



Paw Prints

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Columnist

Cats make great pets, too

If you've ever had a cat you probably already know how much joy they bring to your life.

Yet, cats sometimes don't get the credit they deserve. They are often seen as solitary, aloof creatures. And this can be far from the truth. Cats can thrive in a family with children and can even learn to play games that you'd think are associated with dogs, such as fetch.

Many cats love to be petted, held, and cuddled. Give them a bit of attention and you'll get love in return. Cats love to play, and they are quite acrobatic, too – especially when you take out a toy fishing pole or a cat dancer toy. They will leap,

run, and pounce on the toy, which is great fun to watch for the whole family.

And they are extremely loyal.

Even scientists were baffled by how Holly, an indoor four-year-old tortoiseshell calico, became lost on a family excursion during an RV rally in Daytona Beach, Florida, in November 2013 and returned home 200 miles away and two months later, showing up in her family's backyard weak and emaciated. There was a strong bond between that feline and her humans.

Most cats are litter-box trained. You won't have to walk them on cold, rainy, or snowy days. They do prefer a clean litter-box, so keeping the box tidy is necessary.

If you're the busy bee, that's OK; cats don't require constant attention. They are happy just being near you. So, you won't have to dote on them all day.

You can teach a cat to come when called, to not scratch the furniture, and to retrieve toys. Just like clicker training with dogs, you can teach cats with a clicker.

Some folks worry that cats do not love their pet parents as much as a dog would. Even though some cats like their space, once they get to know you, they will love

you unconditionally in their own way. Many cats wait by the door when they hear you coming home, just like dogs do.

Dr. Dennis Turner, a leading expert on the feline-human bond, explains why he likes cats:

"I appreciate the fact that they're very sensitive. They are very independent thinkers and independent actors and they're very elegant and beautiful to watch. I could watch cats for hours."

According to Dr. Turner, each feline-human pair has an individual way of communicating, due in part to the wide variety of behaviors cats use to "talk" to their human family.

While some kitties like to rub up against your legs, others will rub their head against yours. Some cats sit very still while staring at you, others tilt their head in an irresistible questioning gesture.

Many kitties vocalize as a way to communicate, and some scratch the floor or stand on hind legs to reach for you with their front paws.

Dr. Turner's research shows that unlike dogs, cats follow their pet parents' lead when it comes to how much involvement they have with each other.

Some cat pet parents



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER MCNAMEE

Cats are not necessarily aloof creatures. They can make for really fun pets.

prefer a lot of interaction with their pet, while others don't have much time to devote or simply prefer less interaction. Cats are very adaptable to their humans' need in this regard and fall into step easily with the pace that you set.

Cats played an important role in humanitarian Albert Schweitzer's life. He believed that cats consistently improve a human's mood. Research carried out

by anthropologists suggest that Schweitzer was right. A recent Swiss study recruited over 200 couples with cats and compared how both their cat and their partner affected their mood.

Their results showed that, in line with previous studies, cats could alleviate negative moods.

Cats are wonderful pets and so many need homes, so if you're looking for a pet, why not adopt a cat?

And the winner is... Joni McCreery

Joni won the "Pets Just Wanna Have Fun" quilt that was designed, appliquéd, and quilted by Valerie Fercho-Tillery. The original design and incredible detail make this a spectacular quilt!

100% of raffle proceeds went to Furry Friends Foundation.

Congratulations, Joni!

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