



## **HSHA VOLUNTEER CAT SOCIALIZER PROGRAM GUIDE**

### **1. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

- New volunteers only:
  - i. Fill out and submit a volunteer application
  - ii. Attend the HSHA general volunteer orientation
  - iii. Attend the Cat Orientation, which goes over the basics of the Cat Play program
  - iv. Meet with an experienced cat play volunteer to learn how to handle and socialize the shelter cats
- Commit to a regular cat play schedule (recommended)
- Ongoing, 2 hour minimum weekly commitment
- Pet, play with, and socialize adoptable cats at the shelter
- Follow proper cleaning procedures when handling shelter cats
- Mark the cat play tracking sheets located in each cat room
- Attend quarterly volunteer meetings (recommended)
- Assist new cat volunteers as needed
- Complete Medical Evaluation Forms as needed
- Complete Behavior Evaluation Forms as needed

### **2. CAT PLAY HOURS**

- Monday – 11:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Tuesday - 11:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Thursday - 11:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Friday - 11:00 AM – 7:00 PM
- Saturday - 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
- Sunday - 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM

### **3. VOLUNTEER ROOM**

The Volunteer Room is adjacent to the Cat Get Acquainted Rooms in the back of the shelter. The following items are located in the Volunteer Room: Volunteer Sign in/out Book, Volunteer Stickers/Name Tags, and a Bulletin Board with information posted by HSHA staff members. Volunteers may leave personal items in the volunteer room while volunteering at their discretion. However, it is strongly recommended that they leave all items of any value locked in their vehicle. HSHA is not responsible for lost, stolen or damaged property.

#### **4. CAT PLAY TRACKING SHEETS**

Cat Play Tracking Sheets are used to track which cats are taken out or socialized each day. There is a sheet for each bank of cages taped to the end of the bank in the large, middle and front cat rooms. Each sheet shows which cats are located in which cages. Cat Volunteers must date the appropriate box (cage) on the sheet to indicate when they socialized that particular cat. Volunteers are encouraged to try and make sure every cat has equal time out of the cage and/or socialized in the cage.

#### **5. FOOD PREP ROOM**

The following items are located inside the Food Prep Room: Water source, clean litter boxes, clean food dishes, cat treats, canned cat food, and newspaper.

- a. Volunteers are never to feed shelter animals, as they are on the Science Diet Feeding Program. Volunteers are permitted to give treats and fresh water.
- b. Every cage is cleaned every day by staff. However, if a cat has made a mess of their cage, Volunteers are permitted to clean the cage or supply a clean litter box/food dish as needed. Please make an effort to conserve supplies as much as possible, as supplies are limited.

#### **6. CLEANING SUPPLY ROOM**

The following items are located in the Cleaning Supply Room: Water source, Mop/mop buckets, cleaning supplies.

#### **7. GROOMING SUPPLIES/TOYS**

Cat brushes and toys may be found in each cat room, food prep, or in the hall cabinets. Brushes, combs, and toys must be sterilized between cats to prevent the spread of disease. Many volunteers choose to purchase and maintain their own brushes and/or combs as supplies are limited at HSHA. Volunteers should ask an HSHA staff member for assistance when handling a difficult cat. When finished using supplies or toys, please put them away. Do not leave items on top of cabinets in hallways or in cat get acquainted rooms.

#### **8. MEDICAL/BEHAVIORAL EVALUATION FORMS [NOTE: Before completing a medical evaluation form, check the binder outside med screening to see if a form has already been submitted for the problem you're seeing. Do not fill out/submit duplicate/redundant forms.**

**Medical Evaluation Forms** need to be completed for any cat that is sneezing, coughing, bleeding or has discharge from the eyes or nose. A form should also be filled out if a cat has diarrhea, blood in the stool, or any other health or medical condition. Medical Evaluation Forms are located outside the Medical Screening Room and should be placed in the same box when completed. If you are not sure if there is a real medical problem, fill out a form anyway. It is better to be safe than sorry.

**Behavioral Evaluation Forms** need to be completed for any cat that is demonstrating signs of possible behavior issues, including but not limited to, hissing, growling, lunging, or scratching. Volunteers should also report signs of self mutilation, such as over grooming or chewing paws/tail. The sooner any such possible behavior issue is reported to HSHA staff, the

sooner HSHA staff can begin to work with the cat and treat the problem. Behavioral Evaluation Forms are located outside the Behavioral Care Office.

## **9. VOLUNTEER INCIDENT REPORT FORMS**

Every volunteer must immediately tell an HSHA staff member if she /he is injured (including but not limited to, scratch, bite, twisted ankle, etc.) while volunteering at the shelter. Incident Report Forms are available at the front desk.

## **10. HOW TO HANDLE/SOCIALIZE A SHELTER CAT**

### **First Things First**

Handling a shelter cat might seem as simple as handling your own cat, but it is important to remember that shelter cats are in a stressful environment and each has its own unique personality. As a volunteer, you need to do a few things to ensure your safety, the safety of the animals, and the safety of shelter workers and visitors. All new cat volunteers must meet with an experienced cat volunteer who will show them how to handle and socialize the HSHA cats before they start volunteering.

### **Benefits for Shelter Cats**

- Exercise keeps shelter cats calm, sane, and helps control weight issues
- Improves the behavioral, mental, and emotional health and well being of shelter cats
- Increased socialization strengthens the ability for shelter cats to connect and bond with people
- Increases shelter cats' chance for adoption because they appear more relaxed, happy and comfortable with people

### **Stop, Watch and Listen**

When preparing to handle shelter cats, the first step is to enter the cat room and stop, watch and listen. By standing in the center of the room for a few seconds, you will have the opportunity to identify any cat which may have an illness. You may hear sneezing or see a cat displaying unusual behavior. Cats that are displaying signs of illness should not be handled, or handled last. Always fill out a Medical Evaluation Form if there are any signs of illness.

By observing the cat in the cage before opening it, you can glean some valuable information which will give you insight into the cat's personality.

- ✓ Emotional State/Body Language: The shelter is a very stressful place where cats have little control over their environment. Many are lonely, anxious, fearful, frustrated or depressed. Behaviors indicating fear or emotional stress may include: ears pressed down, tail tucked, head down with eye looking up, hissing, growling, hiding in litter box or in the back of cage, etc... If you see any of the above body language you should handle that cat slowly with caution. You may want to wait and handle those cats once you are more experienced. The above body language does not necessarily indicate a cat that does not want to be touched. The cat may simply be scared, but you should still proceed with caution.

## **STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS**

- ✓ Wear shoes with good support and grip for your safety and comfort. Wear clothes that you don't mind getting dirty. Volunteer tees are available for purchase.
- ✓ Sign in to the volunteer book in the volunteer room as soon as you arrive
- ✓ If you are not wearing an HSHA volunteer shirt, put on a volunteer name tag (located in the volunteer room)
- ✓ Before you pick a cat to take out, stop, watch and listen. Also check the cat play tracking sheets to make sure you are giving equal time to all cats.
- ✓ Before opening the cage door, read any special notes on the cats cage and observe body language.
- ✓ Open the cage door slowly and reach in to pet (greet) the cat. Stand in front of the cage and keep a hand on the cat to make sure it does not run past you.
- ✓ Once you have greeted the cat and are comfortable, pick up the cat by scruffing the back of the neck with one hand and supporting the hind quarters with the other. Transfer the cat to a carrier for transport from the cage to a play room.
- ✓ If the cat does not want to be picked up, you may want to socialize the cat in the cage until it becomes comfortable with physical handling.
- ✓ Once in a play room, allow the cat to explore the room. Some cats will want to be held and other will want to play. Remember each cat has its own unique personality and needs.

## **ADDITIONAL TIPS/ REMINDERS**

- ✓ No children may accompany cat play volunteers.
- ✓ Remember to wash your hands, toys, and brushes between each cat.
- ✓ Do not take out any cat that is on hold or undergoing medical treatment.
- ✓ Do not take cats out of the cages for the public unless you are SAFER trained.
- ✓ Always ask for help if there is a cat you are not comfortable handling.
- ✓ NEVER allow two cats from different cages to socialize.
- ✓ Do not use your cell phone while handling a cat. Focus on the cat.

## **SOCIALIZING THE CATS**

For most shelter cats, 15-20 minutes out of the cage is sufficient time for socializing and play. Cats have a short attention span and may not tolerate extended handling. However, we do want to give them enough time out of the cage to give them a sense that they had a break from the cage. If a cat becomes agitated or stressed, return it to the cage immediately.

Pastel forms are available in the Volunteers' Room for cat volunteers to fill out and place on individual cat cages. These slips of paper give potential adopters basic information about the cat so they can get a quick profile while walking through the cat rooms. Naturally, we prefer that they emphasize the individual cat's positives. These forms help make the correct match between family and pet, which means a successful adoption and a 'forever home' for the cat.

# **HSHA VOLUNTEER CAT SOCIALIZER PROGRAM GUIDE ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Keep your copy of the HSHA Volunteer Cat Socializer Guide ("Guide") in a safe place for future reference.

**To: Volunteer Coordinator**

- I acknowledge that I have received, read and understand the Guide and obtained guidance where I had questions.
  
- I acknowledge that the Guide sets and refers to policies and procedures that I must follow while volunteering at HSHA.
  
- I acknowledge that my compliance with the Guide is a requirement of my volunteer relationship with HSHA.
  
- I acknowledge that I can and will volunteer in compliance with the Guide and other HSHA policies.
  
- I acknowledge that I will report medical and behavior issues to HSHA staff promptly.

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**Volunteer Signature**

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**Date**

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**Print Name**

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**Experienced Cat Volunteer Signature**

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**Date**

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**Print Name**