

Twenty Toes Cat Sitting was really started by the people who identified me as a cat person and asked me to take care of their cats when they went away. This happened after I left a corporate job (15+ years in a technical field) to start a personal chef business.

I never had any intention to become a pet sitter, much less a special needs cat caregiver. However, my love of cats led me down this path, and it wasn't an easy path.

I am not a veterinary technician (licensed or otherwise). I have never worked in a veterinary practice or hospital. I am simply a cat owner.

In the beginning, since I had no intention to start a cat sitting business, I would catsit for a nominal amount of money and donate it to my favorite cat shelter. I figured I liked taking care of cats and that this was just going to be a once-in-a-while thing, so it would be a nice way to donate money to one of my favorite local causes.

It didn't take long before people were saying "I want YOU to take the money. I don't want you to donate it." How odd, eh? So, in 2004 I went to the county office and filed a DBA (Doing Business As) certificate for Twenty Toes Cat Sitting, to establish the business. Next step, join the local petsitter group, CAPPs (Capital Area Professional Petsitters). The person I contacted said "You need to have petsitting insurance before you can join our group." Wow, petsitting insurance? Who ever heard of that? I went out and got my petsitting insurance.

During all of this, I kept working to promote my personal chef business, and get enough customers to earn a living. Despite all my efforts, it just never got to that level. In the meantime, the catsitting just went crazy. I had a lot more cat sitting than I could handle with the other business, so I was faced with either closing down the catsitting or hiring employees. In the past, I swore I would never hire employees, because of all the extra work I'd have to do to handle that.

So much for that. I did hire three people and put them to work so I could focus on my other business. That didn't pan out. In 2010 I finally admitted that catsitting was now my full time profession. I changed entities to an LLC (Limited Liability Company) and shifted my life around. In 2016, after employing 30 people at various times over 10 years, I threw in the towel on trying to run a business with employees and I am now the sole worker.

From the personal side -- I credit one of my cats, Jordan, for being the true beginning of this business. He suffered massive kidney failure in 1997. His creatinine was 22.5 ... normal is around 1-2. The veterinarian at the time said she had heard that cats with levels as high as 17 had lived. So, we weren't very hopeful.

My husband, Alan, and I were told we could take Jordan home and try giving him subcutaneous fluids. I was the kind of person who couldn't even watch a vet give my cat a vaccination! No kidding! So, to say I was distraught over the turn of events is putting it mildly. I had never heard of subcutaneous fluids, and I did not know and could not find anyone else who was doing this at home.

We bought Jordan home. And then I had to try sticking what seemed like a giant needle into my cat and make him hold still while fluid dripped into him, under his skin. Every day. I couldn't even get the needle into him, I was crying. I felt like he was going to die because I just couldn't do this. Alan and I finally got the procedure figured out. It was still extremely traumatic to me for a long time. I would start shaking at work in the afternoon, knowing I had to go home and do this.

Jordan lived almost three more years -- we really thought if we got three more months for him that would be good. So, we were really happy in the long run. However, we found out it was next to impossible to find someone to give him fluids so we could go away. You can swap catsitting with your friends, but your friends sure aren't going to stick needles into your cat!

But, that's ok, as during this time one of our other cats, Io, was diagnosed as being diabetic and we had to give her insulin injections twice a day. Even after Jordan and Io died, our 3rd cat, Fritz, was diagnosed with BOTH diabetes and kidney failure. Like it or not, we became homebodies.

After Fritz we were able to enjoy our other cats with just petting and play time. But those needle skills were now a really ingrained part of me and I was starting to hear of other people who were giving their cats fluids. I thought it would be a good idea to put my skills to use to help other cat owners. When I started doing my catsitting, I really meant to just be doing cat sitting for cats that needed fluids. Everyone else in the world had a different idea! What you see now is the result of me just trying to roll with what has come my way.

And no, most cats do not have Twenty Toes, but special cats do! :)