



*We've got 8 FUN
and SIMPLE IDEAS that
everyone can do.*

BY ARDEN MOORE

Easy Ways to SAVE SHELTER CATS

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Collect cardboard boxes to create fun feline houses for shelter cats, like this one by Jorja Williams created for the SPCA of Texas.

Jorja Williams thinks outside — and inside — the box to help kittens and cats at the SPCA of Texas in Dallas get adopted. She spends hours each week collecting cardboard boxes, bottle corks and fleece fabric to create colorful, whimsical feline houses with dangling toys, faux shingles, cut-out windows and other features.

Potential adopters can't resist watching the playful antics of the shelter cats playing and napping in these cardboard houses often decorated in various themes to celebrate Halloween or Valentine's Day. Not bad for a super volunteer who shares her home with five dogs ... and no cats.

"I never had a cat and still don't because I have five dogs who aren't fans of cats," Jorja says. "I have a love for architecture and a love for cats. Making these houses is fun for me and definitely for the cats."

Jorja is just one example of how you can tap into creative ways to boost adoption rates among cats in shelters and at rescue groups.

"We are always looking for new ways to foster and adopt our shelter animals and get members of our community more involved," says Terri Hooks, lifesaving initiatives manager at the SPCA of Texas.



Catster reached out to cat-caring groups and individuals who share seven more ways to step up adoptions:

2 Become a vacation relief foster

If your schedule doesn't permit you to continuously house one litter of kittens after another, do what Mary Tan of Minnesota does. She takes care of foster felines for foster volunteers who want to take a two-week vacation or whose job demands require them to travel.

"Not all rescues and shelters have vacation relief fosters, but they should," says Mary, president of Whisker Media and former public relations manager for the Animal Humane Society in Golden Valley, Minnesota. "You are able to reach out to people who cannot foster long term, and that increases your pool of volunteers."

3 Team up with your local pizza joint

Ask owners of these family-owned eateries within your shelter or rescue group circulation area to include a colorful flyer of a cat or dog up for adoption with each pizza delivery.

"These flyers can feature hard-to-place animals or a huge picture of a cat who needs a home and include a bit about →



Become a vacation relief foster, like Mary Tan of Minnesota, where you only foster kittens for a short time while the regular fosterer is on vacation or traveling for their job.

DONATE NOW



Help your local shelter create a comfy room for people to hang out with the cats, like this one at the Peggy Adams Rescue League in West Palm Beach, Florida. If your shelter already has one, make time to hang with the kitties yourself.

the cat and needs of your local shelter,” Mary says. “When delivered in a radius close to the shelter, you will be amazed how this can help recruit volunteers, fosters and bring in donations.” (See more story and pics on page 6.)

4 Make giving money even easier

Writing a check to a shelter is so 1990. Help your local shelter or rescue group expand ways to receive monetary donations by setting up online-giving programs accessible by a click on a phone, setting up monthly donations or alerting people about making memorial donations in honor of a cherished pet or person who passed away.

5 Promote cat interaction

Help your local shelter create a visiting room where prospective adopters can interact with the cats in comfort. Shelters like the Peggy Adams Rescue League in West Palm Beach, Florida, created an adoptable cat room when they opened their new pet adoption center a couple years ago.

According to CEO Sue Berry, it has comfortable furniture so the public can visit with the cats in a home-like environment. People are welcome to bring drinks along with something to read.

“We also have cat colony rooms, which are spacious areas with cozy beds, activity shelves and toys,” Sue says. “Many of the rooms have access to our “catio,” which is a screened-in



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room with access to fresh air and overlooks beautiful plants that attract butterflies.”

6 Boost adoptions for black cats

Black cats and kittens can be challenging to photograph in some shelter settings, making them less noticed by those looking to adopt felines. Dr. Gary Weitzman, president of the San Diego Humane Society, suggests shelters recruit professional photographers to volunteer their talents to showcase black cats and to conduct black cat adoptions tied to Black Fridays (the big shopping day after Thanksgiving) and to National Black Cat Awareness Day (which is Aug. 17 this year) or Black Cat Awareness Month (every October).

7 Spread the word on social media

Find out what's on your local shelter's needs list and get the word out via your social accounts. Friends of Jacksonville Animals, Inc., an all-volunteer nonprofit, actively uses Facebook and other social media to identify specific supplies and medical items needed to care for kittens and puppies at the Animal Care and Protective Services of Jacksonville, Florida.

The shelter, on average, cares for 200 to 500 kittens in foster care and is in constant need of kitten milk replacer, bottles, miracle nipples for the bottles, snuggle-safe discs to keep underage kittens warm and other items. The group also promotes all foster needs with photos and success stories of cats and kittens helped by these donations.

8 Get matched with a shelter

Want to volunteer but not sure how? Chris Roy is the founder of Doobert.com, an online software platform that acts much like the dating app Match.com in that it connects animal shelters and rescues with volunteers willing to drive shelter animals to adoptable homes. The site also donates 5% of any items bought on the site to the animal rescue group of your choice. At last count, more than 15,685 animals have been rescued from more than 5,390 registered groups thanks to the help of more than 35,000 volunteers. 🐾

BEFORE DONATING

Check a rescue or shelter's website or contact staff to find out what they need and what they are not able to accept.

Shelters do not usually accept soft, plush toys or ones with squeakers to limit spreading infections. Instead, those donations tend to be forwarded to the homes of fosters. It is also expensive to disinfect cat scratching posts.

DONATE INSTEAD:

- ➔ Disposable corrugated cardboard scratching items for shelter cats
- ➔ Durable, easy-to-clean items like Kongs for cats
- ➔ Items made of fleece (never yarn), because they can be washed and sanitized
- ➔ Canned and dry cat food
- ➔ New towels and blankets
- ➔ Here is a creative idea from cat trainer Jackie Johnson: “Pancake spatulas! I love using spatulas to socialize scared cats and to be able to handfeed them from a distance by placing the food on the spatulas.”



Arden Moore is a pet behavior consultant, author and master pet first-aid instructor who teaches hands-on classes with her cool cat, Casey, and very tolerant dog, Kona. She hosts the national radio show *Four Legged Life* and the podcast *the Oh Behave Show*. Learn more at ardenmoore.com.