

# Shelter Spotlight



## CAT Food Bank is Preventive Aid for Those on Tough Times

While bulls and bears keep chasing up and down Wall Street banging up the economy, cats and dogs still need loving homes with stocked pantries. That is becoming more and more difficult for some pet owners to manage.

When owners feel crunched by financial downturns, they often scour the household budgets to trim excesses. Unfortunately, that sometimes means cats and dogs are surrendered to shelters due to the costs of keeping them healthy and fed.



Cat Adoption Team gave more than 1,000 pounds of cat food to owners in need in November.

Cat Adoption Team (CAT) in Sherwood, Ore., has long coped with such surrenders. Now it has set up a strategy to prevent them: a pet food bank.

The Portland-area shelter has many publicity and fundraising programs and services built on seemingly endless founts of creativity and energy — fix-a-thons, fundraising dinners, an on-site hospital, a car donation initiative, cat photo calendars, a retail boutique — but the pet food bank stands out. It is a proactive program to aid people who feel squeezed by

the economics of pet ownership.

An advantage for hosting the food bank is CAT's location in a former manufacturing site. Space in what had once been a warehouse, now holds shelves donated by a local PetSmart; those shelves are stocked with donated cat food, including Purina brand cat foods. The first Sunday of each month doors open to pet owners who receive government aid (no proof necessary). The owners fill out a brief form and are sent home with a month's worth of food for up to four cats.

"We ask about the cats so we can give food that is appropriate, such as if their cat is a senior or needs a particular diet," says Kathy Covey, Public Relations and Marketing Manager, CAT. "We also give them instructions on how to mix foods, since they may have a different brand already at home. We're lucky that with a veterinarian on site we're able to make sure our instructions are right."

CAT uses the food bank interaction to promote other health measures to be taken, as necessary, by pet owners.

"When they come to the food bank, we talk about cat behaviors. We also provide information on spaying and neutering; we encourage it," Kathy says. "We explain that we have the resources available and at discounted cost. That's where our fix-a-thons come in."

The domino effect of CAT's food bank has drummed up more awareness for the organization, in general.

"The food bank has far-reaching ramifications beyond the basic benefit of helping at the moment," Kathy

says. For example, marketing and grant opportunities have increased.

And CAT's reach continues to grow.

The food bank program began in June 2008. It gave away more than 3,000 pounds of food in its first six months of operation, though open for only those few hours one Sunday each month.

On average, CAT is feeding 53 cats per month, but its impact, in terms of poundage of food, has mounted exponentially. In November, the food bank handed out more than 1,000 pounds of cat food.

"We're not in the heart of Portland. We're in the suburbs, miles from the main highway, and people are coming to us," Kathy says. "We feel like the food bank has been wildly successful, and we're glad we can give them food and keep the cats in their homes."

The giving feeling, Kathy says, reaches to any shelters who are interested in using the idea for themselves, too.

"This was not a proprietary idea of ours," Kathy says. "We want to help others help pets."

For tips on how to start a food bank in your area, contact Kathy Covey at (503) 925-8903 or [kathyc@catadoptionteam.org](mailto:kathyc@catadoptionteam.org). For more information about Cat Adoption Team, visit [www.CatAdoptionTeam.org](http://www.CatAdoptionTeam.org). 🐾

## 2007 Quick Facts Cat Adoption Team

**Cats rescued:** 3,129

**Cats placed in foster homes:** 1,302

**Cats spayed or neutered:** 2,571

### Staff:

Total volunteers — More than 400

Food bank volunteers — 6

Paid staff — Fewer than 30

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