

Cumberland County Animal Shelter (CCAS)

# Volunteer Handbook



Cumberland County Animal Shelter (CCAS)  
**Volunteer Handbook**

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## WELCOME

Welcome to the Cumberland County Animal Shelter (CCAS)! Our desire to help animals has brought us together as volunteers and staff. Our volunteers are a vital link to the community and we rely on you to advocate for the shelter and for animal issues within our community. Volunteers are an essential part of sheltering. We value your help greatly. Thank you for considering volunteering at our shelter.

This handbook is intended to help animal shelter volunteers understand the scope of responsibility, limitations and expectations that are placed upon them when they agree to serve as volunteers at CCAS. Public service in a volunteer role requires maturity, a sense of responsibility, and common sense. All of which take on a greater significance when interacting with animals being housed at the shelter, as well as with the public. Your personal safety and the safety of the animals, other staff and the public are of paramount concern in an animal shelter. Even though volunteers are not staff and are not paid for their work, the things that they say and do while working as a volunteer reflect on CCAS and Cumberland County.

Most public animal shelters and private adoption groups know the value of the hours contributed by their dedicated volunteers each year. Some of the best adoption stories are those told by great volunteers who took the time to patiently answer questions of an adoptive family about a cat or dog they were considering. When the family chose to adopt the animal in question, both they and the volunteer knew it was a good fit. Volunteers can know that their efforts make a real difference for that pet and for that family. Volunteers are invaluable to our shelter and they are deserving of our respect and thanks.

Volunteers and our staff work very hard to make this adoption center a good experience for the people and animals that come through our doors. To achieve and maintain that level of service to our community and our animals, we are looking to encourage volunteerism by those who can, freely and without compromise to their own mental health and well-being, make those efforts necessary to help build the shelter's image to the community. This can be done through their support of staff and their adherence to all requirements as members of an expanded shelter team. Our animal shelter is a department of our county government and it is the responsibility of the entire community of Cumberland County. Our dedicated volunteers and staff deserve to be surrounded by other like-minded individuals who show up when they are scheduled, lend a willing hand, and can work within the rules to the benefit of all. Our volunteers are just as deserving of credit for our community success as our staff.

Other than the Shelter Director, there are only two other full-time positions at the shelter. Everyone else who works at CCAS is a part-time employee with limited hours given to each to assist staff with the daily cleaning. The turn-over in part-time staff is an ongoing problem both here and in other similarly situated city and county animal shelters. The need for loyal, good-hearted, hard-working volunteers is real. This is a great help to the staff, freeing their time to process incoming animals, manage animals already on-site, and to facilitate adoptions.

Space at the shelter is limited for housing cats and dogs. The more animals a shelter decides to accept, the greater the burden on existing staff who must clean kennels and cages and feed the animals before the doors

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are opened to the public. To enable the staff to accept those animals and keep them from being abandoned, volunteers are needed to assist. Volunteers are encouraged to fill out a shelter volunteer application in support of that interest. A volunteer coordinator or assigned staff then will interview applicants to confirm their interest in being a part of the team, their suitability for the areas of interest, as well as their availability for assignments on specific days that the shelter is open to the public.

## SHELTER MISSION STATEMENT

The Cumberland County Animal Shelter operates to provide for the housing of stray animals within the City of Crossville (a municipal corporation) and Cumberland County (a political subdivision of the State) boundaries that are impounded by Animal Control Officers.

The purpose is to reduce general animal control problems in the County including, but not limited to, protecting its citizens from the dangers and problems associated with free-roaming animals (domesticated dogs and cats).

## WHAT DO VOLUNTEERS DO?

Volunteers are an essential part of our shelter and our mission. We appreciate you! There are many volunteer opportunities, each one with its own duties. Many volunteers choose to start volunteering within the shelter by assisting with animal care. Regular volunteer assignments are limited to the shelter's adoption center. No volunteers will be assigned to work at the quarantine/intake facility without the express approval of the shelter director and then, only for limited purposes for which specific training has been acquired/provided.

Volunteers may request to work in only the cat or dog sections, or both. However, the volunteer coordinator or assigned staff must train the volunteer for work in each section before the volunteer is approved to work in those sections. Shelter staff may set limits concerning how many volunteers may be present on any given day, or how often an individual may volunteer each week.

Days of assignment are limited to the shelter's normal business days. Hours of most assignments are limited to the shelter's normal business hours. Exceptions are for those volunteers who successfully complete training for cleaning dog kennels/runs and/or cat rooms/condos and are willing to do so by the opening of business hours at the adoption center.

Although volunteer duties may change from time to time, the following is a list of items volunteers may do at the shelter:

- Walk dogs and continue the training or behavior modification set in place by volunteers and staff.
- Foster a dog or cat at your home. This gives us an idea of how they will behave in a home and gives them a break from the kennels. Fostering requires advanced approval of the Shelter Director and a separate Foster Application to be completed.

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- Socialize with the cats in our adoption areas. Play interactively with toys, groom and brush the cats, get to know their personalities and report their likes and dislikes to the staff!
- Groom or bathe a dog (ask the staff first please). This makes them more appealing for adoption.
- Throughout the day in the adoption areas spot clean, replenish water in cages.
- Kennel cleaning and feeding (cleaning before business hours only).
- Cat rooms and cat condos – general cleaning/deep cleaning and feeding (before business hours for general cleaning; during business hours for deep cleaning condos).
- Become a greeter/matchmaker for individuals interested in adoption of one of our pets.
- Help with laundry and dishes when the dogs and cats are not available.
- Help at off-site adoption events.
- Help with visits to and from schools, scout troops, etc.

These are just some of the things that need to be done on a daily basis at the shelter. Each day is different! There is always something to be done, so please ensure that your time volunteering with us maximizes your positive impact on shelter operations. You can always ask a staff member if you are unsure of our needs that day. There are also other volunteer activities such as fundraising and education programs that can be done outside the shelter. If you are interested in such activities, please see the Volunteer Coordinator.

## VOLUNTEERING (DOGS)

- Only those volunteers who are trained to clean the kennels and dog runs may be assigned to come into the adoption center before normal business hours.
- Volunteers are required to indicate on the dry erase board in the dog kennel area which dog they are taking for a walk. Volunteers should also make any comments about the animal on this board.
- Assigned volunteers are restricted to walking adoption center dogs during normal business hours.
- No more than three dog walkers are permitted to be on site at any one time. Too many volunteers on site at any one time can interfere with the ability of staff to monitor them and make it more difficult for prospective adopters to view the animals and move through the facility. It also adds to the stress of the animals to have the kennels overloaded with people.
- Staff may also set limits as to how long each dog may be walked and how far away from the adoption center the walk may extend. Dogs must be readily available to be seen by prospective adoptive families during the shelter's normal business hours.
- Staff sets the standard on how much food is to be given to each dog based on weight and condition of the animal.
- Please don't take dogs to the grass area behind the intake facility or near the edge of that facility. Some shelter animals come in with diseases, while others will break with diseases soon after they arrive. Keeping adoptable animals away from that area protects them, as well as other animals they may be housed with at the adoption center. As new areas are developed in the future, dog walkers will be instructed concerning additional walk/play areas to which they may take the dogs.

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- Volunteers may wish to donate bedding, food, treats, or toys for the dogs. No volunteer is required or under any obligation to donate anything.
  - For those who wish to do donate, the item must be pre-approved by staff before it is purchased. Some treats and toys are hazardous to animals.
  - While the shelter accepts donations of these items from the general public, not all items can be used. Items that are not in good condition, cannot be easily sanitized, that look questionable, or might be harmful to the animals may not be accepted.
- Some dogs must be separated from their kennel mate at feeding time. Those volunteers who are trained and approved to feed must properly secure each dog where staff has indicated this is necessary to avoid food aggression at feeding time.
- No volunteer is ever required to walk or handle any animal they consider unmanageable at their level of skill or based on the animal's own behavior.

## VOLUNTEERING (CATS)

- The three cat rooms are separated, at present, into a male room, a female room, and a kitten room. This is to prevent unaltered animals from mating and getting into fights. It also reduces the stress of the animals.
- Staff will determine which animals go into these three rooms and into the “get acquainted” room where the cat condos are located. Volunteers are not permitted to move animals between condos and cat rooms or from one cat room to another unless staff directs them to do so.
- Staff cleans the cat rooms and condos daily to prepare to open the adoption center to the public. If the litter boxes need to be scooped during the center's normal business hours, please use the individual scoops to remove any waste and place it in the appropriate, designated container for disposal. There is a separate scoop for each room and for each separate condo. Only those trained to know which one is to be used in which area should be performing this task.
- Please do not throw out all of the litter from a pan and replace it with a new pan and fresh litter without staff's approval.
- Volunteers are encouraged to wash and sanitize empty litter pans that staff removed from the separate rooms and condos to get the center ready to open to the public.
- Volunteers are encouraged to be trained to deep-clean the cat condos on a monthly or other regular schedule established by the volunteer coordinator or staff.
- Volunteers are encouraged to spend time in one cat room each visit socializing and helping to reduce the stress levels of the cats in that room. Any room may house an animal that is breaking with an upper respiratory virus or other illness. Limiting yourself to one room helps to reduce the number of animals that may become infected and have to be returned to the intake facility for treatment. The longer an animal is at the shelter's intake facility, the more it costs to care for that animal and the fewer opportunities that animal will have to be seen locally and to get adopted. It also takes up room that other incoming animals need at the intake facility.

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- Only those bedding items and toys that staff have already approved and placed in the rooms and/or condos may be kept in those rooms. Volunteers may not place bedding or toys in those rooms without staff's knowledge and approval.
- Volunteers may wish to donate bedding or toys. Only bedding and toys that can be sanitized easily and reused (check with staff before you purchase it) will be accepted.
- Toys that are so small they can be pushed out under the screened doors of the cat rooms or through the bars of the condos are not acceptable to be donated. They pose a safety hazard to people and risk the spread of illness.
- Bedding and toys in the rooms may not be relocated to other rooms by the volunteers.

## VOLUNTEER DOS AND DON'TS

### Volunteer DOs

- Sign in & out on the volunteer log at the volunteer entrance.
- Wear the appropriate shelter "Volunteer" name badges while working on site.
- Keep poop bags in your apron & clean up whenever needed.
- Wear appropriate clothing and shoes (no flip-flops or sandals).
- Help potential adopters get the information they need.
- Show up to work rain or shine! The animals depend on you to get time out of their kennels. If you are unable to show up for a scheduled time, please contact the volunteer coordinator or shelter staff to let them know as soon as possible.
- Adhere to and demonstrate support of the shelter policies and procedures and its staff.
- Although CCAS has staff to clean the kennels & cat cages, the animals don't soil their places on our schedule. Volunteers are encouraged to pick up solid waste but please do not use the hose. Notify staff of extreme messes
- Use common sense; if you are uncomfortable or afraid to do something, don't do it. Ask for help.
- Report anything that concerns you to the staff or Volunteer Coordinator. (Medical issues, inappropriate behavior, etc.).
- Represent yourself and the shelter according to the volunteer code of conduct included in this manual.

### Volunteer DON'TS

- Do not enter the parts of the building that are off limits to volunteers, such as quarantine and intake.
- Please do not use the shelter as a place to socialize with your friends. Focus on helping the animals while you are here. Encourage your friends to become volunteers too!
- Volunteers may not ask adoptive families for their name and phone number or indicate to them that the family should contact them if they believe the adoption is not going to "work."
- While volunteers may provide general information about shelter policies to visitors, they must direct people with specific questions about the policies and procedures to authorized staff for clarification.

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- Names and contact information about all adoptions, rescues, transports, reclaimed animals, and even euthanasia of animals is private information and may not be disclosed by a volunteer to anyone. Any member of the public requesting such information is to be directed to staff.
- Volunteers may not interfere with staff's performance of their duties, undermine staff's directions, or encourage others to do so.

Most importantly, remember why we are all here – to help the animals find homes and have the best possible quality of life while in our care! Stay focused on that goal and use your time wisely. Volunteers are a huge part of that process and we need you!

Any volunteer may self-select “out” of serving as a volunteer at any time by communicating to the volunteer coordinator or other staff of their intention to end their volunteer work, preferably in writing. Any volunteer may indicate their desire, in writing, to take a leave of absence from their volunteer work with the shelter for any reason. However, they will need to contact staff and/or the volunteer coordinator before returning to determine whether there is an assignment available for them.

If volunteer work performance and/or conduct prior to the leave met the standards established for volunteers, they will be advised of available assignment days/times that match their interests and training. It may be necessary for volunteers to be scheduled for retraining depending on how much time has elapsed, whether new protocols have been implemented, and whether or not their areas of interest have changed.

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND GENERAL GUIDANCE

- Before any training assignment commences, a volunteer will be trained and signed off to perform work in that specific area by the volunteer coordinator or assigned staff.
- At present, no volunteer is authorized to train, direct or oversee the work of another volunteer. This is a small adoption center and all staff and volunteers are trained by authorized personnel to perform cleaning duties and care for the animals in the same approved manner.
- Only approved, on-site cleaning materials and tools will be used to clean and sterilize any portion of the adoption center lobby, its kennels, rooms and condos. Volunteers may not bring cleaning supplies and/or tools from home.
- When a volunteer confronts a new situation for which training has not been provided, that volunteer shall contact the appropriate on-site staff for assistance in resolving the situation in a manner that is appropriate with the shelter's policies and procedures and the circumstances.
- The County promotes a family friendly environment in its buildings and on its properties. It is inappropriate to argue with or be rude to members of the public, the staff or any other volunteer. The use of foul language is prohibited.
- The County maintains a drug and alcohol-free environment in all county buildings and premises. It is not permissible to show up for a volunteer assignment under the influence of, or in possession of, illegal

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substances and/or alcohol or any prescribed drug that impairs your ability to safely drive your vehicle to/from the shelter and perform your assigned tasks.

- The County does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, and disability status or any other protected classification. All forms of discrimination, harassment and retaliation on the basis thereof are prohibited in its volunteer opportunities and practices.

## ADOPTION PROCEDURES

Staff members handle adoptions at our facility. Volunteer input is always welcome regarding animal personalities, likes and dislikes etc. If there is a concern about a potential adopter please feel free to pull a staff member to the side and voice your concerns. Ultimately the decision is up to our trained adoption staff. If someone is interested in adopting an animal, one of our staff will ask them a series of questions to see what kind of animal they are interested in adopting and what their lifestyle is like (for example kids or no kids, pets or no other pets). The staff will then show the potential adopter the animals that might be compatible with them.

## SURRENDER PROCEDURES

The County reserves the right to limit the acceptance of stray animals to those brought in by City and County Animal Control Officers. During periods when the shelter is accepting surrenders, if an owner wishes to surrender a pet and is a resident of Cumberland County, we will accept the animal. We require the person to complete an owner surrender questionnaire so that we can determine what type of new adoptive home the animal would be suitable for. The person will be required to show official identification with his/her name and address.

## EUTHANASIA

A public animal shelter such as CCAS, by necessity, must euthanize animals. There simply are not enough people interested in adopting our shelter animals locally. The only reason our shelter is not euthanizing more animals than it is, at present, is due to the efforts of a regional non-profit animal group (AARF), in Cookeville, which transports many of our cats and dogs to other adoption facilities. Those are mainly located in large communities in northern states. There are only a couple of other local, legitimate non-profit rescue groups that take animals from our shelter on any regular basis. However, if AARF no longer provided such support to our county shelter, the euthanasia rate would again skyrocket. Until 2011 when AARF started its transport program to help regional shelters, our euthanasia rate was quite high. Staff had nightmares about the number of healthy, adoptable animals they had to euthanize at that time. We have come a long way since then. Our new county-built adoption center has been up and running since July 2018. We are having success in getting more animals into new homes thanks to the happier adoption experience people have in the new building.

Euthanasia is an unfortunate but necessary part of animal sheltering. Millions of lost, abused, unwanted and abandoned animals come into shelters every year. We do our best to place every adoptable animal that comes to our shelter. Animals that are diagnosed with life threatening illnesses, extreme medical problems or display aggression towards other animals or people are not placed for adoption. In these cases, the animal is euthanized. Only veterinarians and state-licensed technicians may administer the injection. The procedure is

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quick and painless. The staff is with the animals until the very end. It is the most humane and painless method of euthanasia available. CCAS will meet or exceed TCA requirements for euthanasia.

### DO VOLUNTEERS TAKE PART IN EUTHANASIA?

No, we do not expect or allow volunteers to take part in euthanasia. When the decision is made by staff to euthanize an animal it is an extremely difficult one. The staff is here because we love animals and want to do our best to make the world a better place for them. Every animal deserves a home. If an animal is not adoptable and cannot be provided with an acceptable quality of life, we feel that it is not humane to let them linger indefinitely in the shelter. While volunteers do not take part in the process, you will need to be able to come to terms with the fact that it does happen.

Volunteers are expected to show consideration to the staff that are involved in euthanizing animals. If you would like to discuss euthanasia or our policy further, please see the Shelter Director.

### ARE WE CONSIDERED A NO-KILL SHELTER?

The most accurate answer is we strive to minimize euthanasia at our shelter and are committed to do everything in our power to avoid euthanizing healthy, adoptable animals.

### FOSTERING

One of the most important things a volunteer can do to help save animal lives is fostering. There are a number of reasons we often need fosters:

- Overcrowding at the shelter.
- Controlled environment needed for medical treatment.
- Providing experience in a home so we can tell adopters more about him/her.
- Temporary living space while waiting for rescue transport.

To be considered as a foster, please request a Foster Application. After it is approved you will be placed on file as a potential foster and will be contacted as needs arise. The application allows you to specify preferred size, age, species, and so on.

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**VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT**

By signing this agreement, I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to the following Cumberland County Animal Shelter (CCAS) Volunteer Code of Conduct:

I understand that the goal of the volunteer program at CCAS is to engage and educate the public on the mission and philosophy of CCAS, to support shelter activities, and to provide supplemental care and enrichment for the lives of shelter animals, and that my actions and attitudes should always further these goals. I understand that I can and should always seek guidance if I am ever unclear about the mission, philosophy or practices of CCAS.

I agree to conduct myself in an appropriate and professional manner while volunteering for CCAS, following and publicly supporting CCAS programs, policies and practices. In my capacity as a volunteer, I agree to consistently conduct myself in a manner consistent with humane treatment of CCAS animals and professional interaction with CCAS employees, patrons, other volunteers, and members of the public.

I understand that CCAS welcomes and relies upon volunteer feedback. If I am ever in disagreement with any philosophy, policy or practice of CCAS, I agree to use the appropriate, established communication channels to share my concerns or feedback. The channels are, in order:

1. Communicate first with the Volunteer Coordinator.
2. If I feel my concern was not addressed at this level, I will then communicate it directly to the Director.

I understand that I am responsible for reviewing all the materials given to me at orientations and trainings, including the Volunteer Manual. If I have any questions or do not understand anything in the materials, I agree to ask the Volunteer Coordinator. I know that as a CCAS volunteer, I represent the Cumberland County Animal Shelter, and I promise not to engage in any activity or communication that may cause harm to the reputation of CCAS. I agree to be a role model for the humane treatment of animals, at home and in all places as well as while working with the shelter animals.

I agree to accept supervision, direction and support from the CCAS staff and understand that they will provide me with feedback to help me perform my volunteer duties most effectively and safely, and in the best interest of the animals I am volunteering for. I understand that failing to observe the above agreements could result in my dismissal from the volunteer program, and that I can be removed at any time at the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator or Shelter Director.

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Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian (Volunteers under age 18) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**VOLUNTEER RELEASE FORM**

Cumberland County Animal Shelter  
782 East Lane  
Crossville, Tennessee 38555  
931-484-8525

I have volunteered to care for, walk, and interact with the animals at the Cumberland County Animal Shelter (CCAS). As a volunteer, I agree to follow all rules, policies, and procedures of Cumberland County Animal Shelter while volunteering for CCAS in any capacity.

I assume all risk associated with volunteering and understand that the Cumberland County Animal Shelter offers no warranty or guarantee as to the animals' physical condition, health, or ability to cohabitate with persons or other animals. I agree to indemnify and hold Cumberland County and the City of Crossville harmless from any and all damage to myself or my property, or the person and property of third persons, resulting from my volunteering for the Cumberland County Animal Shelter in any capacity. I assume responsibility for my own safety during these activities.

By placing my signature hereon, I hereby agree to release, indemnify and hold harmless Cumberland County, Tennessee, a political subdivision existing by virtue of the laws of the State of Tennessee, the Mayor of said County, any and all personnel or elected officials of said County, and the City of Crossville, a Tennessee Municipality, from any liability for any loss or injury including damages to property and/or damages to person including personal injury or otherwise, due to my being present on and/or participating in any activities located at or on property owned by Cumberland County, Tennessee, said property being specifically located at the Cumberland County Animal Shelter.

I hereby acknowledge that I have inspected said property and I assume the risk of any hazards or other conditions on said property and/or improvements that could cause harm.

The release of said damages mentioned above includes all damages that could be asserted under Tennessee Law including but not limited to: loss or damage to chattel or personal property, loss of property usage, loss of earnings or profits to an enterprise or business, and/or loss for personal injury and all damages associated with personal injury. I understand that I am giving up rights by signing this document. I have read this document and I hereby execute this document upon my own free will and choice.

Check one:     I am 18 years old or older  
                   I am under 18, however I have a parent or legal guardian who has agreed to accompany me to all assigned volunteer days. I will provide written proof of legal guardianship.

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Volunteer Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Parent/Legal Guardian Signature (Volunteers under age 18) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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Witness Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_