



Save the Animals Foundation

Cat Volunteer Handbook

Volunteer Line 513-561-7824

Being a volunteer at Save the Animals Foundation is a very special and important undertaking. On behalf of the cats, WELCOME TO STAF and THANK YOU for volunteering your time!

Because we are an all-volunteer organization, Save the Animals Foundation has some unique and special challenges. We must ensure that the animals in our care receive consistent, top-quality care and that both they and our volunteers are always safe and able to enjoy their time at the shelter. **The guidelines in this handbook must be read, understood, and followed by every volunteer on the shift.**

After reading, if you have any questions about anything in this handbook, please discuss them with your Team Leader or shelter manager team. As an all-volunteer shelter we rely upon our volunteers to take an active role not just in the day-to-day responsibilities of feeding, cleaning, and caring for the animals, but also in the overall policies and direction of the shelter.

OUR STORY

Since 1988, STAF has been making a difference in the lives of the Cincinnati-area animals. Our no-kill shelter currently homes over 275 dogs and cats providing them with a safe and caring environment run by volunteers.

STAF operates two shifts daily – one in the morning, one in the evening – seven days a week, 365 days a year. Most volunteers choose one weekly shift, although everyone is welcome to volunteer as often as they like. Every shift follows the same basic procedure, and every shift is coordinated and led by a Team Leader. Your Team Leader will help you learn the routine, show you what is where and answer any questions you might have.

The cat area is made up of 28 free-roaming rooms, a vet room, and various cages. When the cat is ready to go to a room (after FIV and FeLV testing, vaccination, spay/neuter, appropriate time to adjust to the shelter), he or she is moved to a room based on several factors. Diet, temperament, health issues, FIV/FeLV status, and age are all considerations when placing a cat in a specific room. It is important to never move a cat to another room on your own; if you feel a cat is unhappy or not adjusting well to a specific room, talk to your Team Leader so he/she can get the information to the shelter manager.

NOTE! PLEASE – do not enter the dog area other than during an open house, for any reason, at any time. It can be dangerous! If you would like to also volunteer with the dogs just check out our website for dog orientation dates and time.

QUICK SUMMARY

1. Be sure to SIGN IN and SIGN OUT in the sign-in book located to the right when you enter the hall from the lobby.
2. Please make it a habit to read the various signs posted around the shelter. They contain vital information about our cats.
3. Please notify your Team Leader ASAP if you cannot work your regular shift. Most team leaders send out a room cleaning schedule, so check your emails for weekly updates.
4. DO NOT bring in foods and treats for the cats from home, they can have an adverse effect on the cat's digestion. Our cats are fed a high-quality diet and monitored closely by our Medical Management Team (MMT).
5. Apart from Open Houses and Brush-n-Fluffs, no visitors are permitted beyond the lobby area of the shelter without prior approval. All visitors must complete a guest waiver form signed by visitor and a STAF representative. See your Team Leader for a form.
6. Communication is critical to the care of the cats, so always report any problems on the note pad in the vet room and tell your team leader or medicator immediately if you feel there is an emergency health issue with a cat (such as labored breathing, lethargic, unable to stand, excessive vomiting, posturing or going in and out of the litter box without much or any production).
7. Always clean your hands with soap or hand sanitizer before entering any room or cage.
8. **Make sure to make some extra quality furr time!!**

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Be sure to ***SIGN IN*** the sign in/out book upon arrival at the shelter and check in with your Team Leader to let them know you have arrived and so they can communicate any changes in the room cleaning schedule and say hello to your furry friends. Also ***SIGN OUT*** when leaving the shelter.

SIGN, SIGN, EVERYWHERE A SIGN....

Signs are a fact of STAF life. Why so many? With dozens of volunteers coming and going during two shifts, seven days a week, signs are necessary to keep everyone up-to-date and in-the-know about health and behavioral issues. ***PLEASE read and pay attention to the signs every week.*** They are for your safety and for the safety and well-being of the animals. Also please be sure to check out the volunteer bulletin boards, which provide information on what is new around the shelter.

COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR TEAM LEADER

Please get to know your Team Leader, exchange phone numbers and email address and always notify him or her if you are unable to make your regular shift as far ahead of time as possible. Advanced notice makes it easier to recruit substitutes as needed. If it is a last-minute situation and you can't reach your Team Leader, call the STAF volunteer line (513-561-7824).

VISITORS

For the safety of our animals, only trained and authorized volunteers are allowed beyond the lobby during regular hours. Any other visitor must be authorized by shelter management and sign a Guest waiver/release form. This is a requirement of our insurance company (If we were to lose our insurance, we would be unable to continue operating the shelter!) We carry the obvious risks associated with being an animal shelter, and we simply cannot monitor/ensure the safety of visitors and our animals without prior training.

Of course, you will want your family and friends, etc. to see where you volunteer and meet the wonderful animals you care for, so we hold Kitty Brush-n-Fluff and Open House events several times a year that offer the perfect opportunity to show off STAF!

A NOTE ABOUT FIV and FELINE LEUKEMIA (FeLV)

It is important to know that you cannot pass FIV on your hands. You cannot take FIV or FeLV home to your cat. You cannot catch FIV or FeLV. It is completely safe (and important) to touch, hold, cuddle and handle the positive cats. Please wash your hands ***before*** handling them as they do have depressed immune systems.

Although FeLV can only live outside the cat's body for a few seconds, it is still a good idea to wash your hands after handling the FeLV cats, and to handle them after the FIV cats. (FIV cannot live outside the cat's body).

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Please let your Team Leader know when you are finished, and most importantly if you notice any problems. If you have a minute to help a fellow team leader finish up, please do! There always seems to be a few dishes that need doing, or a load of laundry that can be tossed in the washer, dryer or folded and put away on your way out. ***Make sure to sign out in the sign in/out book when you leave.***

THE SHOW-STOPPERS

We only have a couple rules that must absolutely be followed, without any variation, no matter what, by every single volunteer, NO EXCEPTION to these rules. Each of these is specifically for the safety and health of the cats; not following them hurts the cats, so please make sure you understand and stick to the following rules. *If you are unable to adhere to these rules, no hard feelings, but STAF is not the place for you.*

- **Never allow a room or cage cat to roam the halls or enter another room.** It is CRITICAL to the health and adoption of our cats that they are not exposed to the halls and roamer cats. The roamer cats are exposed to leukemia and could be exposed to parasites from a new/incoming cat. Carrying illnesses into a room shuts down the entire room from adoptions and endangers everyone in that room. If someone accidentally escapes from a room or a cage, put them back immediately. If an unknown cat is in the hallway, tell your team leader or medicator immediately so it can be returned to its proper cage or room. Do not guess which room he/she belongs in.
- **Never use scissors on a cat.** If you find a fur mat that should be removed, write it up on the notepad in the vet room.
- **Never remove a cat from the cat area** or the shelter without permission from the shelter management team.
- **Never roughly handle or hit any cat, for any reason.** If a cat panics when you are trying to handle him/her, let go and tell your Team Leader or medicator right away.
- **When entering the dock or “quiet room hallway,” we must clear the way if a dog is coming with a volunteer.** The rules around approaching, clearing the way and generally staying safe in the spaces we share with dogs is absolutely critical! If a dog volunteer is coming through with a dog, they will yell, “dog coming through” so that all volunteers are alerted to stop in place or move out of the way, and you should announce you are there if they cannot see you. Do not assume the dog is friendly, do not try to pet the dog, and always yield to the dog volunteer(s).

Mistakes are completely understandable – it is going to happen. But if you feel another volunteer is breaking one of the above rules and endangering a cat, please speak up! You can do so confidentially if needed. Call, text or email your team leader or the Medical Management Team at mmt@staf.org if you feel another volunteer is deliberately violating any of the above rules.

GOT SKILLS.... HERE'S HOW ELSE YOU CAN HELP

To keep our shelter running in tip top shape, there are many committees you can join to utilize any special skills or talents you may have! Please see the bulletin board in the back hall for the most current contact for a particular group or committee you are interested in joining. Many of the below committees require a **minimum** of an hour per week commitment after training, and depending on the committee, the time commitment could be greater per shift and per week!

- **Adoption Committee:** Screening, introducing, and coordination of adoptions.
- **BFF Program (Best Feline Friends)** Our BFF Program is looking for extraordinary volunteers who can be an exceptional friend to some of our kitties who need a little extra help adjusting to shelter life by giving them special one on one attention (socialization, grooming, etc.)
- **Building & Grounds Committee:** Make general repairs, touch up paint, deep cleaning, special projects to keep shelter looking good.
- **Care Corps Committee:** Socialize new and shy cats having trouble acclimating to the shelter.
- **Cat Cab Committee:** Transport cats to appointments at various vets.
- **Cat Enrichment Committee:** Create and execute ideas to improve the quality of our residents' lives in their rooms, improve furniture and create new attractions.
- **Foster Home Committee:** Foster kittens until they have received all the protocols to be adopted or reside at the shelter.
- **Medicators:** Give medication, nebulize, topical ointments to our residents. Requires several months of training.
- **New Volunteer Orientations:** Introduce and train potential new volunteers to the shelter, coordinate volunteers with weekly shift and shift leader. Monitor cat orientation email.
- **Petfinder Profiles:** Write personality profiles of our cats to post on Petfinder for adoptions.
- **Pet Sponsorship Committee:** Help with one or all three categories (1) Keep sponsor acknowledgement outside of rooms up to date (2) send out sponsor annual thank you gifts (3) weekly sponsor communications.
- **Spa Committee:** Trimming nails, removing mats, regular brushing, hindquarters cleaning.
- **DNG Committee:** Weighing our very scared cats that we are not able to pick up easily to get on the scale. This requires patience, a willingness to utilize the proven methods for safely getting the cat on the scale and having an acute understanding of a cat's body language. Comfortable with simple mathematics.
- **Weight Committee:** weighing cats that can be easily handled and placed on the scale. Comfortable with simple mathematics, evaluating gains and losses, sending a report that includes changes plus or minus six ounces/weight loss or gain trends monthly.

Note: All committees will require a minimum time requirement after the initial training period

Committee	Contact	Email
Adoptions	Jean Kandel	jean@staf.org
BFF Program	Diana Kolar	diana.kolar57@gmail.com
Building & Grounds	Essi Rosenthal	erosenthal@cinci.rr.com
Care Corps	Jeff Ruebel	ccmanagers@staf.org
Cat Cab Committee	Linda Lange	lindalange@cinci.rr.com
Cat Enrichment Committee	Essi Rosenthal	erosenthal@cinci.rr.com

Foster Home Committee	Jean Kandel	jean@staf.org
Medicator Training	Debora Hall-Bradley	deborahallbradley@fuse.net
New Volunteer Orientations	Linda Harmon	catorientation@staf.org
Petfinder Profiles	Julie Aronson	juliearonsoncats@gmail.com
Pet Sponsorship	Megan Seiter	megan.staf@gmail.com
Spa Committee	Diana Kolar	diana.kolar57@gmail.com
DNG Committee	Diana Kolar	diana.kolar57@gmail.com
Weight Committee	Julie Aronson	juliearonsoncats@gmail.com

Again, we reiterate that we are very grateful for your commitment and dedication to our animals at Save the Animals Foundation! There truly are so many ways to get more involved beyond your weekly shift and the fact that we need so much more help, we really hope you will consider making an even greater difference by joining one of these committees. What makes STAF so unique is the fact that we are a 100% volunteer organization and what allows us to rescue more requires a village!

Thank you for your service and your consideration to step up in additional ways to make our organization even stronger!

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