



**Humane Society**

# Volunteer Handbook 2023

Last Updated 03.2023

**100+**

Current Animals

**5**

Departments

**1**

Mission



# Table of contents

**03** Our Mission  
Our Vision

**04** Our History

**05** Columbus Animal Care and Control

**06** Limited Admission Shelter

**07** Programs and Services

**08** Programs and Services

**09** Importance of Volunteers

**10** Volunteer Center

**11** Volunteer Rules

**12** Volunteer Rules

**13** Volunteer Rules

**14** Social Media Rules

**15** Social Media Rules

**16** Attendance

**17** Waiver and Release Forms  
Accidents and Injuries

**18** Personal Property  
Cross Contamination

**19** Personal Adoptions,  
Unauthorized Areas

**20** Harassment

**21** Mistreatment of Animals, Drug and  
Alcohol Abuse, Smoking Policy,  
Termination and Resignation

**22** Disciplinary Process

**23** Volunteers Levels

**24** Volunteer Promise

**25** Things to Keep In Mind

**26** Contact Information



## **Our Mission**

To enrich the lives of both animals and people as a solution-based community resource for animal welfare by providing high-volume and high quality spay/neuter, rescue and adoption services, volunteer opportunities, outreach, and education.

## **Our Vision**

To be the regional leader for animal welfare in adoption, spay/neuter, outreach and education to ultimately create a No-Kill Community

## Our History



PAWS Columbus, Inc. and The Muscogee County Humane Society merged together to form Paws Humane Society in January of 2009, just after the completion of our new Adoption Center in November of 2008. Paws Humane is a non-profit organization that receives no city, state or government funding, and we rely solely on the private support and contributions from concerned citizens of our community. Because we are completely donations-based, we are considered a limited admissions shelter which frees us from some of the laws that apply to a municipal shelter.

Just a few short steps away from the front door of Paws Humane Society is Columbus Animal Care & Control. Being an open admissions shelter, they are required by law to intake every animal that is brought to their facility, whether stray or owner surrendered. Due to lack of space, employees at CACC are often forced to make the difficult decision to euthanize. The issue of animal overpopulation directly affects the quality of life for both animals and the citizens of Columbus.

---

While we are two separate entities, Paws Humane works in partnership with Columbus Animal Care & Control and we have made a commitment to:

- Address animal overpopulation through the adoption of healthy companion animals, a spay/neuter program to control animal overpopulation, and humane education to reduce abuse, neglect, and abandonment of companion animals, and promote responsible pet ownership
- Develop outreach programs, bringing people and animals together to benefit both. We are People Helping Animals, Animals Helping People

# Columbus Animal Care and Control

When a stray or found animal is dropped off at or picked up by Animal Control, they will keep them for 5 days. During that time, Animal Control will try to locate their owners to reunite the animal with their family, who may pay a fine depending on the circumstances. If an animal is not claimed from Animal Control, one of three things will happen:

- Paws and other area rescues can pull them and adopt them out through their organization
- Animal Control will contact anybody interested in the animal to come adopt them after they have been held for 5 days
- If animal is neither adopted nor rescued and Animal Control runs out of space to house animals, long termers may be humanely euthanized

This is why we do what we do. We continue to work to one day eliminate the need to euthanize healthy adoptable animals.



## Limited Admission Shelter

“The terms “Kill” vs. “No-Kill,” when used to describe a shelter or rescue group are falling out of common usage. We describe Paws Humane as a “limited admissions shelter,” meaning we take in as many animals as we can humanely care for. Attempting to take in more animals poses a threat to animal health and safety. A shelter that cannot take all animals in danger of euthanasia cannot accurately be described as a “No-Kill” facility.

Instead, our vision is focused on a “No Kill Community.” We will only realize this goal when all animal welfare groups in our community work together and refrain from using emotional and divisive language.



# Programs and Services

## Adoption Program

Adoption Counselors provide information to families and individuals to help them choose the right pet for their home. Our adoption process is designed to ensure each animal finds a loving, forever home.

To learn more about our Adoptions Program, please visit [www.pawshumane.org/adopt/](http://www.pawshumane.org/adopt/)

## Spay/Neuter and Wellness Clinic

The Paws Humane Spay/Neuter and Wellness Clinic is open to the public. Our high-volume, high-quality spay/neuter clinic is a key factor in the No-Kill equation. In February of 2018, our clinic hit the 50,000 mark for the number of spay/neuter surgeries performed at Paws Humane.

We offer excellent prices for spay/neuter surgeries, basic exams, annual vaccinations, flea and heartworm preventatives, and other basic services. Please feel free to utilize our services and tell your friends.

In addition, we offer special spay/neuter programs from time to time for those neighborhoods that provide higher numbers of intakes at Columbus Animal Care and Control.

## Community Cat Program

The Paws Humane Community Cat Program is the humane, effective way to reduce the number of outdoor cats living on our streets. Community cats are the unowned stray or feral cats who live outdoors in our neighborhoods. This program is free for Muscogee County residents only

The Community Cat Program provides:

- Humane trapping of community cats, followed by spay/neuter surgery, vaccinations, and the return of the cats to their communities. Over time, their numbers are reduced
- Ear-tipping of spayed/neutered cats. A painless procedure, an ear-tip is the universal symbol of a spayed or neutered outdoor cat



## Community Outreach Program

Paws Humane offers outreach services such as free or low-cost spay/neuter surgeries, educational events that include pet care and training, and humane education. By comprehensively addressing the lack of accessible, affordable pet care in under-served communities, Pets for Life keeps pets in the homes they already have, improving their quality of life and elevating the human-animal bond.

Building trustful relationships with people and establishing an ongoing presence in the community is critical to making a real impact.

Experience has shown us that when we extend our compassion to human beings as well as animals, we can create long-term and meaningful social change



## Humane Education

Educational classrooms, Boy/Girl Scout meetings, or Career Days can be enhanced with a visit from Paws Humane. Our Humane Educator, Volunteers and a shelter dog will visit students, delivering age-appropriate presentations which will cover humane education through lessons and activities.

Our Humane Education Program helps students spread and practice compassion and kindness in addition to respect for animals, people and our environment.

## Court-Ordered Community Service

Paws Humane Community Service program is provided for individuals who are completing community service for court or preemptive community service as recommended by legal counsel. Applicants must be 18 years or older to participate.

Traffic citations, DUI, and misdemeanor drug charges are acceptable to participate in the community service program.

Charges we do not accept are animal cruelty, theft, assault and arson. Duties may include cleaning animal rooms, washing dishes, folding laundry, sweeping and mopping, picking up litter, filling water dishes, walking dogs and various other tasks as assigned.



# Importance of Volunteers

Our organization could not exist without volunteers. Volunteers are an important part of our team and are essential to providing the best possible care for our animals. Volunteers who work directly with animals can increase an animal's chances of adoption by providing additional human contact, thus making them more sociable and content.

Volunteers also help us inform people of the aims and objectives of Paws Humane and promote responsible pet ownership.

As a volunteer, you have the responsibility to:

- Meet your time commitments or provide adequate notice so other arrangements can be made
- Be trusted with confidential information necessary to do your work
- Perform assigned work to the best of your ability
- Follow organizational policies and procedures
- Be open-minded and respectful of others
- Accept reasonable tasks with a positive attitude
- Maintain a positive attitude toward Paws Humane

As a volunteer, you will always:

- Know that your efforts contribute to the organization's objectives
- Receive the necessary orientation, training, and supervision
- Learn how to improve your skills in the work you are doing
- Be treated with respect
- Be appreciated for the work you have done
- Ask questions and make suggestions about the work you are doing



## Volunteer Center



The volunteer center is the room at Paws Humane where you sign in/out. Volunteers may also use this area for personal phone calls, to relax while clocked out, as a learning center for newer volunteers, or to submit anonymous suggestions for improving our Volunteer Program. We want our volunteers to have their own space to get away to when needed and we hope this area serves your needs satisfactorily in this way.

# Volunteer Rules

## 1

Be courteous with cell phone use in the shelter.

- For the safety of our animals, volunteers, staff and customers, we expect your full attention to be on the animal you are working with at all times. If you and the animal are secure inside their adoption room or kennel, you may use your phone to text, check email or social media, or play soft, relaxing music (as long as the animal does not show signs of stress).
- Please do not make phone calls in the animals' adoption room or kennel, or any other public area where customers may be visiting our shelter. You may make phone calls in the volunteer nook, outside (behind the building), or in the community room if it is not occupied



**2**

No ear bud use inside or outside of the shelter, at all. Please leave your earbuds at home or in your locker.

**3**

Volunteers must wear their Paws Humane name tag, long pants/shorts and close-toed shoes at all times while volunteering for Paws in the shelter or at offsite events. Paws Humane t-shirts are not required but are strongly encouraged.

**4**

No smoking or vaping while walking our dogs. There is an outdoor smoking section at the picnic table near the back tree line. Please use this area for smoking.

**5**

Please adhere to all rules associated with our Volunteer Levels Program.



**6**

We understand life is busy, but if you agree to event we **RELY** on your attendance to make that event successful. So be mindful of attendance. Too any instances of poor attendance could result in disciplinary action.

**7**

**NEVER** reach into a dog fight if one occurs. Grab a noise maker, yell, clap, make as much noise as you can, but do not reach in or touch the dogs in any way. Staff members will hear your noise and come running to help.

**8**

Please treat staff and other volunteers with the same respect you would like to be treated with. A positive, pleasant working environment is what we strive to accomplish and you can help make that happen.



# Social Media Rules

**1**

Feel free to post photos of our shelter animals to your social media pages. Please use #pawshumanesociety and #iampawshumane when posting.

**2**

When posting, only use positive, general, yet accurate, words to describe our animals. (Such as sweet, cute, adorable, fun, etc.)

**3**

Do not use specific words to describe our animals' personality traits. (Such as good with children, great leash walker, active, energetic, shy, etc.)



**4**

Never use negative words to describe our animals. (Such as dog aggressive, does not like children, not good on a leash, barks a lot, etc.) Our Marketing and Adoptions Teams are specially trained to use the best language to describe our animals, so please leave the specifics to them.

**5**

Never, ever, ever speak negatively of other animal shelters or rescues on social media. This includes Paws Humane. We are all in this business together and every shelter or rescue has its own policies and regulations. If you cannot say anything nice about another animal welfare organization on social media, please refrain from saying anything at all.

**6**

Please remember that as a volunteer for Paws Humane, you represent us and our integrity. Please keep this in mind when posting and post wisely.



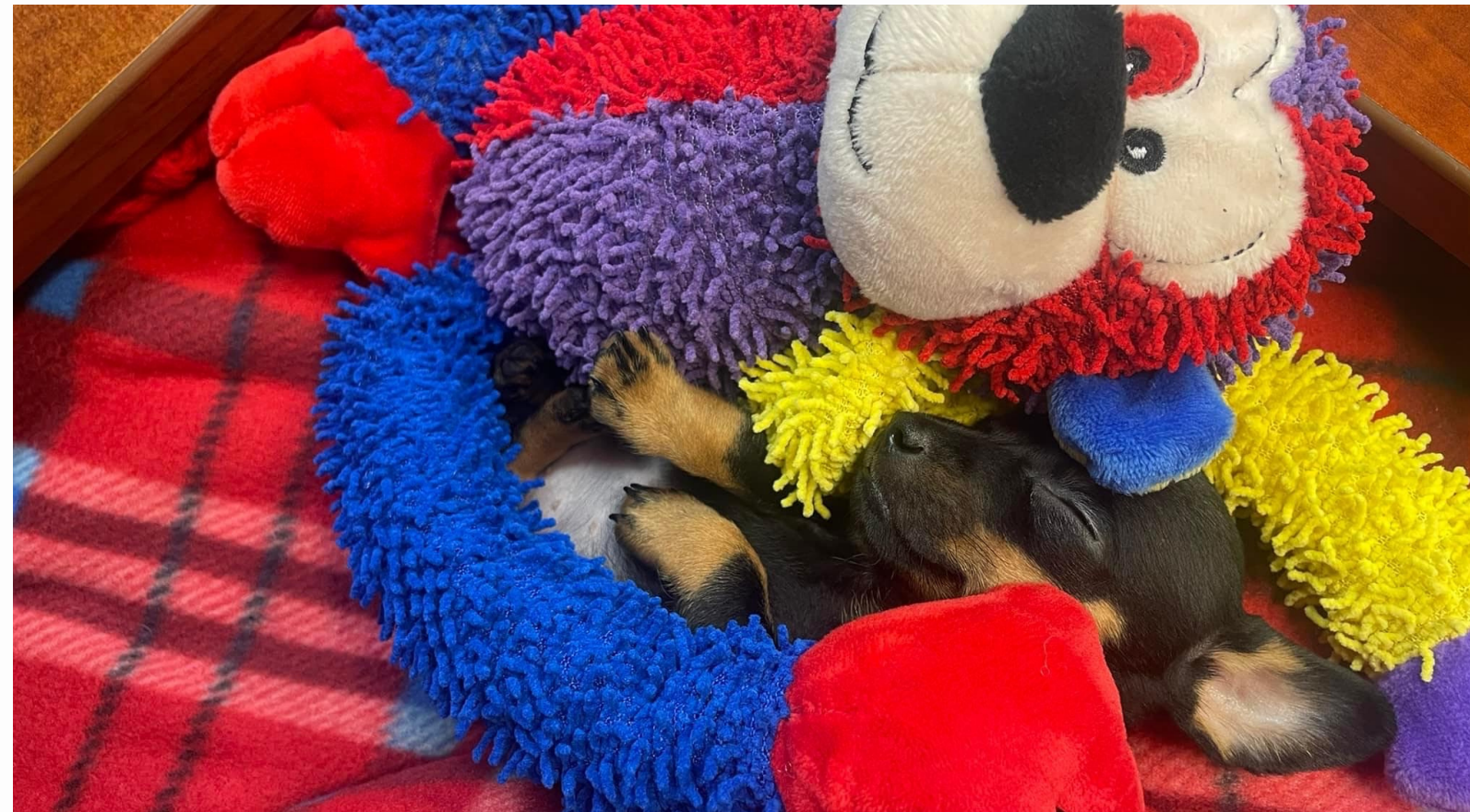
# Attendance



Flexible volunteer sessions do not need to be scheduled and you may come and go as you please. However, if you volunteer for a scheduled task or shift, please be punctual and reliable. If you are unable to fulfill your commitment, please contact the Coordinator that you signed up through to let them know. We plan many important tasks around the number of volunteers that are expected to show up. If you no-show without any prior notification, you are putting our staff and other volunteers in the difficult position of doing your work, plus their own.

No-shows will be subject to our volunteer disciplinary process. If you no longer wish to volunteer, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator and you will be made inactive.

\*If your account remains inactive for a year or more, you will be removed from our database and must attend a Volunteer Orientation if you wish to return.\*







## Waiver and Release Forms

At your New Volunteer Orientation, you signed a Volunteer Waiver/Release Form and Bite/Scratch Protocol. If you would like copies of the waivers you signed at Volunteer Orientation, please request one from the Volunteer Coordinator.

## Accidents and Injuries

Any accident or injury that occurs while at Paws must be reported to the supervisor immediately (within 10 minutes after the injury occurs). Bites and scratches are considered an injury and must be treated immediately. When working with animals, there is a potential risk of injury, however Paws is not liable and you are not covered under our insurance policy.

## Volunteer Personal Property

Paws is not responsible for loss, theft or damage of personal items. Volunteers are advised not to bring excessive cash or valuables with them while working on-site. We provide lockers in the volunteer area for your use. Please provide your own lock and take it with you when you leave.

## Cross Contamination

Wash or sanitize your hands before and after contact with each and every animal. An animal that may look healthy could have recently gotten over or may be coming down with kennel cough or an upper respiratory infection (URI).





## Personal Adoptions

Volunteers and staff may adopt animals that enter into our program as long as they meet Paws adoption guidelines, follow adoption procedures, and pay all applicable fees.

## Unauthorized Areas

Volunteers are not allowed in any unauthorized area at any time without staff approval. This includes quarantine, isolation, and the vet clinic unless trained and assigned to these departments.

# Harassment

It is illegal to harass others on the basis of their sex, age, race, color, national origin, religion, marital or veteran status, citizenship, disability and other personal characteristics. Harassment includes making derogatory remarks about such characteristics, making "jokes" about ethnic or other groups, and other verbal, physical and visual behavior, including sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment is a form of misconduct that undermines the integrity of the volunteer/staff relationship. No volunteer, either male or female, should be subject to unsolicited or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct, either verbal or physical. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature. It refers to behavior that is not welcome, that is personally offensive, that debilitates morale, and that, therefore, interferes with work effectiveness. Such behavior may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted physical, verbal or visual sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and any other sexually oriented conduct, that is offensive or objectionable to the recipient, including but not limited to: abusive language, derogatory or suggestive comments, slurs or gestures, and offensive posters, cartoons, pictures or drawings.

Paws Humane will not tolerate the harassment or sexual harassment of any employee, client, customer, volunteer, vendor or any other person dealing with the organization. Volunteers should report suspected sexual comments or harassment directly to their supervisor or the managing director and the matter will be promptly investigated.

- 
- Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent possible consistent with the need to conduct a prompt and thorough investigation of a complaint. Retaliating or discriminating against an employee or volunteer for complaining about sexual harassment is prohibited. Any instance of sexual harassment as described herein, any act of retaliation, or any failure to cooperate in the investigation or resolution of a sexual harassment complaint may result in disciplinary action or termination.

## Mistreatment Of Animals

There will be NO mistreatment of animals. If a volunteer is found mistreating an animal, the volunteer will be terminated immediately.

## Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Paws Humane will not tolerate the use of alcohol or drugs in the workplace. Use of these substances can adversely affect a volunteer's performance and judgment, compromising the welfare and safety of the animals and others.

## Smoking Policy

There is a designated smoking area on the side of the building. There is no smoking allowed when handling the animals!

## Termination and Resignation

As a volunteer, you are under no contractual obligation to continue services at Paws Humane. Should you decide to resign, please notify Volunteer Services of your decision.

Reasons for involuntary termination include, but are not limited to:

- Distribution of any defamatory or slanderous comments about Paws Humane (including, but not limited to: e-mails, Facebook, Twitter, blog sites, and verbally)
  - Any abuse of animals
  - Sexual harassment of any kind
  - Reporting for duty under the influence of alcohol or other substances
  - Utilizing Paws Humane Society's property for any illegal purposes
  - Theft in any form
  - No Call/No Show for scheduled shift three times
  - Non-compliance with rules and regulations of Paws Humane
-

# Disciplinary Process

Paws Humane Volunteers are subject to a formal disciplinary process, dependent upon the offense(s) and Management's discretion. The process for disciplinary action is as follows:

## First Offense

Your first offense is considered a warning and will be documented with the Volunteer Coordinator. Depending on the offense, you may be required to attend a training session to further your knowledge in the area you were working.

## Second Offense

If it is determined by Management on your second offense that the safety of an animal or person was at risk, you may be permanently dismissed as a Paws Volunteer. However, if no one's safety was at risk, you will be required to attend a mandatory training session in the area you were working. Our Volunteer Coordinator will document the offense and you will receive a final warning by email.

## Third Offense

Your third offense will result in an automatic and permanent dismissal as a Paws Volunteer. You will be required to meet with our Volunteer Coordinator for an exit interview and will be escorted to your car by a Paws staff member. You have the right to request a copy of all documentation regarding your offense(s) during your exit interview and it will be provided to you.

## Grounds for Immediate Dismissal

Any action by a volunteer that intentionally puts the safety of our animals, volunteers, staff or customers at risk is considered grounds for immediate and permanent dismissal. Intentionally compromised safety will not be tolerated and will not be held to the 3 step disciplinary process as stated above.

- 
- The decision for immediate dismissal will be made by a Department Manager and/or the Manager of Volunteer Services. You will be required to meet with our Manager of Volunteer Services for an exit interview and will be escorted to your car by a Paws Humane staff member. You will also be permanently banned from Paws Humane's property. Should you choose to violate this request, a restraining order may be placed against you. You have the right to request a copy of all documentation regarding your offense(s) during your exit interview and it will be provided to you.

## Volunteer Levels

Upon Intake, all animals will be given a color of **Green**, **Yellow**, or **Blue** to coincide with their overall behavior, health status, and ability to handle.

All new Volunteers begin as a **Green** and through various trainings/experience in-shelter will work their way up to **Yellow**.

Volunteers may only work with animals matching their color and below. Example: A **Yellow** Volunteer can work with **Green** and **Yellow**.

**Blue** means the animals is STAFF ONLY and can only be handled by a member of staff.

Name tags with corresponding color levels can be found in the Volunteer Area.



# Your Volunteer Promise

## I promise to always treat every animal with kindness and respect

- Remember, these shelter animals ended up here because they have been deemed “unwanted” for one reason or another. If a dog is hyperactive or jumping and barking incessantly, do not take your frustration out on them – yelling at them will only raise that level of excitement. We believe in positive reinforcement, not harsh corrections. There is no such thing as a bad dog, only dogs that have not been shown the proper way to behave.

## I promise to report any signs of illness to a staff member

- Be careful to notice any nasal discharge, loose stool, sneezing, coughing, vomiting and/or lethargy. A limping dog may be recovering from a previous injury, or they may have just hurt themselves, so always let us know if you see anything out of the ordinary





# Things to Keep In Mind

## While working with animals:

- Never try to handle an animal that looks scared. Remember, you do not know these animals, and they do not know you.
- When an animal is scared or feels threatened, their behavior can be unpredictable. If they are giving you clear signs that they do not want to be handled, please respect that and never force them to do anything.
- Do not bend over a scared animal. Keep in mind, from a cat or small dog's point of view, we are much larger and towering over them only exacerbates fear.
- Do not make prolonged, direct eye contact with any dog. This is a challenge and can promote anxious behavior.
- Do not approach the dog from the front, but rather from the side with the side of your body facing them.
- Never turn your back on a room or cage with the door left open – Always check to make sure the cage or room doors are closed and securely latched. The real life rooms have an additional latch to provide for our very smart residents who have learned to open doors.
- Have fun! – Using your voice in a confident, up-beat manner can be a wonderful source of stimulation. The words you use are important, but the tone of voice is everything. If you are unhappy, the dogs will know. By being here, you can make a big difference, so let's make it a positive experience for both you and the animal.





## Contact us

4900 Milgen Road  
Columbus, GA 31907

Front Desk: (706) 565-0035  
[www.pawshumane.org](http://www.pawshumane.org)

Volunteer Coordinator  
Morgan Rambler

Office: (706) 987-8376  
Email: [volunteer@pawshumane.org](mailto:volunteer@pawshumane.org)

**Adoption Center and Retail Store:**  
Monday – Friday: 10:00am – 6:00pm  
Saturday: 10:00am – 5:00pm  
Sunday: CLOSED

**Vet Clinic:**  
Monday – Friday: 7:30am – 6:00pm



Please take a moment to join the Volunteer Facebook group.  
Simply search:  
"Volunteers/Staff of Paws Humane Society"