Guinness Book of World Records with the most skips of a jump rope in one minute by a cat! Now the world would know what we all knew—just how special Kit Kat is!

More to Come

Kit Kat and Trish did not rest on their laurels after submitting Kit Kat’s documentation for the jump rope record. They were already working on the next one! Kit Kat’s ability to give out high fives was legendary, with conference attendees coming back year after year to get high fives from their favorite feline, telling Trish that Kit Kat and his friends were the highlight of the conference for them! Trish decided that she and Kit Kat would go after a few high five records next – most high fives in one minute with the same person, and highest number of individuals getting a high five from the same cat in one minute.

There were a few speed bumps along the way, though. The attempt would have to wait until COVID restrictions were lifted, as this was one we could not do in Trish’s studio. After a year’s layoff, conferences again resumed in 2022 with the January VMX veterinary conference in Orlando, and Trish was taking a big crew to this show, deciding to drive the two days rather than fly. Trish had to get a lot of cats back in the groove, and she wanted to take more cats than she had people attending.

Unfortunately, tragedy nearly struck. Kit Kat was refusing to eat, only occasionally accepting his favorite Tiki Stix. He was clearly off, and we started seeing some mild seizures and tremors along with an inability to urinate. We determined that he was reacting from a new flea preventative that had been recommended, a theory that was later validated by other cats having reactions – but none so immediate and severe as Kit Kat. As soon as we arrived in Orlando, unpacked, and the other cats settled with the rest of the human crew, Trish and I headed to the nearest open emergency clinic about an hour away. It was a Friday evening on a holiday weekend, and even finding a place open was difficult, but we did. Kit Kat’s case was ruled an emergency because of the blockage and they moved us to near the head of the line. Kit Kat was admitted, his blockage cleared, and he received IV fluids. They were skeptical about his flea treatment reaction, but as they were treating his obvious symptoms we decided not to get into a debate over root cause at this moment in time. With the blockage cleared and drugs given to reduce the inflammation and swelling, Kit Kat was already showing signs of improvement.



Water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink....

While Kit Kat was improving, we still felt he needed more time on fluids to wash out the toxins. We were thrown another curve, though. The emergency clinic we took him to was a model we had never run into before – they were only emergency nights and weekends. During the day, they were a regular veterinary practice and he had to be out by 7 AM Monday morning, when our “day vet” was supposed to take over his care. Trouble is, we didn’t have a “day vet” in Orlando, and it was impossible to find one. They were all at the convention, and there was no room on the schedules of those who were working. Our only option was another ER even further away, and they had an 11 hour wait in their parking lot. We decided we would just pick him up, take him to the convention where I would monitor him closely. They had left the catheter in for IV fluids from the day vet, but we had a first aid kit and felt comfortable removing it ourselves. That quickly changed when we removed the bandage and found a tangled mess of hair and tape. Back to the drawing board! I finally found a vet that could see him. She gave him more fluids and then removed the catheter.

He was still recovering, so we contemplated our next move. Gamer that that Kit Kat was, he clearly indicated that he wanted to go out and work, so Trish took him out for a short visit to his friends rather than have him stress about having to remain behind.



The brief visit to the convention floor seemed to revitalize Kit Kat, but that evening he still was showing signs of tremors. We checked a walk-in clinic at a big box pet store, where there was no vet on duty, but a helpful vet tech told us to get some unflavored pediatric electrolyte solution and give it to him to continue flushing his system.

We did, and we noticed even more improvement in him. We had found a clinic in the Atlanta area that would see him on the way home, but his improvement was so dramatic after the electrolytes that we decided just to head straight home and continue to treat him ourselves with his meds and electrolytes. Kit Kat seemed to know that the electrolytes were helping him and would walk over and tap the bottle when he wanted more, which we gladly obliged. Between conventions, we continued to treat Kit Kat with extra fluids and medication. After several months of treatment, he eventually cleared the toxins and returned to the convention circuit.

At the March 2023 Global Pet Conference in Orlando, Kit Kat was ready to make his attempt in the booth of a major global cat food vendor. The booth staff lined up, and Kit Kat delivered high fives to a whopping 29 people in one minute! He followed that up with giving Trish 60 high fives in one minute, setting two records in one conference! Trish and Kit Kat are eagerly waiting for Guinness to make this new achievement official! Stay tuned!

Party Time!

Trish and Kit Kat got the big news about Kit Kat’s jump rope record less than a week before they were scheduled to appear as entertainers at the August 2023 Midwest TGIF Fanciers’ CFA cat show at their old stomping grounds, Purina Farms. They celebrated with in true CFA fashion with – what else – a cake, and a big bowl of Kit Kat bars, appropriately, at the very place where Kit Kat’s career was launched.

A few days later, Vicki Newman, the lead digital editor for Guinness World Records, published a story about Kit Kat and his story hit the newswires. Kit Kat’s amazing feat was picked up by TV stations, website, newspapers, and magazines across the world, including *People Magazine*! Kit Kat is now one of the most famous cats in the world.

Trish continues to participate in CFA as an exhibitor and breeder when not on the road or on set with her performing crew. The youngest of her current crew of performing Siberians, GP Cyberkoshki The Greatest Story, completed his Grand Premier title during Kit Kat’s Guinness celebration! In addition to Bali and Story, CH Basilic Blessing Raise A Hallelujah (Halle), a silver classic tabby and white spayed Siberian, rounds out her trio of performing Siberians. Trish is also co-owner of the 2022-23 Region 1-9 Siberian Breed Winner GC, BWR, RW Cyberkoshki Call Me Mighty, and is currently co-breeder of five Siberian CFA registered litters. A new face will be joining the CatBoss TV performance team – CH, GP Castlekatz Colby, a cream tabby British Shorthair, made his home with Trish and earned his Grand Premier title.

Want to see Kit Kat, Trish and the amazing CatBoss TV cats for yourself? They will be appearing at the 2023 CFA International Show handing out high fives and performing some of their other amazing tricks! Come see them at the show, get a high five from the crew, and learn from the best why cats CAN be trained and why you should train yours, too!