

HANDBOOK FOR STAF VOLUNTEERS - 2024 Edition

***BEING A VOLUNTEER AT SAVE THE ANIMALS FOUNDATION IS A
VERY SPECIAL AND IMPORTANT UNDERTAKING***

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN JOINING US!

Because we are an all-volunteer organization, Save the Animals Foundation has some unique and special challenges. We must ensure that the animals at STAF receive a consistent, top-notch quality of care and that our volunteers are kept as safe as possible while allowed to enjoy their time at the shelter.

THE GUIDELINES IN THIS HANDBOOK MUST BE READ, UNDERSTOOD, AND FOLLOWED BY EVERY VOLUNTEER ON EVERY SHIFT. This handbook is based on volunteer experiences of over 30 years working in our animal shelter. Many of our rules and procedures have been developed after we learned lessons “the hard way”.

After reading this manual, please discuss any questions with your team leader or a shelter manager. 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 at the shelter and the future direction of our organization

**IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU READ THIS HANDBOOK IN ITS ENTIRETY TO
UNDERSTAND HOW STAF WORKS AND WHY CERTAIN RULES ARE IN PLACE**

OUR ANIMALS ARE COUNTING ON YOU!

Before starting your first shift, please be sure that you have read this handbook thoroughly and have signed the “Handbook Acknowledgment form” you received in your orientation packet. This must be given to your team leader before you are eligible to begin your care of our animals.

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

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 one or two Team Leaders. Your Team Leaders will help you learn the routine, show you what is where and answer any questions you might have.

The dog area is made up of 4 large hallways with individual runs and 7 private rooms. It is important to never move a dog to another run on your own; if you feel a dog is unhappy or not adjusting well to a specific area, talk to your Team Leader so he/she can get the information to the shelter manager.

NOTE! PLEASE – Do not enter the cat area other than during an open house or under direct supervision. If you would like to also volunteer with the cats just check out our website for cat orientation dates and time.

QUICK SUMMARY

1. SIGN IN and SIGN out at the beginning and end of each shift
2. Make it a habit to read the various signs posted around the shelter (especially those on the individual dog runs) – These signs contain important information about the dogs and the shelter.
COMMUNICATION IS KEY!
3. No STAF dog may leave the premises without following the guidelines established for off-site outings (See Off Site Outings below for guidelines)
4. Please notify your team leader ASAP if you cannot work your regular shift
5. Anyone (including volunteers) who wishes to adopt an animal must complete an application and meet with our adoption volunteers
6. There are specific procedures to follow if you need to bring an animal to the shelter. Please don't just show up with a cat or dog without making prior arrangements with our Shelter Manager.
7. If you need to talk to someone at the shelter, call one of the volunteer lines (Dog Area: 513-271-7825)
8. Do not enter cat rooms without permission of Cat Shift Manager or Vet Techs.
9. With the exception of Open Houses, no visitors are permitted beyond the lobby area of the shelter without prior approval. All visitors must complete a guest waiver form signed by the visitor and a STAF representative.
10. Do not open any emergency exits unless there is a fire or another true emergency
11. Contact names and information of personnel mentioned in this document can be found at the end of the handbook under "Dog management team"

GENERAL PROTOCOLS

FIRST THINGS FIRST...

Be sure to ***SIGN IN*** upon arrival at the shelter and ***SIGN OUT*** when you leave. This is important in the case of an emergency as the sign-in list will be used to make sure that all volunteers are accounted for. Once you've signed in, check in with your team leader to let them know you have arrived and so they can communicate any changes to the plan for the shift.

WE'RE ALL ONE TEAM...Ask Questions!

Taking care of so many animals is a *lot* of work, and that is why STAF, by necessity, is an incredible, coordinated team effort: A lot of caring people, each doing their own little part, and together we make miracles happen! Many volunteers choose to work in the same area each week so they can become familiar with a certain number of animals and procedures. If you're not sure how to do something or find yourself unsure about how to handle an animal safely, ask someone! When in doubt, your shift leader is the best place to start, but get to know who the long-term volunteers are on your shift...they are great resources. And don't forget: Even if you can spare only an hour weekly for STAF, it will help the animals and keep someone else from having to put in an extra hour!

SIGN, SIGN, EVERYWHERE A SIGN...

Signs are a fact of STAF life. Why are there so many? With dozens of volunteers coming and going during at least 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 each and every week, especially those on each dog's run. These signs may contain vital information about each dog's origin story, current medical condition and needs, and behavioral observations by other volunteers. They are there for your safety, the safety of other volunteers, and the well-being of the animals. Also please be sure to check out the volunteer bulletin boards, which provide information on what's new around the shelter.

TELL YOUR TEAM LEADER

you can't work your regular shift on a particular week, please notify your team leader 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 at home or work, call the dog area phone (513-271- 7825) to notify one of your team members.

We realize that you're busy with your life outside the shelter, and that there will be weeks when you can't make it in at all. But if you're missing your shift because of one of those "one-shot" situations (you've got concert tickets, or the doctor must see you on a Wednesday), please consider trading shifts with another volunteer or simply helping out another shift that week. Your fellow volunteers will appreciate it, and, most importantly, the animals will benefit from the extra attention. Whenever you work a shift other than your regular shift, please check in with the team leader upon arrival.

"TREAT" WITH YOUR LOVE

Please do not bring unapproved edible treats into the shelter. Because many of our dogs are stressed when they come into the shelter and most are under medical supervision, it's important that our dogs maintain a stable, high-quality diet. Approved treats are provided in each room for a special end-of-shift or "your run is a happy place" treat. In addition to only using approved treats and food, it is important to keep the dog's size in mind when providing treats. A "handful" of kibble or a "scoop" of wet food on the end of a spoon for a large dog could be almost equivalent to a normal sized meal for a small dog. This can also impact the food cost that the shelter incurs.

The best treat you can give any dog is a belly rub, some quality time in the training area, or some quiet time in one of our dedicated quiet rooms. They love your time and attention more than anything else.

DOG WALKING AT AND AROUND THE SHELTER

Please refer to the "Dog Handling" manual regarding how to safely leash and walk dogs in the shelter. Most accidents occur while dogs are on leashes, so it is very important to handle dogs carefully and attentively.

THE IMPORTANCE OF "QUALITY TIME"

Shelter life is stressful for a dog. . . Living with 40+ other stressed, barking dogs 24/7 can be a little overwhelming! ***Giving the dogs regular "quality time" is the #1 thing you can do to keep them happy, help them de-stress, and improve their chances of getting adopted.*** What constitutes "quality time?" *At least 20 minutes* spent away from the stress of the kennel area: snuggling in one of our dedicated "quiet rooms," playtime and agility training in our training area in the Quonset hut, brushing in the yard, etc, etc. The "Quality Time Log" posted in the volunteer break area is part of our effort to ensure that every dog gets the one-on-one time that he/she needs. When you spend quality time with a dog, please check him/her off for that day. If you look at the Log and see that a certain dog has *not* received a lot of checks lately, please consider making their day by spending some special time with them.

BE A MENTOR

Once you start volunteering, there are bound to be certain dogs that tug at your heartstrings. The neat thing about STAF is that we're made up of all kinds of dog-people -- there are those of us who are suckers for big dogs while others have a soft spot for little dogs, brown dogs, old dogs, pit bulls or poodles. When you make that extra-special connection with a dog, please consider signing up to be his/her "mentor." Being a mentor simply involves committing at least 20 minutes a week to devote solely to that dog. ***In essence, you're promising to be a special friend to that dog during his/her stay at the shelter.***

We can't all be experts on all STAF dogs, but if we each "specialize" in a dog or two, we can help ensure that health or behavioral issues won't go unnoticed and will get the attention they need from shelter management before they become serious problems. The adoption committee greatly benefits from any insight that you can provide about your mentor dogs. Please share your experiences with them.

OFF SITE OUTINGS

Taking a dog out of the shelter for a walk or a home visit can be a wonderful experience ... it promotes socialization, reduces stress levels, and is just plain fun for dog and volunteer alike! *Every new volunteer must actively work a shift at STAF for 3 months before being eligible for off-site privileges.* This "waiting period" is necessary to give you time to become familiar with STAF dogs and vice-versa.

No dog is permitted to leave shelter grounds without following the procedures outlined in our Home Visits/Outings Guidelines (contact the Dog Outing Coordinator for a copy), which are designed to promote the best possible off-site experiences for dogs and volunteers alike. Please remember that handling a STAF dog out in the "real world" is a lot different than handling that same dog in the controlled environment of the shelter.

STAF dogs must always be on leash outside of the shelter---***No retractable leashes and no visits to dog parks.***

Our dogs *love* going on walks and other outings with volunteers, so we want to keep this facet of STAF life going strong. In order to make that happen, it's vital that you read and follow the guidelines thoroughly before taking a dog off-site

PHONE CALLS

All calls to the shelter are answered by our machine. This lets volunteers concentrate on caring for the animals and keeps us from having to spend hours explaining why the shelter is too full to take someone's animal or answering routine questions about adoptions,

location, etc. ***If, however, you need to talk to someone right away, you are welcome to use the dog area line (513-271-7825).*** You may want to share this number with family members, babysitters, etc., so they can reach you in case of an emergency while you are at the shelter. *Please request that they use this number sparingly, as it requires a volunteer to take time away from the animals to take a message or hunt down another volunteer.*

KITTY LOVIN'

Because many of our dogs are on-guard and protective around strangers, we ask cat volunteers to stay out of the dog area as much as possible, for their own protection. Dog volunteers are less likely to be injured if they visit with the cats, although some cats do bite. If you do want to spend some quality time with the cats, check-in with the cat shift leader first to find out which cats most need your attention and which cats do not like to be handled. Please make every effort to stay out of the way of cat volunteers trying to get their jobs done. When returning to the dog area, please wash your hands before handling the dogs.

VISITORS

For the safety of our animals, visitors and volunteers, only trained and authorized volunteers are allowed beyond the lobby during regular hours. This is a requirement of our insurance company, and, if we lose our insurance, we will be unable to continue operating as a shelter. We carry the obvious risks associated with being an animal shelter, and we simply cannot monitor/ensure the safety of visitors who come in at odd hours.

Of course you'll want your spouse, children, friends, etc. to see where you volunteer and meet the wonderful animals you've befriended. Our Open Houses, held twice a year, offer the perfect opportunity to show off STAF to your family and friends. If there is a special reason for bringing someone at another time, please discuss it with a shelter manager.

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.

DOG CARE PROCEDURES

- ***New volunteers must be supervised for several weeks before leashing/handling dogs on their own.*** This training period gives you time to get to know the dogs and for them to become comfortable with you. Certain dogs require special handling as noted on their run signage. For your own safety, **PLEASE** be sure to read the signs on the runs **EACH** shift **BEFORE** taking a dog out.
- ***Always take dogs to and from the yards, training area and quiet rooms ON LEASH*** (there are a few exceptions that your team members will point out). When bringing a dog back into its run, always remove the leash **BEFORE** releasing them back into their run **ESPECIALLY** during feeding round as some dogs may display resource guarding.
- ***Never handle any dog that you are not comfortable handling.*** If you are afraid or nervous, the dog will sense it, making it a stressful, potentially dangerous situation for you *and* for the dog.
- ***Follow the feeding amounts and what type of food that is to be provided/or each dog.*** These diets, monitored by our Vet Team, are intended to maintain the dog's ideal weight or, in some cases, to help the dog gain/lose weight as needed.
- ***Do not move the dogs.*** Dogs are placed in specific runs for specific reasons. With so many dogs and so many different personalities, it can be tricky to find congenial neighbors. The Shelter Manager works on an ongoing basis with the Tuesday AM team to arrange the dogs in a way that minimizes stress, safeguards the well-being of each dog, and makes it convenient for volunteers (situating playmates next to each other).

If you feel that a dog should be moved, pass your concerns along to your team leader. If there is an urgent need to move a dog, please inform your team leader or contact the Shelter Manager.

- ***Do not try unapproved playmates.*** Follow the pairings as indicated on the Pairings Board in each room. If you feel two dogs may "hit it off," do not try introducing them; ask your team leader to pass the information on to the Dog Pairings Team

- **Communication is key!** There are "shift-to-shift" dry erase boards in each room and notes on each dog run that are intended for messages that you need to share with following shifts. Please report any medical issues with the dogs (injuries, strange bumps, weight concerns) in the vet binder that is located on the table in the dock area. All dog management team numbers and e-mails are located by each phone if you have any questions or concerns during your shift.

END OF SHIFT DETAILS

1. ROOMS/RUNS

- **No blaring music to be played on shift. For the dogs' sakes, keep music low and peaceful.**
- If you are part of the feeding round, PLEASE read the run tags carefully in order to feed the correct food AND the correct mix of dry/canned
 - Morning shifts: Be aware of which dogs need feeding twice on your shift (The food-tag will say "X3"; and there will be a "Lunch Please" card on the run")
- Checklist at the end of the shift:
 - Run gates are properly latched and secured with their snap clips. Please note some runs have two latches, both of which should be secured with clips.
 - Each dog has a Nylabone and Kong EXCEPT WHEN NOTED THAT A DOG CANNOT HAVE A KONG
 - Check that NO rope toys, tennis balls or soft toys are left in ANY runs
 - Water buckets should be full and are clipped to run fencing OFF the floor.
 - Bedding is given ONLY To those dogs who do not chew/shred (info on run tag)
 - ALL MEDS HAVE BEEN PUT AWAY IN MED CABINET (responsibility of the volunteer who prepares the medications.) Charts are filed on the Vet Cave Table.
 - Towel baskets are NOT placed in front of the mirrors in Back Blue
 - All garbage cans are emptied and have clean bags
 - All FOOD BINS have been checked...are they shut and is there enough for the next shift to feed? Please refill as necessary.
 - Dirty mop heads are rinsed well, put in laundry, and WASHED
 - NEW/CLEAN mop heads are installed in mop handles for next shift
 - Floors are swept and mopped
 - Mop buckets are emptied and rinsed
 - Bathtubs and sinks are clean
 - All bowls and toys have been washed and, if dry, put away
 - Hair/debris is removed from floor drains (in Yellow and Peach)
 - Tables in rooms and on the dock are washed and tidied
 - Water bowls have been put back in Quiet Rooms after adoptions
 - If a dog has pooped/peed in a run right before you leave...please clean it up ☺
 - Entry gates to rooms are all closed
 - Music is playing quietly (morning shifts only)...can use classical music on radio or calming CDs.

- Inside doors on In/Out runs are CLOSED (can be left open after morning shifts only, weather permitting)
- Evening shifts: CLOSE BOTH DOORS.
- Lights are OFF

2. YARDS

- All poop is picked up in yards (including small indoor/outdoor runs)
- Run-Area garbage cans are emptied of poop bags.
- Poop bags are replaced in garbage cans, in the yards, for the next shift
- All toys used in the yard are picked up and washed. NO pieces left in the yards
- In warm weather, pools are emptied and brought inside
- Water bowls from the yard are brought in and washed
- Doors are locked at end of shift

3. LAUNDRY

- All wash is completed to the best of your ability (assuming all machines are working)
- NO large rope toys are put in the machines at all; soak them in soapy water, rinse well and hang to dry. (Put a towel underneath if they are dripping!)
- Lint is removed from laundry sink
- Lint is removed from drier traps (after each load)
- Clean toys are put back in appropriate bins
- Towels are taken to baskets in rooms
- Blankets/sheets are folded and placed on shelves
- Laundry garbage can is emptied when full
- Washers can be left running at end of shift
- **Driers are turned OFF at end of shift**
- If a machine is broken, file a report on the Buildings and Grounds sheet on the tool room door (on dock)
 - Put a note on the broken machine to alert the next shift

4. Q-HUT

- All pee /poop has been cleaned up
- All toys have been picked up and washed (including tennis balls)
- Agility equipment has been put back in place
- Junk/rubbish/trash is picked up
- Clean toys are in storage boxes

5. EXTRAS:

- Fill up all biscuit and TD cans/containers when they are low
- Note the “extra cleaning chores” lists on all of the room entry gates. Please try and complete one item per shift.(if you have a full shift of volunteers)
- Make sure no canned food is left out
- Make sure food bins are clipped tight to keep food fresh
- **If there are any bites/fights/incidents on your shift the TL must contact Diane (Shelter Manager) 513-317-2075 .**

- If you have ANY questions about your shift, the procedures or you have problems, the TL should contact Diane (see above) or email: londondkp@gmail.com
- IF a dog is sick, lethargic, or injured the team leader needs to contact Diane (513-317-2075) , Kristin P. (513-802-3849)or Donna (513-312-1908) ASAP!

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. WITH THE DOGS

- Read the Pairings Boards in each room to see who can go out and play as a pair
 - **Do not pair dogs on your own**
 - Check carefully to see who needs to be supervised and/or on leash
- If you are approved for offsite walking, make sure that the **harness** is correctly fitted
 - If you are not sure about the fit of the harness, ASK for help
 - Always use a harness and two leashes when taking dogs offsite
- ALWAYS CALL “DOG COMING!” WHEN WALKING A DOG THROUGH THE HALLWAYS OR ROOMS.
 - Keep dog on very short leash until you are outside.
- If you wish to take a dog off-site, please follow Off Site Guidelines as outlined in the “dog offsite information” form
 - CONSULT your Team Leader first.
 - **Offsite coordinator : Cindy Z: cindy@staf.org**
 - **You may also contact Diane Parsons : londondkp@gmail.com : 513-317-2075**
- In poor weather...use the Q-hut for play-time!

OTHER WAYS TO HELP AT STAF

FRIENDS WHO WANT TO HELP!

Current volunteers are some of our best recruiters for new volunteers! If you have animal-loving friends who may enjoy sharing some of their time with STAF, please encourage them to attend an upcoming volunteer orientation (schedule posted on the website at www.STAF.org).

Please do not just bring them to the shelter with you before they have gone through our formal orientation program. This puts everyone in an awkward position and may *discourage* a potentially great volunteer when he/she cannot be allowed to stay and visit the shelter.

For the safety of the animals (who need consistent care), out of respect for the other volunteers who had to go through orientation, and in order to keep our insurance, ***every potential volunteer must complete our orientation program before working as an animal care volunteer.***

MEMBERSHIP: ANOTHER WAY TO HELP

In addition to volunteering at the shelter, please consider helping STAF by becoming a paid member. Your dues will directly benefit the animals, and you'll be assured of receiving all of our mailings. Only paid members are eligible to vote in shelter elections, chair committees, and serve on our Board of Directors. To become a paid Member of STAF, please pick up a membership flyer located in the front lobby, check out our website, and/or contact Kara Markham at [Markham kb@hotmail.com](mailto:Markham_kb@hotmail.com). We encourage all of our volunteers to become active members at STAF!

DONATIONS

If you're looking to donate even more than your time, please consider donating money to STAF. Every dollar donated to our shelter is used directly to help the animals. If you really enjoy donating "things" rather than contributing money, we are always in need of unused dog collars (**Martingale with no buckle**) and leashes, mops and mop heads, laundry detergent, paper towels, and cleaning supplies.

GET INVOLVED!

There are many ways that you can help the STAF animals beyond working an animal care shift.

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 ask your team leader, the shelter manager, or a member of the board of directors to help put you in contact with a particular group or committee you are interested in joining:

- **Adoption Committee:** Screening, introducing, and coordination of adoptions.
- **Mentorship Program:** Our Mentorship Program is looking for extraordinary volunteers who can be an exceptional friend to some of our dogs who need a little extra help adjusting to shelter life by giving them special one on one attention (socialization, grooming, etc.)
- **Dog transport:** Transport dogs to appointments at various vets, to training sessions, and/or to doggy daycare.
 - **Vet Team:** filing, creating vet visit forms; entering spreadsheet data, contacting vets, checking on dogs at STAF, updating run tags, updating medical files.
- **Foster Home Committee:** Contact homes with foster-dogs until they have received all the protocols to be adopted or reside at the shelter.
- **New Volunteer Orientations:** Introduce and train potential new volunteers to the shelter, coordinate volunteers with weekly shift and shift leader. Monitor dog orientation email.
- **Petfinder Profiles:** Write personality profiles of our dogs 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.

Many of these committees require a minimum of an hour per week commitment after training.

Other ways to get involved include the following:

- **Fundraising** – Interested in getting involved in fundraising? Please contact the Board of Directors at board@staf.org to volunteer to assist in these important activities.
- **Buildings and Grounds** – To join our Buildings and Grounds Committee to help with the maintenance of the shelter, please contact the Board of Directors at board@staf.org

If you have any other particular talents, interest, or skills that you would like to share with STAF, please contact the Board of Directors at board@staf.org. Thank you!

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 you know that saying...it takes a village? We ARE that village!

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

ADOPTING A DOG (OR CAT) FROM STAF

Many of our volunteers fall in love (with a dog!) and decide they want to adopt them. We love sending dogs home with volunteers, but we must ask you to follow the usual protocols for adoptions as found on our website.

If you are interested in adoption a dog, please fill out an online application and contact a member of the adoption team to let them know which animal you're interested in. If the animal is not already promised to an adopter, we will not let anyone else adopt him/her before you've had a chance to come in and be interviewed by the volunteers on the adoption committee. You will have to be screened just like any other prospective owner, and we ask that you come in to complete the application process within a week of requesting the hold. Until the adoption committee completes the adoption screening with you, we cannot guarantee that you will be able to adopt the dog.

If you've found an animal that is perfect for a friend or relative other than yourself, it is important to refer them to the STAF website for the application and adoption team contact information. Do **NOT** have the person come and meet the dog outside of these arranged meetings. Our adoption volunteers will make every effort to work with every person who meets the qualifications and is interested in providing a loving and permanent home to our furry residents. To ensure a great experience for them, please advise your friend of our application and interviewing procedure and encourage them to remain open to meeting several different animals rather than just coming in to see one particular cat or dog. If the cat or dog you have spoken about is already in the process of being adopted, we want to be able to suggest another animal that may fit their needs and lifestyle.

DOG INTAKE PROCEDURES

JUST A REMINDER

Everyone who gives their time to volunteer at a shelter does so because of the love they have in their hearts for the animals. It is our instinct to want to save them all. If you decide to take in a stray, please remember that there is a responsibility to care for that animal until we are able to assist by accepting him or her into the shelter. We want to provide all volunteers the same fair opportunity to have an animal placed at STAF.

DOG WAITING LIST

The shelter is always at capacity. While we're not often able to accept animals immediately, we do have a waiting list policy and try to assist volunteers and the public alike as fairly as possible in the midst of a completely unjust situation: too many dogs needing homes and not enough space, money and manpower to accommodate them all immediately.

The waiting list policy is pretty simple. When someone calls, emails or shows up at the door to get a dog into the shelter they are added to the waiting list. As resident dogs get adopted and a space opens up at the shelter, dogs are brought in from the top of the waiting list. Sometimes there may be an empty run, but don't worry --- it is probably just that the waiting list home is making arrangements to bring us the dog or we are waiting to see if a dog on a Home Visit is actually adopted.

Dogs and their care are the responsibility of the individual homes until they are accepted into the shelter. Once the dog comes to the shelter, STAF assumes financial responsibility. When a dog is placed on the list we always request a picture/description so that the adoption committee can make referrals for families who don't "click" with our current STAF dogs. For volunteers with a dog on the waiting list we also offer a courtesy petfinder.com posting to generate interest and potential homes. With these extra initiatives we are often able to help place these dogs before they ever have to enter the shelter, which allows us to move to the next dog in need.

IF YOU FIND (OR INHERIT) AN ANIMAL. . .

If you find yourself with an animal you want to bring into the shelter, please don't just show up with the animal! First, contact the Incoming Dog Coordinator either by phone or e-mail. If you call and get voicemail, please leave your name and phone number and wait for them to return your call.

If you think the animal came from a good home and is simply lost, it is actually a good idea to contact Cincinnati CARE (or other humane society in the area where you found it) to provide them with a description of the dog in case they receive inquiries. That is the first place the owner will look, and the public shelters have a system in place to help reunite lost animals with their families. In addition, return to the area where the dog was found to look for "lost dog" flyers and consider looking on Facebook or "NextDoor" for postings from the owners who are searching for their lost dog.

In the meantime, keep the dog in your bathroom, spare room or garage (away from your own pets if he/she has not been vet-checked, tested and vaccinated), ask a friend or family member to foster the animal, or board him. Until/If the dog is accepted by STAF, it remains at your discretion whether or not to place him with a potential family.

If you think you can find a good home for the animal, do not bring it to the shelter while you are trying to place him/her yourself. If your name comes up on the waiting list but you are following up on some good leads and feel close to placing the dog yourself, please ask to be skipped and continue to work with the dog's placement on your own. You will be called again when the next opening is available. It is often easier to place a dog as an individual and more importantly we want to avoid any confusion or hard feelings once the dog becomes a STAF resident. We have had situations where someone brought an animal in, insisting that they had no place for it, and within a few days they were back with a friend or relative who wanted the animal. Then they became angry because we would not release the animal until it had completed our schedule of tests, shots, and neutering or because their friend did not meet our standards for adoption. If you think your "Aunt Mary" would like to have the stray you found, please keep it at your home (separate from your own pets as outlined above), or board it. Bring it to the shelter only after "Aunt Mary" has decided not to take it.

Please keep in mind that coming to the shelter is not always an entirely positive or beneficial experience for every animal. An animal that's used to being alone or in a home environment may "freak out" when suddenly surrounded by dozens of its own species. A dog's stress level can be greatly elevated while trying to adapt to shelter life. As great a shelter as STAF is, it is a shelter nonetheless.

SIGNING THE RELEASE FORM

When your animal is at the top of the waiting list and you get the go-ahead from the Incoming Dog Coordinators to bring him/her to the shelter, you will be asked to sign a release form. This release makes the animal STAF's sole responsibility. You are encouraged to give the animal extra love, grooming, etc., as a volunteer and/or mentor but it is important to remember that once you have signed the animal over to STAF he/she is now a STAF dog.

Once you place the animal in STAF's care, we will not-and you should not-place a "FOUND" ad in the papers or put up posters in the area where you found the animal. This is

likely to bring people who may not be the rightful owners into the shelter at times when there are no trained personnel around to talk with them. If the animal has an owner who loves him/her, the owner will place a "LOST" ad, put up posters or call us, and we will respond. If you return to the area where you found the animal and see that the owner has put up posters, do not call him or her directly. Instead, contact the Incoming Dog Coordinator and give them the owner's name and telephone number. They will arrange for the appropriate person to meet the owner.