



# FELINE WORKFORCE

## Why a Job is the Cat's Meow

by Sandra Murphy

**S**ome cats started their careers in barns with minimal job opportunities. With updated skills, they now boost office morale, encourage reading, promote products and provide therapy. Community cats even work in private security.

### In the Office

Millennials, now comprising a third of this country's stressed-out labor force, according to the Pew Research Center and American Psychological Association, are among those that can benefit from having a cat around. Lowered blood pressure is one result, according to research by psychologist Karen Allen, Ph.D., conducted at the University at Buffalo. Even when comfort breaks are hard to schedule,

insistent cats cannot be ignored.

"Pompous Albert, a rejected show cat, works at SafeWise, in Salt Lake City," relates Sage Singleton, who handles Albert's Instagram account. "He boosts morale, reduces stress and provides entertainment."

Carlos, a former rescue kitten, greets employees at PetNovations, in Norristown, Pennsylvania, each morning. He's the star of the corporate Instagram account and blog, and promotes the company's eco-friendly Cat Genie litterless cat box.

Smith's Ace Hardware and Housewares, in Princeton, New Jersey, has Dusty patrol its 18,000-square-foot facility, often escorting customers along the aisles.

At St. Augustine Health Ministries, in Cleveland, the furry receptionist

is Oreo. This black-and-white stray claimed the job by installing herself at the front desk to welcome guests and visit with residents that miss having their own pet.

### Therapists

At the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco, Duke Ellington Morris visits with patients while nurses check vital signs; he's part of an animal-assisted therapy program through the city's Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

With the help of his humans, Jessica and Eric Hagan, of Pennsylvania's Wolf Creek Township, Draven was certified through a local Love on a Leash chapter that qualifies pet-provided therapy animals. He showed *My Cat From Hell* host Jackson Galaxy his hospital routine for a segment called "My Cat From Heaven." Draven regularly visits the Grove City Medical Center, in Pine Township, local nursing homes and service groups.

### Literacy Aids

"At 18, Cleo, my small, gray cat, retired from therapy visits and missed the attention," says Michelle Cardosi, a retail clerk in Silt, Colorado. "Kids reading to her at the school library provided a solution that satisfied everyone."

In 2010, the public library in White Settlement, Texas, adopted Browser to remedy a rodent problem. Five years later, the city council cited pending renovations and a potential impact on allergies in backing a motion to oust Browser. Supporters, pointing out that the cat brought children through the doors, successfully petitioned to keep the four-legged employee.

### Private Security

Less socially developed feral felines can provide needed services. The Kitty Bungalow Charm School for Wayward Cats rescues such cats from Los Angeles shelters. Each is vetted, spayed/neutered and microchipped. "When they're adopted out in threes, community cats are more likely to stay on the job," notes founder and headmistress Shawn Simons.

Photo: Yakov/Shutterstock.com



“In Southern California, working cats are employed as assistants to brewmasters at the Monkish Brewery to protect the grain and hops and at Saluti Cellars as vintner support in charge of gopher population control,” says Simons. “More traditionally, cats at the Portuguese Bend Riding Club barn discourage mice and make friends with horses and riders.”

The school’s Working Cat Program partners with area recycling centers, golf courses, warehouses and industrial parks that could otherwise lose hundreds of millions of dollars annually due to vermin-related structural damage, including gnawed wiring and other potential fire hazards. “Businesses get an all-natural, safe and effective way to control pests and cats live life naturally,” says Simons.

Working cats of many stripes are becoming increasingly common. For a business, it’s a money-saver; for a cat, it’s a lifesaver.

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