

Pets for the Elderly Foundation Plays Match-Maker

How one organization helps senior citizens and cats find a love connection.

By Brad Kollus

The Pets for the Elderly Foundation matches cats in need of a home with seniors in need of companionship.

Many scientific studies have found that pets can provide important psychological and physical benefits to the elderly. One organization that helps seniors obtain cats and dogs is the Pets for the Elderly Foundation.

The Pets for the Elderly Foundation pays for the adoption of cats and dogs for elderly persons. The organization was founded by philanthropist Avrum Katz in 1995 after he realized the health benefits pets had for the elderly. Katz funds all the operating expenses of the organization so that all donations go directly to funding adoptions.

Match-Makers

Currently the Pets for the Elderly Foundation gives grants to 60 local no-kill shelters in 32 states and ensures that every cat and dog is spayed or neutered. In 2005, the foundation placed 5,080 pets with seniors, 70 percent of them cats.

"Cats are helpful for companionship without affecting the limited mobility some of the seniors have. We are finding that some of the housing that seniors are in, like apartments and condos, are more open to cats than dogs," says Ms. Kurowski, the foundation's general manager. "Cats are easy to hold on your lap and so many people, especially those who live alone, need the touch and cuddling provided by cats who need to be cuddled."

Animal Friends, based in Pittsburgh, is one of the shelters that the Pets for the Elderly Foundation funds. The shelter's Golden Age Retriever Program uses funds from the foundation to pay the adoption fees for elderly people.

"Senior citizens that live with companion animals are emotionally healthier, physically healthier and they become socially more interactive," says Ann Cadman, health and wellness coordinator at Animal Friends.

Cadman says that more of the elderly adopters choose to adopt older cats, which is nice because older cats are sometimes the hardest to place.

"We couldn't do this without their (the foundation's) help; I think the world of them. They searched us out to participate in their program, and we are eternally grateful and will be forever in their debt," Cadman says.

One story really sums up the value of the program: "I had one lady who lived in an apartment alone say to me 'I know when I go into my apartment I am not alone' because she has her cat," Cadman says.

Richard, Connie and Camille

Richard MacGregor was one of Pets for the Elderly Foundation's beneficiaries when he and his wife Connie adopted their cat, Camille, from Animal Friends.

"When I was walking by the glass window where the cats were, Camille came up to the window, so I touched my finger to the window and she raised her paw to where my finger was. She adopted me," Richard MacGregor says.

Camille is an important member of the MacGregor family.

"She provides hours of entertainment just watching her, she is very comical and actually does somersaults," Richard MacGregor says.

The MacGregors are grateful to the Pets for the Elderly Foundation for paying for Camille's adoption.

"Cats are wonderful pets, they keep seniors from being lonely, they provide a lot of companionship and I think the seniors won't have a chance to be depressed or feel empty," Connie MacGregor says.



Freelance writer Brad Kollus specializes in the human-feline bond. He lives in New Jersey with his wife Elizabeth, son Dylan and their four cats.

To donate to the Pets for the Elderly Foundation or for more information, go to the [Pets for the Elderly Foundation website](#).

To donate to the Golden Age Retriever Program at Animal Friends or for more information, go to [Animal Friends' website](#).

Learn more about the bond between cats and seniors in the March 2007 issue of CAT FANCY.