



**Best Friends**

## **Volunteer Engagement:**

How to Engage and Retain Your  
Most Valuable Resource



Volunteers are incredible individuals, each one committed, passionate and uniquely skilled. The ability to harness that passion and those skills can make or break an organization.

Whether your organization has 10 or 10,000 volunteers, the foundations of volunteer engagement are the same. The following guidelines are designed to help you recruit, engage and retain exceptional volunteers in order to meet the goals and objectives of your organization.

### 1. Assess your organizational needs.

Look beyond your day-to-day operations and think “big picture.” Look at where you are now, and where you’d like to be in the future as an organization. What steps can you take to get there, and what relevant skills and talents should you recruit to do so? Here are some tips for conducting an assessment of your organization’s needs:

- Include multiple stakeholders and individuals of all levels from your organization (e.g., board members, staff and volunteer leaders).
- Clearly outline your organization’s mission. Any and all needs identified should directly align with that mission.
- Evaluate what is currently being done well and what else could be accomplished, or improved upon, if you had more resources at your disposal.
- Identify specific tasks and projects that need to be completed. Indicate if they are one-time, ongoing or occasional in nature.
- Identify problems or challenges currently experienced by the organization.
- Identify what is currently being done that can and should be expanded upon.
- Identify any areas in which the organization feels understaffed or overstaffed.
- Determine which skill sets your organization is currently lacking.

### 2. Create position descriptions.

Creating position descriptions is a great way to clarify your own thinking around different needs and tasks while also clarifying opportunities and expectations for volunteers. Position descriptions also provide a sense of legitimacy to the organization and demonstrate to volunteers that the work they’re performing is necessary and valuable. See page 5 for some sample position descriptions. Cre-

ating project and task lists is another great way to stay organized. See page 7 for Best Friends Animal Sanctuary animal care examples.

### 3. Create key written materials.

You should have a volunteer application form that asks prospective volunteers for basic personal information and gives them sufficient opportunity to describe knowledge and skills that might be of value to your organization. In addition, you should have a volunteer handbook or agreement in place. The purpose of this document is to describe expectations, policies and procedures for all volunteers. Depending on the nature and size of your organization, this document could be short and simple or quite lengthy.

Check out example application forms and written materials currently used by other trusted organizations. Make sure you regularly revisit these documents as your organization grows and changes. You can [click here](#) to view the Best Friends Volunteer Handbook.

### 4. Recruit and interview volunteers.

Recruiting and interviewing volunteers should be a purposeful and proactive effort for your organization. It’s great when volunteers find you, but it’s even better when you go out and find the volunteers you’re looking for. If you’re looking for someone with a particular skill set, then make sure to advertise and recruit in places frequented by that type of person.

Once you’ve recruited potential candidates, take the time to formally interview them. Doing so demonstrates to them that they’re joining a professional organization, and allows you the opportunity to find out where they might fit best in helping your organization achieve its goals. It can be tempting to spend time in these interviews talking about your organization, but remember to ask thoughtful questions and let prospective volunteers do most of the talking.

The following are helpful resources for recruiting and interviewing volunteers: recruitment tactics template (page 8) and recruitment plan template (page 9).

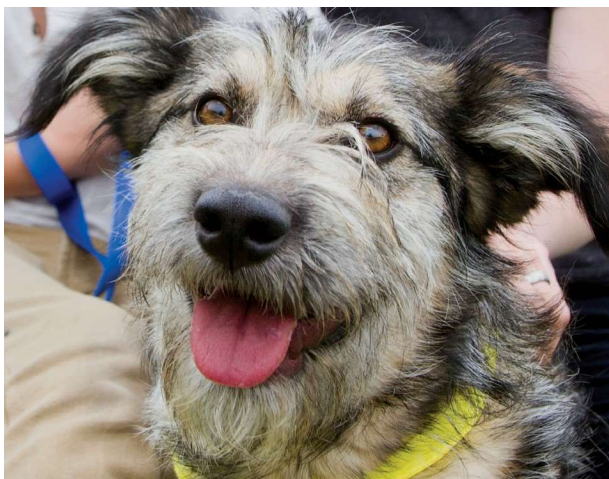
Here are some interview tips:

- Schedule the interview at a time when you can devote your full attention to the candidate.

- Select a location with limited distractions and interruptions.
- Structure the interview so that the volunteer does most of the talking. Assessing how the person thinks and communicates is every bit as important as the answers to specific questions.
- Interviewing someone for a volunteer position differs from interviewing someone for employment, because usually you're not trying to find out if the person is qualified for a specific job. Ask about the prospective volunteer's interests, experience and skills, and use the interview to help determine where the volunteer might fit best within your organization.

Here are some sample interview questions:

- Why do you want to volunteer with our organization?
- What other volunteering experience have you had in the past?
- What have been your most and least rewarding volunteering experiences so far?
- What skills or qualifications do you have that you believe will help you in this position?
- Can you tell me a bit about yourself and your hobbies and interests?
- For how long would you like to volunteer?
- What do you think makes a good volunteer?
- What was your least favorite part about your last volunteer job?
- What kind of supervisor do you like to work with?
- Are there any questions you would like to ask me?



## 5. Provide orientation and training.

Conducting formal volunteer orientations help make new volunteers feel welcome while providing them with an overview of the organization and its mission. Hosting a regular weekly or monthly orientation meeting is an easy way to welcome multiple volunteers at once while making efficient use of time and resources. See page 10 for a sample orientation checklist.

Orientation is also the appropriate time to have volunteers sign a liability waiver form. (See page 12 for the waiver form that Best Friends uses, which will give you an idea of the types of things to include.) In addition to orientation, make sure to offer general and position-specific training for new volunteers. Investing time in training helps ensure that best practices are followed and better prepares volunteers for long-term success with the organization.

## 6. Establish safety guidelines.

If your volunteers will be doing hands-on animal care or any kind of manual or physical tasks, be sure to establish safety guidelines and make them available to all volunteers. Depending on the size and nature of your organization, your safety guidelines could be short and simple, or considerably more detailed and specific to different volunteer positions. See page 15 for some sample safety guidelines from Best Friends for reference.

## 7. Track volunteer hours.

Volunteer time is valuable, not just to you but also to your donors. Accurate tracking of volunteer hours is a key measurement of organizational effectiveness and is required for many grants and other funding sources. Whether you use an electronic method, such as a Web-based program or spreadsheet, or just a basic paper sign-in form (see page 17), keeping an accurate record of all volunteer hours and activities is critical for measuring performance and growing the organization.

## 8. Manage volunteer performance.

In addition to providing orientation and training for volunteers, managing their performance helps set up both you and your volunteers for success. Set realistic expectations for individual volunteers and make sure they have the support and tools available to perform their responsibilities to the best of their abilities. And be prepared to have constructive, non-confrontational conversations when problems arise or when there's a need for improvement.

## 9. Recognize and reward volunteers.

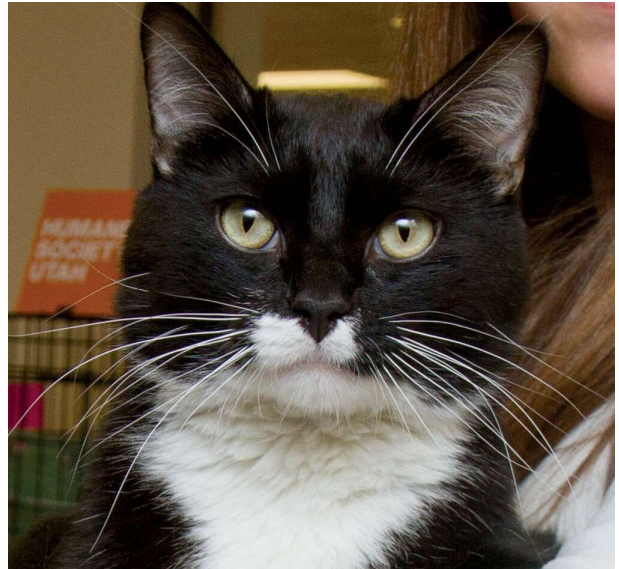
More than anything, volunteers want to know that their time and efforts are sincerely appreciated and that their contribution to your organization is meaningful. Focus on treating volunteers with respect and as vital members of your organization, rather than as unpaid help. Recognize key milestones for volunteers, such as number of hours logged or types of jobs completed. Offer volunteers opportunities to see the impact they've had; for example, celebrate specific animal adoptions or monthly statistics with them or update them on fundraising accomplishments. Keep in mind that many volunteers are often also donors, adopters, future leaders and the public face of your organization, so the recognition and respect you provide to them can directly affect your ability to meet your organization's goals and objectives.

## 10. Use educational opportunities and professional resources.

There are countless resources and learning opportunities available to organizations that use volunteers. Staying up-to-date on best practices in this area will help you to be effective and continue to grow as an organization, while helping to attract a larger, more skilled volunteer population. Check out some of the free volunteer-related webinars offered by VolunteerMatch and other resources, such as [these previously recorded webinars](#)

available through the Best Friends Network webinar page. We highly recommend Corey Roscoe's presentation called "Rebuilding a Fizzled Volunteer Program."

For a thorough overview of creating and managing a successful volunteer program, check out "[Volunteers: Getting Ready for Them, Finding Them, Keeping Them](#)" in the Resources section on the Best Friends website.



## Sample Position Descriptions

### Sample position #1

Name of position: Community cat program data entry assistant

Division: Community Programs and Services

Reports to: Local program coordinator

Schedule and time commitment:

- One or two hours a day, as needed. Can be done from home. Must have Internet access. Can be done at any hour of the day.
- This is an ongoing opportunity.

Location: Remote, from home

Core responsibilities:

- Enter program initiative related data into a spreadsheet
- Work closely and effectively with the community cat program coordinator(s) regarding data input needs
- Track and input hours worked into the Best Friends volunteer database

Qualifications:

- Experience with Microsoft Excel and/or other spreadsheet software programs
- Accurate data entry skills
- Detail-oriented and organized

Physical requirements:

- Must be able to tolerate extended periods of time working at a computer, with repetitive typing, arm and hand motion

### Sample position #2

Name of position: Food drive coordinator

Division: Community Programs and Services

Reports to: Local program coordinator

Function:

- To schedule volunteers, dates, times and locations of food drives
- To market these events and gain public interest about animal welfare, Best Friends and trap/neuter/return (TNR)

Location: Any large commercial grocery store in the area

Commitment: Two Saturdays per month, approximately six hours a day

Goals:

- To help collect cat food (preferably dry kibble) for local colony feeders
- To create public awareness about the benefits of TNR and the no-kill philosophy
- To educate the general public about animal welfare and Best Friends Animal Society

Core responsibilities:

- Schedule dates and times with coordinating grocery store for event
- Provide lists for shoppers outlining food needs
- Recruit new and veteran volunteers for events and record additional volunteering interests
- Track and input hours worked into the Best Friends volunteer database

Qualifications:

- Must have basic knowledge of TNR and our program specifically
- Must have reliable transportation and good people skills
- Must be trustworthy and responsible: will be handling cash donations and donated products

Duties:

- Pre-event setup: Meet with store manager to get a signed copy of date and time agreements.
- Event day: Set up table, chairs and banner, laying out literature and other information.
- Post-event: Return materials to the community cat coordinator or designated location for storage and processing. If available, deliver food to caregivers.

Priority deadlines: Schedule two food drives a month on Saturdays only. Must have volunteer lists, donations and equipment returned by the next business day at the latest.



## Sanctuary Animal Care Project and Task Lists

### Dogtown volunteer projects and tasks

Thank you for volunteering to help out in Dogtown. Your visit means a lot to the staff and to the dogs, who really enjoy the extra love and attention. Here are some ways that you can help care for the dogs:

- Sweeping or mopping the floors in buildings, runs or patios
- Raking the runs and filling in holes
- Taking dogs on walks
- Feeding, along with a caregiver (some dogs have special diets so a caregiver must be present during all feedings)
- Socializing (first ask the caregiver if the dog is toy-aggressive)
- Brushing
- Poop scooping
- Cleaning doggie door flaps
- Clearing walking trails of rocks, sticks or poop
- Cleaning and refilling water pails
- Cleaning and refilling pools in the summer
- Taking dogs on an outing (special considerations apply)
- Walking the fencing to make sure no holes are being created
- Doing other general cleaning and special projects (ask the caregiver)

### Cat World volunteer projects and tasks

Thank you for volunteering to help out in Cat World. Your visit means a lot to the staff and to the cats, who really enjoy the extra love and attention. Although the schedule is flexible, the morning routine usually consists of a thorough cleaning of all rooms, including the following tasks that you can help with:

- Changing and cleaning litter pans
- Brushing cat beds and furniture
- Sweeping and mopping
- Wiping soiled surfaces
- Washing dishes
- Assisting with feeding and watering

The afternoon may involve grooming, spending time playing with the cats, or just sitting with the cats and reading a book. It may sound simple, but these are essential pre-adoption activities. Even the feral cats learn that it can be fun and safe to be with people just by observing your interaction with the friendly cats. This is also the time to observe the cats' health and well-being. Any apparent problems should be reported to a caregiver. Other afternoon tasks could include the following:

- Washing walls and windows
- Raking fur from outside the screened runs
- Weeding
- Restocking supplies and/or food

## Recruitment Tactics Template

Recruitment Source	Lead/Support	Recruitment Details	Run Date	Comments
(Local businesses, contacts, schools, etc.)				
Email/newsletters				
Social media:				
Facebook				
Twitter				
Instagram				
Pinterest				
Blogs				
Volunteer websites:				
LinkedIn		<a href="https://nonprofit.linkedin.com/find-volunteers">nonprofit.linkedin.com/find-volunteers</a>		
Volunteer Match		<a href="https://volunteermatch.org">volunteermatch.org</a>		
Create the Good		<a href="https://createthegood.org">createthegood.org</a>		
Idealist		<a href="https://idealist.org">idealist.org</a>		
Craigslist				
Events				
Other				



## Recruitment Plan Template

Project name \_\_\_\_\_

Prepared by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Recruiting objective \_\_\_\_\_

Event, program or initiative info and goals \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Target audience \_\_\_\_\_

Volunteer info (number needed, shifts, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Strategy (brief summary or bullet points listing recruitment efforts) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Messaging (brief summary of what to say to the audience) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Measurable outcomes (e.g., number of adoptions, number of cats neutered)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Additional resources or info needed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Track the recruiting tactics (e.g., email, newsletters, social media, websites, events) in a separate spreadsheet or database.

## Sample Volunteer Orientation Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is to provide you with effective steps for engaging volunteers and creating what we like to call “reliable regulars.” Most volunteers initially sign up to volunteer for short-term projects or events. The goal is to move them along the continuum of the volunteer engagement scale from short-term contributor to reliable regular and, ultimately, to fully engaged volunteer. Once you have fully engaged volunteers, you can identify those who are suitable for leadership positions.

### Volunteer orientation

- Provide a volunteer sign-in sheet.
- Use name tags.
- Present a brief history of your organization, as well as its mission, policies and goals.
- Describe your organization’s programs, the communities you serve and your organization’s key relationships.
- Provide a structural overview of your organization, including an introduction to key staff members and an explanation of their roles.
- Review volunteer position descriptions.
- Review your expectations of volunteers, including what they can expect from you. Discuss volunteer commitment and the importance of representing the organization.
- Introduce the volunteer handbook and highlight key sections.
- Provide a tour of your facility, including locations where volunteers can safely store their belongings and take breaks.
- Have volunteers sign up for position-specific training (if no such training is provided during orientation).

### Volunteer training

- Provide hands-on training for each specific volunteer position.
- Supervise volunteers and be available for any guidance needed.
- Provide instructions for logging hours in the volunteer management database.
- Thank volunteers for their time and effort.
- Offer periodic check-ins. How are they settling in? Are they feeling comfortable with the tasks assigned? Do they have any questions or concerns?
- If they’re volunteering for a short-term event, ask them to volunteer again.

### Ongoing volunteer engagement

- Follow up with new volunteers (and current volunteers assigned to new positions) within one week to confirm their satisfaction and comfort level with the program and/or position.
- Provide additional instruction or training if warranted. Give volunteers the tools and resources needed to meet program goals and advance the organization’s mission.
- Offer feedback regarding volunteers’ performance. Start with positive feedback and then offer constructive feedback (if necessary).
- If a volunteer is not comfortable with a specific position or task, allow him/her to tell you so. Reassign the volunteer to something he/she is comfortable doing. Take the time to make the volunteer feel valued, no matter how small the task.
- Find ways to connect volunteers to your mission, strategic direction and goals.
- Find ways to connect volunteers to other volunteers.

- Find ways to connect volunteers to your staff, particularly those they'll be working closely with.
- Show appreciation and recognition via follow-up phone calls, thank-you cards, food, gift cards, awards and discounts. The most immediate way to show appreciation is to smile, be pleasant and say thanks.
- Proactively ask volunteers for feedback on the volunteer program. What would they like to see done better or differently? You can ask for feedback in person, or through email or surveys. Be open to that feedback and, if possible, implement their ideas.
- Offer volunteers opportunities for increased responsibility and advancement.
- Identify lead volunteers based on their desire and ability to assume leadership roles.
- If possible, designate a volunteer coordinator for each program to help communicate with and mentor other volunteers.

*“Without a disciplined and respectful approach to recruitment, orientation, support, assessment, and recognition, we will have lower performance and a disenchanting volunteer.”*

*– Francis Hesselbein, Hesselbein on Leadership*

## Best Friends Agreement and General Release for Adult Volunteers

Thank you for offering your time to volunteer with Best Friends Animal Society. The work we do for the animals would not be possible without the help of our volunteers. Please read through the agreement below, complete the form at the bottom and return to the appropriate volunteer office.

**1. VOLUNTARY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION.** I acknowledge that I have voluntarily agreed to serve as a volunteer for Best Friends Animal Society, a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the State of Utah (“Best Friends”), whose mission is to bring about a time of No More Homeless Pets. I am referred to as a “Volunteer.” I offer to perform as a Volunteer of my own volition. No one has demanded that I participate in any activity with Best Friends.

**2. NATURE AND SCOPE OF SERVICES.** As a Volunteer, I will be contributing my time and effort to various sanctuary and outreach programs of Best Friends and performing a wide range of Services (collectively, the “Services”). The Services will be performed by me as assigned by an officer, director, employee or another volunteer of Best Friends. In the course of performing the Services, I agree:

- To read the Volunteer Handbook (if applicable) and otherwise complete all required orientation, training, and paperwork relating to my volunteer position(s).
- To disclose any physical or psychological limitations to appropriate staff before participating in any activity. Since I may be interacting with animals, both healthy and sick, big and small, and may be lifting, carrying, moving, or otherwise engaging in physical labor, I will be respectful of my own limitations and will inform staff immediately of any such limitations.
- To read and to obey all safety rules and regulations, especially at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. In the interest of the safety of the animals, staff, and volunteers, I acknowledge that Best Friends has the right to revoke volunteer privileges if these rules and regulations are not followed.
- To treat all Best Friends staff, volunteers, the animals, property, tools, and equipment with respect and kindness. I will also return all Best Friends property when my volunteer relationship ends.
- That either I or Best Friends can terminate this relationship at will.

**3. NO COMPENSATION.** I agree to provide my Services without compensation. I will not be compensated for my efforts nor am I an agent or contractor of Best Friends Animal Society. I agree that I am not and will not become an employee, partner, agent, contractor or principal of Best Friends upon execution of this agreement or the performance of the Services.

**4. RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY OWN ACTS AND OMISSIONS.** I hereby agree to be legally and financially responsible and will indemnify and hold Best Friends Animal Society harmless for my own acts and omissions relating to the service I am voluntarily providing to Best Friends Animal Society. I acknowledge that I am responsible for providing my own medical, liability, and auto insurance during my volunteer service. I understand that I am not covered by workers’ compensation nor insured by Best Friends during the performance of my volunteer duties and tasks, including when driving a vehicle or transporting an animal.

**5. ASSUMPTION OF RISK.** I am voluntarily participating in the activities of Best Friends with full knowledge of the risks and dangers involved and hereby agree to accept any and all risks of injury, death, or damage to myself and/or my personal property. As a volunteer, I may come into contact with and interact with animals, and such work entails risk of personal injury due to proximity to animals, dangerous equipment, long-distance driving, and other considerations. These include, but are not limited to, being bitten, kicked, clawed, tripped, and possibly exposed to zoonotic diseases.

**6. PHOTO, VIDEO AND AUDIO RELEASE.** I understand that as a volunteer of Best Friends Animal Society, I may be recorded on film, video or other electronic recorded images or other media recordings of my name and likeness (“A-V Recordings”) for any purpose related to furtherance of the objectives of Best Friends, including use in Best Friends media properties such as its magazine and websites. In particular, I grant



Best Friends permission to copyright and use, reuse, publish, and republish A-V Recordings, without restriction as to changes or alterations, for art, advertising, trade, or any other purpose. Further, I understand that all work product I create in my capacity as a volunteer for Best Friends will be the property of Best Friends and that Best Friends will have the sole right to use, sell, license, publish, or transfer any such work product, in any and all media formats, including print, mechanical and electronic formats. I will disclose any such work product to Best Friends and assign all rights thereto to Best Friends.

**7. RELEASE.** As consideration for being permitted by Best Friends to participate in activities and provide Services, I hereby agree that I, my assignees, heirs, distributees, guardians, and legal representatives will not make a claim against, sue, or attach the property of Best Friends for injury or damage resulting from any act, omission, negligence or other acts, howsoever caused, by any employee, agent, contractor, or representative of Best Friends as a result of my participation in activities and performance of the Services and any A-V Recordings.

I hereby release Best Friends from all actions, claims, or demands that I, my assignees, heirs, distributees, guardians, and legal representatives now have or may hereafter have for injury or damage resulting from my participation in activities and performance of the Services and any A-V Recordings.

**8. CONFIDENTIALITY.** During my association with Best Friends and thereafter, I will keep confidential, refrain from disclosing to others, and use only in the performance of my volunteer duties, all confidential information of Best Friends Animal Society that I develop or learn about during the course of my association. I understand that this agreement covers all confidential business and technical information and know-how of or about Best Friends which is not generally known to persons outside of Best Friends and which I have not been specifically authorized to disclose or use. Examples of confidential information include, but are not limited to, information on finances, membership and donors, volunteer performance, research and development, the condition of sanctuary animals, campaigns, outreach programs and information received from others that Best Friends Animal Society has agreed to keep confidential.

**9. I HAVE READ THIS RELEASE AGREEMENT AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT I WILL RELINQUISH ALL CLAIMS OR ACTIONS KNOWN NOW OR IN THE FUTURE AGAINST BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SOCIETY.**

I am of legal age and legally competent to sign this agreement. I am signing this agreement of my own free will without the influence of a Best Friends Animal Society staff member. If, for any reason paragraph 12 below is deemed unenforceable and this Agreement is construed in accordance with the laws of the State of California, it is expressly understood and agreed that I am hereby waiving and surrendering my rights pursuant to § 1542 of the Civil Code of the State of California, which provides as follows: "A general release does not extend to claims which a creditor does not know or suspect exist in his favor at the time of executing the release, which if known by him must have materially affected his settlement with the debtor."

**10. ARBITRATION.** Any controversy or claim arising out of or relating to this agreement or its breach will be settled by arbitration in the State I first perform volunteer duties for Best Friends, even if it pre-dates the date of this agreement, and continuing as long as I continue to be a Volunteer and thereafter as is necessary to protect the interests and rights of Best Friends arising herein with respect to confidentiality and use of my work products and/or A-V material as authorized above.

**11. TERM OF AGREEMENT.** I acknowledge that this agreement will apply to the entire term of my volunteer relationship, starting with the date I first perform volunteer duties for Best Friends, even if it pre-dates the date of this agreement, and continuing as long as I continue to be a Volunteer and thereafter as is necessary to protect the interests and rights of Best Friends arising herein with respect to confidentiality and use of my work products and/or A-V material as authorized above.

**12. GOVERNING LAW.** This agreement will be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Utah without regard to conflicts of laws or principles.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer Acknowledgement of Safety Rules at Best Friends Animal Society**

By signing below I acknowledge that I have read, understand and will follow the safety rules for all areas in which I volunteer, including, but not limited to, all Sanctuary animal areas and other departments (Welcome Center, offices, Angels' Rest, etc.).

I further agree that **if I am volunteering for Best Friends Animal Society outside of the Sanctuary** (Los Angeles programs, Salt Lake City programs, New York programs, other events, etc.), I will read and abide by all guidelines as outlined in the Best Friends Volunteer Handbook.

Signature of Volunteer \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## General Volunteer Safety Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to ensure a safe environment for our visitors and volunteers as well as our animals and staff. We ask that you review them thoroughly and abide by them at all times while volunteering at Best Friends.

- Please let us know if you have any health or physical issues of which we should be aware.
- For the safety of both people and animals, children five years and younger are not able to volunteer. Children between the ages of six and 17 may volunteer at the discretion of the staff if the child/children is/are accompanied by a parent or guardian at all times. Further age restrictions apply in various animal areas (see individual animal area guidelines).
- Non-staff members are allowed in the animal areas of the sanctuary only during volunteer shifts: 8:15 to 11:30 am and 1:15 to 4:00 pm. All animal areas are closed from noon to 1:00 pm.
- Lunch is available for purchase from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm, Monday through Saturday.
- You will not be able to bring your own animals or underage children to the animal areas, nor will you be allowed to leave animals in your vehicle at any place at the sanctuary.
- When you arrive at an animal area at the beginning of your shift, please check in with the designated volunteer coordinator or staff person.
- Please be aware that your behavior will have an effect on the animals. Calm and gentle behavior has a soothing effect. Loud noises, exaggerated gestures, running and horseplay tend to disturb the animals.
- When entering or leaving an animal run, be sure to close and latch the gate behind you. If there is an airlock system, make sure one gate is latched before opening the other.
- Good hygiene can prevent the spread of illness. To protect your health and the health of our animal friends, please sanitize your hands after working with the animals and before leaving the animal area.
- Any injury, however small, either to an animal or to yourself, should be reported immediately to a staff member of the area in which you are working. In addition, you will be asked to review and sign an incident report.
- It is important to wear clothing that is appropriate to the environment and the volunteering you are doing. Closed-toe shoes are a requirement for volunteering in any of the animal areas. For those who volunteer with the horses and pigs, long pants are also required. For your own protection, long pants, a shirt that will protect you from scratches and sunburn, and a hat are strongly recommended when volunteering with the animals. (Please note that some animals are afraid of strangers with hats so they might have to be removed if you're working in Dogtown.)
- Safety equipment (earplugs, dust masks, gloves) is available for your use in those areas where needed.
- The sanctuary is located at 5,000 feet, so the altitude can affect you. In the summer it can be hot, so be sure to drink plenty of fluids. Tell a staff person if you would like to take a break during your volunteer session or need to cut your session short.
- In the summer, you might encounter wasps and rattlesnakes. A snake will not attack you unless it feels threatened, so calmly turn around and walk slowly away.

## Dogtown Safety Guidelines

There are hundreds of dogs in Dogtown, and such a large population obviously creates an environment that is very different from a home with one or two animals. So, for the safety and well-being of the animals and yourself, we ask that all volunteers attend an orientation designed to give you basic knowledge about Dogtown and how it works.

Some of the dogs have moderate behavioral issues and need to be treated in particular ways. A few of the dogs have severe behavioral issues and volunteers do not work with those dogs. Most of the dogs, though, can go on walks with volunteers. A volunteer coordinator will tell you the simple rules we have developed to ensure the safety and enjoyment of both you and the dogs.

To keep you and our animal friends safe, here are a few things that you should be aware of before volunteering in Dogtown:

- For the safety of the animals, parking and driving are permitted only in designated areas.
- You must be at least 10 years of age to volunteer in Dogtown.
- Children under 14 cannot walk dogs by themselves.
- It is very important to clip all gates closed when entering or leaving a dog run.
- Please be aware that dogs like to jump up on people, which could cause or exacerbate injuries.
- For your safety, be careful not to place your face close to a dog's face in case a biting reaction occurs.
- If you see a dogfight starting, blow the whistle you've been issued until a staff member arrives to break up the fight. Please don't try to break up a fight yourself.
- While we welcome your questions about our dog-training procedures, we ask that you please refrain from trying to train them on your own.
- Please do not bring your personal pets to the sanctuary.

## Cat World Safety Guidelines

To keep you and our animal friends safe, here are a few things that you should be aware of before volunteering in Cat World:

- Remember to keep doors closed at all times. Cats are curious and we have many escape artists.
- Please sanitize your hands between visits to different groups of cats.
- Some cats have unusual ways of showing affection. Please check with a staff member to find out if you will be working in a room with these kinds of cats so you won't get bitten or scratched.
- Cats who enjoy human contact make themselves readily available for love and attention. Cats who are feral won't come to you and it is best to leave them alone.
- Do not break up cat fights. If you notice a fight starting, please find a staff member to break up the fight. We don't want you to get bitten.
- If you are pregnant, please consult with your doctor about precautions against infectious diseases like toxoplasmosis (which comes from being around cat litter and cat feces).
- Watch your head: Kitties love the shelves and cubbies at Cat World, but some are just the right height to walk into or bump your head on from underneath.



