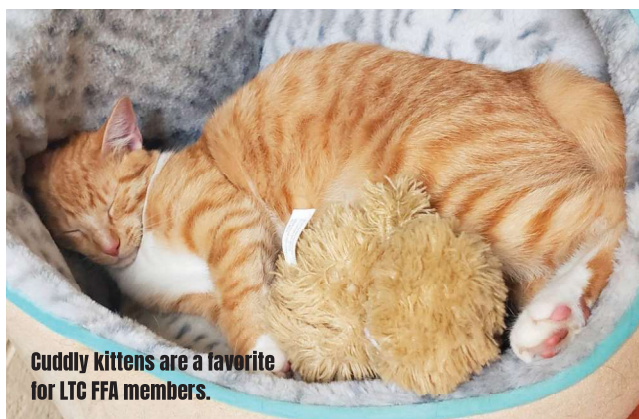
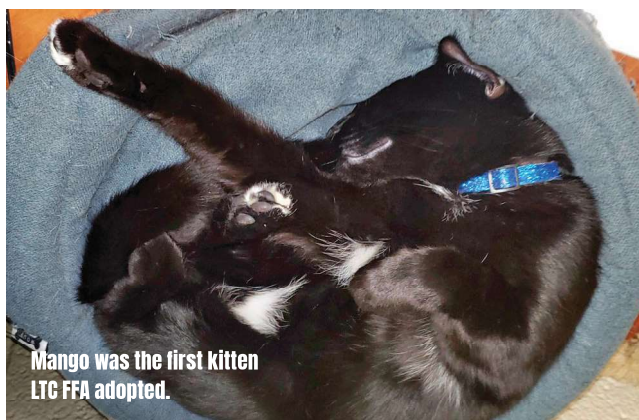


Teacher's Pets

This FFA chapter in South Carolina partners with a local humane society to take in, tame and rehome animals. – By Lauren Denton



Cuddly kittens are a favorite for LTC FFA members.



Mango was the first kitten LTC FFA adopted.

Robert Bollier's classroom at Lexington Technology Center (LTC) in South Carolina unites students from five high schools. The diverse classes get hands-on experience with a variety of small animals, socializing them for adoption.

It began four years ago when a student brought in a stray black kitten named Mango. Bollier remembers saying, "We'll see what we can do for that one wild-as-can-be animal."

The project has grown since. More than 30 animals have been adopted in four years; over half of those found new homes in 2022. In addition to cats, the students have tamed rabbits, guinea pigs and even a parakeet they found in a bush outside the school.

"I draw the line at reptiles," says Bollier, who has taught animal science for nine years at LTC.

Bollier and LTC FFA had been using their own funds for basic care, including spaying and neutering, when a partnership with the Humane Society of South Carolina occurred by chance, Bollier says. The organization's executive director, Dawn Wilkinson, stopped by to donate her family's guinea pig supplies, spotted all the small animals and instantly offered to provide basic care. Now the two groups work together to promote animal welfare and match pets with homes.

"The students get to love on the animals," Bollier says. And the animals love them back. "The animals know when every block starts," he adds. "They wait at the door, and the first thing the kids do when they come in the room is pet them."

"Those animals are living their best lives," Wilkinson says. "I wish every school district had a similar program to take the burden off shelters. Not only are more animals finding a home, but also we know we're sending them out with the best start possible."

"It does the kids good too," Bollier says. "It's one of those things that makes a difference for them — and that they can make a difference in."