



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

Revised June 2020

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Volunteer Coordinators

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About Us

The Humane Society of Walden (HSW) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, no-kill organization dedicated to helping stray and abandoned animals. Operating since 1974, our animal shelter serves the towns of Montgomery, Walden, Maybrook, Crawford, Deerpark, Mamakating, Wawarsing and Shawangunk, but will not turn away pets from across the country in need. We also often rescue from high-kill shelters mainly in the southern part of the U.S. HSW believes that all animals have a natural right to humane treatment including proper care, respect and safe shelter. Our primary mission is to provide care while finding permanent, loving homes for the many animals that come in our door.

PetSmart Adoption Centers

HSW volunteers also run PetSmart adoption centers in Middletown and Monroe. The coordinator for each location will give you further details on the procedures for your PetSmart location. Please read and review this handbook. Additional information may be provided by your PetSmart coordinator.

Welcome

This handbook summarizes many of HSWs' volunteer policies and procedures. All HSW staff members are responsible for administering the policies described in this handbook and would be happy to provide you with further information or clarification as needed. HSW volunteer coordinators may modify, rescind, delete or add to the provisions of this handbook at any time. If changes are made, we will be sure to notify you as soon as possible.

Volunteers are the backbone of our facility and aid our staff in daily operations thank you for choosing to volunteer with HSW. We have a variety of volunteer activities available:

- Dog walking / feeding / handling
- Cat socializing / feeding / handling
- Cleaning animal areas and facility
- Adoption events
- Photography / PR / social media
- Yard and building maintenance
- Onsite Yard Sale Room: The room is open for shopping twice a month. Volunteers can help by bringing in donations, organizing the donations or working on yard sale days.

Policies and Procedures

Dress Code

- **Proper footwear:** Floors are often wet and slippery so shoes with good traction are a must. Your feet also need to be protected from animal waste, cleaning chemicals and disinfectants. Tennis shoes or work style boots with low heeled, non-slip soles are recommended. Open toed shoes, clogs, slip-ons, or sandals are not permitted.
- **Clothing:** Please only wear comfortable items that can also be easily washed. Long pants are recommended to protect you from chemicals, bites and scratches even in the summer. All clothing should be laundered between visits to the shelter. This reduces the spread of viruses and disease.

- **Jewelry:** Please limit jewelry while volunteering. Large or dangling jewelry can get caught on cages, and in claws or fur, potentially injuring you or the animals.
- **Nametag:** Volunteers must wear a nametag at all times. This ensures that staff and the public recognize you as a volunteer and helps us get to know you.

Minimum age to volunteer

Due to safety and legal restrictions volunteers under 16 years old must be accompanied by an adult or guardian. Volunteers must be 18 or older to hold a leash and 21 or older to walk a dog offsite.

Personal Belongings

It is recommended that anything of value to you be left in your vehicle or at home. HSW cannot guarantee the safety of your personal items.

Volunteering Hours

Upon successful completion of our in-person or online orientation you are welcome volunteer. HSW is open daily to the public from 12 – 4 PM.

- Dog walking and animal socialization: 12 - 4 PM
- Cleaning and feeding the animals: 8 AM – 4 PM, the bulk of it is completed from 8 AM – 12 PM, before the shelter opens to the public

We hold many offsite adoption events year-round, if you are interested in helping please email vc@waldenhumane.org.

Logging Your Volunteer Time

Volunteers MUST sign-in and out at the Volunteer Services area (to the immediate right of the front door) every time you volunteer.

Community Service

If you are volunteering to fulfill school, court-ordered, or other required volunteer hours in excess of 20 hours please speak to shelter staff after you complete your orientation. You are responsible for tracking the hours you need to complete. If needed, HSW can provide you with a letter of service once your hours are complete.

Court-ordered community service volunteers generally do not work directly with the animals, but assist with cleaning, feeding and other tasks and projects as available.

Communication

Almost all communication in the volunteer program is done via e-mail, through our Facebook page @WaldenHumane, and our Facebook Group “HSW Volunteers”. Due to the large number of volunteers, phone calls are not possible and sending mail via the postal service is cost prohibitive. Volunteer newsletters, notices, updates, and other important information about the volunteer program will be e-mailed and posted to Facebook.

If this is not an option for you please check in frequently with the volunteer coordinator when you come in to ensure that you aren’t missing any important communications. The volunteer

coordinator's contact info is on the front of this handbook. If you have an urgent need or concern that cannot wait, please see the shelter manager.

Conduct

HSW upholds the highest standards of conduct and service for the sake of saving the lives of animals. When you are serving as a HSW volunteer, we ask that you please do the same. Here are a few service guidelines that we kindly request you follow.

- **Be professional.** As a HSW volunteer, please present an image that is both professional and appropriate to your working conditions.
- **Be responsible.** Service begins and ends with individuals. While you cannot control what others do, you can guarantee the quality of your own individual contacts. Each individual can potentially make or break the chain of great service. Responsibility is the key to this process, so you should strive to provide accurate and timely information. And don't be afraid to ask for help from staff when you need it.
- **Be positive.** A positive attitude is contagious.
- **Be friendly, courteous and helpful.** Common courtesy goes a long way toward making a favorable impression.
 - A smile goes a long way
 - Practice active listening
 - Ask open ended questions

We value our volunteers and consider them a huge asset, so we want to help ensure your experiences with staff, other volunteers, and the public are pleasant. The above are only guidelines to providing great service. Of course, no written standards can ever take the place of good judgment

Harassment Policy

HSW is committed to an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to volunteer in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, HSW expects that all relationships among persons at HSW will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. In order to keep this commitment, HSW maintains a strict policy of prohibiting unlawful harassment of any kind, including sexual harassment and harassment based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sex, age, physical or mental disability or any other characteristic protected by state, federal or local employment discrimination laws. If you would like more information regarding HSW's Harassment Policy please email your volunteer coordinator.

Please inform the volunteer coordinator or the shelter manager if anything occurs that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable.

Customer Service Expectations

Volunteers are considered shelter ambassadors, so how you conduct yourself while in view of the public is very important. Be friendly. Smile. Say hello. Ask a guest if they need assistance and when applicable help direct them to the appropriate staff member.

Adoption counseling and advice is handled by our experienced staff, the exception being a PetSmart volunteer. Our adoption counselors go through extensive training in order to identify the

right home for the right animal. Be mindful of the privacy of our guests please refrain from joining in on conversations staff are having with them.

Safety and Health Guidelines

Social Distancing

HSW will operate in accordance with New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) requirements, World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19. To serve our community, we are required make robust plans which meet social distancing requirements—and to strictly enforce those requirements.

Social distancing measures at the shelter consistent with guidance from NYSDOH, WHO, and CDC will be enforced. This means maintaining 6 feet between individuals and use of protective personal equipment. Masks must be worn by staff, volunteers and guests. Gloves/gowns will be provided if appropriate to the work.

- If you are working alone in an outdoor space with no contact with others, you are not required to wear a mask during that time
- Masks must cover your nose and mouth and must be worn inside or when you can not maintain a 6-foot distance between individuals not in your household
- Wash your hands before putting a mask on or off to protect the sanitation of your face covering

These strictly observed measures allow HSW to remain in operation serving animals, preserving jobs and protecting employee, volunteer, and public health.

Practicing Safety around Animals

The animals that our volunteers handle are animals that the staff have evaluated and consider good candidates for adoption. The shelter environment can be stressful for many animals; therefore behaviors cannot always be predicted. For the safety of pets and people, handling of animals is strictly prohibited until you have completed volunteer orientation. This includes putting fingers or arms into cages and kennels. If you discover a loose animal, NEVER reach out and grab it. If possible, close any doors in the immediate area and alert a staff member, who will safely retrieve the animal. Remember that all animals must be kept separate unless approved by a staff member. Keeping animals separate reduces the spread of disease, and not all animals at HSW are friendly towards other animals, especially under times of stress. If you witness a fight, DO NOT attempt to break it up. Fights often sound worse than they really are, and trained staff members are the only ones who should intervene.

Even when every precaution is taken, accidents can happen. While very rare, bites and scratches do occur. Cleaning any injury is important to avoid infection. You must report any bite, scratch, or other injury to a staff member immediately, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem. Medical history is uncertain on many of the animals here. Additionally, state law requires that most pets be quarantined temporarily after biting. ***If a cat bites you notify the shelter staff immediately.*** See a doctor within a few hours of a cat bite to ensure that no infection is present. Also report the injury to the volunteer coordinator so an incident report can be written.

*****Bringing your own pet to the shelter while volunteering is not permitted.*****

Children and Guests

Children who are not active volunteers cannot accompany a parent/adult while they are volunteering. Guests are also not permitted to accompany volunteers while they are performing their volunteer duties. Please invite your friends and family to attend an upcoming volunteer orientation session. If you have a friend or family member in town feel free to email the volunteer coordinator and see if a special orientation can be held for your guest. If someone will be picking you up or dropping you off please meet them in the front lobby. They won't be permitted to search the shelter to find you.

Off-Limit Areas

For the safety of the animals and volunteers, volunteers are not permitted in any area marked with signs alerting you that these are STAFF ONLY areas. Housed in these areas are stray animals, animals under bite quarantine, sick animals, or new arrivals that have not yet been evaluated for adoption. The temperaments of these animals have not yet been evaluated. **Do not enter these areas, even if you see other volunteers doing so.**

Hygiene

Please wash or disinfect your hands after handling each animal and before handling the next one. Washing your hands will help eliminate the risk of becoming ill yourself, and also help prevent the spread of disease and germs throughout the shelter. Hands can be washed in the restrooms, or any sink onsite. Wall dispensers with disinfectant gel can be found in the kennel and cat areas.

Exposure to Infectious Disease

While volunteering at HSW you may be exposed to infectious disease. Usually these diseases will be contagious only to other animals. However, some diseases can spread from animal to human. HSW will notify you if we have reason to believe that you were exposed to a disease that could affect humans while you were at the facility. Please take extra precautions to launder your clothes and wash your hands. Notify the volunteer coordinator immediately if you develop symptoms. If you develop symptoms of an infection do not return to volunteer until you have completely healed. You may re-expose animals, other volunteers and staff members who have otherwise been cleared from infection.

Social Media Policy

Online communication tools such as blogs and social media networks (e.g., Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) are becoming the go-to channels for people who are interested in keeping up with HSW and our many efforts to Bring Love Home. For that reason, and because your behavior as a volunteer reflects on HSW, please use good judgment whenever you contribute to HSWs' social media pages. We encourage volunteers to join online conversations and spread the word about HSW and the animals, but you should never speak as an official representative of HSW. When you are engaging with others via social media on behalf of HSW, please keep in mind the following:

- **Be transparent:** Identify yourself as a volunteer.
- **Be accurate:** Make sure you check your facts with a staff member who's involved with the issue before posting. Take every precaution to gather the most current information available. Be the first to acknowledge and correct your own mistakes.
- **Provide resources:** Link back to our website whenever you can so that people can see where your information is coming from.

- **Be considerate:** Please do not use profanity, derogatory language or personal attacks, or engage in any other inappropriate conduct.
- **Be real:** Use your own experiences with HSW.
- **Be professional:** Do not allow legitimate online explanation of a position or debate to devolve into personal attacks, fights or flame wars that would reflect poorly on you or HSW. If you have any doubts about the appropriateness of your involvement in an online discussion, please disengage or do not get involved in the first place. Pass along the link to your volunteer coordinator.
- **Protect sensitive information:** Protect HSWs' confidential and proprietary information as well as the personal information of others. Get permission to use copyrighted content such as photos or videos, or to cite or reference our supporters, partners or suppliers. Do not disclose or use any confidential or business information about HSW, such as member or donor information. Do not disclose personal information about co-workers, volunteers or former employees.

You are encouraged and welcome to use your own social media platforms to help promote adoptable animals, events, volunteer opportunities, advocacy, outreach and more. However, HSW volunteers are prohibited from starting any new social media properties that represent the organization. If you have any questions about this, please contact your volunteer coordinator.

Media contact

Media relations can be complex. For that reason, we ask that, as a HSW volunteer, you don't speak for HSW with the media without prior permission. Please send all media inquiries directly to your volunteer coordinator.

Thank you

Thank you for your generous service to the animals in our care. We couldn't do what we do without you. If you have any questions or concerns about the content of this handbook please contact your volunteer coordinator.