



# It's Hero Kitty to the Rescue

BY MARY SCHWAGER



**F**ive years ago, Danielle Schafer spotted a stray kitten on a rural street in upstate New York. She took her home, and named her Kitty. The beautiful, green-eyed feline, clearly smitten with her rescuer, made it pretty clear she wanted to stay. "She would run down the stairs meowing at me," Danielle says. "She was a cuddle bug. So playful."

Danielle fell in love. She never intended to adopt Kitty, but it's a good thing she did. Last fall, Kitty became the hero.

## Kitty to the rescue

The pair moved to an apartment in Lansing, New York, while Danielle attended her last year of veterinary school at Cornell University.

One night, Kitty startled Danielle awake by jumping on her chest. Then Danielle heard an explosion. She and Kitty bolted off the bed, and Danielle ran to her front door and saw a fire.

Panicked, she ran back to her room, but she couldn't find Kitty. "I was calling for her. I was screaming and crying," Danielle says.

She tried to leave and get help, but flames blocked her front door. In a frenzy, she closed her bedroom door and escaped through a patio door.

## Even more heroes

In bare feet, wearing only pajamas, Danielle yelled for help. A man passing by ran over. "I kept saying, 'My cat is in there,'" Danielle says.

The man broke her bedroom window. When Danielle tried to climb in to find Kitty, he stopped her. The entire building was now on fire, and a family trapped on the second floor started yelling. Fire also blocked their front door.

The parents dropped their two children out a window to Danielle and the man. With the kids in their arms, they ran to a parking lot, as the children's parents managed to escape.

When firefighters arrived, Danielle begged them to find Kitty. "I was so persistent, I wouldn't stop," she says.

After everyone got out safely, rescue crews convinced residents to go to a hotel and warm up. Reluctantly, Danielle left. The moment dawn broke,

Danielle raced back to her apartment. She felt sick when she saw that most of the building was destroyed.

Then, like a scene in a movie, a firefighter appeared with Kitty in his arms. "I was so thankful. I kept hugging and kissing him," Danielle says.

That hero was Brad George, from the Lansing Fire Department. He, too, was determined to find Kitty and went back to Danielle's apartment. "I said, 'This cat is in this bedroom, I know it,'" Brad says.

He flipped over the pillows on

Danielle's bed, discovered Kitty and took her up in his coat. "She was trying to lick my nose," Brad says.

## So many miracles

Danielle then learned of the incredible events that helped save Kitty. When she closed her bedroom door, it helped shut out the fire. Her broken window created a vent of fresh air. And Danielle's pillows helped filter the air Kitty breathed. Kitty spent a few days in the animal hospital but is now healthy.

Danielle says she has many heroes to thank. The mystery man she never saw again, who broke her window and helped her save the children. Brad, who didn't give up looking for Kitty. And Kitty herself, who alerted her to the fire. "She didn't just save me," Danielle says. "She helped me help other people."

Danielle loves the attention Kitty's heroism is receiving. "Everyone calls her hero kitty now. It's perfect," she says. "You should save a random cat on the side of the road — one day they may save your life." 🐾



**Mary Schwager**, aka WatchdogMary, is a TV and print journalist watchdogging for animals. She is honored to have won 16 Emmys and 8 Edward R. Murrow and Associated Press awards for investigative reporting and writing. Send her story ideas via [watchdogmary.com](http://watchdogmary.com).



