



## Making it their business to help get KITTIES HOME ♥

Nikki Jardin • Spot Magazine

### IN A BRIGHTLY LIT CORNER

of the expansive Pets On Broadway pet supply store in NE Portland, a woman is cooing at three cats housed in a large enclosure. She dangles her fingers just outside the structure, engaging the attention of one of the more social felines. Manager Joe Morton chats about the lovable qualities of this particular kitty. The woman isn't looking for a cat, but is clearly enjoying engaging with them and with Joe. As she moves on, Morton encourages her to tell her friends about the cats in the store, "I will!" she assures him.

These aren't pet shop cats; they're adoptable adult kitties in an outreach program sponsored by Multnomah County Animal Services



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©David Crosby, Meowhaus

(MCAS), in which local pet-friendly businesses provide space for adoptable cats from the shelter. Launched in April 2012, Pets On Broadway is one of five local businesses taking part in a program that's proven to be a great success, with more than 100 cats placed in loving homes in 10 months.

"We've been really trying to focus on our release rate of cats," says Ann Potter, program specialist at MCAS. "One problem with being located in Troutdale is that people who don't live within a five-mile radius don't tend to adopt our cats."

MCAS previously conducted adoptions at the Gresham PetSmart, but had problems finding volunteers to keep the offsite adoption center staffed. MCAS staff thought tapping into staffed, pet-loving businesses might be the answer.

"This is a win-win solution for everyone," says Potter. "We buy the display structure and provide fully vetted cats, and the business promises to care for them and adopt them into good homes." Citing the benefits to the businesses and the shelter, she says, "The business has created a relationship for life with the family of the adopted cat; we've increased our capacity, and we're raising awareness in parts of town that we serve but don't have a presence in."

That's certainly been the case at Sellwood Dog Supply and Cat Annex in SE Portland, a partner in the program since its inception.

"In the last three months, we've had people call specifically to ask about the cats," says store manager Kathleen Kramer, pointing out a shy, 10-month-old Calico who has been with them for about a week. "It's been great. The cats are going through and I think people are really happy about it."

For Morton, the partnership has aligned perfectly with the

Pets On Broadway's mission. "The adoption program was one way we felt we could be a resource for the community and help find more homes for animals. It was a no-brainer."

Pets On Broadway currently houses four cats and hopes to expand to six. Many cats stay for about a week before finding forever homes; some leave even sooner. "We had one cat who came in and was adopted that very same day," Morton says. Much of the success comes from staff, who eagerly promote their temporary residents.

"We're kind of nerds for them," says Morton. "Whenever someone is standing by them, we'll go greet them and ask if they want to play with the cats. Even if they say no, we'll say, 'Well, I'll just stand here and pet him so you can see how nice he is.' They might not be looking for a cat themselves, but that person could be at dinner with a friend tomorrow with someone looking for a cat and they can say, 'Hey, I just met the sweetest cat.' We've adopted out more than one cat from those kinds of referrals."

Morton is so enthusiastic about the program, which they've been part of since last summer, that he is eager to be a resource for other businesses that may want to participate. "If there is anything

we can do to help other stores get in on this, we're more than happy to help," he says.

At nearby Meowhaus Cat Boarding and Day Spa, owner Anya Stites shows off two recent arrivals from the shelter, her first since joining the program. Stites needed little convincing to participate. "It was part of my business plan from day one," she says. "I wanted to get involved with cat adoption and I wanted it to be with MCAS. I thought if I could get cats here it might promote adoptions. As soon as I contacted them they said, 'As a matter of fact, we're starting this outreach adoption program'... it was total serendipity."

Stites says MCAS has made the process extremely easy. "They're awesome," she says, pointing to a fluffy white cat named Raja. "They got him neutered, updated his vaccines, made sure he was FIV tested, and gave him a microchip."

MCAS also helps the businesses with adoption protocols designed

to ensure good placements. The businesses can set the adoption fees themselves; MCAS asks only that they return the \$12 required licensing fee.

Aside from helping place cats in loving homes, Stites, who has years of experience working in shelters, says that having adoptable animals at her business may be more comfortable for people considering adopting a cat who are skittish about going to a shelter. "People can get overwhelmed by seeing 50 cats at the shelter," says Stites. "Meowhaus's environment is quiet; there aren't rows and rows of cats who need homes. It's relaxed, so people don't feel so uptight about it."

It's also clearly good for the cats. At all of the locations we visited, the cats are able to stretch their legs and have plenty of one-on-one time with staff, making for a less stressed, more adoptable animal.

Kramer of Sellwood Dog Supply shares this story about

a frightened, 18-pound cat who was so aggressive MCAS shelter workers weren't able to examine her for two full days. In the quiet atmosphere of the Sellwood store, however, she relaxed to the point that Kramer could play with her, ultimately giving her a second chance at a new life. "I was just so glad because she turned out to be an awesome cat and now she has a great home with someone who was so happy to get her," says Kramer.

"We love it," Morton says about the partnership. "We donate a lot of money and food to other programs, but that's so indirect. With this we can say, 'remember that cat I loved so much? I found him the perfect home.'"

To learn more about the program, contact Ann Potter at [Ann.D.Potter@Multco.us](mailto:Ann.D.Potter@Multco.us) or call 503-789-4561. Additional neighborhood adoption partners include Beauty for the Beast on Lombard and Natural Pet Solutions in SE Portland. 🐾



Tollgate gets a little playtime while waiting for his forever home.

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