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## VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

### CAT CUDDLER

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## Introduction – Why Cat Cuddlers are Important

Next to staff, volunteer Cat Cuddlers generally have the most consistent contact with shelter cats. Your interaction with adoptable cats helps them stay socialized and engaged, while serving as an extra set of eyes to help staff monitor their overall health and behavior. You are also helping us to fulfill our mission. We thank you in advance for sharing your time and love of cats with the animals at Heart of the Valley (HOV).



## Cat Cuddling Volunteer Hours

**Volunteers may cuddle cats any day of the week between the hours of 11:30AM and 5:30PM.** HOV is closed to the public on the following days: New Year's Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

Planning on coming out to volunteer? You must sign-up for all cat cuddling sessions in advance.

## Important Information for Adults Volunteering with Jr. Volunteers

**You must be accompany your Jr. Volunteer during all cat cuddling sessions. Failure to provide proper supervision of your Jr. Volunteer will result in termination from the volunteer program.**

## Cat Cuddling Requirements & Commitment

*Must have attended a New Volunteer Orientation and...*

**A. Be a member of the Junior Volunteer Program (and have completed a Cat Cuddler Training)**

Commitment: Minimum of 2 visits per month for 6 months' time

**B. Have participated in a Daily Cat Care or Cat Cuddling Training**

Commitment: Incorporate into your PAW Program Service

## Hygiene

Many diseases are transmittable from animal to animal or human to human. There are some diseases that are communicable from animal to man. Therefore, very good personal hygiene is necessary.

Each individual must promote his or her own health. By your actions you can either limit or enhance the spread of infectious diseases.

We have included the following recommendations for your protection:

- All volunteers working with cats are asked to wear a clean apron or scrub top during volunteer service.
- Wash your hands at the start and end of each cat cuddling session.
- Many volunteers have a set of designated 'volunteer clothes' that they wear only at HOV, changing out of their volunteer clothes as soon as they return



home. You may also change to volunteer clothes and shoes when arriving at Heart of the Valley, and change back to your "home" clothes and shoes prior to leaving or at the time you return home.

#### Protect Yourself and Your Own Animals:

- Immediately report any bite/scratch to a staff member and wash immediately with disinfectant;
- Do not handle any animal that appears ill, including coughing, sneezing or congested.

#### Protect Shelter Animals:

- Do NOT mix cats from separate cages.
- Remember that many items, including toys, brushes, bedding and clothing, can transfer disease to animals, and so do not share these items among animals. Used toys and other dirty items can be placed in the dirty laundry bin in Main Adopt. Used brushes may remain in a cat's kennel for re-use.
- Adhere to the outlined procedures at all times. They are in place to protect you and shelter pets.

## VOLUNTEERING

### Signing In and Out

As with all volunteer opportunities, please begin and end your volunteer shift in the **Volunteer Center**. Store your belongings in the provided **cubbies** but *please leave valuables in your car*. **Please sign-in and out** at the touch screen computer in the Volunteer Center. Service hours are used when applying for grant as well as helps with annual reports and volunteer trends.



**Name Tags: Everyone MUST wear your name tag while volunteering.** Name tags are hanging in the volunteer center, hanging alphabetically (sort of!) by last name. Junior Volunteers and their parents have **green paws**. PAW Program volunteers have **blue paws**. If you haven't been in for a while, your name tag may be in the roll-a-dex on top of the cubbies.

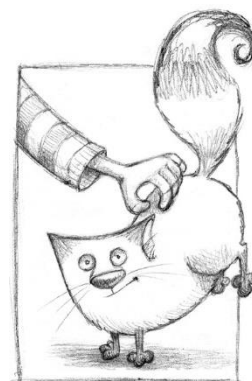
HOV also provides '**Volunteer Aprons**' for all Cat Cuddlers to wear. **Please wear a CLEAN apron during your volunteer shift.** This identifies you as a *trained volunteer* during your volunteer shift. And it will help to keep your clothes clean too! Place dirty aprons in the laundry basket below the clean aprons.

### Time to Cuddle!

#### Who to Cuddle?

Volunteers are able to cuddle all cats who have the "cuddle me" symbol (right) attached to their kennels.

Because kittens are easily stressed and very popular with potential adopters so we ask that cat cuddlers do not cuddle them. Older cats who will stay at the shelter longer benefit the most from spending time with volunteers.



*Some kennels have a Gold Card attached to the front door stating “Please Check-In With a Staff Member First” – for safety reasons you must take Cat Enrichment/Gold Card Training to be able to work with these cats.*

### Where to Cuddle.

Volunteers are primarily responsible for cuddling cats in the Main Adoption Room. This room is open to interested adopters at the same time it is open to volunteers for cuddling. Because of this, it is very important that we each do our best to remain calm and quiet in Main Adopt. For enrichment, our goal is that every adoptable cat gets a *minimum of 10 minutes* of cuddle time with a trained volunteer *every day*. Pay attention to their body language though – for some cats 10 minutes may be too much.

To help prevent the spread of germs from one cat to another, please begin by cuddling cats **in their kennels**. There are step stools and folding ladders for you to sit on when spending time with a cat – some cats may even want to sit **on your lap**! This is okay as long as you are comfortable with it and the cat is relaxed (ie: not acting out towards neighboring cats). If spending time with a cat on the top row, please stand on a step ladder or stool. *Please try not let cats walk on the floor. Being a public space, the floor is an excellent place for germs to travel.*

The shelter has two **“Meet and Greet” rooms** attached to the Main Adoption Room. When these two rooms aren’t being used by potential adopters, you are welcome to use this space for cats to stretch their legs. ***We ask that an adult be the person to transport the cats to and from the Meet and Greet Rooms rooms.***

There are also cats in three **colony rooms** – don’t forget about these guys! Junior Volunteers often like to spend time with these cats as they’re often quite social and, since they are in a room, there is more room to play. Please do not take cats out of the colony room or bring additional cats into the colony room. Just like with cats in kennels, please change gloves between rooms.



### Before Entering A Cat’s Kennel: Learning more about a the cat!

Each cat has a kennel card on the outside of their kennel that gives volunteers valuable information.

On the kennel card you will learn:

- The sex of the cat. Girl cats have pink kennel cards, boys have blue.
- Their age
- Their name
- Other personality traits
- How long they have been at HOV.

### Body Language

**Cats speak with their entire body.** Their ears may say one thing and their tails another-we cannot stress enough how important it is to respond appropriately to what a cat’s body language is telling you.



- ✓ It may take time for them to open up. When meeting a cat, we *recommend beginning with a “Cat Handshake”* – offering a slow moving hand for the cat to sniff, then encouraging the cat to come to the front of the kennel on their own, rewarding them with a kind, soft voice and petting if they want it. Start by petting their head and neck before moving to their back. We do not recommend petting a cat’s tummy or tail.
- ✓ Encourage cats to come to the front of their kennel and to display positive behaviors. **Cat’s choose distance.** If a cat will not come forward or hides in a cubby, perhaps they aren’t ready to cuddle.

### Recording Cuddle Time

Before cuddling it is a good idea to check the ‘Cuddle Board’ to make sure the cat has not already been cuddled that day. It’s okay if a cat is cuddled more than once per day, but your time may be of more value if you are cuddling cats that have not had cuddle time yet that day. We especially need Cat Cuddlers Tuesdays-Fridays.

When you are done cuddling, **please record your service by finding the square with your cat’s name and day of the week. Then, write your initials followed by the number of minutes you cuddled that particular cat.** For instance, if Luke Wigle cuddled Kali for 10 minutes on Thursday, he would write LW10 on Kali’s Thursday square.



### Brushes & Toys

You may groom cats using a brush that is already in their kennel, or one from the labeled drawer on the island. Cat toys are found here as well. When finished grooming, remove all the hair and leave the comb or brush with the cat. Or put the dirty brushes in the red container at the end of the hallway. **Please DO NOT use the same brush or toys on cats from different kennels.**

### Keeping Cats Healthy

All Cat Cuddlers must wash their hands at the start and end of their shift. By washing your hands, you can prevent the spread of germs – another way we strive to keep the shelter’s cats as healthy as possible.

There are some things we ask volunteers *not to do* in order to promote healthy cats, prevent upset tummies, and medically track the status of a cat with an upset tummy.

- ♥ Please do not feed cats treats, additional food, or catnip.
- ♥ If a cat’s water dish has spilled please give them fresh water – they’ll thank you!
- ♥ Also, please do not scoop their litter boxes. This may sound counter-intuitive. The reason why we have this request is that all cats get fresh litter daily. If there is no poop in the box the next morning, we will assume that cat did not have a BM in the previous 24 hours. Scooping multiple litter boxes without sanitizing the scooper in-between also promotes



cross-contamination in an environment that we want to keep as clean and healthy as possible. If you run across an especially stinky box, please tell a feline staff member and they will take care of it.

### **Please Notify a Staff Member Immediately if:**

You receive an injury while volunteering. Reporting bites or scratches from animals gives us a more complete understanding of the animal and its needs. If a cat bites or scratches someone, an injury report must be filed and the animal will be relocated to an isolation room where it will be monitored for a 10 day period.

The three most common reasons people get bitten or scratched are when:

- A. a volunteer reaches into the cubby where a cat is hiding – the cat is hiding because it does not want attention.
- B. a volunteer is petting a cat's tummy or tail – these are sensitive areas on a cat's body.
- C. a volunteer is petting a cat and turns to talk to their friend or family member but continues to pet the cat – missing the visual cues the cat gives saying "stop petting please" or "please change the way you're petting."

### **You are a Cat Room Ambassador**

As a trained Cat Cuddler, the general public may ask you questions about HOV's cats, the adoption process, etc. **If you are comfortable, tell them what you know. If their questions are beyond your scope of knowledge or involve special diet or medical information, refer them to the front desk for assistance or go get a feline staff member to help them.** We want to encourage a positive experience for you as well as potential adopters!



### **Questions, Comments, Concerns**

**HOV staff are here to help you.** If you ever have questions, comments, or concerns, please go to a staff member. If you cannot find a Feline Adoption Counselor, front desk staff can page someone for you. If a cat gets loose and you are having trouble getting it back into its kennel, contact a staff member for assistance. Always report any behavioral or medical issues you are concerned about. We carefully track all behavioral and medical concerns.

### **Thank You**

Volunteers play an important role in providing consistent love and attention to the shelter's cats. We appreciate you opening your heart and donating your time to caring for the shelter's cats while they wait for their families.

# CAT CUDDLER QUIZ

Please review this with your Jr. Volunteer before attending training!



1. In the PAW Program? Please skip to question 2. In the Junior Volunteer Program? Please answer.

To stay active in the volunteer program we are asked to volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ times per month for at least \_\_\_\_\_ months. We can volunteer \_\_\_\_\_ day of the week between the hours of \_\_\_\_\_ AM and \_\_\_\_\_ PM.

2. Where do you begin and end every volunteer shift? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What two items, provided by HOV, should you wear during your entire volunteer shift?

A. \_\_\_\_\_ B. \_\_\_\_\_

4. How do you know which cats need to be cuddled? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Before entering a cat's kennel, how do you learn about the cat's basic information?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. What should you do at the start and finish of your volunteer time? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Ideally, we would love for every cat to have at least \_\_\_\_\_ minutes of attention daily.

8. How do you introduce yourself to a cat? \_\_\_\_\_

9. There are three places I can Cuddle Cats. They are:

A.) In their \_\_\_\_\_. Here, cats can sit on my \_\_\_\_\_ if I they are not acting out towards neighboring cats. I also must stand on a \_\_\_\_\_ when cuddling cats on the top row...even if I am an adult.

B.) In the \_\_\_\_\_ rooms. Please do not bring extra cats into these rooms or take cats out of these rooms.

C.) In the M \_\_\_\_\_ and G \_\_\_\_\_ rooms. Please reserve these rooms for adoption counseling on busy days. Also, we ask that adults transport cats to and from these rooms.

10. Please DO give cats \_\_\_\_\_ if their bowl is empty or dirty.

11. If something falls on the floor it is considered \_\_\_\_\_ and must be \_\_\_\_\_.

12. Where do dirty brushes and toys go? \_\_\_\_\_.

13. Where can you find clean brushes and toys? \_\_\_\_\_.

14. If a brush isn't too dirty you can leave it \_\_\_\_\_.

15. Please try not to let cats walk on the \_\_\_\_\_.

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

16. If a potential adopter starts asking you questions about adopting a cat what do you do?

\_\_\_\_\_

17. If you are bitten or scratched or you see this happen to someone else, it is extremely important that you tell a \_\_\_\_\_ immediately.

18. Cats choose \_\_\_\_\_. Please list three ways a cat might tell you that it needs space:

A.

B.

C.

19. Please list three ways a cat will show it wants or is enjoying your attention:

A.

B.

C.

20. If a cat's litter box has been used, do you:

a. change it    b. scoop it    c. tell a staff member    d. do nothing

21. If the kennel is especially messy, then you should:

a. change it    b. scoop it    c. tell a staff member    d. do nothing

**Do you have internet access? Please watch this short YouTube video on Cat Body Language:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvsfB7sf4QU>

22. When a cat shows you its belly, what does that mean? How should you respond?

\_\_\_\_\_

23. When a cat is up high or hiding, this is an indicator the cat is feeling \_\_\_\_\_.