



CAT crusader

- Written by Kathleen Donnelly
- Photograph by Amanda Koster

When Dan Kraus pulls up to a job, the atmosphere is as tense as a traumatized tabby. Kraus—champion tree climber, certified arborist, suburban superhero—jumps out of his truck (license plate “CAT RESQ”), grabs his cat carrier and his heavy-duty gloves, and starts climbing.

Wherever there is a feline in distress, there is Dan Kraus, cat Samaritan.

Kraus, a mild-mannered 37-year-old from Bothell, has been extracting cats from Seattle-area trees for four years—or 294 cats as of last count. He began offering his services when he heard how many desperate pet lovers called local tree companies, fire departments and police agencies looking for help.

“It got me thinking,” he says. “Who you gonna call when your cat’s stuck in a tree? I thought I was the right person.”

Consider his qualifications: He’s been the Pacific Northwest tree-climbing champion for six years running. He likes cats and has three: Faye, Bo and Sweetie. “Plus,” he says, “I’m a ham. I like to be the hero.”

Once or twice a week, Kraus picks up a distress call on his answering machine, gathers his gear and races to the rescue. “I get a line in the tree and work my way up,” he says. “Usually the cat’s crying the whole time, and as I get closer I can tell what kind of cat it is, whether it’s scared of me or not.”

Kraus coos the kitty’s name, scratches behind its ears, and in one swift movement peels the pet off the limb “like Velcro.” Then it’s into the carrier and down the tree, usually to the cheers of the neighborhood.

Swinging up the tree using ropes—never spikes—is fun. Gathering up the cat is challenging. Collecting his \$50 fee is fine. But, Kraus admits, he’s in it for the adulation.

“My favorite rescues are the ones in which the people are so distressed over the cat, the kids are crying, the neighborhood is out and everyone’s cheering,” he says a bit sheepishly. “I love that.” ■

Contact Dan Kraus’ cat rescue service at (425) 806-3845.