



Dog Walking Volunteer Orientation Handbook

Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter

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Welcome to the volunteer team at Heart of the Valley!

When you become a volunteer at Heart of the Valley, you also become an ambassador for the organization and its mission. The following pages will discuss the policies and procedures for dog walking at the shelter, but we also aim to provide you with an educational experience - so that when someone in the community asks you about the shelter, you are armed with the information you need to help educate the public and encourage volunteerism.

While there are many reasons that people decide to become dog walking volunteers at Heart of the Valley, there are two main reasons for the program itself:

- To enhance the quality of life of the dogs at the shelter
- To make each dog more “adoptable” as a result of its interaction with volunteers

A core part of the mission of Heart of the Valley is facilitating the adoptions of quality companion animals to members of the public. In order to accomplish this, each dog that comes through the doors into the shelter, whether brought by their owners, by Animal Control officials, or as a stray, is given a medical and behavioral evaluation by HOV staff. These evaluations determine whether an animal is “adoptable” or not.

Heart of the Valley operates a “no-kill” animal shelter. This is a misleading term, and simply means that we do not euthanize animals for space or after certain lengths of time. “Adoptable” animals are sheltered here for as long as it takes to find them new lifetime homes. Animals that are deemed to be “un-adoptable” are humanely euthanized.

All dogs that you will come into contact with as volunteer dog walkers are considered medically and behaviorally adoptable, and have been vaccinated against distemper, coronavirus, leptovirus, hepatitis, parvovirus, parainfluenza, bordetella, and rabies. Additionally, they have all been micro-chipped and spayed or neutered. As a precaution due to the number of dogs volunteers come in contact with at the shelter, it is strongly recommended that you also keep your own dogs fully vaccinated.

How do you make a dog more adoptable?

Dogs with even a basic grasp of proper “manners” and leash etiquette will find new homes more quickly. Through consistent reinforcement of these manners with every staff and volunteer interaction, dogs will learn that jumping and barking at a cage door is bad and sitting patiently gets them fun stuff like walks and treats. So the next time a potential adopter walks through the adoption room, ideally what they see are these manners on display. As simple as this seems, it is key in increasing the rate of adoptions at the shelter!

Hours:

Volunteer dog walking hours are 11:30am-4:30pm every day of the week.

Order of Operations:

1. Sign in at the volunteer office & look for new information on the board
2. Grab a name tag, collar, leash & dog treats
3. Check the dog walking checklist to see who hasn't been out
4. Select the dog you'll walk – check the “star” rating
5. Walk the dog!
6. Immediately after putting each dog back, mark it off on the checklist
7. When you're done walking, make sure to sign out at the volunteer office
8. It is recommended that you wash up and change clothes before handling your dogs

Finding the right dog:

Before choosing any dog to walk, take a moment to read through the cage card which is attached to its indoor cage. In addition to the dog's name and basic information, the cage card also notes the dog's “star” rating for its difficulty level walking on leash:



Green Star: Very easy and well-mannered on leash. This dog is perfect for a beginner!



Blue Star: More energetic, stronger, and not so well-mannered on leash. May be a challenge.



Gold Star: You may walk these dogs only after talking with Ben or Blaine. They may be extremely shy or fearful and require additional expertise to handle.

Additionally, any dog wearing a **RED COLLAR** is not available for walks due to injury or some other medical situation.

If the dogs happen to be in their outside exercise pens when you come, the cage cards will not be with them but on their inside cages. When you've read the cage card of a dog you would like to walk, simply note the cage number it is on and then find the corresponding number on an exercise pen outside – the same dog(s) will be in that pen.

If you are walking a high-energy dog or you just want to burn off some energy in an off-leash situation, feel free to use the “play area” near the outside exercise pens. This large enclosed pen is perfect for throwing a ball for fetch or working on the “stay” command. After 10 minutes or so of play, the dog may be much more ready for a well-behaved on-leash walk around the shelter. With the exception of paired dogs (who already live in the same cage together) the play pen is to be used for only one dog at a time.

The trail system:

There are two different loops that you may choose to walk with shelter dogs. You may also connect the loops, but you must keep your walks to a maximum of 30 minutes per dog. There are several dog waste pick-up stations along the trails, so please have some bags on hand and pick up the poop!

Please consult the trail map in the volunteer office, or ask if you have any questions about available routes.

The volunteer commitment:

Dog Walking Volunteers are encouraged to make at least a weekly commitment. Those who walk dogs less often than that tend to lose touch with current happenings and forget basics about things like effective prong collar use.

The privilege of walking shelter dogs may be revoked at any time if a volunteer is unable to comply with or refuses to follow the guidelines of this handbook and all written or verbal direction from shelter staff.

Some Do's and Don'ts:

DO's	DON'Ts
DO walk with a partner – get two dogs at once!	DON'T take any dog off leash
DO reward good behavior with a treat	DON'T hand off any dog to anybody else
DO wear sturdy, comfortable footwear	DON'T enter staff-only areas
DO use concern reports	DON'T leave shelter property with a shelter dog
DO report injuries to the staff	DON'T walk a shelter dog in the off-leash dog park
DO tell your friends how much fun you're having!	DON'T let the dog meet another dog or person
DO ask for help!	DON'T walk through the parking lot

