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Sergio Castillo is making it easier for people to enjoy the emotional and health benefits of cats with his new Purrington Cat Lounge café on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Finding Love from a Pet

New cat lounge café makes it a connection

BY OLIVIA OLIVIA
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

A new minority-owned business is trying to make it easier for people to enjoy the emotional and health benefits of cat ownership.

Purrington's Cat Lounge on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard opened its doors earlier this year, fulfilling the owners Sergio and Kristen Castillo's dream of helping animals find homes while simultaneously bringing pet ownership education to the local community.

Long time residents of northeast Portland, the couple has always had a passion for cats. When some friends living abroad in France told them about a cat café in Paris, they decided it was something they wanted to try.

"So many people don't know how much they can benefit from the love of a pet," says Kristen Castillo of her work getting cats into adoptive homes. "Cats have been shown to lower blood pressure, improve mental health, and even extend the lives of their owners. We want to make cat ownership easier and decrease the barriers to pet ownership."

Purrington's has set up an exchange with a local shelter, the Cat Adoption Team, and sometimes gets cats from other parts of the country that no longer have room in their no-kill shelters. Some cats which would otherwise be put down for lack of space find second chances in Portland, where no-kill shelters are more abundant and have more funding.

So far, just over a dozen cats have been adopted by local families because of their efforts.

"For some people," says Kristen, "going out to some of the larger shelters at the edge of town is out of the question, or just something they wouldn't do. Here, people just walk past a window and might see a cat and fall in love."

Sergio Castillo agreed, adding that the café is planning to eventually add even more services like pet-owner education courses and guidance groups, along with stress-relief and management courses that would allow locals to do yoga or meditate in the company of the cats.

"The cats tend to enjoy being here instead of at the shelter. They move freely and get to visit the guests," he said. "People who can't afford to own a cat or live in a place where pets aren't allowed can



Sergio and Kristen Castillo open Purrington's Cat Lounge at 3529 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., fulfilling their dream of helping animals find homes while simultaneously bringing pet ownership and pet companionship to the local community.

come here and get the benefits of pets without having to pay a big deposit or worry about vet bills."

The Castillo's say they only bring in cats for which being in a café and moving around near people won't be too stressful. The felines can also retreat to a back area behind the visitation lounge, where they can avoid people if they get "petted out."

The lounge is also full of hiding holes, toys, climbing areas, and comfortable pet beds for the cats to enjoy. Usually, there is between eight to ten cats available in the cat lounge, with a capped number of visitors inside the lounge at a time.

Visitors to the café pay \$8 for entry, but the entry fee might be waived if several of the cats have been adopted, are sick, have retreated, or absent for whatever reason that day. The money helps maintain the cats and keep the owners in business.

The café also sells snacks and beverages.

Purrington's is currently hosting a supply drive for the Cat Adoption Team shelter. Visitors can donate needed items or cash from a Giving Tree of requests from the shelter. For more information, visit purringtonscatlounge.com.