

Cat for \$1

Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter up to 190 felines



NICK WOLCOTT/CHRONICLE

Jazzy, a nine-week-old kitten, was brought into Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter because his owners were moving. The shelter is hosting "Feline Fun Days" this weekend, where you can offer any price for a cat.

By **AMANDA RICKER**
Chronicle Staff Writer

Storm's family dropped him off at Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter a year and a half ago because they were allergic to him.

The 9-year-old gray cat has been there ever since.

That makes Storm the animal with the longest residency at the Belgrade shelter.

"We can't really figure out why he's still here," said Angela Sandoval, operations director. "He's a little on the shy side. He's just a quiet cat."

Storm is one of 190 cats available for adoption this summer. And while that's not the highest number of felines Heart of the Valley has ever had in its care, there's not much room for more.

"We're kind of at the point where if we got 20 more kittens in today, we'd be at our capacity," Sandoval said.

This weekend, Heart of the Valley is holding "Feline Fun Days" where people are invited to name their price and pay whatever they can to adopt any cat 6 months or older. The shelter is at 1549 E. Cameron Bridge Road.

"You could get a cat for \$1," Sandoval said. "It's really not about the money. It's about finding a wonderful home for them."

"We just recover more cats in general during the summer months — same with dogs," Sandoval said. "We get probably 200 kittens or more every summer."

Last summer, the shelter maxed out with about 240 cats. Some were placed in foster homes, but pet owners who wanted to surrender their cats had to get on a waiting list and wait at least a week to drop off their pet.

"It was really bad last summer and we're trying not to replay that scenario," Sandoval said.

Year-round, seniors age 62 or older can adopt an adult cat for free.

But Feline Fun Days will give many others a chance to rescue a cat. All of the shelter animals available for adoption have passed medical and behavioral evaluations, are spayed or neutered, are up to date on their shots and have microchips, she said.

And they all come with a 30-day money-back guarantee, so people can return the cat with no questions asked.

The weekend's activities — from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday — will also include a kitten cuddling room, a free raffle and the opportunity to sign up as a shelter volunteer.

On Friday, shelter volunteers Heather Meredith and her 10-year-old daughter, Kira, spent time with Echo, a 1-year-old tabby cat brought to the shelter as a stray.

The Bozeman mother and daughter started volunteering as "cat companions," petting and playing with cats at the shelter, after visiting last year looking for a cat they had lost. Now they visit the cats once a week.