

City of San José

# Animal Care & Services



# **VOLUNTEER PET PAL HANDBOOK**

# **Welcome!**

All of us at Animal Care & Services are excited to have you! We consider all of our Pet Pal Volunteers to be a part of our team and we are happy to have your help in making the City of San José Animal Care Center a warm and inviting place for the public to come and view our adoptable animals.

Being in a shelter is hard on all of our homeless critters but with your help we will strive to provide them with as much comfort and care as possible during their stay with us. Clean cages, dry bedding, nourishing food, toys, exercise, companionship and most of all kindness all contribute to improving the quality of life for a scared and stressed shelter animal.

Thank you for donating your time and energy. We hope you will find your experience here to be both satisfying and rewarding.  
**Remember, together WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

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## About the Animal Care Center

### History

The San Jose Animal Care Center located at 2750 Monterey Rd in San Jose opened its doors on October 1, 2004. Caring for almost 18,000 animals per year, the Animal Care Center is the largest animal shelter on the west coast. Each year, more than 3000 dogs, cats, rabbits, and small animals are adopted. Partnerships with local rescue groups allow another 2500 - 3000 animals to leave the shelter for a chance to find new homes.

### Low-cost Spay & Neuter Clinic

The Animal Care Center is also a leader on the front lines trying to prevent animal overpopulation. In Spring 2006, the SJACS Low-cost Spay & Neuter Clinic began to offer services to the public at substantially discounted rates, along with microchip and vaccination services at the time of surgery. **Each week, the San Jose Animal Care Center Low-cost Spay/neuter Clinic performs approximately 150 surgeries.** This clinic is separate from the veterinary clinic which treats our shelter pets and spays/neuters all our adoption animals. The clinic also offers surgery for feral cats on a walk-in basis to help keep feral cat populations under control.

### Our Goal

One of our main goals at the Animal Care Center is to serve the needs of the homeless animals in our community. This means providing safe shelter, supportive care, and nourishment for all animals that arrive at the Animal Care Center. Some of the animals we shelter are lost pets waiting for their owners to bring them home. For others, the Animal Care Center is an opportunity to find a new forever home.

The main goal of a volunteer Pet Pal is to *enhance* the stay of adoption animals. Shelter staff is responsible for making sure the animals have clean environments, food and water. Volunteers fulfill the other side of their experience by exercising and socializing them. Volunteers also directly impact animal adoptability by publicizing and training adoption animals.

# ACS Operations

## **Field Operations**

This branch of the Animal Care & Services Division is sometimes referred to as Animal Control. This unit is comprised of Dispatchers and Animal Service Officers. Our ACS Dispatchers answer thousands of calls each year from people reporting or needing help with stray, injured, lost, dead, nuisance or dangerous animals. They then prioritize the calls and 'dispatch' our Animal Service Officers (ASO's) to the location where they do their best to resolve the various situations that occur each day. Part of an ASO's daily patrol duty is to enforce all state codes and municipal animal ordinances including laws pertaining to cruelty, nuisance, licensing and leash laws.

## **Shelter Operations**

This branch of the Animal Care & Services Division is responsible for the thousands of animals that are brought to the Animal Care Center by the public each year. Many are sick, injured or just scared but they all need our help. Each one is checked over to determine if there are any serious medical issues that need treatment. All of our animals are treated as gently as possible, given quality food, placed in the appropriate shelter area, and provided clean accommodations. Many are lost animals that have gotten separated from their home. Others come in as strays after having been abandoned by their owners/guardians or, in the case of feral cats, never having a home to begin with. Hundreds more are surrendered by people who can no longer care for them for various reasons.

## **Administration**

The "Administrative Services" branch of ACS is responsible for facilitating support for both the ACS field and shelter units. Administrative staff performs a wide range of duties including handling community and press inquiries, selling dog and cat licenses, tracking all ACS financing and databases as well as overseeing the ACS volunteer program.

## What it Takes to be a Pet Pal

### Time Commitment

To be a volunteer Pet Pal, you must be able to commit at least 3 hours weekly for a minimum of four months. We do not require volunteers to sign up on an assigned schedule, but many volunteers find it improves their own individual experience if they volunteer on a regular day and time.

Volunteers can come and fulfill assignments any time the shelter is open:

Tuesday – Saturday      11am – 7pm

Sunday                      11am – 5pm

Monday                      CLOSED

You cannot volunteer before or after business hours or when the shelter is closed.

Consistent volunteer time is critical for the success of the program and for the benefit of our animals. We often have many people who have the best of intentions but, quite frankly, just don't have the time. **We encourage you to think very carefully about your available time and other obligations before you make the commitment to volunteer.** While we know you want to help the animals, it actually is detrimental to the overall effort if you cannot commit the minimum time requirement, or are unable to volunteer on a regular basis. If you still want to help animals, but cannot make the time commitment, we encourage you to check our website at [www.sanjoseanimals.com](http://www.sanjoseanimals.com) for other ways you can help the animals in your community.

### Volunteer Uniform & Materials Fee

There is a small administrative fee of \$35 for volunteer materials. This fee covers your volunteer uniform and other training materials you will receive. The fee will be collected and materials will be provided at the conclusion of your training, assuming you are accepted as a volunteer. We can accept cash or check, payable to "City of San Jose."

Your volunteer uniform properly identifies you to staff and to the public while you are at the shelter. Volunteers are responsible for their own uniforms. You will be expected to bring it with you and take it home. The volunteer uniform includes a volunteer t-shirt, badge with magnetic holder, and apron. To retain the quality of the aprons, we recommend that you wash the apron in cold water on gentle cycle, and dry on low or air dry.

### **Experienced Handlers Only**

To volunteer with the animals, you must have previous experience handling the animal that you are interested in working with. This experience can come from a range of places. As a general guideline, we recommend that you can say yes to at least TWO of the items below for your experience WITHIN THE LAST 5 YEARS:

- I have cared for my own pet for at least 5 years.
- I have assisted in care for a roommate's pet for at least 1 year.
- I have worked in a shelter environment as a kennel attendant for at least 1 year.
- I have volunteered with animals in a shelter environment for at least 1 year.
- I have volunteered with an animal rescue group for at least 6 months.
- I have fostered animals for an animal rescue group for a total of 6 months.
- I have worked as a vet technician for at least 6 months.
- I have owned or have worked for a dog-walking or pet-sitting business for at least 6 months.

Shelter animals act differently than regular pets in homes, and it is very important for everyone's safety that you are comfortable with animal body language, stress factors, and how to appropriately handle different potential scenarios. Experienced animal handlers are much better prepared to read and react to the various behaviors of shelter animals.

## **Volunteer Training & Evaluation**

The type and length of volunteer training we provide and require will vary depending on the assignment for which you are applying. You will be asked to complete the following basic training before you will be accepted as a volunteer.

- You must participate in an intensive training session. For roles that work directly with animals, applicants should expect 6-10 hours of initial training. For roles that do not work directly with animals, applicants can expect 3-6 hours of initial training.
- For roles that involve working with animals:
  - You must pass a written exam that tests your existing experience level and knowledge of animals as well as your mastery and understanding of the volunteer training you have received.
  - You must pass a practical hands-on exam with a volunteer evaluator.

If it is determined that you are not qualified or able to safely perform your chosen assignment, you will be offered an alternate assignment.

After you have completed the ACS training and evaluation process, and you have decided that you are ready to make the commitment, you are ready to join our volunteer team. Welcome aboard!

## **Volunteer Information & Volunteer Service Agreement**

Before you begin volunteering, you must complete and sign a volunteer service agreement. By signing the agreement, you agree that you can and will meet the time commitment and have reviewed and agree to all the written volunteer documentation, rules, and procedures provided to you.

All volunteer files are confidential and are kept in the Volunteer Supervisor's Office. Included in each volunteer's file is information such as your signed volunteer service agreement, commendation letters, disciplinary action, injury reports, time sheets and other information related to your role as a volunteer.



Please promptly notify the Volunteer Supervisor of any changes to your personal information, including address, phone number, email or emergency contact. It is important that all your personal information is accurate and current so that we can get you help in an emergency as well as inform you of any upcoming special events or training sessions in which you might be interested.

## **General Rules**

### **Parking & Facility Maps**

All Pet Pal volunteers should park their vehicles in the parking spaces located in front of the Animal Care Center. For security purposes, we do not publish detailed facility maps. As you begin volunteering, you will become more familiar with the layout of the facility and will not need a map to access your regular volunteer areas. We know it is a daunting task to figure out where different areas are located and just how to get around! Feel free to ask staff members or other volunteers how to get around.

### **Dress Appropriately**

Please be neat and clean in your attire. We want the public to have a good “first impression” of our facility. Everyone working at the Animal Care Center is reflective of our operations. We want visitors to feel comfortable approaching any member of our team. That means you! Of course volunteers working in different areas and capacities need to dress ‘duty appropriate’. Guidelines are as follows:

- Volunteer aprons and badges must be worn by all volunteers
- Long pants or jeans recommended
- Closed-toe shoes (tennis shoes fine)
- Support undergarments for females
- Non-dangly jewelry
- Baseball-type caps are acceptable
- No perfume/cologne/fragrance

*\*Clothing (including caps) should not advertise or endorse a company, product, team, or contain offensive messages or off-color humor.*

## **Follow Procedures**

All Pet Pal Volunteers are required to know and follow all ACS policies and procedures listed in this handbook along with any supplemental position specific material. In order to run an organized and safe shelter everyone working there needs to follow the same rules. Volunteers who don't follow the proper procedures will be dismissed from the program.

## **Restricted Areas**

Certain areas in the Animal Care Center are off-limits to Pet Pal Volunteers either for safety or to prevent impeding the progress of ACS staff members during the course of their duties. Most doors to these 'off-limits' areas are kept locked and include ACS administration, shelter surgery and medical wards, animal isolation kennels, the euthanasia room, officer quarters and truck sally port and the telephone dispatch room. Pet Pal Volunteers who deliberately enter these restricted areas without being accompanied by an ACS staff member will be immediately dismissed from the program.

## **Customer Service**

It is simple – the lives of our shelter animals depend on the customer service provide by our staff members and volunteers. If people do not feel welcomed and well-served they will not return. Not only will they not come back but they are sure to relay their disappointing experience to their friends and neighbors discouraging them from visiting too. Fewer people coming to the Animal Care Center means our adoptable animals have less of an opportunity to be adopted. Know that your attitude and conduct matters and has an indirect but significant impact on the lives of the animals here.

Please be friendly and helpful to our visitors and your fellow volunteers. If someone asks you a question or looks like they may need help -- smile, identify yourself as an ACS Volunteer and offer to help them. You may not know the answer and that's O.K.! You can always flag down an ACS staff member to help, or escort them to the Information Counter. Never attempt to 'wing-it' or create a 'made-up' response if you are not 100% sure of the answer. We do not want our visitors given wrong information as it just leads them to be confused and frustrated when they find out otherwise. It may take you a while to learn enough information to be able to answer many of the myriad of

questions the public asks. A good start, however, to expanding your ACS knowledge is to thoroughly read the content of our ACS website [www.sanjoseanimals.com](http://www.sanjoseanimals.com). Pay special attention to the Adoption and Lost & Found sections, as you will be frequently asked questions pertaining to these areas.

### **Solicitation**

ACS recognizes you may have interests in other events and organizations. However, the distribution and/or solicitation of goods, services or literature to visitors, employees or other volunteers is not permitted on City of San José Animal Care Center property.

### **Internal/External Communications**

ACS encourages you to develop working relationships with our Animal Care Center staff members. Please be considerate though of their time limitations when initiating conversations. As much as they might like to talk with you they are still required to get their work completed.

You may also see local print and television reporters touring around the Animal Care Center from time to time. Know that you must have authorization from the Volunteer Supervisor before conversing with the media concerning your activities as an ACS Pet Pal volunteer.

### **Conflict Resolution**

In the course of your volunteer duties you may experience a problem or conflict with a fellow Pet Pal Volunteer. Please try to work out the issue on your own in the most mature manner possible. If you are unable to resolve the problem after trying your best, you should bring the matter to the attention of the ACS Volunteer Supervisor. If the ACS Volunteer Supervisor is unable to reconcile a satisfactory solution the issue will be referred to the ACS Deputy Director.

## **City of San José Policies**

In addition to ACS Division policies and procedures, the City of San José has comprehensive citywide policies, procedures and restrictions that apply to all employees and volunteers. This citywide volunteer handbook is also included in your ACS Volunteer Pet Pal Handbook. It is incumbent on all Pet Pal volunteers to read the City of San José Volunteer Handbook before you begin your volunteer service.

## **Day-to-Day Rules**

### **Signing In and Out**

Each volunteer is required to sign in before they start their shift and sign out when they are through volunteering for the day. It is mandatory for insurance purposes that we know who is on site. This also helps us to determine which days and hours we need to request more help. The “sign in” computer is located in the Volunteer Center. Please pull up a chair and have a seat. It’s easy. Just follow the ‘sign-in’ instructions.

**Remember all Pet Pal Volunteers must sign in and out. It is not optional. Failure to do so is cause for dismissal from the program.**

### **Volunteer Badge & Apron**

You will be issued a Pet Pal Volunteer badge with your personal volunteer number. You are responsible for bringing your badge in its magnetic holder (provided) with you when you report for duty. **You cannot perform any volunteer duties on-site without wearing your I.D. Badge.** If you forget your I.D. Badge and the Volunteer Supervisor is on duty, you can request to have a temporary badge issued for you in order to be able to work that day.

It is also mandatory for you to bring and wear your volunteer apron. If you forget your apron and a Volunteer Supervisor is on duty, you can request to have an apron loaned to you for that day. We encourage you to wear the volunteer t-shirt while you volunteer, but it is not required.

## **Be Proactive About Staying Informed**

The Volunteer Notice Board is located next to the Sign in Computer. Please check this board each time you come in to work as this is the most efficient way of notifying all Pet Pals of procedure changes, updates, etc. Please do not write or post anything on the board without the approval of the Volunteer Supervisor.

We also use an online message board to communicate with one another, and you will be invited to join this group after you have completed your training and become a volunteer.

## **Safety**

### **Disease Prevention**

While handling animals, you can be exposed to a zoonotic illness. A zoonotic illness is one that can be transferred from an animal to a human. These include ringworm, mange, bordetella, parasites and though highly unlikely, rabies. Always, practice good hygiene, such as frequent hand washing to limit your risk of exposure. We recommend you consult your physician about receiving a tetanus vaccination and acquiring additional information about zoonotic illnesses and possible allergic reactions.

When animals are handled frequently, they are at risk for contracting an illness themselves. If you interact with one animal, and then interact with another one before washing your hands, you can transfer illness or disease from one animal to the other. This happens as easily as a common cold amongst school children. Please don't be responsible for making our animals sick! Always wash or sanitize your hands before touching a different animal. This is especially important for our cats, as feline upper respiratory infections (URI) are extremely contagious.

### **What To Do If You Are Injured**

Everyone who handles animals is likely to get knocked down, bitten or scratched at some point. Volunteers are no exception. If you are injured or hurt while on volunteer duty you MUST notify an ACS supervisor immediately. If your injury requires medical

treatment beyond first aid you will need to fill out two Injury Claim Forms before seeking treatment. Volunteers with injuries involving an animal bite must also fill out an ACS Bite Report Form.

## **Euthanasia**

Unfortunately part of our job is to euthanize animals. Many of the animals we have to euthanize are ill, severely injured, or dangerous to the public. But sadly we also have to put healthy good-natured animals down when the public drops off more animals than we can find homes for. We never want to do this. However, when the Animal Care Center is inundated with more animals than we can adopt out or place with rescue groups and other shelters, we simply run out of room to hold them all.

Each of you can help us cut down the number of animals the Animal Care Center has to euthanize by encouraging your friends and neighbors to do three things:

- Adopt a homeless animal instead of buying or purchasing pets from breeders.
- Encourage people to spay or neuter their pets. Every pet that is born means one less home for a shelter animal.
- Encourage people to be responsible and caring. A pet is a lifelong commitment that requires time and effort. Not something to be discarded should they become inconvenient.