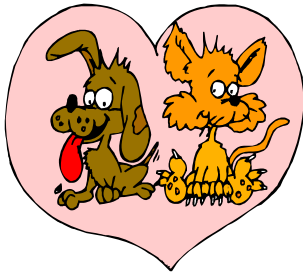


RCHS

Volunteer Handbook



Written by Ginny Zuboy/2011

First, we want to thank you for considering to offer some of your time and goodwill to the Randolph County Humane Society for the benefit of the animals in our care. As is typical of organizations such as ours, we are under-budgeted and understaffed! Volunteers contribute a necessary and vital service to our resident animals and the staff who care for them. So, again, we thank you!



Perhaps you are still sitting on the fence? Not sure you “want to get involved”? Here are a few common reasons that might be holding you back: #1

Working at the Shelter would make me “too sad.” You are a “softie!” You can’t watch Animal Planet because it’s too upsetting. You love your pets and can’t imagine them without a home and someone to love them. You would want to bring them all home with you. They would haunt your dreams. It would just be too close and personal.

Welcome to the Club! We’ve all been there. If you weren’t a true animal lover, you probably wouldn’t be reading this. It is hard on all of us! But it is because we care about our pets and we have love in our hearts that we are the ones who must be the advocates for those animals who are less fortunate. If not we animal lovers, then who?

My case in point: I always said that when my work schedule allowed more free time I would donate some of that time to RCHS. I have been contributing financially for several years but decided it was time to ‘put my mouth where my money is.’ I came to the Shelter with lots of anxiety and trepidation – could I really do this? Honestly, my first volunteer session as a dog-walker was overwhelming and an assault to my senses. Communal living, with no access to outdoors, could not be otherwise. The odors, the barking, all those anxious faces and wiggly bodies— Touch me! Talk to me! Play with me! Take me for a walk! RIGHT NOW! The need does feel overwhelming—and it is.

That is why we need you! My first reaction: “I don’t know if I can do this...” But I went back the next time, and the next, and my expectations, my understanding, and my perspective began to change. Instead of leaving feeling distressed, I could leave feeling good.

Walking a Shelter dog is a happy experience! They are so glad to be outdoors, to move, to sniff and to mark, to breathe some fresh air; to have some alone time with a human who cares. And upon their return from a morning walk, they will likely find a clean kennel and a meal waiting for them. Perhaps you are a cat lover and that is where you will spend your time. Cats need to climb, to play and be cuddled. They are caged of necessity and time out of their cages is crucial to their health and well-being.

We need to remember: THIS IS THEIR HOME, for now. They are sheltered from the elements and kept safe. They are immunized against disease. They have fresh food and water every day. They are talked to, handled and cared for by people dedicated to their well being. There are many so called “pets” out there that don’t have it as good as our Shelter animals. Our goal is that all of our shelter animals will eventually find their “forever” homes. By volunteering, you are helping us achieve this goal. So, instead of going home feeling sad, you can return home knowing you did something special for a four-footed friend who is out of harm’s way; that every animal you connected with had a better day because of YOU. That is a good feeling!

2 I’ll get sucked in by the under-tow! I could never do enough. It will take over my life!

It is true that the need is great. The more volunteers we have rotating in and out of the shelter on a daily basis, the easier it is on everyone and the better for the animals. But you set your own schedule. YOU decide how much time you can give. Perhaps you want to give two hours a week. That is fine. There will be no pressure to work more hours than you want to commit. We hope that you will be able to schedule your time so that we know how many we have coming and going and at what times. Kelly Scheidegger, the Shelter manager, has many responsibilities that require quiet office time, and a reliable volunteer schedule helps her know when she can find the

office time she needs. More about time commitment and scheduling will be mentioned below.

#3 They will ‘depend’ on me and I will be stuck... No, we understand that you are “volunteering” and this is not your job. Your services are valued and appreciated but we know that your time is your own and that you may need to withdraw your volunteer help at any time. We will wish you well and offer our great thanks!

Ok, so now that I have convinced you that you CAN “do this” here are some ways you might

CONTRIBUTE AS A VOLUNTEER:

~ Direct contact with the shelter animals is always a top priority. They thrive on human interaction. The cats need to be cuddled and to play and to flaunt their ‘catness’. The dogs need a brisk walk, eye contact and hearty conversation with humans interested in knowing who they are. Animal/human contact is our number one priority.

~ We may be providing food and fresh water to as many as 100 animals per day. Each day the food bowls must be washed and sanitized. This usually takes place in the morning and your help in the food preparation room is always appreciated.

~ Assistance with cleaning and maintenance is always needed. The kennels and cat houses are cleaned thoroughly once daily

but keeping the animal living quarters cleaned and maintained requires constant attention.

~Feeding the washers and dryers is also a daily task. Each animal is provided with a clean towel or blanket daily so doing laundry is an on-going chore.

~Answering the phone is often inconvenient or impossible. Your help at the desk may be requested.

~You might wish to assist bathing and grooming animals as it is needed.

~The shelter often has need of volunteers with special skills, such as carpentry, plumbing, grounds and building maintenance, computer savvy and data entry. If you have other ideas about how you might help, make us an offer!

SPECIAL EVENTS: You can be a shelter volunteer without ever having to visit the shelter by helping with special events. Volunteers can assist with scheduled **FUND RAISERS**, from January through June. Watch the website to learn about these and how you can help. Spread the word! Tell your friends about the scheduled fund raisers and invite them to participate.

We also appreciate volunteer assistance with our **OFF SITE ADOPTION** events. These are typically held during the spring and summer, when we transport animals available for

adoption to various community locations and events. These have been highly successful in promoting adoption.

FOSTER AN ANIMAL for adoption: Perhaps you are a traveler and therefore cannot be “tied down” with a pet at home, but you enjoy animal companionship. Consider fostering a dog or a cat for a brief period of time. This is very helpful in preparing an animal for adoption. It gives them a break from the atmosphere of the shelter and helps prepare them for their forever home. If you have children in your home and/or other animals, this foster experience helps to socialize the animal and increases its chances of being adopted by a wider range of possible families.

PROVIDE A FOREVER HOME If you have the proper environment, life style, and love in your heart, adopt a shelter animal. Perhaps you have an animal already and you think ‘one is enough.’ Reconsider! Many pet lovers will agree that two is often easier than one and a lot more fun. When the pet owner is away from home, it is very comforting for your pet to have a four-footed housemate for company. And yes, dogs and cats can be great companions!

BE AN ADVOCATE: Spaying and neutering our pets and encouraging others to do so is the number one way we can reduce the need for animal shelters and help those in existence function more effectively. Spaying and neutering our

pets is the right thing to do – we have a responsibility to put the pressure on to make that happen.

POLICIES:

All interested in being a volunteer must sign the Volunteer agreement included in this handbook. This includes emergency information, a medical release, and a confidentiality agreement.

All volunteers must be over 18 or older. Those who are 16 or 17 may volunteer with parental consent. Younger volunteers 14 to 16, must be accompanied by a guardian.

Volunteer Hours:

10:00 – 3:00 (sometimes 5:00), 7 days a week

GUIDELINES:

All volunteers must attend a volunteer orientation session. These will be offered as they are required and will most likely be offered on a Saturday. The volunteer coordinator will contact you by email to let you know when a session will be offered. Much of what we do at the shelter is ‘learn as you go,’ and initially you will be guided by a helper.

1. All volunteers must sign in and out each time they volunteer and specify the tasks performed. This helps us in many ways. It lets us know where help is needed

most and what days are more in need of volunteer help than others. Documenting volunteer hours is also useful information when applying for grant assistance.

2. If possible, submit a schedule, even if it is only for two hours a week. This will help inform other volunteers, whose time available is flexible, how to schedule their own hours to best serve the shelter. A calendar for the month will be available for this purpose. You will be shown how to record your schedule. If you do not wish to be ‘expected’ but wish to just come and go as your time allows, your time and your help is always appreciated. Come when you can, by all means!
3. If you cannot come at an appointed time, always inform the shelter and please give as much notice as possible. Volunteer reliability is extremely important to the shelter staff, who depend on your support.
4. If you wish to be a dog-walker, the most helpful time to arrive is in the morning when the kennels are being cleaned and the meals prepared. The dogs are often rotated for walks while their kennels are being cleaned. This is very helpful to the shelter workers during this busy time. This is also the time when the food bowls are being collected to be washed and sanitized, which is often done by a volunteer. If you can’t help in the morning, the dogs appreciate being walked ANY time throughout the day!

5. If you wish to help with cats, the time of greatest need is also in the morning, between 8:00 and 11:00 am. It is during the morning that their living quarters are being cleaned and the cats are being fed. But schedule your time as it is available. As with the dogs, the cats enjoy human company whenever it is offered.
6. Laundry is being collected and attended to daily. It must be washed, dried and folded throughout the day.
7. You may arrive to find we need your help at the front desk, answering the phone and serving as receptionist. A staff person will always be available to help you with issues that you do not feel equipped to handle, but your being there allows them to attend to other tasks that need their attention.

If you will be having direct contact with the shelter animals, we ask that you follow these important policies to help control the transmission of disease:

DO NOT STICK YOUR HANDS IN CAGES FOR ANIMALS TO LICK AND RUB AGAINST unless you wash your hands before touching another animal. One person could be responsible for spreading a contagious virus or bacteria from one animal to many others in a matter of minutes! We encourage physical contact, but ask you to consider the health and safety of our animals. There are hand sanitizers stationed at various points throughout shelter.

Please use them, or wash your hands. We strongly encourage **frequent hand washing** throughout your scheduled visit.

If you will be walking dogs or cuddling cats, please wash your hands before moving to the next animal. If you are walking dogs in the winter months and are wearing gloves, we have disinfectant spray available to spray on your gloves between dogs. When walking and visiting with the dogs, many will jump up for kisses and hugs. Avoid touching their noses, eyes, and mouths. If the dog you are walking invites lovelies, head rubbing and bear hugs are much appreciated! By avoiding the dog's face, however, where most of the germs and bacteria are transmitted, we are providing some level of protection against the transmission of virus and infection.

Suggestions for Dog Walkers:

The highlight of the shelter dogs' day is probably their walk with a companionable volunteer. Once out in the fresh air their noses will go to the ground to learn who has been out before them. They will mark to say, I was here, too! They might immediately choose a spot to poop – some of our shelter dogs will 'hold it' while in their kennel, for the dignity of being able to poop outdoors. (More about poop below.)



And then off to the races! Most of them want to run, so be prepared! Be sure you have the leash looped inside your hand and have firm footing. Some of our shelter dogs are quite large and very strong. They have been cooped up for most of the day and stretching those legs is what they need to do. Don't let them yank you out of your shoes, however. Let them know that you are on the other end of the leash and that you are in control. It can be frustrating, because they will strain against the lead until they are cutting off their air supply and while we know they want to run free, we must maintain control. A periodic yank followed by a 'stay' position is sometimes helpful to remind the dog that he has a human on board and will help to settle him down. Talking to them along the way is also helpful. These dogs don't just need to move, they also need our attention. We will never know their stories. Some were used as hunting dogs and kept for that purpose until they were no longer useful. These dogs were never socialized as normal pets. We are helping them develop social skills by touching them and talking to them. Try to shape better manners by not allowing them to jump up on you. They are so excited and want to tell you all about it! Push them down with a firm but gentle NO, and then meet them at their level with a soothing voice and stroking.

There are plans in the works to provide a small fenced in area on the shelter grounds which will allow the dogs a chance to chase a ball and to 'play' unrestrained by a leash. It will also provide a place for a few animals at a time to socialize

together. We are very excited about this project and know that it will improve the quality of life for all of our shelter dogs. As is our story, we must first raise the funds to purchase the fencing. ***(Are you interested in donating to this special cause?)*** Until then, dog walking is their sole form of exercise.

Consider a walk duration of about 10 to 15 minutes. This will sometimes depend on the dog and may also be determined by the need on that day. Exiting the shelter, you may turn right and head up the street or left and walk down Weese Street and then turn right at the Darby School corner. So that we can maintain good neighborly relations, we ask that you please not allow the dogs to trespass on people's property and to walk on the opposite side of the street when possible to demonstrate our goodwill. As mentioned earlier, many dogs will wait for the opportunity to poop outdoors so it can collect on the side of the road rather quickly over a day's time. Let's all do our part to keep this under control. You can stick several poop bags in your pocket and pick it up along the way, however the recommended approach is to retrace your steps before your departure and pick up the poop with one of the scoopers and buckets available for this purpose.

We suggest that you dress for the weather. Dogs need exercise in all seasons, including winter. Put on your long johns and wooly socks, boots with a good tread and dress warmly. If you are insulated against the cold, you will find that a brisk winter walk is quite refreshing

and the dogs love it! Consider dog walking as part of your fitness routine. It rivals a treadmill and is a whole lot more fun. Walk one of our hounds and you are promised a great 'resistance' work out! And wear work clothes - muddy paws and shelter chores can be messy business. Some shelter volunteers have clothing designated strictly for shelter work which they keep separate from the rest of their wardrobe. Please, no open-toed shoes, and short shorts are not a wise wardrobe choice, even in the warmest of weather. Knee length shorts or Capri's will serve better in preventing minor injury from our high energy, enthusiastic residents.

A system is in place to indicate which dogs need walking, which ones have already had their walks, as well as those who must stay in for the day. The dog walking routine will be reviewed during the orientation session. Dog walking is supervised by shelter staff. If you have any questions, ask.

Bring a friend! Belong to an organization? Get them involved. Dogs can be walked together, though keeping a respectable distance between them is recommended. After several dog walking sessions, you will learn their personalities and will know which dogs are good together and which dogs need their 'space.' Some are easier to walk than others, but they all need exercise.

When exiting from and returning to the shelter with a leashed dog, be aware of other dogs also coming and going. It is suggested that you not enter a corridor with a large dog in

tow if another dog (especially another large one) is also exiting or entering, so that they do not have to cross paths in a restricted space. Some of our male dogs have not been neutered and might feel the need to 'strut their stuff' and potentially cause problems. If you are not sure you are strong enough to handle a large breed dog, it is ok to choose to walk the smaller dogs. Every dog you walk is one fewer that the staff has to be responsible for, and every effort is appreciated.



Suggestion for Cat Cuddlers: We ask that the same disease control measures mentioned previously be followed when interacting with cats. Please wash your hands or use hand sanitizer between each animal you touch. Procedures are in place to guide you in the cleaning and feeding processes of cat care; you will always be working with a helper who will orient you to these procedures. Beware of ambush-- cats are wild things! They love to reach out through the bars for your hair, your clothes, your glasses. Notice me! Play with me! I'm bored! Cats will be cats, which means they scratch and sometimes bite. Wearing shirts with sleeves and long pants will help protect you from their sometimes unpredictable nature. Transporting a cat from a kennel to the group playhouse must first be approved by staff. The playhouse allows groups of cats to climb and play together but these groupings need to be considered with care. Do report any play that seems too rough. Join them and have a seat! While cats are often content to 'hang out,' talking to them and engaging them in play will stimulate physical

exercise and help socialize them, making them more suitable for adoption. When transporting a cat to and from the outdoor playhouse, a portable carrier is always used as a safety precaution.

Please report any animal bite or scratch incidents to the staff. If the skin is broken, the injured area should be immediately washed with soap and water. A first aid kit is available.

Please alert the staff if you notice any animal injuries or signs of illness. Chances are they are aware of what you are reporting but the earlier these symptoms are known, the sooner they can be treated.

While volunteering, you may be exposed to communicable diseases to humans/and or household pets. Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly before leaving the shelter and do not allow your household pets to have direct contact with the clothing worn at the shelter. It is also advised that your household pets be current on all vet recommended vaccinations.

As a volunteer, you may have access to information and documents that are considered confidential, such as donor information, adoption records, etc. All volunteers must sign a **volunteer confidentiality statement**, agreeing not to divulge information of this nature to others outside the shelter community.

D ID YOU KNOW...

RCHS is an “open-admission” shelter. That means we accept every homeless, lost and abused pet that is brought to us. An average of 150 animals come to the shelter each month, which means in a year’s time, we house nearly 1800 dogs, cats, puppies, kittens and other companion animals.

Until the pet owners of Randolph County and the surrounding area resolve to spay and neuter their animals, a ‘no kill’ policy is unrealistic for RCHS. Euthanasia is, at times, the most humane option for some of the neglected and injured animals that are brought to us. RCHS has, however, earned the designation of the “lowest kill” shelter in the state of WV and considering our size and the number of animals that pass through our doors, we can feel good about that.

RCHS is a proud supporter and participant of The *Rescue Waggin’* program, created by PetSmart Charities to help save the lives of homeless dogs and puppies. They transport animals from areas of high pet population, like ours (where they may likely face euthanasia), to shelters where adoptable animals are in demand (because they have in place a **successful spay and neutering program!**) In the year 2010, 321 animals (the largest number from any shelter on the East Coast) were rescued from RCHS through the Pet Smart Charity Program. This is a wonderful program, and it is due to Kelly’s

and Rich's dedication and hard work that such a large number of pets have been rescued from Randolph County.

THINGS WE NEED:

Dog and cat food, both dry and canned; dog/cat treats. Cat litter, dog collars, leashes.

Paper towels, bleach, laundry soap, trash bags, cleaning materials, brooms, mops, trash bags, newspaper, copy paper.

Rugs, blankets, sheets, towels, wash cloths, pillows, cushions, fabric remnants, 10-24" zippers, draperies (these items used in making small animal beds, puppy bedding and kennel covers).

YOUR DONATION! It costs approximately \$130,000 to operate the shelter annually (projected, 2011). RCHS relies primarily on adoption fees, membership dues, public donations, bequests, and payments by the county and municipalities. The adoption fees and fees for reclaiming pets do not even cover the actual costs incurred. Perhaps you would like to contribute to the *Yelp for Help fund*, which allows us to provide emergency vet intervention to save an animal suitable for adoption. Or you may choose to donate to our ***Spay and Neuter fund*** which we feel gives you the biggest bang for your buck. **Our goal is to spay and neuter every animal that leaves our shelter.** That takes a big chunk of our

already encumbered budget. Every dollar of every donation we receive is put to work keeping our animals safe, fed, and free of disease with the ultimate goal of finding them their forever homes. By also spaying and neutering them before being released back into the community, we are doing our part to reduce our County's pet overpopulation. **Please advocate for the spaying and neutering of all pets!**

The Randolph County Humane Society is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization. **All donations are Tax Deductable.**

Please go to our website, rchs-pets.org, to learn more about the Randolph County Humane Society and the various ways you can help. Click the volunteer tab where you will find names and phone numbers to help you learn more.



Thank you for your support!

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