

Animal Shelter Volunteer Program Development Plan

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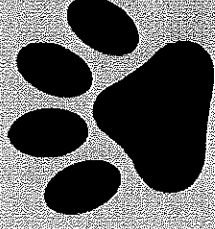
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in Regional and Municipal Shelters

Introduction

I would like to thank all those involved in creating this presentation. Each of the contributors have successful volunteer programs and although it demands a lot of time to create them, everyone involved in this project feels it is very necessary for the socialization and welfare of the animals in their care and a benefit to the shelters.

Should you have any questions about any part of this presentation, please contact any of the members of this sub-committee.

Paula Poplawski



Purpose:

How Can a Volunteer Program Help?

- Grow your shelter
- Expand your shelter's efforts
- Kennel Cleaning
- Exercise Regimens
- Networking
- Marketing
- Fundraising & Awareness

Benefits of a Volunteer Program

- Decreases animal care workload for ACO
- Volunteers clean, feed, walk dogs
- Network to find future homes
- Bring donations to organization
- Provide voice for organization
- Understand your organization's needs

Process:

First Steps to Develop Your Program

- Develop an application to reflect your shelter's needs
- Establish a Code of Conduct
- Create a waiver that releases your town or city from liability
- Form Rules and Regulations

Process:

Top Five Suggestions For Your New Program

1. Clarify expectations and set boundaries
2. Be grateful for what the volunteers do and thank them for helping – but remember that you are in charge
3. Volunteering is a privilege, not a right
4. Don't be afraid to ask volunteers to remove themselves from your organization if they are causing issues
5. Always protect the organization

Volunteer Screening

- Complete short interviews with potential volunteers
- Establish a job description
- Consider different types of volunteers
 - Every day volunteers vs. fundraising event volunteers
- Consider a “Volunteer Orientation” to welcome new volunteers
 - Schedule orientations based on your shelter’s needs
 - Limit orientation to a small number to make more manageable

Volunteer Screening:

Questions to Ask

- What do you hope to get out of this experience of volunteering?
- Do you understand that there is an inherent risk in working with animals?
- Are there any animals you feel uncomfortable with handling?
- What is your position on euthanasia?
- How do you respond to structure, constructive criticism, and stress?
- Where else have you volunteered?

Training Your New Volunteers

- Develop a training program to fit your shelter's needs
- Find a trainer who works with your shelter's specific needs
- Have separate training for dog and cat volunteers
- Host a minimum of two hour training sessions for each type of animal
- Volunteers should pass a test following training
- Consider utilizing online training videos
 - ASPCA, Maddie's Fund, etc.

Volunteer Welcome Packet: Set Expectations for New Volunteers

- Animal Shelter Mission Statement
- Code of Conduct
- Conflict of Interest Statement
- Rules and Regulations
- Release of Liability
- Dress Code
- Animal Handling
- Time Commitment
- Hours and Contact Information

Manage Your New Volunteers

- Utilize a volunteer book/software program to help manage your volunteers
 - Volgistics, Regpack, NewOrg Management System, Doorstep, etc.
- Keep track of every volunteer's days and times worked
- Consider a permanent schedule for new volunteers
- Maintain minimum hours worked per month

Continuing Education

- Continued emphasis on consistent training methods
- Offer a controlled environment to provide volunteers the opportunity to get comfortable with and learn more about animals they may not have otherwise taken out on their own based on initial impressions through the kennel door
- Offer a controlled environment to work on desensitizing the individual animal to their stress triggers
- Create a forum to ask questions and share feedback about their time spent with specific animals with tips and tricks provided around addressing any challenges they are having
- Create a method of observing/assessing and providing continuing constructive feedback on volunteer handling of the animals after their initial entry into the volunteer program
- Learn new information to potentially enhance & modify current programs

Next Steps: Prepare Your Volunteer Program for the Future

- Following your first year, consider the following:
 - Select/Nominate a standout volunteer as “Volunteer Coordinator”
 - Initiate monthly volunteer meetings
 - Find volunteers to fit the specific needs of your shelter
 - Example: weekend volunteers vs. week day volunteers

Conclusion

- The first year of any new program is the most difficult. There is a huge learning curve and the beginning of a new project brings about a lot of extra work. But once the program is in place, the benefits to you and the animals is extraordinary

