

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Humane Society of Berks County Announces Re-Instatement of Award-Winning “Free To A Great Home” Emergency Cat Adoption Program to Combat Euthanasia

The Humane Society of Berks County, Berks County’s leader in animal welfare, announced today that incoming cat numbers at its Reading shelter have once again reached critical levels. In response, the HSBC has re-instated the “Free To A Great Home” emergency cat adoption program. The program, created in 2005 to address the shelter crowding crisis faced by the HSBC during the summer months, provides free adoption for adult cats to qualified adopters. “In 2005 and 2006, this program doubled adult cat adoptions when we needed them most and led to the first summers in recorded history at the HSBC when we did not have to euthanize cats simply because we ran out of space at the shelter,” said Humane Society executive director, Karel I. Minor. “We hope that by putting this program in place now we can have the same result this summer.”

Because of the overwhelming response by the public and the press coverage received for the program, adoptions went up significantly for cats and dogs- and stayed up. The result was a 25% overall increase in successful adoptions in the past two years. The program, considered controversial among some in the animal sheltering community when it was first introduced, has gone on to win the American Humane Association’s Best Industry Practices for Adoption Award, and has helped lead the way for other shelters locally and nationally. Since the introduction of the program other local shelters have begun offering drastically reduced adoption fees for cats, including the Philadelphia Animal Welfare Society, which offers \$1 cat adoptions in the summer. “The HSBC is proud that we were on the cutting edge of this new approach to saving lives and that others in our region have followed our lead,” said Minor.

In fact, the program worked so well for placing older, harder to adopt animals, that in March 2007 the Humane Society of Berks County expanded it to include all cats eleven years and older and all dogs eight years and older. Those pets are now “Free To A Great Home” year-round. This expanded program is once again the first of its kind in this region. However, this elder pet program it’s not enough to save every cat in need during the overcrowded summer months.

Adopters wishing to save a cat’s life through the “Free To A Great Home” emergency cat adoption program must go through the normal adoption screening process. Once approved, the adoption of a cat one year or older is free and has all the same benefits and requirements as a “regular” adoption. Adoptions include some vaccinations, de-worming medication, a 14 day health guarantee through VCA Hospitals, and microchipping. Said Minor, “Our hope is that an adopter who was thinking about adopting a cat will do it now when the need is greatest or perhaps even adopt an adult cat through this program at the same time they adopt a kitten in the regular program.”

The “Free To A Great Home” emergency cat adoption program will be in effect until the summer overcrowding crisis comes to an end. The program is in effect year-round for seniors, 65 years and older.

The Humane Society of Berks County serves all of Berks County and surrounding communities, sheltering 7,000 animals each year. It is a private, non-profit organization funded through donations and service fees. In addition to enforcing Pennsylvania’s animal cruelty laws, the Humane Society offers adoption services, spay and neuter services, humane education, pet behavioral counseling, and helps stray, injured and mistreated animals. The Humane Society of Berks County is located at 1801 N. 11th Street, Reading.

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