

The Shelter Connection, Inc.

Volunteer Handbook



P.O. Box 226 Greenvale NY 11548
(516) 626-8948

Table of Contents

Welcome Letter	I
Management Team	2
Our Mission	3
Volunteer Opportunities	4 - 5
Active Shelter Roles	
Adoption Advisors	
Dog Handlers	
Key Supporting Roles	
Audio/Visual	
Special Events & Fund Raising	
Newsletter	
Risks	
Standards of Excellence	6 - II
Organizational Policies	
Training Requirements	
Complaint Procedures	
Corrective Action Process	
North Hempstead Animal Shelter	12 - 15
Policies & Procedures	
Informational Page	
Job Descriptions	

Welcome, New Volunteer!

We are extremely pleased that you have chosen to donate such a very precious commodity to us – your time and talents.

We want each volunteer to feel that he or she is a part of our team, each important to our overall success. The Shelter Connection could not exist without the support of our volunteers who bring a diversity of interests, knowledge, expertise and caring to our organization.

Your ideas and suggestions are important to us and we welcome them at any time. For your convenience, there is a suggestion box available in the volunteer office at the North Hempstead Animal Shelter. Alternatively, if you have any problems, suggestions, ideas or concerns that you would like to discuss regarding the organization or your role in it, please feel free to contact the Volunteer Coordinator, or any member of the management team, at 626-8948.

Thank you so much for your interest and your caring. We appreciate it - and the shelter dogs appreciate it as well!

The Shelter Connection

Management Team

Board of Directors

President	Robert Slifkin, MD
Director of Training	Rosanne Palumbo
Treasurer	Jeff Rosen
Secretary	Marianne Sikora
Executive Director	Teresa Teravainen
Volunteer Coordinator	Regina Connolly
Special Events Coordinator	Denise Waters

Advisory Board

Bonnie Brown, DVM
Sue Hassett, Assistant Director, North Hempstead Animal Shelter
Brian Kilcommons, Internationally Renowned Dog Trainer
Erik Tallbe, CPA
Julian Wise, Attorney-at-Law

Volunteer Opportunities

There are many opportunities to be involved with The Shelter Connection, both in active roles dealing directly with the shelter dogs and the adopting public as well as educating the public about our causes and helping out with the fun-d-raising! Volunteers are encouraged to be in as many groups as they feel they can efficiently support. However, we do ask each volunteer to commit at least 2 hours per week in any combination of those areas.

Active Shelter Roles

Adoption Advisors

- Welcoming prospective adopters at the shelter in a professional manner and providing additional information about the shelter dogs
- Providing a foundation of community education, shifting public perception about shelters & dispelling the myth that shelter dogs are damaged goods

Dog Handlers

- Giving shelter dogs an opportunity for much-needed exercise and socialization (Happy dogs are more adoptable dogs!)
- Giving the dogs a baseline of obedience, making them more adoptable and encouraging lasting and successful adoptions

Additional Key Supporting Roles

Audio/Visual

- Providing the public with information about our organization, the shelter and the many dogs available for adoption
- Providing a foundation of community education, shifting public perception about shelters & dispelling the myth that shelter dogs are damaged goods

Fund Raising & Special Events

- Assisting in one of the most important functions of every non-profit organization!
- Making community events fun and profitable
- Reaching out to the community for active involvement in helping us to solve the homeless pet population crisis

Newsletter

- Helping us to communicate to one another & the public
- Providing information about our organization, the shelter and the many dogs available for adoption
- Letting everyone know how wonderful it is to be a Shelter Connection volunteer!!

RISKS

As in any organization working with animals, there are always risks involved. It is important that each volunteer be aware of the potential risks prior to engaging in any volunteer activity. Some of these potential risks can be medical (such as animal diseases communicated to humans), physical (such as falling, scrapes and possibly dog bites) and emotional (such as depression, anger and grief).

While these risks are real, following the safety protocols as outlined by the organization and the shelter can significantly minimize the actualities. Chances are, these things may never happen, but it is our obligation to ensure that each volunteer is aware that these possibilities do exist.

Standards of Excellence

At The Shelter Connection, we are committed to the highest standards of excellence. We see ourselves not just as an organization, but a community of volunteers. It is critical to our mutual success that we work with each other and support each other and most importantly, respect each other for all of our hard work and dedication. As an organization, we commit to ensure that each volunteer has a full knowledge of their responsibilities and to maintain a clear and effective line of communication throughout their service. In return, we expect each volunteer to hold themselves and each other accountable to those standards.

Whenever people gather together to achieve goals, some rules of conduct are needed to help everyone work together efficiently, effectively and harmoniously. As a volunteer, you have a responsibility to adhere to certain rules of behavior and conduct. The purpose of these rules is not to restrict your rights, but rather to be certain that you understand what conduct is expected and necessary. When each person is aware that he or she can fully depend upon fellow workers to follow the rules of conduct, then our organization will be a better and safer place to work for everyone.

Generally speaking, we expect each person to act in a mature and responsible way at all times. However, to avoid any possible confusion, some of the more obvious unacceptable activities are noted in the following sections regarding policies and procedures. If you have any questions regarding any work or safety rule, or any of the unacceptable activities listed, please speak to the Executive Director for an explanation.

It is our group cohesion and community spirit that will mark our success. Together, we can ensure that we meet our goals and increase the quality of life for shelter dogs. As a result, human-canine relationships everywhere will be enriched.

We appreciate your contributions in meeting our group goals.

Organizational Policies

Volunteers must abide by all of the rules of the North Hempstead Animal Shelter and to always give the shelter staff appropriate respect. We are all guests of the NHAS, acting as partners for the benefit of the dogs and the community. It is imperative that we always unequivocally honor any requests made by the staff. If you have questions regarding the reason a specific request was made, you may contact your direct coordinator, the Volunteer Coordinator or Sue Hassett.

Volunteers are expected to meet all of the responsibilities of their specific role(s), as outlined in the training programs and the job description(s). This allows us to present a common standard of professionalism in any environment we work in.

Volunteers must abide by all security and safety rules as outlined in all applicable training programs, job descriptions and in this handbook. The safety of our volunteers, the shelter dogs and the public are of paramount importance. Infractions of these rules can result in unexpected consequences to the life of a dog and to the organization as a whole.

Volunteers should wear Identification Badges at all times while working in the shelter or representing the shelter at designated functions. This immediately identifies our members to both the public and the shelter staff. Exceptions are made for Walkers and Training Assistants while dogs are being handled.

Volunteers are expected to be punctual and dependable.

Volunteers must refrain from any act of harassment (sexual, racial or otherwise) to fellow volunteers, shelter staff, members of the management team and the public. This is a key aspect of community spirit.

Volunteers should dress and groom themselves appropriately for your volunteer position, particularly if your job involves dealing with shelter visitors and the public in general. Such an appearance contributes to the positive impression made to the public.

Volunteers must not commit any willful violation of any Shelter Connection or Town of North Hempstead Animal Shelter rules or any deliberate action that is extreme in nature and detrimental to the Shelter Connection's or the animal shelter's efforts to operate so as to fulfill their purpose and mission.

All of the outlined policies are critical to the integrity and success of The Shelter Connection and to the goals that we set forth in order to improve the quality of life for shelter dogs. Violation of the following policies are considered to be extremely serious offenses and may result in immediate dismissal without warning (see Corrective Action Process).

Representation of The Shelter Connection

Volunteers will not represent, or purport to represent, The Shelter Connection in any public forum without the express prior written approval of the Board of Directors. It is very easy to unwittingly compromise our public image, even with the most well-intentioned communications. Our public image is a carefully thought out and coordinated process and is key to our growing success in the community.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will abide by the non-disclosure agreement, and will not give any confidential or proprietary Shelter Connection information (including, but not limited to, personnel information, policies and procedures, and fund raising strategies) to competitors, other organizations, or any unauthorized persons without the prior approval of the Executive Director and the President. This is standard procedure in any organization.

Non-Compete

Volunteers that are participating as Dog Handlers, having completed training programs by the Director of Training, may not work in any similar capacity handling dogs at any other organization. Conversely, if a volunteer is handling dogs at any other organization, they may not participate at The Shelter Connection as a Dog Handler. This does not exclude participation at either organization in any other capacity except the physical handling of dogs. We happily welcome volunteers to participate in this organization in any of our other capacities including participation in our Adoption Advising, Fund Raising, Newsletter and Audio Visual groups.

Training

Participation in The Shelter Connection requires various levels of training certification, to be determined by the Board of Directors. All volunteers will be required to fully understand the following:

- * responsibilities of the position
- * organizational policies and procedures
- * shelter policies and procedures

Additional training certification is required for programs that involve active involvement within the shelter. For example:

Adoption Advisors -

- must prove an understanding of dog breed identification and characteristics
- must prove an understanding of safety protocols

Dog Handlers (levels I-4) -

- must prove an understanding of any required additional safety protocols
- must prove an understanding and application of basic dog handling and walking techniques and skills, as appropriate to level and determined by the Director of Training
- must prove an understanding and application of basic obedience training skills, as appropriate to level and determined by the Director of Training

Certification is cumulative, therefore a volunteer may not achieve certification as a Dog Handler without first having satisfied the requirements of an Adoption Advisor.

No volunteer will be allowed to participate in any program until all required levels of certification are reached and the volunteer has signed a formal document regarding acknowledgment of all policies, procedures and safety protocols.

Periodic re-certification will be mandatory, and volunteers will be required to participate in various safety update and education programs.

Complaint Procedures

It is very important to us that you always have a voice in our organization. We are open to any suggestions or comments that you feel would benefit the organization. If, for any reason, you are unhappy or concerned with your role, the policies and procedures of the organization or with the way you feel that you are being treated by either a member of the management team or a fellow volunteer, we encourage you to discuss it with us.

Generally speaking, your first resource beyond a direct coordinator is the Volunteer Coordinator. However, any member of the board should be considered an alternate resource for discussing and addressing any of your concerns. We are all happy to be of assistance in making your time and efforts working with us as harmonious as possible.

Corrective Action Process

All volunteers will be held accountable for upholding the policies of the organization and the shelter, as well as all applicable safety protocols. With the exception of the infractions listed on page 11, the corrective action process will be handled as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <u>1st infraction:</u> | verbal warning from supervising coordinator (documented) |
| <u>2nd infraction:</u> | written warning from supervising -coordinator with signed acknowledgment |
| <u>3rd infraction:</u> | final written warning from supervising coordinator with review process*. Review process to be administered by Volunteer Coordinator, Executive Director and Director of Training (where appropriate). Results of review process can be 1) probation, 2) requirement for re-certification or 3) dismissal. |

** The review process provides each volunteer with a forum to explain their actions, as well as any circumstances surrounding it, in order to give the management team a better idea of exactly what is happening and why. This ensures that the situation is being addressed in the most appropriate manner for both the volunteer and the organization.*

Exceptions to the standard Corrective Action Process

Violation of the following policies are considered to be extremely serious offenses.

Confidentiality Policy

Non-Compete Policy

Authorized Representation Policy

Violations of these will result in a full board review process. The results of the review process can be 1) Final Warning and Probation, 2) Exclusion from specific volunteer activities or 3) Dismissal.

Note:

The Town of North Hempstead reserves the right to exclude any volunteer from actively participating in volunteer activities at the shelter for any reason at any time.

North Hempstead Animal Shelter

Policies & Procedures

The Town of North Hempstead Animal Shelter, as a municipal animal control agency, has to abide by many official rules of operation. The Assistant Director, Sue Hassett, and her staff have done an incredible job of changing the previous culture of this agency into a humane, well organized effort that, daily, has a positive impact on this community. It is imperative that we honor and support their hard work and dedication in this crucial partnership by making sure that we always represent the shelter honestly and positively. Their reputation is well-earned and hard-won.

We feel that it is important that, as volunteers, you have an understanding of some of the more important policies and procedures. However, for some of the policies, it is more appropriate for them to be communicated to the public by the shelter staff and not the volunteers.

All inquiries regarding the below policies highlighted in RED should be referred to the staff appropriately. You may communicate the policy, should the situation dictate, but all explanations and further inquiries should be immediately referred to the shelter staff. This is also appropriate if there is a policy that you feel at all uncomfortable discussing (such as euthanasia).

All shelter business transactions are to be handled by shelter staff

It is our responsibility to forward questions or business regarding surrenders, animal complaints, wild animal entrapment, etc. to the shelter office. There is to be no discussion with the public regarding any activity other than adoption, spaying & neutering and responsible pet care.

Dog Bite Quarantines

It is also a town policy that no dog that has been surrendered for a dog bite may be adopted by the general public. A surrendered dog may be held for a quarantine period at the shelter to determine rabies. These dogs may also be redeemed by their owners.

Surrender Policy

This is a municipal shelter and provides services to its residents. If a dog is found stray within the town limits, it will be accepted by the shelter. Dogs owned by town residents will also be accepted for surrender. Town of North Hempstead residents will not be able to surrender dogs found in, or owned by residents of, other townships. If we are to meet our mutual goals is imperative that we all do our part to minimize the pet population within the shelter first. It will do damage to the hard-earned reputation of the shelter as a 'humane oasis among municipal shelters' to have to euthanize more dogs (rather than less) as a result of overpopulation. If a dog is found stray in another town, the best chance that it has for being re-united with its owner is to be in the shelter closest to the community that it was found in. Many dogs end up too far away for them to be found by their original owners through the negligent, though perhaps well-meaning, actions of other people. Do not assume that every stray dog has been abandoned...

The Town of North Hempstead Animal Shelter is NOT a "no kill" shelter

While Sue and her staff do everything possible to prevent the necessity of euthanizing dogs, they are often at the mercy of the homeless pet population crisis and the irresponsibility of many pet owners. They are also responsible for community animal control and safety. Most of the dogs that are put down at the shelter are unadoptable for either medical or aggression issues that are beyond the scope of our mutual resources. In some cases, the shelter will destroy dogs that cannot tolerate the shelter environment and are suffering either physically or psychologically. There is also the unfortunate possibility that healthy, adoptable dogs will need to be destroyed due to overpopulation at the shelter. The difference between a municipal or public "kill" shelter and a private "no-kill" shelter is that the private shelter can control and choose which animal it accepts into its facility, whereas the public shelter cannot. Therefore, the private shelter does not run into issues of dealing with aggressive, un-adoptable dogs or with overpopulation issues. We advocate the adoption of dogs from any shelter vs. buying a pet from a breeder or pet-shop. However, adopting from a public "kill" shelter clearly saves a life that may not be at risk in a private "no-kill" shelter.

Adoptions are based upon a “first come, first serve” basis

A dog may NOT be reserved. On the day of availability, adoptions will be transacted to the first prospective owner to arrive.

Dogs are NOT temperament tested

The Town of North Hempstead Animal Shelter and The Shelter Connection can be held liable for any mis-information, regardless of the intention. We cannot state or claim that a dog is house-broken, trained, good with children (of any age) or travels well. We can only provide information “based upon our experience”, “to the best of our knowledge” or “according to information provided by the previous owners”.

Dogs are not guaranteed

Dogs are not guaranteed for health or temperament. The Shelter Connection and the shelter will do its best to provide all available information and assistance to adopting families. In the event that an adoption does not work out, the shelter will try to take the dog back from community residents based upon space availability. There is not only no refund, but an additional \$20 surrender fee to process this transaction.

Adoption Fees and Package

The adoption fee for a dog will be no more than \$29.50 and is a cash transaction.

The adoption package includes:

- * a free vet exam with the consulting veterinarian for the shelter
- * a free spay/neuter certificate from North Shore Animal League (if dog is not already altered)
- * all up-to-date vaccinations
- * a leash and collar
- * a “doggie-bag”

Dogs must be taken out of kennels and “shown” by authorized shelter staff ONLY

Volunteers may NOT direct prospective adopters to any dog outside of its kennel that is being worked, in any way (by staff or volunteers) or that is being shown to another group of prospective adopters. Adoption Advisor volunteers may coordinate with appropriate shelter staff at the front desk on behalf of prospective adopters and may continue to be present while the dog is being shown, provided that they not interrupt, contradict or otherwise distract the shelter staff and the prospective adopters.

Town of North Hempstead Animal Shelter

75 Marino Avenue
Port Washington, NY 11050
(516) 944-8220

Hours:

Monday - Friday	8 am - 4:30 pm
Saturday	12 noon - 4 pm
Sunday	Closed

Shelter Staff:

Assistant Director:

Sue Hassett

Dog Control Officers:

Scott Halleran

Nancy Morrie


Kennel Attendants:

Liz DeCesare

Tom Garramone