

Northwoods Humane Society – Deanna Persson, President

This past week I had the opportunity of going with my son Chris, who lives in Chicago, to Anti-Cruelty located near the loop. Over 45 years ago, I adopted a dog from them by the name of Chopper. (Not a great name for a dog.) Chris lost his cat, Miss Flack, last July. Miss Flack was 18 years old, blind and she loved Chris and he loved her. He was now ready to fill the void. I was merely the driver and observer for the day. I watched as he interacted with each of the cats. He was looking for a young cat (not a kitten), who was affectionate and curious. He found the perfect cat – ‘Oak’. She was a two year old cat that had come to the shelter as a stray. She was spayed, vaccinated, microchipped and ready for a home. They have proven to be a perfect match.

Chris is an apartment dweller. He prepared for her homecoming with a fabulous new cat tree giving her a view of the city and of neighboring pigeons. She has a fancy new litter box, dishes, a new scratching board and lots of toys. He was ready. He also didn’t want to commit to any social commitments as he wanted to be home as much as he could be to help her adjust. My heart was so full of pride and love.

The “All Animals” publication put out by the Humane Society of The United States had an article about play activities. In the article by Emily Smith, she refers to Denise Seidl who is a cat behaviorist and author of the book “Fun and Games for Cats”, who stressed that cats need more than food, water, fresh litter and a the occasional scratch behind the ear. “Cats are natural explorers. While an indoor-only lifestyle is the safest choice for felines, life can get rather dull without regular activities that tap into their drive to stalk and pounce on prey.”

“Exciting games and activities have the magical effect of turning a bored indoor cat into a happy and more fulfilled companion.” Seidle also states that games can strengthen the bond between human and feline, as well as help correct destructive behavior, problems between cat housemates and weight issues.

Activities and toys should engage your cat’s eyes, ears, nose, paws and claws, as well as her brain. Each cat has her own preference for games and toys. Seidl recommends an hour of daily activity, divided into sessions of to 10 minutes. Most cats energy peak in the evening hours, which is a good time for activity.

The activities below are from Seidl’s book” Fun and Games For Cats”:

Cup Craziness – Place two plastic cups upside-down in front of your cat. Show her a treat (or a few pieces of dry food) and then place it under one of the cups. You may also place the treat under a cup when she is not looking and encourage her to find it using her sense of smell. Another variation: place the treat in one cup and set it on its side. When you cat pats the cup, it will spin and make it harder for her to grab.

Ping Pong Party – Put a treat or a few pieces of dry food in the bottom of a shallow plastic container. Add ping pong balls, leaving enough room for your cat to move them around. Make it a little more difficult by using a taller container.

Water Polo – Fill a wide bowl with warm water. Place two balls inside – one hard ball that will sink and a lightweight one that will float – for your cat to fish out. Try using a clear bowl that allows your cat to see the sunken object from the sides.

Pyramid Play – Glue toilet paper rolls together to create a shape such as a wall or pyramid (If you are crafty, first cover them with nontoxic paint, paper or fabric). Use tissue paper to close some of the tubes, fill some with treats or toy mice and leave the rest empty. Push the treats/toys farther into the tubes, or conceal them behind the tissue paper.

One of the favorite play toys that the cat volunteers use is the feather on a string on the end of a short rod. You can also use a short fishing rod to cast and retrieve good smelling toys.

Playing is good for our furry friends and for us. If we play we tend to smile more and most of the suggested games were associated with treats – we all respond well to treats!

Dates to save:

October 22 – Redbery Books – Cable, Wisconsin! Percentage of all sales go to the Northwoods Humane Society – 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.