



*An orange tabby at Blount County's shelter is especially fond of love from visitors. Shelter staff have dubbed him 'Screamsicle' for his yearnful meows.*

## Pet a shelter cat for their health — and yours

By [Kristin Yarbrough](#)

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Meet Screamsicle, a 1-year-old male orange tabby who would *really* like a word with you. While some [cats at Blount County's shelter](#) can be a bit aloof, Screamsicle talks to you, reaches his paw in your direction, rubs his forehead against your hand — he wants to be your pal.

By showing Screamsicle your care, you offer him not only him not only friendship but also good health. Cats who are petted and talked to daily have a markedly lower incidence of upper respiratory infection, according to a 2020 [study](#) published by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH). Cats not stroked and talked to gently are over two times more likely to get sick than cats who are.

A shelter is a stressful place for cats and kittens, and with felines just as with humans, stress can precipitate illness. In contrast, time with you can help cats feel comfortable, which improves their health, happiness, and their likelihood of being adopted.

The care you offer is returned to you: Washington State University [study](#) participants who pet a cat or dog for 10 minutes experienced in a significant reduction in cortisol, a major stress hormone.

Perhaps you'll say hello to Screamsicle at the Animal Adoption Center of Blount County's cat room? Will you ask a staff member to take him out so he can stretch his legs, look out the window, and, most of all, enjoy a few minutes of your presence?

At the shelter you'll find carpeted trees for the cats to climb and lounge on, scratching posts, tunnels to hide in and run through, and sparkling crinkly toys to bat around. Maybe you'll bring a book for you or your child to read to [the cats and kittens](#). Most of the cats would love to be pet. Or you can simply observe as these curious creatures explore the room. It is a delightful and enriching experience for human and cat alike.

The Animal Adoption Center of Blount County is open Tuesday thru Friday from 11-4:30 and Saturday from 9-2, and is located at 5554 County Highway 1 in Cleveland. You do not need an appointment to adopt or to visit the animals. All ages are welcome. Children must be in the direct supervision of a parent or guardian, while 16- and 17 year-olds may volunteer on their own with the signature consent of a parent or guardian.

Make a note on your calendar today. Even a quick stop can be a highlight of your day – and theirs.