



About Our Volunteers...

Who They Are

Foothills Animal Shelter Volunteers are an invaluable part of the FAS team! Our 300+ Shelter Volunteers and 100+ Foster Volunteers range in age from 16 to 85 years old and have diverse backgrounds (students, teachers, retirees, engineers, accountants, nurses, doctors, homemakers, artists and veterinarians, just to name a few!) yet they share a deep passion to help the homeless animals in our community. Many of our Volunteers desire to give back what they have gained by having companion animals in their lives, some are hoping to make a difference in the community while having fun, and others are seeking to learn new skills during a career change. FAS Volunteers and Staff work together to meet our mission of providing support to our surrounding community through education, services that strengthen the human-pet bond, and humane care for the animals we serve.

What They Do

FAS Volunteers commit to logging at least 8 hours a month for at least 6 months in order to support the needs of the Shelter. They are scheduled to work regular on-going shifts, and their consistent, reliable presence is vital to providing the daily care, enrichment, and customer service required to meet our mission. They are willing to do the roles most needed by the staff and animals and understand that cleaning tasks are just as essential to the well-being of the animals as the comfort and enrichment roles. In addition, Volunteers assist with fundraising and other vital community outreach efforts throughout the year.

Qualities of our Volunteers

There are certain qualities that separate a good Volunteer from a GREAT Volunteer. Our Volunteers are selected because they have these qualities, and we hope you have them, too!

They Understand Their Commitment to FAS

Our Volunteers understand that the staff relies on them to be at the shelter on a certain day at a certain time, so potential Volunteers need to assess their availability for the next 6 months to determine whether or not this is the right time to commit. Because Volunteers are involved with direct care and enrichment of the animals, our Volunteers must be reliable and show up to work their scheduled shifts. The Volunteer schedule is designed to fully meet the needs of the

animals and to support the FAS staff in the work they do. When we are short a Volunteer, this impacts the work of all of the Volunteers on that shift, as well as the staff, and ultimately the animals. We understand emergencies do happen, but recurring absences are very difficult on the staff and other volunteers.

They are Communicative

If our Volunteers ever have a conflict, concern or question, we expect them to communicate this to the Volunteer Staff. As with any commitment, there may be situations or people with whom Volunteers are not comfortable. We encourage Volunteers to communicate any problems as they arise, rather than being unhappy and leaving. We always seek to improve our volunteer program, so we welcome ALL feedback -- our Volunteers avoid gossip, are active in resolving conflicts, and use a Considerate Approach (polite, kind and intentional) whenever possible.

They are Coachable and Safe

An animal shelter is a highly unnatural environment for animals and they are under a great deal of stress. Volunteers must understand that they cannot behave with the animals the way they would animals in their own homes. Regardless of demeanor, we cannot anticipate the ways in which an animal might react to the overwhelming amount of stimulus occurring at any one time. Many of our Volunteers come to the shelter with a lot of animal handling experience; however, our Volunteers understand they are required to follow our specific protocols and procedures when interacting with animals. Volunteers must pay attention to the work they are doing and not let their guard down while interacting with an animal. If a Volunteer is observed behaving in an unsafe manner, they will be advised on how to be safe. If they continue to be unsafe, or if the infraction is egregious in nature, the Volunteer may be asked to reattend training or discontinue with direct animal contact roles at the shelter.

They Support FAS Policy

When a Volunteer makes the commitment to volunteer at FAS, they are also committing to following our policies, procedures, and protocols. FAS has cared for and adopted out thousands of animals, we follow the industry standards and draw on a vast wealth of knowledge when making our policies. Volunteers must understand and support the policies we employ at Foothills so they can represent them to the public while they're volunteering at the shelter, as well as to the community at large when they are not. Volunteers trust that everyone at Foothills is making decisions for the animals in good faith, and they ask if ever unsure about a decision. Volunteers understand that while they are able to choose their assignments, the staff is required to support the needs of the entire shelter and can be under tremendous stress at times. Our goal is not to convince every volunteer that we are right; rather, our goal is to inform them of our policies and allow each volunteer to determine whether or not they feel this organization is one which they would like to be a part. We train our Volunteers in our policy and philosophy in order that they are able to best represent our organization when speaking with the public.

They are Empathetic

As comfortable as we try to make an animal's stay, a shelter is still a highly unnatural environment. We make every effort to reduce the fear, anxiety, stress and frustration animals encounter during their time here and rely on Volunteers to help in that mission. We ask Volunteers to be sensitive to the needs of the animals and attempt to understand what they

might be experiencing. We also encourage Volunteers to be empathetic and use a Considerate Approach (polite, kind and intentional) with the public as well as with the animals. We rely on the public and their willingness to come to FAS in order to get the animals adopted. In order to best serve the needs of the animals, Volunteers must show compassion to the people who come to us.

They possess Common Sense

Our Volunteers think before they act and know their limitations. Volunteers who have not been trained to do something should not attempt to do it on their own. Knowing limitations will prevent injury to humans and animals. Common sense also means asking questions any time a Volunteer is unsure of a procedure.

They are not Squeamish

Being squeamish and working with animals doesn't mix well since there is a lot of poop at an animal shelter and every Volunteer is expected to spot clean kennels. If a Volunteer may have a problem with bad smells or picking up poop, that Volunteer needs to think carefully before accepting any Volunteer position. Cleaning kennels, walking dogs, and doing laundry mean that Volunteers will come in contact with poop – there are very few, if any, roles here that do not involve some degree of mess! 😊

They are Self-Motivated and Autonomous

Once Volunteers have been trained, they will be expected to work with a minimum amount of supervision. Being able to follow directions from staff and retain training are vital. The staff is very busy and may not always have time to chat, so following through on tasks and completing assignments independently ensures the animals are getting the best possible care. We do things a certain way because we have found things that work and are very intentional in our standard operating procedures. From doing laundry to walking dogs, there are procedures that need to be followed. We are open to suggestions and we may want to try one – but please no experimenting with procedures.

They understand Emotional Contagion

This is sometimes sad, stressful and discouraging work. It's perfectly natural to feel bad when an animal must be euthanized or to feel stress when things are hectic. If a Volunteer needs a break for any reason, or is having a difficult time with any aspect of the Volunteer experience, please let the volunteer staff know and take breaks when needed. Acknowledge staff and fellow Volunteers when they do something well and always, always assume the best intentions of staff and other Volunteers. Volunteers cannot let negative emotions infect others – they are expected to bring and spread positive energy to the animals and humans.

They are Flexible

There are a lot of things to be done here and they are all important! While we will try to accommodate preferences as much as possible, Volunteers help us the most by being willing to do whatever needs to be done. Longevity enables volunteers to learn more skills, thus allowing a wider variety of tasks from which to choose! Volunteers know that they are here to support the needs of the staff and organization. We want volunteers to have a rewarding and satisfying

experience and we will always be willing to listen to ideas and suggestions in an effort to make improvements.

We understand that volunteering at Foothills Animal Shelter is a very big commitment on your part for the welfare of all of our animals. If you believe you are up to the challenge, please join us – we would love to have you as a part of our team!

In their own words...

Here is what our volunteers have said after completing their initial 6 month commitment:

What they enjoy about volunteering...

- *What I like best about volunteering is the people I have met as well as the impact I can have on an animal's stay at the shelter. I also like how everyone is kind and compassionate for the same reasons I am (animals) and how supportive everyone is.*
- *The people at FAS are amazing & great to work with. The facility is well designed for as optimal of an experience for the animals as possible.*
- *I love having a place to go where my contribution is both beneficial and appreciated.*
- *I simply love helping at such a wonderful place. The other volunteers are so nice and friendly. I feel like a part of a family at FAS*
- *I am having so much fun! I love walking the dogs, helping at animal training and cat socialization. I'm always so happy to see when dogs that I have walked or cats that I have helped socialize are adopted.*
- *I like getting to celebrate the successes of the animals I know best. And I love helping to match patrons with the best cat for them.*
- *Staff and other volunteers are friendly and helpful. And I enjoy the opportunity to make animals a bit better off*

What advice they would give a new volunteer...

- *Embrace it all - there's a lot of information in a limited time so re-reading the notes is super helpful.*
- *I would say that they should train for both dogs and cats so they can have a variety of things to do. For my first day I wish I had known to make myself a schedule for volunteering so I could make sure to get all of my hours in.*

- *To be flexible and take things in stride; everyone at the shelter is kind and they just want to look out for you. On the first day just try to go in without any expectations of what you do and with an open mind.*
- *Always ask someone if you aren't sure about what to do; never feel that any question is not important because for the volunteer, it is. It's how we all learn to be better for the welfare of the animals.*
- *To share what makes each animal special with patrons... Even when you aren't the kennel guide. We get to see the best of these animals, and when working with cats specifically we know it takes a while for them to get comfortable with people.*
- *Just have patience, learning to care for shelter animals takes time. Knowing more about how the process works for the animals -- when they arrive, what happens until they reach adoption floor.*
- *Be patient with yourself. There is a lot to learn and the staff and other volunteers are always just a step away to help!*