

Adopt a Cat: Save a Life and Improve Your Own

Our cat Frank moved on to kitty heaven in 2006, and our other cat Milo followed just recently. After a few weeks of mourning, I was lonely and bereft. We were catless for the first time ever, and I didn't like it.

We started considering the need for some new furry roommates. We decided to get two, so they could play together and keep each other company when we went to work. We wanted them to get along and decided it might help if the two were brothers. I'd heard good things about Cat Depot, a no-kill shelter housing up to 200 homeless cats at any given time. A non-profit charitable organization, Cat Depot opened five years ago with the mission of caring for cats until good homes are found for them. I looked online and found their website, www.catdepot.org.

I called Cat Depot about one of the kittens I saw there. It turned out that particular cat had already been adopted, but after talking to me for a few minutes, Michelle encouraged me to come by to meet some others who fit the bill. We excitedly drove up to their storefront location on U.S. 301, between University and DeSoto. We opened the door, and walked into a veritable sea of adorable, fluffy, gorgeous felines, I immediately found myself saying, "Aww, look at that one!" "Oh, look how handsome!", and numerous other exclamations like that.

We introduced ourselves to Michelle, and she took us into another room to meet the kittens she'd told me about. Born just over two months before, they had just arrived at Cat Depot a day or two before. In a litter of five kittens, three were boys and two were girls. Michelle pulled a couple of kittens out for us to meet and hold. I'd never seen a cat that small. They weighed just over two pounds each, tiny and wriggling, with huge ears! Their mother was a tabby, and I'm guessing Dad was white, because these kittens looked like they had been dipped in white paint: tabby on top, with snow-white paws and chests. We chose a handsome brownish one, so we could tell them apart, and one with the cutest two-tone face, tabby on one side, white on the other.

Technically too young to adopt, Michelle told us we could foster-to-adopt. We had to agree to bring them back for the rest of their vaccinations and a weigh-in. At

three pounds, they would be ready to be neutered, and could receive the last of their vaccines. We filled out the application and paid the adoption fee of \$75



Curry (L) and Haze (R)

per kitten, and we were on our way. Not everyone can foster-to-adopt, there are certain criteria that must be met like local residence, not having any other pets, and promising to never declaw the cats. I asked Marilyn Warner, Cat Depot's manager, why the adoption fee is higher than some of the other shelters and she explained that the fee covers preventative medicine, testing, shots, spay/neuter, food and shelter care, and micro-chips – so the animals can always be identified if lost. She told me Cat Depot invests well over \$100 on each animal, and it would indeed be hard to spend less than that on all those vaccinations and surgery.

We brought our babies home, named them Curry and Haze after a cult-favorite 70s television show (if you don't know which one, I'm not telling!), and we've been giggling ever since. We recently giggled even more when we took to boys to get neutered and found out one was a girl! Apparently, it's hard to tell what gender they are when they're small. So instead of brothers, we've got littermates. Either way, they get along famously, and that's what's important.

I don't understand why everyone doesn't have at least one cat at home. They're good company, endlessly entertaining, and they bring out the dust lingering under the furniture where the vacuum cleaner doesn't reach! If kitten energy is a bit too

frantic for you, adopt an older cat. There's one of every temperament at Cat Depot, and they need you as much as you need them.

Just like a new mom, I fretted when both our new kittens came down with a cold, and was so appreciative of having Cat Depot as a resource for advice about whether or not I needed to seek medical care for their runny noses and eyes. When I said I was sorry for bothering her, Ms. Warner thanked me for my concern. "We take scores of calls each day, answering basic cat care questions like litter box issues, food, and the importance of spay/neutering of animals. We refer people to a veterinarian in their area, and give them resources for low-cost/no-cost spay/neutering programs, and Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) of feral cats."

How do you know if you're a good candidate for adopting a cat? Warner says the requirements are that you be an animal lover, prepared to give a lifetime commitment to your cat. If you rent, the landlord must give his or her permission. Cat Depot asks that you be forthright about what other animals you have, and if you have children, they be kind and loving toward the animal.

If you're not in a position to adopt yourself, there are many other ways you can help. Volunteers are needed to clean and to help socialize the cats so they get along well with humans. Cat Depot can always use donations of cash, cat food, and litter, and they sometimes need help fostering cats, transporting them, and staffing their special events and adoptathons.

I hope you can find a way to incorporate a cat or two into your life and into your home. In the words of Tay Hohoff, "There are few things in life more heartwarming than to be welcomed by a cat."

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