

Cat rescue group marks milestone

Salem Friends of Felines places its 5,000th cat

A local family was looking for a companion for their indoor cat — who spent his time looking for ways to get out and visit the neighborhood cats.

The search led them to Salem Friends of Felines and an 8-year-old cat now named "Isabella," destined to be the friend who keeps the wandering boy at home.

Unknown to the Dedek family, their trip to the adoption center Monday night set off a much-anticipated celebration.

Isabella is the 5,000th cat to find a home through Salem Friends of Felines since it opened in 2004, said Jeanie Sloan, director of operations for the nonprofit group.

"We won the cat lottery," Shawna Dedek said, as shelter volunteers showered the family with a cat carrier, a cat climbing tree, cat litter, toys, food, and a brush for Isabella's long hair. "We didn't expect all this!"

The kitty's new family includes parents Shawna and Abe Dedek, children Kayla, Jenayah and Brenden, the escape-artist boy cat and two small dogs.

Isabella, a snowshoe Himalayan, came to SFOF during the weekend, as a transfer from the Willamette Humane Society.

"The humane society left a message here Friday, so Saturday we made some room in the kennels," Sloan said, adding that she used Craigslist and Petfinder to get information about the kitty online. "We got a call this morning about an adoption."

Isabella's original owners moved, and surrendered their cat at the humane society.

"She is just in perfect health, friendly, a really nice cat," Sloan said.

Isabella was the fourth adoption at the shelter Monday, Sloan said. Volunteers were awaiting the milestone adoption.

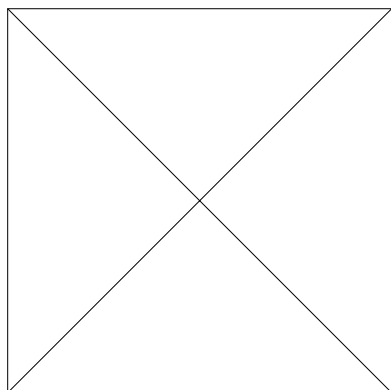
"We're very excited," Sloan said. "We're very glad we can provide this service for the community. We see the need for it coming in our door every day."

Salem Friends of Felines is hoping to reach 1,200 adoptions this year. The group placed 200 to 300 cats in 2005, its first full year of operations. In December, the shelter placed its 4,000th cat.

"We're getting more adoptions every year," Sloan said, adding that SFOF works in cooperation with the humane society in some cases. "We work together to do the right thing."

The right thing for Isabella turned out to be a loving family — and a full-time job keeping her new kitty brother entertained.

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