



Humanely Speaking

Bangor Humane Society Newsletter

Spring 2014
Special Feline Issue

Features

Let's Talk About Cats

*A Whole New World,
A Whole New Cat*

Finding Mr. (or Miss.) Purr-fect

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Our Mission

The Bangor Humane Society champions the humane treatment and adoption of companion animals, provides quality care for homeless pets, and promotes animal welfare through education and advocacy.

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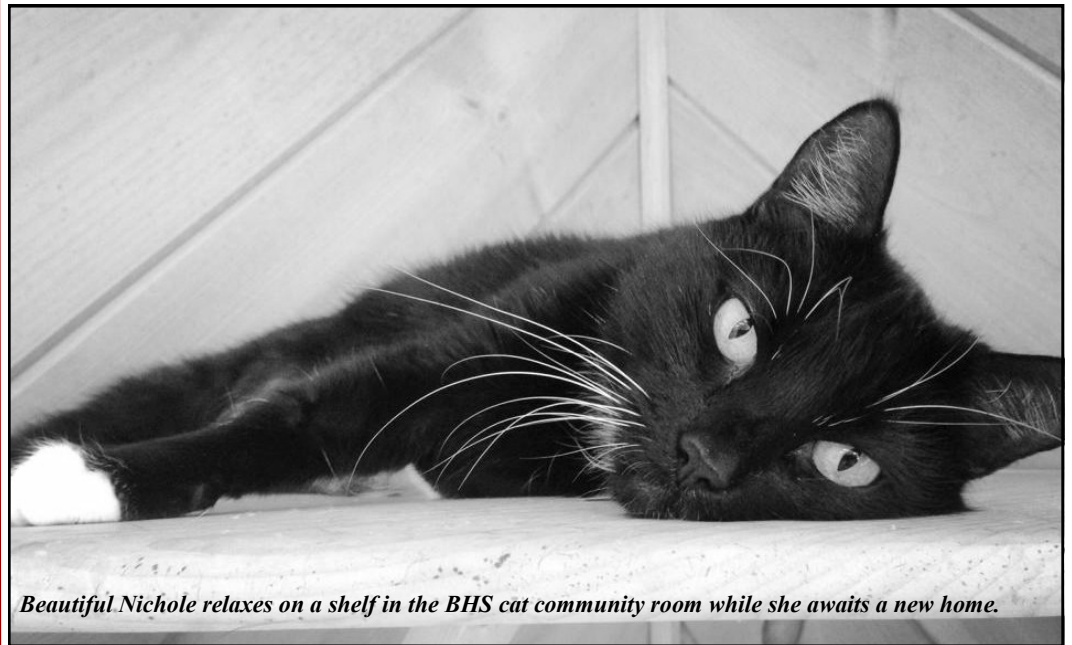
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BHS is proud to feed our pets
Hill's Science Diet food!

Let's Talk About Cats!

By: Stacey R. Coventry



Beautiful Nichole relaxes on a shelf in the BHS cat community room while she awaits a new home.

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) estimates that 6 to 8 million homeless pets enter animal shelters across the United States each year. Nearly 5,000 of those animals find refuge at the Bangor Humane Society, two-thirds which are cats (that's over 3,000 felines)! Of the over 700 cats that come to BHS deemed stray or lost (believed to have an owner), only 4% will be reunited with their owner (twice as many as the national average of 2%) versus 53% of our dogs (compared to the national average of 30%). The other 1,700 cats are surrendered to BHS by their owners for various reasons.

In addition to those homeless cats that end up in a shelter, the HSUS believes there to be tens of millions of un-owned cats currently living an outdoor lifestyle as either feral (wild cats living outdoors in a colony with other felines) or free-roaming felines (cats who have been surviving and living outdoors but may

transition to an indoor lifestyle). Some local reports in Maine have suggested that upwards of 30,000 of these un-owned cats are living throughout the state. There is a growing concern around the number of un-owned felines across the United States, as they pose a threat to outdoor habitats and wildlife, can be a nuisance to local neighborhoods, and contribute to pet overpopulation at an exponential rate.

Recently, this feline dilemma has received the attention of national organizations like the HSUS and the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), whose researchers are spending a lot of time and resources on re-thinking our approach to cats, so that shelters become less overwhelmed with feline populations, less cats have to experience the stress of shelter living, and more cats can be placed in the right environment for them to thrive and peacefully co-exist with both humans and other animals,

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From the Director



After closing out 2013 with the highest feline adoption rate (89%!) in agency history, we felt inspired to share our success and current philosophies in feline sheltering with our community through an all-feline newsletter.

Sheltering cats has always had special challenges spanning from widespread lack of spaying/neutering of cats; the rate at which people quickly surrender their cats for various reasons; the difficulty in keeping cats happy and healthy in a shelter environment; or convincing people of the importance in paying an adoption fee to give a shelter cat a second chance rather than get one free from local advertisements.

Since cats make up two-thirds of our shelter population, we have been particularly committed to enriching their experience while they wait for a new home, while we work hard to simultaneously increase adoptions and decrease feline intake.

Our success in the ASPCA Challenge showed us that our community of partners, funders, donors, volunteers, and supporters have grown larger than ever before. The increased support from our community has given us the confidence to explore new, innovative ways to positively change and impact the lives of every shelter pet that comes through our doors, giving them all the second chance they deserve.

However, we continue to learn that not every home is created equal for our shelter pets, particularly for cats. Some thrive cuddled on a lap where others are happiest exploring the outdoors. We also believe that every life is worthy of a human willing to commit to them fully through providing necessary veterinary care and exploring resources to help them through the challenges that being a responsible pet owner sometimes brings.

So, this past year, we have explored some new programs and developed some new policies to help us do just that. For example, we created a “Barn Buddies” program modeled off the best practices of other local and national programs, to help place vaccinated and sterilized feral cats into barns, warehouses, or studios where they can thrive. Also, during our busiest months, rather than overwhelm our shelter capacity by taking in too many cats, we created a waiting list, similar to the one we have long had for dogs. We discovered that the waiting list helped us reduce owner-surrendered cats as it gave owners time to explore ways to keep their cats or to re-home them privately. Additionally, we just concluded 24 consecutive months of sustainable spay/neuter funds for low-income individuals. Furthermore, we instituted new best practices for feline disease control and enrichment. Finally, we have continued to develop creative marketing strategies, offer on-going promotions, and build more off-site adoption partners to increase feline adoptions. These combined efforts have helped us decrease our feline intake by 949 in just one year, and end the year with our highest adoption rate in history!

However, we have only just begun. I strongly encourage you to read our feature articles. “Let’s Talk About Cats” and “Finding Mr. or (Miss. Purrfect)” to help adopters find and retain their best feline match. Then, I urge you to join our call to action and in the daily fight to help us save more lives. Become a volunteer or foster parent, help educate the community on our programs, and please reach into your hearts and pockets to make a donation. Saving more lives requires more resources. Every dollar *matters*, and every human life willing and able to help us *matters*. We cannot do it alone. Join us in the fight to save more lives today!



Hours of Operation

Monday — Friday: 12:00 p.m.— 6:00 p.m.
Saturday 10:00 a.m.— 6:00 p.m.

Board of Directors

Emily McIntosh, President
Amy Faircloth, Vice-President
Steve Thomas, Treasurer/Past President
Lani Naihe, Secretary
David Cloutier, DVM
Shirar Patterson
Bob Williams
Renee Ordway
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Lanni Moffatt
Matt Nye
Jeff Russell
Buddy Angst

Our Staff

Executive Director
Suzan Bell

Shelter Operations Manager
Chris Young

Office Manager & Bookkeeper
Deborah Hawkins

Director of Development & Public Relations
Stacey R. Coventry

Adoption Counselors
Brittney, Kristin, Keren, Moriah, Sarah R.,
Alicia, and Rikki

Animal Technicians
Sarah S., Aron, Cody, Mariah, and
Kimberly

Veterinary Technician
Allen Batchelder, LVT

Foster Care Coordinator
Kimberly Patterson

Volunteer Coordinator
Brittney Littlefield

Your Donor Dollars Matter...

A Whole New World, A Whole New Cat

Happy Tails of felines that blossom outside of a shelter kennel

By: Kristin Harmon

So often staff complete adoptions and send animals into loving forever homes. It's bittersweet: staff get attached and care for these animals like they are their own and it's sometimes hard to say goodbye, but it's so nice to know that they've found their new families! In some cases, staff are rewarded by and delighted to hear updates from adopters. We like to call these "happy tails," two of



Sir Jarvis' owner captioned this photo, 'Milky tea and a biscuit if you please, Gerald.'



Sir Jarvis lounging around

which immediately come to mind because of how purr-fect the match was between adopter and feline.

Sir Jarvis' adopter—Gerald—sends staff the funniest emails, usually photos, accompanied by a witty caption. The first email he sent us was a

heartfelt update followed by the story of how he came across Sir Jarvis. He writes, "I looked at the photos of the cats on your website and was attracted to the grumpy photo of Jarvis. The photo reminded me a bit of myself so I came by to see him." He goes on to say that his new feline loves to play with the dozens of toy mice Gerald bought him. His owner will even announce "time to go to bed," and this fantastic feline will follow his owner right into his bed with him!

Jarvis had only been at the shelter for a week before his adopter noticed him. He was surrendered because of behavior issues, which Gerald was able to work with by providing him plenty of outlets to release his energy. It just goes to show there truly is a match and a connection that is made between

It appears Sir Jarvis really did have a case of grumpy face in his photo on our website.



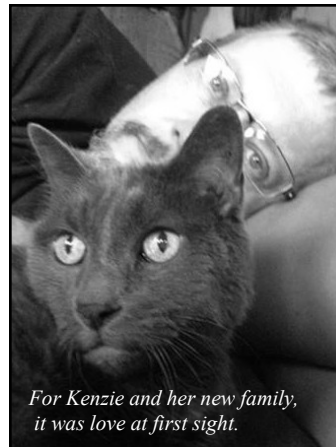
adopter and animal, whether it be a cat, dog, or even a rat, the person needs to be able to take care of specific needs of an animal, and the animal will most likely return the favor by taking care of the human's

needs as well. We are absolutely delighted to know that Sir Jarvis is such good company to Gerald. Sometimes it's not just a person who can help a cat adjust to his/her new home, every once in a while another cat can really help bring out the best in a new feline family member. Take Kenzie and Thumbs for example. Their adopters, Julie, took home two cats who were considered long-term residents and John, though not at the same time.

They adopted Kenzie, who had been at BHS for just over 4 whole months, back in August. Kenzie is a gorgeous 12 year old senior cat who really needed a specific home to help her come out of her shell and truly flower into the fantastic feline she is today.

After almost a month of having Kenzie, Julie decided it was time to take on another cat. In September she adopted 11 year old Thumbs, another long-term senior cat, and welcomed him with open arms into her new family.

A new family which also included Kenzie. Unsure of how long it will take two cats to get along, staff will recommend using caution and giving it time when introducing two felines. But Kenzie and Thumbs were one of the exceptions to the suggestion, Kenzie welcomed her new brother with open



For Kenzie and her new family, it was love at first sight.

paws! These two cats couldn't be more purrfect for each other. From grooming each other, to helping each other adjust to their new home environments, these two kennel-shy kitties depended on each other and became fast friends. We heard wonderful updates from their adopter, Julie, about just how well these two were getting along in their new home.

At BHS we are so proud to be able to give animals a second chance, and are so happy when cats like Sir Jarvis find their adopter and are able to give back to a person just as much as the person is willing to give the cat. And in Kenzie and Thumbs' home, not only is this senior duo a perfect fit for each other — they also bring joy, purrs, and cuddles to their new forever home. The saying 'Whoever said money can't buy happiness has never paid an adoption fee,' could not be more true, especially when it comes to these two happy tails.



Kenzie

MD Photography www.facebook.com/mdphotomaine



Thumbs is a handsome Siamese cat.

Ask the Vet

Q: How can I ensure the health of my indoor/outdoor cat?

A: In regards to the quality of life for feline indoor/outdoor living and keeping them healthy, prevention is the key. Establish a veterinarian relationship early on and be sure to keep your cat updated on vaccinations for rabies and feline leukemia, at a minimum. Cats that venture outdoors are at increased risk for catching and spreading disease. Talk with your veterinarian to determine which vaccines are important for your cat's individual lifestyle, along with which products they recommend to help keep your cat healthy and thriving.

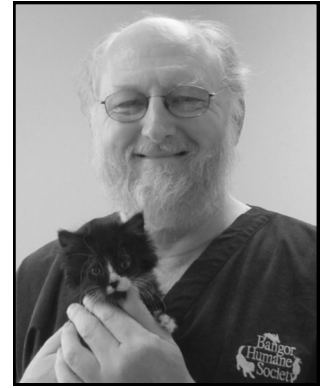


Additionally, dedicate the time to train your cat to come indoors at night with high-value treats or wet food to help them avoid getting into scuffles with other animals and to protect them from outdoor risks, like

getting hit by a car or becoming targets of predators. It is also important during extreme cold temperatures to ensure they are in a warm, dry place to prevent frostbite.

Q: Why is it important to spay/neuter my cat?

A: Spaying/neutering is simply the responsible thing to do as a pet owner to help reduce pet overpopulation and from overwhelming shelters with unwanted litters. Female cats can begin reproducing as young as four months of age and have multiple litters of kittens each year. Feline population can quickly grow out of control. Beyond that, spaying/neutering will result in other benefits that include: it will decrease the likelihood that your cat will spray indoors; decrease territorial behavior and fights with other pets or neighborhood cats; eliminate stress for cats wanting to regularly roam away from home mate; can prevent feline cancers; and may increase their affection towards their human owners. ■



Dr. Benson, Broadway Veterinary Clinic

Paws for Thought

Spaying just **ONE** female cat will prevent **88, 572** unwanted feline births in just **five** years.

Shelter Highlights



A **BIG** tail-wagging, thank you to Kara and Jeff O'Sullivan for hosting their Annual Holiday Spaghetti Dinner to benefit homeless pets. They raised over \$6,000 and matched those donations for an outstanding total of over \$12,000!



Thank you to the Newport Family Practice for collecting \$600 from their employees for BHS!



Thank you to Jeff Figgins and Figgins Massage for raising \$200 through their "Pop for Paws" fundraiser!



Thank you to the staff of Ipanema Bar & Grill for hosting a superhero-themed give-back night to collect over \$1,000, along with toys and blankets for our shelter pets! You guys rock!



Thank you to Penobscot Theater for showcasing our adoptable dogs during their performances of "Cinderella!"



Help Us Save More Lives!
Donate online at
www.bangorhumane.org

Finding Mr. (or Miss) Purr-fect By: Stacey R. Coventry

My name is Maddie and I am a one-year-old grey tiger residing at BHS currently searching for the right human to adopt. The staff at BHS works very hard to find as many of us feline residents a new home through adoption as possible. They also try to match each of us with the right human so we can all live together happily. They asked that I take some time to share what us felines look for when choosing our new home. Just like every human, each of us have our own unique purr-sonality, and some of us can be a little particular on what exactly we are looking for.

Take myself, for example, I am not too fond of human hugs or cuddling on laps. I'm what you'd call a private investigator because I like to work undercover and keep an eye on everything in my home. If anyone tries to interfere with my surveillance, I'm likely to vanish quickly. Frankly, the purr-fect human for me would be one with another feline resident who can be my partner in crime and give me confidence in a new home. But, that's just me.

Some of my feline shelter buddies would love a human who doesn't mind lots of feline chatter or sharing their laps with a very affectionate companion all day long. Others take their time to warm up, but once they feel safe, they have lots of love to give. And, then there are those who enjoy some time alone to take plenty of cat naps in the sun, but then love lots of ear scratches and belly rubs from their human.

So, here are some tips to help you in understanding what we cats look for when adopting the purr-fect human:

1. **Do your homework.** Know what type of feline-ality is the right fit for you and your home. For example, if your house is noisy and chaotic, please don't adopt a shy kitty, like me, who would find that very stressful. You can visit www.aspca.org and search for your feline-ality match if you aren't sure what you are looking for.

2. **Know your limits.** If you're a first time cat owner, please don't adopt one of us with an extreme purr-sonality type like too shy or too assertive of a play style. Instead, choose one with an outgoing or even temperament.

3. **Be open-minded.** I know some of us can be very attractive with our long, luscious fur and colorful markings, but looks can be deceiving. Remember that a shelter can be a very stressful place, so we may not show our true colors in the kennel.

4. **Trust our staff.** Staff spends lots of time learning about each of us. Some of them, like Sarah Sha'afi, BHS cat technician, are what we would call "a leader of the pack" when it comes to human expertise on the feline persuasion. She has fostered many adult cats, so trust her and the BHS staff to find a feline well-suited for your lifestyle. Visit with us outside Continued to pg. 8



Maddie, waiting at BHS to adopt her new human.

From Purrs to Tail Wags

With so many felines in our care we go through a lot of supplies. From the fun things like beds and toys, right down to the supplies that help us with cleaning—like paper towels and wood pellets (BHS' version of kitty litter)—we go through a lot of stuff!

We are always in constant need of things to make our cats feel as comfortable as possible while they are in our care. We are always accepting blankets, pillowcases, and of course cat beds. We just recently had a few handmade cat beds donated to the shelter and it made such a difference! It's so nice to see cats cozy up on comfy beds and just be able to relax as much as possible.

Aside from bedding, toys are always a huge plus! We love hard plastic toys that can be washed and re-used.

In order to continue keeping cats comfortable we have to make sure they're



Buster, enjoying a comfy blanket.

clean and fed. As one can imagine, this is where we go through the most supplies. We are always accepting paper towels, bleach, and kitty litter (which in our case is wood pellets—they're much less expensive, are easier on respiratory systems, and they smell better too!)

We also always appreciate monetary donations as well, that way if we run out of supplies we have the funds available to get what we need that specific day.

And let's not forget our crazy canine friends! They go through just as many supplies as we do, and they typically need the same things. Blankets, toys, and treats are always helpful. They absolutely love hard rubber toys that can be washed and reused, the durability also ensures that they have hours of stimulation while in their kennels. From Kongs to Nylabones, they are awesome for our canine friends!

Continue keeping an eye out for an updated wish list, and don't forget to call and check Facebook for our next kitten shower! Yeah—you heard that right—it may be snowy right now, but spring is just around the corner, and you know what that means; the Bangor Humane Society gets invaded by those cute, cuddly creatures called kittens!

Thanks so much for your continued support. Everyone at BHS, two legged and four, appreciate it so much! ■

ultimately saving more feline lives.

“Years ago, the focus was on shelter dog enrichment, controlling the canine population, and increasing the canine re-homing and return - to- owner rates,” says Chris Young, Shelter Operations Manager for the Bangor Humane Society for nearly 25 years. “We seem to have a better understanding of dogs now and on how to improve their experience in shelters to find better adoptive matches. It is great to see a national effort being made to apply the same model to cats for shelters to implement and utilize.”

Because organizations like the ASPCA and HSUS have begun to rethink their philosophy around cats, they have driven their funding and research towards developing innovative solutions to make important inroads in the feline overpopulation dilemma. Over the last few years those efforts have trickled down to local shelters and have begun to shift society’s ideology away from the notion that cats are disposable, that homes for cats are one size fits all, and their lives are not as valued as much as other domestic pets, like dogs.

These recent efforts have been so strong and successful that, nationally, we have seen the rise of internet feline memes like “The Grumpy Cat,” with his life-is-a-glass-half-empty attitude,” “Lil Bub,” a dwarf cat who inspires audiences with her triumph over adversity, or Nora the beautiful gray tiger cat who plays piano, to name a few. These famous felines have helped us all see and appreciate the individuality that each cat can and does possess.

In January, Maine was ranked the best state for cat lovers, according to an online real estate survey. With the Maine Coon Cat as our official state cat and over 46% of homes that have a feline resident, Mainers rank higher than any other state in their appreciation and dedication to cats.

At the Bangor Humane Society, we also believe that each cat is deserving of a life, whether that life be curled up on a warm lap, fulfilling a career in mousing in a barn, or happily habituating in a colony in the wild with other feline companions.

“Cats need very little from us to survive and thrive,” says Young. “Food, minimal shelter, and access to basic veterinary care are all they really need from us. Spay and neuter programs can allow cats to live happily in the environment that suits them best, without adding to the burden of local shelters.”

While there is no doubt that Mainers are cat lovers, the reality is thousands still end up in shelters every single year. Across the state 1 in 5 cats are euthanized for health or behavior. The majority of cats surrendered to the Bangor Humane Society are for reasons involving behavior issues, affordability, or changes in lifestyle. The statewide euthanasia rate could decrease if more alternatives and educational resources were available for our local felines and their owners.

“The euthanasia rates for cats are telling me a couple of things,” says Katie Lisnik, national director of cat protection and policies for the HSUS. “It is possible people are surrendering cats for behavior reasons or other issues that are solvable, so we need to work more on pet retention.

Dr. Mike McCaw, licensed veterinarian and feline expert at Veazie Veterinary Clinic agrees and says it starts with the decision to become a cat owner, and he urges people to consider all the implications before doing so. Although many people are drawn to cats because of their independence and ease of care, there are still some major factors they should consider before adopting or taking in a new cat.

“I would think about what type of cat would be best for a given situation,” he writes in his July blog. “That is, a timid cat would probably not be the best choice in a bustling, noisy home with small children.”

Dr. McCaw also encourages people to do their research and devote the time to making their home cat friendly beyond just the basics of food, water and litter. “They also need outlets for their normal instinctual behaviors,” says Dr. McCaw. “A private area to rest or hide, perches and toys that stimulate hunting behavior all help our feline companions feel more comfortable. When these things are absent, stress and anxiety are often a result leading to unwanted behaviors that can land an unhappy cat back at the shelter.”

People are more likely to surrender a cat at the first sign of a problem like urinating or defecating outside the litter box, play biting, or fighting with the other animals in the home. Dr. McCaw encourages new adopters and cat own-





One of the several cats placed through the BHS Barn Buddies Program.

ers to reach out to their veterinarian, in addition to a host of internet resources to help them work through those issues rather than quickly opt to surrender their cat to a shelter. For example, the majority of cats that get surrendered for litter box issues are due to a medical issue that can be resolved with a simple antibiotic.

The Bangor Humane Society is dedicated to saving as many feline lives as possible. And to reach that goal, we have put several initiatives in place to do just that. The most significant is our sustainable low-income spay/neuter initiative targeted to individuals on financial assistance to help them fix their current pets, helping prevent more unwanted litters, especially with cats. Just one female cat can produce 420,000 kittens in just six years. Since the program began in February 2012, the Bangor Humane Society has distributed over 1,143 spay/neuter vouchers (over 60% of them to cat owners) valued at \$52,215. Additionally, BHS spays and neuters all the animals adopted from our care.

In the spring, the feline intake at BHS dramatically increases as warmer temperatures often mean increased litters of kittens. Quickly the feline population can become overwhelming, which increases the stress on the feline residents in the shelter and can increase their risk for upper respiratory infection. Last year, for the first time, BHS created a cat waiting list for individuals needing to re-home their cat. For years, BHS has had a dog waiting list, due to limited space. Though BHS has three times the number of cat kennels, instead of reaching capacity, we controlled our cat intake so we wouldn't overwhelm our resources or feline residents. Not only did the waiting list help us keep cats in our care healthier while they awaited adoption, but it also gave owners time to reconsider their decision and utilize other re-

sources that ultimately kept cats in their homes. These combined efforts have decreased cat intake of 949 cats from the previous year's intake.

Other life-saving initiatives that BHS has explored in order to increase feline adoptions are off-site events through our Cats on Tour mobile adoption program and with off-site partners like PetSmart, Petco and Broadway Veterinary Clinic. These opportunities have increased our cats' visibility to an expanded audience. We have also offered monthly adoption promotions reducing cat adoption fees to encourage adopters. We have instituted new best practices in cleaning protocols, treatment options, and shelter enrichment to help control disease and keep cats happier and healthier.

Most recently, BHS has created a "Barn Buddies" program mirrored off other national models, to adopt feral cats into barns or other appropriate outdoor structures. Staff is currently exploring relevant and available options for local TNR.

"TNR programs are all funded by nonprofits and donations," Lisnik says. "It does have its critics and is not without problems, but it's either do nothing or do something that has community support."

All of these initiatives have proven successful so far, helping BHS reach an 89% feline adoption rate this past year (up almost 20% from 2012 and 50% from over five years ago).

Community cats and the number of stray and owner-surrendered cats that end up in Maine shelters every year are not an isolated issue for shelters to battle alone. It is both a statewide and nationwide dilemma that will require a strong call to action through a community approach.

As Maine sits ranked number one in the U.S. for cat lovers, BHS challenges the local community to join us in the fight to save more feline lives and to lead the way nationally with innovative programs dedicated to our feline companions. By sustaining and growing our current initiatives, together, we can save more lives whether that is through preventing more unwanted births, keeping more cats in loving homes, or providing an alternative lifestyle for those more unconventional felines. ■



Carla, a playful kitty, enjoys a shelf by a window in BHS while she awaits adoption.

Continued from "Mr. Purrfect" pg. 5

the kennel, but don't rush us. Wait for us to come to you and watch us carefully to see if we're a match. (See behavior chart below)

5. **Be honest.** If you feel you don't have the time or patience to accept particular nuances, then please don't adopt one of us with such traits to manage. And, may I suggest avoiding those pesky, overly energetic kittens who are require more time.

6. **Create a cat-friendly home.** Most of us have natural feline instincts that need to be satisfied. Provide us with a scratching post, cat tree, or a selection of toys to help us manage our energy or boredom. Please throw in some kitty treats for good behavior. We respond well to positive reinforcement just like you!

7. **Give us time.** Be patient. We all have baggage. Give us time to settle into our new home in our own time. We may take a few hours or a few weeks. Letting us hide, play, or seek you out first to help us build confidence and adjust more quickly. And, consider adopting a second cat to help a shy, introverted kitty,

like myself, blossom in a new home.

8. **Ask for help.** If you aren't sure how to manage negative or undesirable behaviors, call the staff at BHS or your veterinarian, for advice. Sometimes just making some minor adjustments can lead to huge changes. ■

A helpful guide to understanding your cat.



Our Guiding Principles

- **Treat** all animals and people with respect, dignity and integrity.
- **Work** diligently to end companion animal overpopulation by increasing awareness of spay and neuter programs.
- **Promote adoption** of physically and mentally healthy companion animals.
- **Educate and train caretakers** to develop fulfilling and lifelong relationships with their companion animals.
- **Serve as responsible stewards** of our resources.
- **Hold ourselves to the highest standards** of safety, care and cleanliness.
- **Raise public awareness** with regard to the humane treatment of all animals.
- **Use euthanasia** only as a last humane option when in the best interest of an animal.



Regina thanks you for your support!