

Starring “Sheba” Longoria and Teri “Scratcher”?

To get cats adopted, an Arizona shelter produces a new take on ABC’s hit show

BY JENNIFER ROTHACKER

They’re beautiful, sleek, and sometimes just a bit ... catty. They’re also desperate—to be adopted, that is. (What did you expect? This isn’t *Maxim* magazine!)

They’re the cats of Arizona’s Maricopa County, where the Animal Care & Control center has launched a new ad campaign sure to catch the eye—and, shelter workers hope, new adoptive families.

Riffing off the popular ABC dramedy “Desperate Housewives,” the campaign’s ad pictures four fine felines perched behind a white picket fence, a la Wisteria Lane. (A disclaimer at the bottom points out that cats should always be housed safely indoors.)

Volunteers hatched the idea and designed the Desperate Housecats campaign, which was an instant hit. “Usually people smile or giggle,” says volunteer manager Erin Maupin. “They all think it’s so catchy.”

And the message is catching on. Compared to the previous summer, adoptions rose by about five cats a month—not a huge number, but a significant leap, says spokeswoman Aprille Hollis. A larger goal of the Desperate Housecats campaign is to tout the shelter’s new Cat Adoption Center, which features interactive cat condominiums—airy spaces that give the cats room to roam in full view of would-be adopters. Three private interaction rooms help humans and kitties make a more formal acquaintance.

The center makes life easier in other ways, too: A vaccine room is a short drive around the corner, and a planned drive-through window will allow pet owners to pay for licenses, microchips, and rabies vaccinations without leaving their vehicles. Last summer, the center offered a special \$75 adoption deal that covered spay/neuter surgeries and vaccines and provided other freebies and discounts.

DESPERATE HOUSECATS
Maricopa County Animal Care & Control

35th Ave.

This summer MCACC will receive over 50 cats each day in need of homes

Give these Desperate Housecats a home. The cat you take home is virtually free! The \$75 adoption fee covers spay or neuter surgery, vaccines, a kitty carrier and a PETCO book filled with \$100 in discounts and freebies! Plus, every adopter will automatically be entered into bi-weekly raffles to win superb prizes.

Cat Adoption Center
5231 N. 35th Ave. (35th Ave./Missouri)
Wed.-Fri. 11am-5pm, Sat. & Sun. 10am-4pm
(602) 506-PETS Pets.Maricopa.Gov

PETCO Where the pets go. **SCF Arizona** As work for you
designed and printed courtesy of SCF Arizona

Although cats are shown outdoors, they should always be housed safely indoors. MCACC is the nation's second largest shelter receiving over 55,000 homeless animals each year. Adopt-Volunteer-Spay/Neuter

Between the ad campaign and new facility, the shelter’s feline residents are commanding attention. Volunteers have plastered the ads in neighborhood newsletters and other venues. Shelter employees appearing on local TV to promote pets always mention Desperate Housecats. A local movie house flashes the ad during its pre-movie advertising and trivia. Even PETCO places a copy in every customer’s bag.

While Phoenix area residents have gotten the message, so far there’s been no word from ABC on whether they’d like to pick up this feline version for their fall lineup. And no, Teri Hatcher hasn’t come by to pick out a new kitty.

But the shelter is thinking of producing its own sequel for the canine set. Be sure to tune in. AS