

Introducing Chooley



Chooley and his littermates were found in a culvert on the side of a Tennessee highway. Their kitty momma was nowhere to be found. The Good Samaritan packed the four kittens into a box and transported them to the McKamey Animal Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee. That's where they began their life out of the wild. They were treated and raised by human caretakers.

Now, this is where we come in.

We lost our 20-year-old kitty, Tattoo on July 2nd. I was heartbroken. I lost my cuddle kitty. We also have a 10-year-old kitty, Titan. He's a purring machine but he's not much of a cuddler, and at 18 pounds he's a load. I missed my cuddle time immensely. A notice came over my computer by way of the NOOGAtoday electronic newsletter. They were getting out the word that the McKamey Animal Center was FULL. It's kitten season on top of that and they really needed to clear the shelter. I had been pondering the purchase of another pure-bred cat but was also fond of the idea of adopting from a shelter. That notice made my decision. It was time to help them clear the shelter, but I was not going to fall in love with just any ball of fuzz. If I could not find the exact cat of my dreams, I was willing to wait.

We arrived at our appointed time. Because of COVID we could not just stroll in. They are limited in the number of guests they can have at any time and of course we had to wear masks and social distance. We could wander freely through a few rooms that held kittens. These rooms concentrated on kittens who were older and socialized. If you are going to take a kitten home to a household with small children, you need to take home a cat that can handle the situation. We liked many of those kittens. Interestingly, most of them were black or black and white. I did not fall in love with any of them, so we moved on.

I told our guide that I was interested in the youngest kitten they'd let me take home. I thought that would mean 12 weeks old because that's when they get their last vaccination. I was wrong. She told me they had some younger kittens that were ready to leave the center but that they are housed in the nursery and we could not go down there. They had to be brought up one at a time and because of COVID precautions, you could only look at three.

As part of the appointment process I was required to tick boxes on the website for kittens I was interested in. They cannot promise the ones you focus on will still be at the shelter when you arrive but that they update regularly. The guide told me they had two of the three kittens I had picked as possible choices.



She went off to bring the first one up. She opened the lid to the box and the kitten exited to explore the private room she had put us in. We checked for cuddle potential and held the kitten to see how comfortable it might be with us. I was ready to see the

next one. She came back with the next kitten in his box. She slid open the lid and the 9-week-old kitten named Norcross pranced out. He stood upright – perfect posture – and immediately took command of the room. He raced right over to me to be picked up, squealed with delight and purred like a jet engine. We cuddled. When I put him down, he raced around the room playing with any random bit he could put his paws on. He bounced off walls and delighted in the freedom from his box.

My husband held him and flashed a smile over at me. I don't know exactly what either of us said but it was something like, "This is the one, isn't it." Not even a question; more like a statement. I fell in love with my ball of fuzz.



We started in on the paperwork. We could take Norcross home for \$10. In fact, we could have two for \$10 if we wanted. They really needed to clear the shelter. I was tempted...

After we completed the paperwork and were preparing to put him in his carrier, I announced that his name was going to be

changed to Chooley. My husband had come up with that name the day before. I thought about it all night and it made perfect sense whether we picked a male or female.



Buy why Chooley?

Because we moved to Chattanooga. This kitty is our Chatt kitty. We live right behind the forever famous Choo Choo Hotel. That's why it's spelled Chooley and not Chewey or even Chuy. And lastly, we had a cat at our home in Wisconsin when I was much younger that we named, "Choo Choo." She got her name because she preferred the dark kibble in the Purina Cat Chow mix. We thought that looked like coal and she was a Choo Choo. Yeah, I know... kids come up with crazy things.

Chooley is settling into his new home. He's 10 weeks old now. He's learning his limits. He's already been to the vet and was granted a clean bill of health. He's had his claws clipped and races around like he owns the place. Our only challenge is Titan. The 18-pound kitty has become a chicken. He's afraid of Chooley so we are balancing time between when they are experimenting being together and begin apart. The best news is during a time of COVID and working from home we are all here most of the day and evening. Chooley gets lots of training time, and attention. Hopefully soon, the two kitties will be buddies.

And you can bet I'm getting my cuddle time.

via GIPHY

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Zola". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a small registered trademark symbol (®) to the right of the name.

P.S

Pictures are courtesy of Jennifer's talented professional photographer-husband. Thank you Flint!