



Tim, Ann, and Kevin



Leslie and Anne Thien

Paws-itives of the Pandemic

By: Sage Johnson

Copy Editor in Chief

A rise in pet adoptions within the pandemic has improved the lives of many animals from rescues.

Masks, hand-sanitizer, and toilet paper. The Covid-19 pandemic changed the priority of purchases in households nationwide. For some people, this included a furry friend! With the national lockdown last spring, people found themselves in isolation and needing a companion during the difficult times. Animal shelters and pet rescues all over had a major increase in adoptions.

This summer, my family decided to adopt a kitten. In true quarantine fashion, we spent a lot of time binge-watching our favorite shows such as Parks and Recreation, where our new kitten received the name Ann Perkins, a character from the show. My cat Ann is from AHeinz57 Pet Rescue and Transport, a non-profit organization based in Central Iowa with a foster-based animal rescue to prevent the large number of shelter animals from homelessness.

DMPS elementary teacher, Melissa Simmermaker, fosters cats and kittens through

AHienz57 in her home.

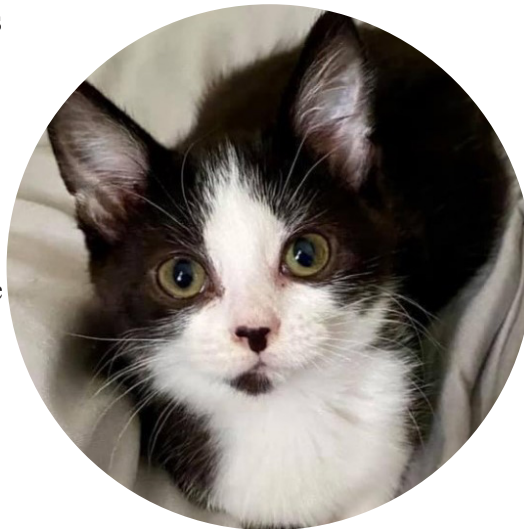
“I began fostering in the fall of 2019 because I saw a story in the news about an animal hoarding incident in Dallas County. AHeinz57 had just taken in an overwhelming amount of cats and needed additional foster homes to make more space for new arrivals,” Simmermaker said.

Simmermaker continues to volunteer and has fostered nearly 20 kittens during the pandemic, including Ann Perkins. While the pandemic has brought more attention to pet rescues, it has also caused a few difficulties for kittens before they find their forever home.

“The pandemic has made it much more difficult for my foster kittens to become socialized. I

typically invite friends over, as often as possible, to handle and play with the fosters. It’s important for kittens to meet as many people as possible when they are young, but the pandemic has made that very challenging,” Simmermaker said.

Simmermaker’s roommate, Kelsey Thien, has





Kevin Thien



Livi Davison

become very familiar with the fostering process and has even adopted her own cat, Kevin, from AHeinz57.

"They all have very different personalities, and it is fun to watch them grow and learn new things. I'm lucky enough that I was able to work from home for a couple of months, so it was really nice to have them during that time. They helped me forget about the world's problems for a while," Thien said.

"I encourage anyone who is looking to add an animal to their family to adopt from a pet rescue. While it might sound cliché, adopting an animal from a shelter honestly saves that animal's life," Melissa Simmermaker said.

The fostering process is a crucial part of the adoption process. Adopting from a pet rescue like AHeinz57 helps animals that are in tough conditions and are taken care of by volunteers before they are adopted.

"While the fosters are with me, I take care of them like they are my own pets. I focus on helping them become more socialized and healthier, so they

are ready for a forever home," Simmermaker said.

Fostered rescue animals are treated for a wide variety of medical issues before they can get adopted. A non-profit like AHeinz57 uses donations to cover medical and transportation expenses.

"Pet rescues do an amazing job of helping animals that may not have had a chance otherwise. Some of our fosters were found under a bridge, on the side of the road etc., and came to us in pretty bad shape. Through the rescue, they were able to get veterinary care, and we were able to help them get healthy again," Thien said.

Social Studies teacher Amber Davison and her family recently adopted a six-year-old pit bull terrier mix through AHeinz57 and faced a similar experience.

"We know a few families who had also adopted from this rescue. They do a lot of fostering so they are able to give you a lot more information about the dog's needs. We were also lucky, the day we went to pick her up they found a cancerous tumor. They removed the tumor and provided us with medication for free after," Davison said.

Adopting a pet is a big step and commitment and not something to enter in without thorough research. A lot of time, effort, and resources are an essential part of being a pet owner and making sure the animal is in a safe and loving environment. Though it can be challenging, adopting from a rescue is great for the pet, and great for you!

For more information about adopting, fostering, or donating, visit the AHeinz47 website, www.aheinz57.com.

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