

ADOPT-A-PET, INC.
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POLICY: Children and Teens Volunteering

We often get teens or parents contacting us whose younger children want to volunteer with Adopt-A-Pet. Because we don't own a shelter facility, there are limited opportunities for children to volunteer with our organization in a hands-on capacity. We don't have a location where children can come and groom animals or volunteer to clean cages, etc.

There are rare times children may be of help for occasional fundraising or community events; however, those events occur just a handful of times throughout the year.

For the opportunities that we do have for volunteers to interact with animals, insurance regulations require that a volunteer be 18 years of age to work hands-on with our animals. So while children are welcome to accompany their parents, for example, on a dog walking mission, the adult must be the one handling and in control of the dog at all times.

We hate to turn children or teens away because we know they are the next generation of animal rescuers and we want them to be excited about the cause and be the animal advocates of the future, but unfortunately, liability issues do not allow us to have minors engaging directly with the animals.

Our volunteers generally work independently, or as part of a team or network, and pretty much everything is adult jobs that require consistency, mostly administrative and "behind the scenes" such as application screening, adoption counseling, and the daily grind of actually working to get the animals cared for and adopted.

When children and teens want to do something to help Adopt-A-Pet, the best way they can put forth an effort to help the animals in the short term is to independently organize their own fundraiser or special project, either alone or as a group. We can provide Adopt-A-Pet literature and various other handouts. Things that children have done in the past include:

FUNDRAISING

- Organize a Collection Drive of our Wish List items, at school, church or around the neighborhood.
- At school or scouts, which class or troop can bring the most pet food or other items from the Wish List? Offer the winning group a fun activity, such as a pizza party.
- Collect tin cans - (some places also pay for bottles) - and cash them in at a recycling center. Pass out fliers around the neighborhood telling residents that you will be coming around on a designated date to collect the cans to raise money for Adopt-A-Pet.
- Set up a "Handykids" service, either ongoing or on a special day - Make "business cards" or brochures - distribute them around neighborhood - do chores in exchange for a donation: pull weeds, clean up leaves, mow lawn, wash car, shovel driveway, decorate a Christmas tree, put up/take down holiday decorations, wrap packages, pick up/deliver dry cleaning, water plants, bring over lunch or dinner, fold laundry, walk a dog, scoop litter boxes, wash windows, organize a junk drawer, clean a refrigerator, change smoke detector batteries, babysit, read to smaller children, sew on buttons, hem a skirt, polish shoes, plant a garden. The list is endless . . .
- Or, raffle off your services. For example, if you're old enough to babysit, sell raffle tickets to win 10 hours of free babysitting. Or to win free weekly lawn mowing for a month. Be creative!
- Hold a neighborhood Car Wash or Bike Wash day.
- Gather kids & organize a backyard or basement (or wherever) Talent Show - charge admission - \$2 per kid, \$5 per adult, or whatever.
- Or, have a "Non-Talent" Show? Charge \$1 for admission, kids do their routines, and then get sillier and sillier (think: "Stupid Kids' Tricks") - or more and more boring (think: reading a phone book or an appliance instruction manual) - and then charge \$5 to leave the event!
- Design and put donation cans/jars at local businesses.
- Have a traditional Neighborhood Walk/Run (sponsor per block walked).
- Have a Pet Parade (with real or toy pets) - charge an entry fee for each pet. Advertise to the neighborhood so that people come out and watch. Have a couple kids without pets walk each side of the street and ask spectators to put a donation in their handmade "dog" or "cat" - crafted out of a cardboard oatmeal container, plastic milk jug, etc. Judge pets at the end and give little prizes or certificates for biggest pet, littlest pet, blackest pet, whitest pet, silliest looking pet, scariest looking pet, best pet costume, best kid-pet lookalike, best behaved pet, most noisy pet.
- Hold a bake sale, lemonade stand, or grow vegetables in the summer and set up a produce stand.
- Have a yard sale. Pass out fliers around the neighborhood telling residents that you will be coming around on a designated date to collect their unwanted goods to sell at your yard sale to raise money for Adopt-A-Pet.
- Solicit raffle prize donations from neighborhood restaurants and businesses - for our Annual Raffle. (ask us for more details)
- Have a toy / book / t-shirt / jewelry exchange - everyone brings some items they don't want anymore and gets to pick out other people's items that they want. Charge \$2 or \$5 per swap.
- Have a "birthday party" for one or more of our rescued shelter animals to celebrate that this pet will now get a second chance at life and have many birthdays to come. Invite friends and charge a small admission fee or ask them to bring items from our Wish List to benefit the pet.
- For your own birthday party, instead of gifts, ask guests to bring cash donations or supplies to be given to the shelter.
- Design and sell handmade pet or rescue note cards (we can give you some wording ideas).
- Set up a special GoFundMe page for one of our animals who needs special medical care or an expensive surgery. (Ask us for info)

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Set up a document shredding day/week/month (if you have access to a shredder). Collect from neighbors - Give them a bag and ask them to fill it up with unwanted papers. We always need bags of paper shreds to use as bedding at our satellite adoption center at Wilmette Pet. (Prefer strips as opposed to cross-cuts. No newspaper. No staples or other inedibles.)
- Groups like school friends or a scout troop can build and donate scratching posts and/or kitty hideouts for cats, or a food/water bowl station that is higher off ground for bigger dogs, or "stairs" for dogs that are too little or too old to jump on the bed or into a car.
- Bake baskets of goodies and make lemonade and take them as a thank you gift to Wilmette Pet Center which fosters some of our animals or one of our participating vet clinics or doggie daycares that give us free or reduced price services to take care of our animals. (ask us for a list)
- Design and sew catnip mice or other kitty toys, fleece blankets, dog/cat beds, bandanas, to give to our foster cats or dogs, or for us to give to our adopters for their new "baby". A little gift for their thoughtfulness in adopting a little orphan.
- Bake homemade healthy biscuits for our dogs.
- Create Thank You cards to adopters that we can put in our adoption packets.

PUBLICITY and ADVOCACY

- Invite local newspapers, radio or tv stations to cover your fundraising event.
- Send press releases to newspapers to promote your event.
- Post our "We need Foster Homes" flier in local schools and businesses.
- Use school assignments like book reviews or show-and-tell to feature a story about an animal, animal rescue, animal shelters, pet overpopulation, the importance of spay/neuter, proper pet care, kindness to animals.
- Join our Facebook group and share our posts with your friends and family.

If you are a teen or a parent with a child who would like to organize an event to benefit Adopt-A-Pet's efforts to advocate for animals, please feel free to contact us for guidance, literature or photos of our animals.

