



## **About Our Volunteers...**

### **Who They Are**

Humane Society of the South Platte Valley (HSSPV) Volunteers are an invaluable part of the HSSPV village! Our Shelter Volunteers and Foster Volunteers range in age from children to senior citizens 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 about animal care. HSSPV 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**

HSSPV Volunteers schedule themselves to work regular 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 HSSPV**

Our Volunteers understand that the staff and animals rely on them to be at the shelter when scheduled to perform a variety of different tasks. We ask new Volunteers to dedicate at list 8 hours per month for at least 6 months. Precious time is dedicated to onboarding new Volunteers so when considering joining our team we ask you to evaluate whether 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

HSSPV staff in the work they do. When we are short Volunteers, this impacts the work of all the Volunteers on that shift, as well as the staff, and ultimately the animals.

### **They are Communicative**

If our Volunteers ever have a conflict, concern, or question, we expect them to communicate this to the Shelter management. 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 HSSV Policy**

When a Volunteer makes the commitment to volunteer at HSSPV, they are also committing to following our policies, procedures, and protocols. HSSPV 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 HSSPV 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 HSSPV is making decisions for the animals in good faith, and they ask if ever unsure about a decision. Volunteers understand that while they can 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 can 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 HSSPV to get the animals adopted. 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 Shelter management 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 the Humane Society of the South Platte Valley 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 village!