

# STRAY CATS

Shop owner Kim Padgett saves strays of all kinds from young kittens to old barns. Once a rescuer always a rescuer!

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What does finding a home for stray animals have to do with a vintage shop? It's all about the rescue. Kim Padgett, owner of the Stray Cats vintage shop in Birmingham, Alabama, readily admits she has a soft spot for stray animals. She and husband Lee Stewart currently have 12 rescued animals on their mini-farm—cats, dogs, and horses. So when she opened a shop it came as no surprise that Kim found herself rescuing again, but this time it was things that could be recycled and reused like vintage furniture and knickknacks.

Kim studied business in college and took the predictable corporate job, but it wasn't long before she craved a more imaginative outlet. "I realized I needed to create to be happy," she says. Nearly two decades ago, she opened Stray Cats in a small house and as her inventory of vintage finds grew, so did her need for space. It was another two moves before Stray Cats landed in its present building. During this time, she met her husband, Lee, who describes himself as an "I can do that" kind of guy.

These headboards created from salvaged materials are sized for twin beds, but Lee makes them in all sizes. New pillows, plus handmade lamps and tables offer more options to complete a bedroom design.



Kim and Lee are perfect partners in a home décor business using vintage materials to make new dressers, tables, sideboards, and more. They salvage wood from old houses and barns, and incorporate other materials in most of the designs, often corrugated tin. Lee builds the pieces and Kim does the finishing. "We like to think when we build a piece of furniture it can be passed down for generations. We even sign each piece with our name," says Lee, who is self-taught and loves working with his hands.

Custom furniture is their main business, but they also offer new merchandise that complements their designs, such as lamps, linens, and signage. Many shoppers come in looking for a unique accent piece, while others have a long wish list hoping to furnish an entire cottage or lake house. Either way, they often return as old friends stopping by to see what's new from Lee's woodshed.

Kim describes their business saying, "We believe in recycling and reusing materials—or, in other words, rediscovering stray beauty." Strays are not stray for long around Kim. ♡



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