For more information on animal care, behavior or AC&C programs, contact (602) 506-PETS or visit pets.maricopa.gov
Curbing Cat Aggression Toward People

you get your cat used to other people when she is young, at about seven to 12 weeks. Have three or four different people regularly handle her for no more than five minutes at a time.

If your adult cat is undersocialized, recruit cat-loving friends to come over on a regular basis. Give them your cat's favorite food treats or a toy attached to a long fishing pole. When Kitty begins to connect good times and good food with people who come through the door, the hissing will be replaced with purring. If the problem is serious, you may need to work with a professional trainer or animal behaviorist.

Redirected Aggression
Consider this scenario: Fluffy is sitting by the window as usual. You pass by and gently stroke her back. Suddenly your affectionate and gentle pet has her teeth in your arm. This phenomena is called redirected aggression. It occurs when a cat is highly aroused and in an aggressive state (for instance, by the sight of an outside cat, or by a loud, disturbing noise), and the cat attacks a person or another animal within reach.

If a cat is in an aggressive state or mood, it can be very dangerous for you to approach him, or try to pick him up. Wait until the cat has changed its mood before interacting with him. The state of arousal can last two hours or more, but in most cases is over within 30 minutes. After the cat has engaged in another behavior, such as grooming, playing, or eating, it is usually safe to approach him.

To treat this type of aggression, the arousing stimulus must be identified so that it can be eliminated. For example, if the cat is upset by looking at other cats through the window, the resident cat's view should be obstructed by pulling a shade or keeping the cat out of the room with the windows.

Many bites and scratches can be avoided simply by understanding, and respecting, your cat. Some companion cats do not like to be held or touched in certain places, and a show of claws may be their way of telling you not to go there. Learn to read feline body language; if you see your cat's ears go back, or if she leans on her hips with her claws exposed and mouth open, it's best to back off.