



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction..... 3
 Volunteers Make a Difference 3
 Mission Statement..... 3
 Our Vision..... 3
 History and Background of the Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter 4
 Shelter Hours 4
 Services and Programs..... 4
 Euthanasia Policy..... 5
 Volunteer Information 5
 Volunteer Program Goals 7
 Volunteer Service Hours..... 8
 Grievances 8
 Emergency Procedures 8
 Termination Policy 8
 Hygiene..... 9
 Safety Basics..... 10
 Opinion and Emotion vs. Policy and Fact 11
 Social Media 11
 In Closing..... 11



An amazing group of volunteers joined together for the shelter’s 2013 Volunteer Appreciation Event!

Introduction

Welcome to Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter (HOV). We are proud to have you join our team. This handbook is loaded with information to help you learn about the shelter's history, policies, and programs. It will serve as your guide as you begin your volunteer work at Heart of the Valley.

Please ask questions! All questions are important and we want you to feel comfortable in your volunteer role. It is our goal to help you have the best experience possible.

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Volunteers Make a Difference

Every year Heart of the Valley volunteers open their hearts and donate their time (over 12,000 hours annually!) to helping the homeless pets in our community. With a volunteer program that aims to empower individuals to make a difference in a meaningful way, there are many ways you can help – and even more personal rewards. When asked “why volunteer?” most profess their love for animals or state a feeling of community responsibility.

Mission Statement

The mission of Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter is to compassionately shelter the lost and surrendered pets of Gallatin and Madison Valleys and to enhance the lives of people and companion animals through pet adoption and education.

Our Vision

Your volunteer service will benefit homeless animals and the community in many ways. You will be a part of Heart of the Valley's mission. We hope you can agree that it is incredibly rewarding to see an animal you have cared for and worked with find his or her new home. The volunteer opportunities are endless, and we know you can find something here that will suit your talents.



Volunteers are a vital and valuable component of Heart of the Valley's mission. As such, volunteers are expected to be familiar with and adhere to our policies and procedures.

History and Background of Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter

Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter (HOV) is a nonprofit organization that has been serving the Gallatin and Madison Valleys since 2004 – when the memberships of the Humane Society of Gallatin Valley and Animal Services Center, Inc. voted to merge both organizations together. After much community support and planning, the Anderson Animal Center was constructed in 2008. The facility greatly improves HOV’s operations by providing optimum animal care. HOV has contracts to serve as the impound facility for Gallatin County, City of Bozeman, City of Belgrade, and the Town of Manhattan.

- *HOV is an independent entity and is not affiliated with the Humane Society of the United States or any other national agency.*
 - *HOV is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Revenue sources include private donations, animal control contracts, grants, and service fees.*
 - *HOV is an “open door shelter” accepting any lost, abandoned, or surrendered cats and dogs. Animals arrive at HOV for many reasons and in every imaginable condition. No matter the circumstances or condition, HOV accepts them.*
 - *HOV does not euthanize for space or length of stay.*
-

Shelter Hours

Daily 11:30AM-5:30PM*

*Volunteers in the PAW Program may come in anytime staff is here - seven days a week, starting at 8 am until closing time. *Junior volunteers may volunteer with their designated parent or guardian during open hours only.*

Services and Programs

Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter provides Gallatin and Madison Counties with a full range of services designed to enhance the lives of people and companion animals. HOV also strives to improve the quality of life for animals within our community while helping to control pet overpopulation and prevent animal cruelty. In addition to the Volunteer Program, Heart of the Valley also offers:

- *Adoptions & adoption counseling*
- *Animal foster care program*
- *Dog and cat licensing*
- *Maxi Park, an off-leash community dog park*
- *Micro-chipping services*
- *Behavior consultation and trainings*
- *Lost and found reports to reunite pets with their families*



- SNAP Clinics (Spay/Neuter Assistance Program)
- Shelter for stray cats and dogs
- Live trap rental
- Crate rental
- Pet food assistance for those in need
- Cremation services
- Humane education and birthday parties for community youth

Euthanasia Policy

Euthanasia is something you must think about before making a commitment to work or volunteer at a shelter. As stated previously, Heart of the Valley is an “open door” shelter.

All incoming animals are given both a medical and behavioral evaluation. Every animal must pass both medical and behavior evaluations before going up for adoption. Heart of the Valley has a strong community responsibility to adopt out animals that are safe and in a manageable state of health. During their stay, animals are re-evaluated regularly to ensure they remain adoptable and are maintaining a reasonable quality of life. *Animals are never euthanized at HOV for length of stay or space.*



Euthanasia as an Option

The animals that are considered for euthanasia are based on an individual’s temperament, health assessments, and quality of life. This is a difficult decision and one that is thoroughly discussed amongst a team of committed staff members. Reasons for animal selection vary based on individual circumstance and on a case by case basis. *HOV does not euthanize for space or length of time.*

Please direct questions regarding our euthanasia policy to the Volunteer Manager. The Volunteer Manager will be happy to answer any questions you have or to direct you to the person best suited to answer your questions.

Volunteer Information

Volunteer Commitments

Junior Volunteers: 2 visits per month for 6 months

PAW Program Volunteers (Adults): 4 hours per month for at least 6 months.

Why do we ask for this commitment?

Training volunteers takes a considerable amount of time. By completing your volunteer commitment each month you are ensuring that you have more opportunities to be trained and to be safe in the shelter environment.

It allows you to know when policies or procedures have changed at the shelter; we are often required to change our procedures in the face of changing conditions at the shelter.

It will allow you to get to know the staff, the animals, and the organization better which will lead to a more meaningful volunteer experience.





Since the shelter could not be run without the participation of volunteers fulfilling your commitment allows us to ensure we are providing the best care possible to the animals and allows us to ensure we are providing a service to the community.

Being unable to complete the time requirements does not disqualify someone from volunteering at the shelter. However, it will limit your ability to perform various volunteer experiences.

How to Become a Volunteer

Heart of the Valley offers flexible opportunities designed to fit into anyone's schedule. Often, you can determine the hours you work and in what capacity – *keeping in mind the minimum commitment level for each volunteer role*. No matter what your skill set – whether you desire hands-on activities with our pets, prefer to provide clerical support, or assist with our events and education programs in the community, there is a place for you. ***If you decide you can no longer volunteer or would like to change your volunteer role, please inform the Volunteer and Education Manager as soon as possible.***

All prospective volunteers must complete the following steps to become an official volunteer:

Step 1: Submit an On-Line Volunteer Application

Takes 10-15 mins

Each person hoping to volunteer must submit their own application – this includes Jr. volunteers and the adults who will be volunteering with them. If you are age 16 or older, please include a valid e-mail address. If you do not have an e-mail account, please inform the Volunteer and Education Manager directly.

Step 2: Attend a New Volunteer Orientation

Approximately 1 hour

Within one month of submitting your On-Line Volunteer Application you will receive an e-mail outlining dates for New Volunteer Orientations. Orientations take place twice per month. Please RSVP for your orientation as they are limited to 30 participants and they often reach capacity. All New Volunteer Orientations take place in the Community Room at Heart of the Valley Animal Shelter at 1549 East Cameron Bridge Road. At orientation you will learn about the history of HOV as well as the various volunteer opportunities currently available. You must be at least 6 years old to volunteer - ***volunteers between age 6 and 15 must be accompanied by the adult they will be volunteering with throughout their volunteer service, including the New Volunteer Orientation. Volunteers age 6-15 must be accompanied by the said adult each time they come to volunteer.***

At the New Volunteer Orientation everyone will receive information about signing up for a hands-on training session. Junior Volunteers and their designated Adult Volunteers will register for a Cat Cuddler Training. Volunteers age 16 and over who want to work directly with cats and dogs will register for an animal care and handling training session.

Step 3: Attend Training

Training times vary depending on volunteer program and interests of volunteers.

During Volunteer Training you will review the policies and procedures of volunteering as well as learn more about animal behavior. Again, attendance at this training is required to become a volunteer. *After Cat Cuddler Training, JVs and their parents can volunteer any day of the week between 11:30AM-5:30PM. Volunteers under the age of 16 must be accompanied by a pre-designated adult during all volunteer trainings and time volunteering.*



If you plan to participate in the PAW Program, continue reading.

Step 4: Complete PAW I Service

8 hours including training time

The PAW Program was created to provide volunteers with a solid foundation of skills and knowledge pertaining to basic shelter operations, animal care, training, and enrichment. Your first eight hours of volunteer time are a great opportunity for you to take basic animal handling training and to learn about the operation of the shelter. Opportunities at the PAW I level are needed daily and are key to maintaining efficient shelter operations and high standards of animal care.

Step 5: Advancing to PAW II

Requires additional training and practice

Certain volunteer opportunities require additional training classes. These include anyone wanting to assist with event support, kitten nursery care, basic dog training, and handling cats and dogs outside the main adoption areas.

Each position requires a minimum monthly commitment, as well as a minimum hourly commitment. *If unable to fulfill a commitment, volunteers should speak with the Volunteer Manager as soon as possible to learn about other roles that may work better for your schedule.* While on-going support will be provided, because of limited staff availability, most volunteer trainings are scheduled in advance.



PAW III and IV

Recognizing volunteers with 6 or more months of consistent service.

Volunteer Program Goals

Heart of the Valley volunteers are an integral part of the shelter and contribute greatly to our success. We ask that all volunteers work towards these goals in their time as volunteers:

- Increasing the quality of life for animals at HOV.
- Maintaining the adoptability of HOV animals.
- Serving as HOV ambassadors in the community.

- Assisting with operational support.

These goals are the guiding principal for the HOV volunteer program and all volunteer policies and procedures are structured to work toward the achievement of these goals.

In order to ensure that volunteers are supported in these goals the HOV staff will strive to use all orientations and trainings as an opportunity to educate the public about the organization and safe handling of animals.

Volunteer Service Hours

For all volunteer activities, volunteers should record their hours in Volgistics, either by signing-in and out at the shelter's Volunteer Computer or by logging their hours via internet from home. If the computer is not working, volunteers can sign-in and out on the clipboard hanging next to the computer.

Why do we need this information?

- An accurate log of total volunteer hours allows us to apply for special grants.
- An individual log is kept for each volunteer, and hours are calculated each month. This is then used for recognizing volunteer service. It is not always the number of hours, but also the *consistency of volunteer work*, that is recognized.



Advance Sign-Up

All volunteers are required to sign-up in advance for any animal handling and care activities. Volunteers can do this by accessing their volunteer accounts via Volgistics.

Why must volunteers sign-up prior to volunteering?

- An accurate count of daily volunteers allows the staff to prepare for the day.
- Advance sign-up keeps us from having too many volunteers at the shelter at one time, allowing for each volunteer to have quality time with shelter animals.

Grievances

If you have any problems with a staff member, another volunteer, or Heart of the Valley rules and regulations, please speak to the Volunteer Manager or the Staff Lead immediately.

Emergency Procedures

All emergencies must be reported to a staff member immediately. This includes animal bites and physical injuries.

Termination Policy

Volunteers may choose or be asked to discontinue their volunteer service to Heart of the Valley. We ask that volunteers please give two weeks' notice if they choose to leave.

We take reasonable steps to work with volunteers on issues that may arise. However, volunteers may be dismissed for unsatisfactory performance or misconduct such as insubordination, being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, theft or property misuse of equipment or materials, abuse or mistreatment of others, and failure to abide by our policies and procedures. Dismissals may be implemented with or without notice or warning, at the organization's discretion.

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, 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:

- Many volunteers have a designated set of volunteer clothes that they wear only when volunteering. You may also change to volunteer clothes and shoes when arriving at HOV, and change back to your "home" clothes and shoes prior to leaving.
- You should not smoke, eat, drink or apply cosmetics in the animal or work areas.
- You should wear protective clothing and gloves when handling sick animals or possible infective material.
- You should keep your hands away from your mouth, nose, eyes, genitalia and wounds after handling animals, their urine or feces.
- You should avoid the use of common combs, hairbrushes, towels, drinking cups, etc.

Protect yourself and your own animals:

- If your immune system is compromised or if you are pregnant, consult your physician before you begin volunteering.
- Keep all of your and your animal's vaccinations current.
- ALWAYS wash hands between animals, prior to eating or smoking, after using the bathroom and before going home; wash palms and back of the hands up to the wrist.
- Immediately report any bite/scratch to the Volunteer Manager or shelter staff member, wash immediately with disinfectant and soak in betadine solution for a minimum of 10 minutes.
- Ask for gloves before any potential contact with excrement or vomit;
- Do not touch/handle animals labeled as "vet hold" or "staff only" without permission from an HOV staff member.
- Do not handle any animal that appears ill, including coughing, sneezing or congested.



Protect Shelter Animals:

- Do NOT mix cats from separate cages.
- Try to clean meet and greet rooms as well as the catio as much as possible before/after each animal.
- Remember that many items, including toys, bedding and clothing, can transfer disease to animals - do not share these items among animals. Used toys can be put in the dirty laundry bin and dirty dishes can be taken to the food prep area to be washed.



Safety Basics

The safety of volunteers is our priority. It is important that volunteers always ask for assistance from a staff member if they feel unsafe because of an animal or a customer. Never hesitate to ask for help.

- ALWAYS inform an HOV staff member if you feel uncomfortable about working with an animal. **KNOW YOUR LIMITS.** By informing a staff person about the behavior, we can further observe the animal. You will be helping to protect potential adopters and other volunteers from possible injury.
- ALWAYS inform an HOV staff member if you feel at all threatened or harassed by a customer.
- Immediately report any injury you may receive at HOV.
- Always read an animal's kennel signs and communication boards before handling it. Do NOT touch/handle any animals that are labeled "Staff Only", "Bite Quarantine", or "No Cuddling"
- Wear the appropriate clothing (including non-slip closed-toed shoes, clothes that can get dirty, and no long hoop earrings).
- Do NOT go into "Staff Only" areas.
- Do NOT touch/handle/approach new animals brought in by the public or HOV staff members.
- Always be aware of your surroundings. Look through windows before opening doors and look around corners.
- Keep dogs close to you when walking inside the shelter.
- Keep all cage doors locked and secured.
- Never break up a dog fight. Get help!
- Do not socialize animals in the lobby, hallways or front offices, unless approved by a Staff Member.
- Never assume that you know how an animal is going to act at the shelter. Keep your face away from all dog's faces. Always be ready to protect yourself.
- Do not allow the public to carry or walk animals inside. Refer them to a staff member. Do not let children under the age of 16 walk dogs. Children should always be with an adult.
- Horseplay is strictly forbidden.
- Sometimes volunteers want to bring friends or family along during their volunteer shift. Volunteers must ALWAYS check-in with the Volunteer Manager to see if this is okay



prior to bringing someone with you to volunteer. Sometimes the answer may be no. This is a decision founded upon policy, procedures and everyone's safety and is made on a case by case basis.

- If an item is too heavy to safely handle alone, get help. Avoid serious injury.
- When you must walk on wet, slippery floors, slow down and take shorter steps.

Opinion and Emotion vs. Policy and Fact

As a volunteer, you have two important distinctions to make. These distinctions are:

- Opinions vs. Policy
- Emotion vs. Fact

The job of dealing with animals is often charged with emotion. Emotion, coupled with opinion, can often become a real problem. Volunteers who offer opinions instead of hard facts do so with good intentions. Unfortunately, despite the best of intentions, these opinions are frequently not to the actual benefit of the animals.

At Heart of the Valley, we pride ourselves on professionalism. As an organization with a dedicated team of staff members and volunteers, Heart of the Valley has much experience regarding policies and procedures that have proven effective, and those that have not.



Social Media

HOV depends on strong community support and good will. Our reputation is a valuable asset. Please consider whether you are potentially damaging our reputation before you post on any site, especially if/when you identify yourself as a volunteer. Volunteers who engage in blogging or posting should be mindful that their comments, even if done off premises and while off-duty, could have an adverse effect on the shelter's mission and animal privacy interests. If you are uncertain about a potential posting, please consult the Volunteer and Education Manager before posting on-line.



In Closing

Heart of the Valley values the commitment you have made to helping animals in your community. Your energy, talent, and compassion are vital to the success of our organization. *Thank you for choosing to help the homeless animals of our community!*
