

SCOOP

Flicks for Felines

Recent *Animal Sheltering* articles have featured strategies that encourage cats to stop being litter box couch potatoes. But when cats want to kick back and relax like their human friends, the cat room at the Arizona Humane Society in Phoenix offers entertainment that many of its residents can't resist.

After watching their own cats' behavior at home, several shelter workers came up with the idea of playing videos for shelter cats, says Kim Noetzel, vice president of marketing and community relations. A donation of funds two years ago led to the organization's purchase and installation of three combination TV/VCRs in the cat room of the Nina Mason Pulliam Campus for Compassion. The TVs, which are suspended from the ceiling, are enrichment of the high-tech variety: "We wanted to find a way to entertain and stimulate the cats," says Noetzel.

While the organization's main goal was cat comfort, potential adopters are entertained, too; the prospect of kitty TV often leads them to take a second look. Visitors have been heard to say to others, "Come here and look at this—they actually have TV for the cats!"

Most cats have taken to the kitty-aimed programs like reality-TV junkies to "The Apprentice." "Some of them just get very mesmerized," Noetzel says. A few cats aren't impressed by the images on the screens, she says, while others seem to have less discerning tastes. For them, a video isn't even necessary: "Some of them actually prefer 'snow,'" she says.

But in general, the cats appreciate the feline cinema. "It's rewarding to see them basically having a great time," says Noetzel.

During the shelter's open hours, visitors can watch the cats enjoy their modern comforts, but the videos are played when the shelter is closed, too. The shelter has several tapes so that staff can give cats a little variety.

The organization buys the videos from www.cattv.com, paying about \$30 for two, says Noetzel. Other sites offering similar videos are www.kittyshow.com and www.videoforcats.com. Because videotapes are prone to wearing out, the adoption manager

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is planning to look into DVDs, Noetzel says. Fortunately, new machines won't be needed, as the televisions already are able to play the discs.

If the cost of several videos in addition to a TV and VCR is too steep, homemade videos might be a great project for a volunteer with a camcorder and some camera skills. With a cast of characters that includes birds, squirrels, chipmunks, and mice, an amateur auteur may be able to produce videos that can pass muster with the pickiest kitty film critics. —KA

