



The Oregonian

Cat Adoption Team has 400 cats needing homes

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Some people will give their loved ones electronic gadgets for the holidays.

Others will put sweaters, books or CDs under the Christmas tree.

But with a little planning, a cat or kitten can be a holiday gift that keeps on giving for years. And that's why Sherwood's Cat Adoption Team is reminding everyone that more than 400 cats are looking for homes.

To boost the effort, the team -- CAT to those in the know -- is offering some specials that cut the cost of safe, healthy feline adoptions. However, the key is planning, to ensure that the furry four-footer lands in the right situation.

"Making sure it's a well-planned adoption can make all the difference," says Kathy Covey, the team's spokeswoman. "You want to make sure that children understand the responsibilities and that their parents realize they'll ultimately be responsible. Kids may go off to college, where they're not allowed to keep pets in their dorm rooms, and the cat will remain at home with the parents."

But even if someone isn't completely sure about bringing home a cat or kitten, the Cat Adoption Team offers a program for "trial marriage," so to speak.

"They can try being a foster parent for a homeless cat or kitten," says Britta Bavaresco, executive director. "That can be anything from two weeks to two months to see if it works out, to make sure there aren't any allergies or problems with other pets or family members."

And it's not as if CAT will run short of homeless cats. The shelter, the largest no-kill nonprofit cat shelter in the Northwest, is housing about 250 cats at its Southwest Galbreath Drive headquarters. Another 150 have been placed with foster families that can offer temporary homes. And still others are housed at pet shops such as PetSmart, Petco, Petloft and Nature's Pet, which partner with CAT to provide community outreach.

"Well," Bavaresco says with a sigh, "we never run out."

From Dec. 7 to 16, CAT is offering \$25 off its adoption fee for a cat at least a year old. "Better With a Buddy" adoptions, for feline pairs, will be \$50 off the regular fees. Details on the fees and special holiday hours can be obtained by calling 503-925-8903 or by visiting www.catadoptionteam.org on the Internet.

All cats offered for adoption have been spayed or neutered. They also will be vaccinated and have microchips implanted, along with an accompanying registration. All cats will be treated for fleas and worms, as well as tested for feline leukemia and FIV, the feline version of AIDS.

Covey says gift-givers can enjoy more successful cat adoptions by giving the recipient an adoption gift certificate that can be used to find the "cat of their dreams."

In addition, giving a "care box" full of toys, catnip, cat box litter and other feline essentials can give kids,

especially, some good clues to understanding what cats like and need.

"The worst thing is if a cat becomes just another gift and gets lost in all the hubbub," Covey says. "There has to be a good setting for a bond to develop between the cat and its new owner."

Of course, open doors can pose a danger to the cat, which may dart out before understanding where its new home is.

Other tips include:

Placing heirlooms out of reach

Decorating with cat-friendly items

Avoiding tinsel and curling ribbons that can cause intestinal issues if eaten

Keeping candles away from areas where cats roam

Covering the water in the Christmas tree stand to discourage cats from drinking

Keeping holiday plants out of nibbling range

"And if you're hosting a party, your cat will most likely enjoy the evening better from the quiet and safety of an off-limits bedroom," Covey says.

But after a well-planned entrance, a cat can make a great companion.

"They're good friends," Bavaresco says. "It makes me feel good every time a cat greets me."

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