



Where Best Friends Are Found

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Thank you so much for your interest in becoming a volunteer with The Humane Society of St. Joseph County!
We have many different volunteer opportunities, and are always grateful for individuals who donate their time and talents to enhance our organization and uplift our community.

“The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.” — William Shakespeare

Volunteer Program Contacts

Primary Contact:

Sarah Stanton - Outreach Coordinator
outreach@humanesocietystjc.org
(574) 255-4726 Ext.235

Other Leadership Team:

Genny Brown – Executive Director
Megan Michalos – Shelter Operations Manager
Rachel Barber – Cat Manager
Amy Kirkeby – Dog Manager

Animal Placement Specialist:

Erin – Dog APS
Shelby – Dog APS
Jen – Cat APS

In Shelter Volunteer Hours: Monday-Saturday: 9am-5pm

Please note: Animal kennels/rooms are being cleaned around the clock. Please be mindful of employees as they are cleaning. Watch your step because floors may be wet.

Becoming a Volunteer:

In order to become a volunteer, these steps must be completed.

- 1. Watch the orientation video on our website and take the orientation quiz.**
- 2. Attend in-shelter trainings & turn in a Volunteer Waiver of Liability.**
- 3. Read & fully understand the entire Volunteer Handbook. If you have questions please ask!**

For your safety and the safety of our animals, you may only begin volunteering after your training is complete. Please contact the Outreach Coordinator at outreach@humanesocietystjc.org with any questions or concerns.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

In Shelter

1. **Dog Walker:** Walking, exercising, socializing, grooming and loving on our dogs. As you know, this is very important work, as our dogs have so much fun when they are out with you for a walk! It provides much needed exercise and enrichment.
2. **Cat Caregiver:** Petting, socializing, grooming and loving on our cats. We also need help cleaning our cat rooms and scooping litter boxes in the morning hours. Cats need love too and they enjoy spending some one on one time with you!
3. **Enrichment Team:** Prepare enrichment items (Kongs, Puzzle Feeders, etc) for dogs or provide cat enrichment.
4. **Dog Training:** Do you have experience with Fear Free and Force Free training methods? Teaching shelter dogs basic manners will increase their adoptability and provide mental stimulation which leads to happier, healthier pets.
5. **Creative Team:** We are looking for individuals with skills in the field of photography, videography, and graphic design to make our animals shine online! The Creative Team will work to produce content for social media including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and our official shelter website.
6. **Grounds Keeping & Gardening:** Volunteers are needed to maintain our wonderful gardens and grounds. If you have a green thumb or just love to do yard work, please let us know!
7. **Facility Care & Maintenance:** Are you good at fixing things? These volunteer duties may include changing light bulbs, repairing and hanging items, fixing doors, and more. We always need handy people with these talents!
8. **Housekeeping:** Housekeeping volunteers help with laundry, dishes, and other janitorial duties. The purpose of this position is to ensure each animal has a clean bowl to eat their meal out of, and a soft clean blanket to lay their head.

Other Activities

9. **Animal Transport Volunteer:** Do you have some time on your hands and enjoy driving? Maybe you want to help animals but aren't able to help in-shelter. Sounds like transport driving is right for you! We partner with some amazing No-Kill rescues around the Midwest, who help us to maintain our no-kill status. To learn more, email Megan@humansocietystjc.org
10. **Animal Outreach:** We occasionally take animals to events in the community. We need animal handlers who are outgoing and willing to speak with the public to attend these events with our Outreach Coordinator. Experience controlling large breed dogs is a plus!
11. **Community Outreach Team:** Help us with events such as Trunk or Treats, donation drives, microchip clinics, and community outreach where we provide information and resources to the public!
12. **Fundraising Team:** Like planning or have a knack for raising funds? Then we need you to help us plan, obtain sponsorships, and execute successful fundraising campaigns.
13. **PetSmart Cat Care:** Once every 4 weeks we have 8-10 cats stay at PetSmart on Grape Road for one week in hopes of getting them adopted. We need adult volunteers who will clean, feed and water the cats every morning and evening.

General Volunteer Policies & Procedures

Responsibility and Dedication:

- Animals are always to be treated kindly, gently and professionally.
- All volunteers are required to follow the HSSJC policies and procedures.
- We encourage volunteers to become a member of the HSSJC which requires annual membership dues. Membership dues are as follows: Household-\$75, Individual-\$40, Senior Citizens (65+)/ Student-\$20.

Time Commitment and Attendance:

- We are an organization that depends on dedicated **long term** and consistent volunteers. We ask that if you commit to a specific event, team, or program that you honor your commitment.
- If there are volunteer opportunities for any upcoming events, they will be posted on the Sign Up website. To give us time to plan, please sign-up at least 3 days in advance of the posted event.
- If you are unable to keep your commitment for any reason, please contact the Outreach Coordinator or designated team leader via email as early as possible so they can find a replacement for you.
- All volunteers are required to sign in and out each time you volunteer in the shelter. The sign-in sheets will be located on the volunteer desk in the front office. If you are meeting other volunteers at an offsite adoption event, please keep a record of your hours with you and write them down the next time you come to the shelter.

Age Requirement:

- **Volunteers must be at least 18 years of age and be independent in order to volunteer without adult supervision.**
- **Anyone between the ages of 8-17 must go through volunteer training with a parent/guardian and remain with that parent/guardian at all times.** Individuals under the age of 18 may not independently handle our animals. Please see the Outreach Coordinator for more details.
- As a safety precaution, children under the age of 8 are not permitted to volunteer hands-on with our animals, but we encourage parents and guardians to bring their child to designated child friendly events such as Paws for Pages.

Dress Code:

- All volunteers must wear a name tag that has been provided to you by the Outreach Coordinator.
- Volunteers must dress in **t-shirts, pants/ankle length skirts and tennis shoes/boots.**
- Working in the shelter can sometimes be messy. Please wear the appropriate clothes and shoes. Long pants and no-skid boots or shoes are recommended. Do not wear open-toed shoes, long earrings, necklaces, or other jewelry in which an animal may become entangled.
- Volunteers are **not** permitted to wear shorts, capris, skirts*, dresses, sandals, slip-on shoes, offensive clothing or clothing promoting alcohol, cigarettes or illegal drugs.
- HSSJC is not responsible for lost, damaged, or stolen property. We do have lockers available for volunteers to use during their in-shelter volunteer hours. Keys must be returned to lockers at end of shift.
- When at offsite adoption events please wear a Humane Society t-shirt or a plain red shirt.

*Ankle skirts may be worn if you choose not to wear pants. No capri length or shorter skirts will be permitted.

General Information:

- Our shelter is divided into a quarantine and adoption section. Volunteers are only allowed in the adoption section side unless otherwise permitted.
- Please be on time and prompt when coming in to volunteer. Do not linger in the office areas. Our animals need frequent socialization in order to find their “forever homes.” Please maximize your time spent here.
- Please note that our staff are paid employees and cannot socialize for long periods of time. Please allow them to work without prolonged non-shelter related conversations.
- Please park in our employee lot located south of our sign on Grape Road or in our main lot along the dog park fence.

Safety:

- All volunteers must go through a training session before handling animals! Learn the correct and safe methods of performing your job. If you are unsure, ask the Outreach Coordinator. We value your safety!
- Follow all safety rules and instructions: they are designed for your safety and the animal’s safety. If you are injured, **NO MATTER HOW SLIGHT THE INJURY**, you must report immediately to the Outreach Coordinator, Dog or Cat Manager, or front office staff. This includes scratches and/or bites as well as any injury to you on any equipment on our premises or off-site.
- Use all safeguards, safety equipment, and other safety devices furnished for your protection and keep them in good working order.
- Report any unsafe conditions or equipment to a staff member immediately. Do NOT use unsafe equipment!
- Do not attempt work for which you are not trained to do. This includes, but is not limited to, operating equipment that is unfamiliar to you, handling animals without in-shelter training, or taking on an animal too large or spirited for you to control.
- Always use good lifting techniques or seek assistance when handling large and/or heavy items.
- Horseplay and fighting will not be tolerated.
- MSDS & SDS sheets are located in the staff break room attached to the clock-in cabinet. Please ask the Outreach Coordinator or Leadership Team Member for help finding these.
- **Children must remain with their trained parent/guardian at ALL TIMES.** Parents/guardians please be mindful of your children when picking which cats to play with. Some cats may be too nervous around your child.

Drug and Alcohol Policy:

- Use of drugs and/or alcohol is strictly forbidden by staff and volunteers while performing their volunteer or paid duties. Anyone suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be asked to leave the shelter, or event immediately and will not be permitted to return.

Public Relations and Social Media:

- Follow all Social Media guidelines as described in the Social Media Policy.
- **Do not give out personal or confidential information of shelter staff, volunteers, customer/clientele, or unavailable animals.**
- Do not sign-up the Humane Society for any social network sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and so on.
- Do not approach the media or other businesses/individuals on behalf of the Humane Society in regard to story ideas, fund-raisers, sponsorships, etc. unless given express permission. Should you have any ideas please do not hesitate to contact the Outreach Coordinator. If the media approaches you, you must contact the Executive Director or Outreach Coordinator immediately. Please do not discuss any Humane Society policies, unavailable animals, etc. with the media or online.

ANIMAL HANDLING

It is the Humane Society of St. Joseph County's goal to provide each animal with a clean and safe living environment.

All adoption enclosures contain clearly visible numbers and animal names. These numbers and animal profiles correspond to information kept in the front office on each animal. If a guest has questions about an animal, please refer them to a staff member unless you are given permission otherwise. The information that may be provided is limited to what is posted on their enclosure and our website regarding the animal. Any other questions can be referred to shelter staff. Please do not make up breeds or ages for the animals either- rely on information on the animal's enclosure or what is posted to our website about the animal.

General

- When grooming the animals please use one brush per animal. When finished, please clean out all hair from the brush and place the dirty brush in indicated locations
- **You may not show an animal to a member of the public unless you have received additional training.**
- If you notice a sick, injured, or overly stressed animal please alert a staff member immediately.
- If you see any broken or damaged kennels or items that could cause injury to an animal or person, please contact a staff member immediately.
- If necessary, use the water spouts located at the end of each row in Adoption Dogs to fill water buckets or watering cans. **Do not use the hoses in the Adoption Dogs to fill water bowls.**
- Do not feed any of the animals – our staff are responsible for that, as many animals may be on special diets. You may offer them treats. **Be mindful of animals on special diets – if you are not sure, ASK.**

CATS

Our cat adoption center is referred to as “The Cattery” and is made up of 9 group rooms that can hold up to 15 cats per room, and an assortment of free standing enclosures that house 1 or 2 cats at a time.

- **CAT DOT SYSTEM PROTOCOL:** Dots are located in the upper right hand corner of the door/cat tower.
 - **GREEN DOT = GREEN MEANS GO!** Green Dot cats have shown little to no issues when being handled or interacting with humans. They would love for you to say hi!
 - **YELLOW DOT = ASK FIRST!** Volunteers must ask staff before entering yellow dot rooms. There may be age restrictions or special instructions for these cats that need to be relayed by staff.
 - **BLUE DOT = STAFF ONLY!** These cats are to be handled by staff only. This may be because of a medical or behavioral issue, but can even be something as simple as location of the cats.
- If a cat does not have a dot please **ASK** the Cat Manager or Cat APS before handling.
- You may enter a green group room and sit and pet the cats.
- You may also clean up rooms by sweeping and putting items back in place, or scooping of litter boxes. Ask staff before replacing food or water, as some cats are on special diets.
- **Please use hand sanitizer or wash your hands between each cat room and free-standing cat enclosures.** This will cut down any illness from being passed between cats.
- You may take a cat out of the free standing enclosure if the cattery staff gives you permission. You may sit and hold/pet/groom these cats in the cattery (not the front office lobby).

DOGS

Our dog adoption center is referred to as “Adoption Dogs” and is made up of 36 regular kennels. Occupied dog kennels must be locked at all times to prevent dogs from escaping their kennels.

- **DOG DOT SYSTEM PROTOCOL:** Dots are located in the upper right hand corner of the kennel door.
 - **GREEN DOT** = **GREEN MEANS GO!** Volunteers with basic training can handle these dogs. These dogs are very well-mannered and easy to handle.
 - **YELLOW DOT** = **ASK FIRST!** Volunteers must ask staff before interacting with yellow-dot dogs. There may be special instructions about how to handle this dog that will need to be relayed.
 - **BLUE DOT** = **STAFF ONLY!** These dogs are only to be handled by shelter staff, unless you are given special permission, which is reserved for seasoned and highly experienced volunteers who complete additional training and have a blue name tag.

If a dog does not have a dot please **ASK** the Dog Manager or Outreach Coordinator before handling.

1. Enter kennels with a dog treat in hand. **Ask the dog to sit.** Once the dog sits, give the dog treat. **THIS IS STEP VERY IMPORTANT.** We are trying to train our dogs to sit when volunteers/staff/guests approach their kennel. ** Turn your back to a jumping dog and wait for them to calm down, or exit the kennel completely and try again. Entering and exiting kennels will be different for every dog.
2. Use the **harness method** when walking dogs with a slip lead. If you are unsure of how to harness a dog using a slip lead, please see the Outreach Coordinator for clarification.
3. Keep dogs on a short leash close to your side and **be aware of your surroundings.** Do not let dogs jump on people. Put yourself between the leashed dog and the other kennels when walking past.
4. To avoid incidents between dogs, do not let dogs come in contact with each other while walking.
5. Return a dog to the **same kennel** you took them out of. Take the slip lead off that you placed on the dog. Make this interaction a positive experience – toss treats to the back of the kennel to reward the dog, and make it easier for yourself to exit.
6. Exit the kennel and **lock the door behind you.** Do NOT turn your back on the dog while exiting, as it will give them an opportunity to run out past you. Back out of the kennel, pushing the door open with your back so you can keep an eye on the dog. **Don't forget to lock the kennel before stepping away.**

If a dog is not to be walked by a new volunteer there will be a yellow or blue dot posted on the dog's kennel. These are to be obeyed strictly and are for the volunteer and dog's safety.

PLEASE REFER TO THE “DOT SYSTEM” PROTOCOL.

- Do not bring dogs into the front office, front yard or the member's dog park.
- Employees are responsible for keeping kennels clean. To help aid the staff in cleaning, you may take a dog for a walk while the kennel is being cleaned. **Ask staff for ways you can assist with cleaning.**
- Read and follow all kennel signs. Dogs may be under medical treatment or have treat/toy restrictions. We utilize **abbreviations** to **denote certain restrictions.** If you are unsure of the meaning behind an abbreviation, please ask.
- Dog leashes, collars and harnesses are kept on the back wall (the North Wall) of Adoption Dogs.
- **One dog per each volunteer at any time.** If there is a kennel with more than one dog, please see the Dog Manager or Outreach Coordinator for permission to take them out.
- Staff members will be rotating animals in and out of exercise runs during the morning and afternoon hours. Please make room for them to walk their dogs past without getting close to the dog you have.

ADOPTION INFORMATION & PROCEDURES

All animals leave Spayed/Neutered

Current Adoption Fees can be found on our website

Adoption Fees Include

Adoption fees include the services described below for dogs and cats. The new owner is responsible for an initial visit to their vet for a general checkup within the first 30 days of adoption. Adoption fees for puppies also include a 4 week training voucher through GoodPup.

Canine Vaccines

Heartworm testing, Distemper, Parvo, Bordetella, and Rabies vaccinations, de-worming and a Microchip registered through 24Hr Pet Watch.

Felines

FVRCP and Rabies vaccination, de-worming, a Microchip registered through 24Hr Pet Watch, and age appropriate FLV testing.

Please note: some animals may be too young to receive certain vaccinations and tests. Refer guests to staff members for any medical-related questions.

Adoptions are done by appointment. Interested adopters must first complete an adoption application on our website, or they can choose to fill out a paper copy in shelter. Potential adopters will be contacted via phone call, text, or email after their application has been processed (which takes about 24-48hrs). Animal Placement Specialists go through additional questions with adopters to determine which animal will be the best fit.

It is very important for the whole family to meet the adoption animal and approve of the commitment to their new pet. We encourage adopters to schedule a “meet n’ greet” with their pet dogs and potential adoptable dogs after the applications is approved. Since cats are easily stressed, we do not do “meet n’ greet” between shelter cats and adopter’s pets.

Adoption Center Open Hours are from 2:00-4:30 Monday - Saturday. During these times, members of the public can walk through and view our adoptable pets. It is important to be mindful of this, as our adoption center can get very crowded, very quickly. When socializing cats, please make room for potential adopters to visit. When walking dogs, be sure that our dogs do not come in contact with members of the public. This is to avoid any accidental injuries. If we reach capacity in our adoption areas, you may be asked to help elsewhere in the shelter to make room for potential adopters.

Volunteers are not allowed to show potential adopters animals (we call these “play times”). If you are interested in doing play times please see the Outreach Coordinator.

If you are not sure of an answer to a question, please ask a staff member for help. **DO NOT ASSUME THE ANSWER.** This will lead to confusion and stress for customers and staff.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING COMMITMENT TO THE HOMELESS ANIMALS IN OUR COMMUNITY!