

By [Nona Nelson](#) The Roanoke Times

Angels of Assisi has a feline placement program called **Barn Cat Buddies**, where friendly and semi-feral cats are permanently placed on farms, warehouses or garden centers, where they act as "rodent control technicians," according to the program's volunteer director, **Diane Novak**.

"Barn Cat Buddies will mouse for food," Novak said. She founded the Barn Cat Buddies program as a way to place animals that are on death row as well as some of Assisi's long-term feline residents. All the cats have been spayed or neutered and are current on rabies vaccines before they are placed. Potential adopters are screened so they understand the barn cat buddy protocol and cats are personality-tested to make the best match with prospective "employers."

Barn cats are usually adopted in pairs, Novak said, because cats typically adapt better to a new setting when they are placed with a familiar feline. But single kitties have also been placed through the BCB program.

Diamond Hill Nursery: After a lengthy search for the perfect cat, Robert Matzuga, co-owner of the Diamond Hill Garden Center in Moneta, found Woody last month and adopted him through the Barn Cat Buddy program. The gray-and-white tabby is now "vice president of public relations" for the garden center. "He's the main man," Matzuga said. Linda Fultz, a clerk at Diamond Hill, said Woody has been great with customers. "He's adjusted very well," she said. "He's very smart."

Matzuga said the cat has already started patrolling the grounds to perform his crucial role as garden center security guard. "He's on vole patrol," Matzuga said. "He's already actively looking and searching." The majority of barn cats have thrived in their new jobs, Novak said. She has sent cats to live in barns as far away as Wythe County. Only three cats have decided they weren't cut out for the work and abandoned their posts.

Though Novak isn't shy about promoting the program, the unfortunate consequence is that she usually gets calls from people wanting to her to take unwanted kitties and not from potential adopters. Unfortunately there's never a shortage of cats that need a place to live and work she says.

Novak says "The biggest challenge is having a reserve of barns, warehouses, plant/tree nurseries to take them."

Anyone interested in learning more can email Novak at diane@barncatbuddies.org where they can be emailed the barn cat buddy protocol. Calls can be made to the BCB extension through Angels of Assisi at 344-8707 ext. 3