

Remote Volunteer Engagement Ideas from the Best Friends National Outreach Volunteer Programs Team:

- Online volunteer trainings (not just recorded, but real-time): Zoom and Google Hangouts (even Facebook!) have platforms that can easily host up to 100 people for free. These trainings could be easy enrichment ideas for animals currently in a home or creating enrichment to drop off at the shelter (with specific guidelines to keep things healthy). For more in-depth trainings, host a 101 of play group protocols, B mod trainings, fostering 101, bottle baby techniques, etc. Shelters can even train volunteers to host some of these! Allow time for Q&A sessions.
- Create phone scripts and have volunteers do call backs or information calls – these could be specific shelter call backs about adoptions, fostering, COVID-19 and pets or even basic “Hey, did you know we have these opportunities available?!” People in general are more willing to talk on the phone right now due to shelter-in-place orders.
- Have volunteers call other organizations and businesses in the area to start a growing, detailed list of possible animal welfare resources, supplies and support. Give them a script to follow, and spreadsheet to track calls/outcomes.
- Have volunteers transport animals to new foster homes or to transport partners. Please be sure to follow all safety guidelines!
- This is a good time to catch up on any paperwork! If allowable, have volunteers enter shelter data. Different shelter software can easily allow for different controlled levels of security/access. If necessary, have volunteers sign a non-disclosure agreement to help keep information confidential.
- Your Daily Dose of Cat-tastic & Pup-dates: if you are currently still doing intake and volunteers can't come to the shelter, bring the shelter to them via video! Take 5-10 minutes every day to introduce a new critter and share with the volunteers the work you are continuing to do. Have volunteers take notes and create bios, social media posts, etc. These would even work great for any B mod/long term animals you have; take a quick video of working with and training them and keep your volunteers up to date!
- If your City/County isn't on emergency shelter-in-place orders, ask volunteers to post fliers about adoptions, fostering, different programs your organization may offer, etc. Some organizations are doing this online, but think about how many people are active and outside right now. This comes with appropriate social distancing/CDC safety guidelines that need to be followed, but if followed correctly, very doable! This can also be done in your volunteers' own neighborhood/zip codes, this will keep them closer to home if on lockdown.
- Start a shelter challenge – create fun, interactive challenges for your volunteers (even staff!) like who can get an adoptable animal shared the most times on social media platforms, create a dance or song challenge that involves your animals and shelter and get everyone to record their versions - most of us are remote and getting to that first silly point of quarantine, so maybe more people than usual would be willing to participate!

- Host a fun shelter game online – not everything has to be super work related, right? Maybe a shelter jeopardy game or Hollywood Squares involving leadership members. Create teams of volunteers and staff, thus creating new relationships within the organization. Multiple virtual meeting platforms allow you to create groups within groups, so you can keep all your secrets from your competition! 😊
- Recreate the social media shelter drawing craze and ask staff and volunteers who want to participate to send in a picture and then assign them out to be drawn by other participants, this could be hilarious depending on talent level!
- Throw together a virtual volunteer appreciation recipe book, could be critter recipes or human(!). Maybe even a virtual bake-off, how FUN!
- **Volunteer Appreciation Week is April 19-25th!** Start thinking about some fun and creative ways to celebrate your volunteers virtually! Get staff to make volunteer appreciation posters or some type of artsy-crafty project, let the volunteers vote on their favorites (or vice versa and have volunteers create something and staff vote)! Get staff and animals together and create a thank you video to all the volunteers that can be posted to online/social media. Host a virtual luncheon where all staff stop by and say hi and thank you and well wishes! Record and send out via email and/or social media!
- Have a step-a-thon! Volunteers with the most steps for Appreciation Week get a prize (upside is this is keeping your volunteers healthy and mentally stimulated)! Think about having your volunteers use the ResQWalk App, (for Apple or Android), to help donate money to your shelter for all that walking!
- Provide enrichment ideas that can be filmed by volunteers and schedule posts that can be done via social media outlets.
- Create a fun and radio-friendly shelter playlist for everyone to listen to while working from home. Host a virtual lunch or yappy hour dance-off and get everyone moving and active! You could do appreciation songs for appreciation week!
- Have your volunteers who are fostering host a virtual adoption party for their animal. Maybe a live 5 minute Q&A every day at the same time with a different foster. Put together an easy to follow script/guideline to follow to ensure organizational cohesiveness.
- A link to more of Best Friend's COVID-19 resources for our network partners:
<https://network.bestfriends.org/covid-19-resources>

Ideas from Best Friend's Partners (in order as received):

- **Riverside County**
 - Make masks for staff
 - Drop off Baked goods or food
 - Foster animals and encourage friends/family to adopt

- Create messages on social media in for lost/found/fosters/etc.

Another area we are focusing on is trying to keep our staff engaged while having fun during this difficult time. A few ideas for them would be;

- Creative Mask Contest
- Social distance videos
- Have kids draw their parents as a super hero and post around the shelter ([Maybe post photos of some of the staff who are willing to participate and let people draw them as super heroes?! - Tammy Jo](#))

- **SPCA of Texas**

One thing we are doing to engage volunteers remotely is to hold weekly “Virtual Yappy Hours.” Our Yappy Hours typically happen monthly at local bars and restaurants, but we decided to do it more often during this time. We are using Zoom to host the meet-ups and I have created a poll on our Facebook group for volunteers to pick a theme. This week we are choosing between wearing wacky t-shirts, funny PJ’s, hilarious head gear or sassy socks. Last week (our first attempt, since our regularly schedule event was canceled), we didn’t theme it, but made the poll to gauge volunteer interest. We had about 12 attendees and I am hoping for more tomorrow.