

At kitty capacity

Heart of the Valley has a full feline house, no longer taking cats

By **AMANDA RICKER**
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Filled to capacity with felines, Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter has started a waiting list for pet owners who want to surrender their cat.

On Monday, there were about six people on the list, said Beth Harper, assistant operations director.

"We are going to contact those people as soon as more room opens up," Harper said. "Right now, we are just really flooded with adult cats."

The Belgrade animal shelter has 205 cats; 146 adult cats — six months of age or older — and 59 kittens, said Kathryn Hohmann, development director for the shelter.

To try and find homes for the cats and open up space for new ones, Heart of the Valley is selling adult cats for 50 percent off until Christmas.

The promotion is one of several the shelter has offered lately to try and reduce the number of cats under its care. In August, the shelter sold cats for \$1. Year-round, seniors age 62 or older can adopt an adult cat for free.

Heart of the Valley gets an average of about five cats per day, adoption counselor Jared Hogg said. The shelter serves Gallatin and Madison valleys.

"We once got 16 cats in one day," Hogg said.

Nationwide, the number of cats turned in to shelters is increasing, Hohmann said.

About half the cats that come to Heart of the Valley are strays, Hogg said.

One of the newest shelter residents is a roughly 7-year-old, black-and-brown shorthaired tabby with white spots. Someone brought him in four days ago after he wouldn't stop following them down the



SEAN SPERRY/CHRONICLE

Kato, a five-week-old kitten, paws at his cage at the Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter on Monday.

street near Fifth Avenue and Grant Street in Bozeman.

The rest of the shelter's cats were surrendered by their owner because they couldn't take care of them.

The longest shelter resident is Midnight Special, an 8-year-old black domestic shorthair whose owner surrendered her nearly a year and a half ago because they were moving.

Interestingly, Hohmann said, "Black cats tend to linger at the shelter a little bit more. We see the same thing with black dogs."

The shelter keeps about 10 cats at PetSmart in Bozeman, where they're available for adoption, some cats live in a local veterinary clinic and others reside in foster homes. Hohmann said the shelter is always looking for more foster homes.

But despite the waiting list, Hohmann said Heart of the Valley won't turn any cats away in an emergency.

For more information, visit www.heartofthevalleyshelter.org.

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Harrison soldier receives Purple Heart for Afgha

I seriously thought I was done