

Junior ACFA - The beginning of our future

April 20, 1997, marked the launching of Junior ACFA! Five young people were inducted as charter members of the newly established Junior ACFA. They were: Hillary Brown, Leanne Follweiler, Bradley Harban, Erin Hisey, and Courtney Keating. The induction ceremony was held as a part of Purr-Fect Reflections Cat Show in Pottstown, Pennsylvania.

Kenneth Miller, ACFA Allbreed Judge and Junior ACFA Committee Member, presented certificates of Charter Membership and ACFA Lapel Pins to each of the youngsters. These young people have been actively involved in the hobby of raising, caring for and showing cats - either purebred or mixed ancestry. One of the inductees is a Licensed chief ring clerk - another has their own registered cattery with ACFA. Others help during shows by stewarding, running the raffle tables, or providing hospitality to ring personnel. Each child has at least one cat registered in their name, and each takes great pride in showing their cat throughout the season.

If you know a child who meets the above criteria, please have their parents contact Kayla Irmsher , Junior ACFA Committee Chair, 444 Vincent Ave, Victoria, BC V9A 2G9 Canada .

_____ YES, please send me more information on the Junior ACFA program

My address is _____

City _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Cut out and send to Kayla Irmsher , 444 Vincent Ave, Victoria, BC V9A 2G9 Canada

ACFA's Junior Division

Kayla Irmsher, Committee Chair, is actively leading this program. The young people are the future of our Association, and the future of the cat fancy as a whole. Many young people are lost to other activities because there is no logical sequence of advancement for them. The Junior ACFA program will help fill that void.

We must cultivate their energy and enthusiasm, and channel this in positive directions, with positive reinforcements, in order for our youth to continue in the hobby of pedigree and household pet registration and exhibition.

As you know, most young people start their active participation at cat shows by stewarding (cleaning cages with disinfectant). the position of cage steward is a thankless job. By the time our children are old enough and tall enough to easily handle this task, they are old enough to voice their displeasure regarding the job.

There are several young people in the Northeast and Southeast regions exhibiting cats of their own. They do this with great enthusiasm, dedication, and pride. These young people are no longer interested in cleaning cages at shows - they want to see their cats judged. One young lady recently registered her cattery name with ACFA, with her father as co-owner (she just turned 12). She has already selected her breed, acquired a breeding pair and has a breeding program underway. (She did not choose the same breed her parents raise.) She knows the standards for her breed, studied the cats being shown by different breeders in her area, and made her well-educated selections. She keeps track of her cats' points in show, helps with the show-grooming, and if she's not been kidnapped to steward, she presents her cats for competition.

There must be other young people in the cat fancy doing much the same thing, just as there must be young people out in the "real world" interested in cats, who would also like to exhibit and perhaps raise pedigreed cats or exhibit their household pet cat.

The Cat Fancy is a micro-cosm - a world unto itself. Entry into our world is fairly well-hidden from the casual observer. You have to know someone in our world to gain access. Cat clubs don't advertise their meetings, breeders often don't openly advertise, and we've stopped listing exhibitor's addresses in the show catalogs. True, we've had good reason to remain anonymous. But our anonymity, while shielding us from over-zealous animal rights activists, is also preventing our growth.

It's time to enlist breeders and exhibitors across the nation, to embrace our youth -- by initiating a mentor program.

If you are interested in helping with Junior ACFA, or know of a young person who fits the bill, contact Kayla Irmsher, Committee Chair, at 444 Vincent Ave, Victoria, BC V9A 2G9 Canada for information.