



Kitten Kindergarten Launched in Seattle

Program aims to reduce the number of kittens and cats surrendered to shelters.

By Soraya Gutierrez

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In an effort to increase the number of cats that are kept in the home, the Seattle Humane Society will launch a kitten kindergarten program in June.

The kitten kindergarten classes, the first to be introduced in the state of Washington, are expected to become regarded as an essential part of proper kitten development, become the norm in the community and decrease the number of cats relinquished to shelters, according to instructor Jennifer Schneider.



The Seattle Humane Society will begin a kitten kindergarten program in June.

"Our state has no such program, so I thought that these classes would benefit the animal community in Washington," said Schneider, a certified pet dog trainer. "I decided that a humane society was the most appropriate place to start offering these classes."

Drawing on the success of puppy kindergarten classes — formulated in the 1970s with the purpose of socializing puppies to other dogs, new people and new environments — Schneider's kitten kindergarten applies the same logic to socialize kittens and prevent problem behaviors.



"Kitten classes would give people knowledge about how to prevent future behavior problems, including house soiling, scratching and aggression," she said. "Plus, the classes would teach people how to bond with their kittens to create a strong, lifelong relationship."

During the course of kitten kindergarten, pets learn how to sit on cue, come when called, and perform tricks including sit up,

jump up on an object and "talk" on cue. Treats will be among the methods used to encourage the kittens to perform these behaviors.

The class will meet for one hour per week for three weeks. Six kittens is the maximum class size.

Brenda Barnette, CEO of the Seattle Humane Society, said the kitten kindergarten classes will help raise awareness about a cat's intelligence and ability to be trained.

"We are finding that more and more cats need our help finding homes, so we are doing everything we can to get the word out that cats make fantastic companions," Barnette said. "Cats may be underrated by people who have never lived with a cat.

"Little is really ever expected of a cat other than using a litterbox and occasionally coming when called, especially if tasty cat food is being served. Kitten kindergarten will help the family and the cat have the most fun together."

The cost to enroll is \$50 for a three-week series. The class is open to kittens 8 to 20 weeks of age. To register your kitten, call 425-641-0080 or [click here](#) to download the registration form.

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