



# Volunteer Handbook

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## Welcome to Father John's Animal House Volunteer Program!

Volunteers are a crucial part of being an effective animal rescue. Participating as a volunteer is incredibly rewarding, exciting, fun, educational, and even life changing. Being able to participate in the events that help change the course of an animal's life for the better is such a rewarding activity - for both you and the animals. The activities that volunteers participate in at the shelter, whether it be socializing with cats, walking a dog, or otherwise cleaning and maintaining the shelter greatly impact our animals.

This Handbook has been prepared as a guide to help create the best volunteer experience possible. The information includes safety protocols, shelter procedures, volunteer policies, infection control, and proper animal handling. Please be sure to read through it thoroughly so you will be equipped with the tools needed for volunteering. We would like to make sure that your time spent here is productive, safe, enjoyable, and is equally rewarding to you and the animals you help care for.

### Shelter History

FJAH was founded in 1999, by a small and very dedicated group of people that recognized a great need in our community to help homeless and otherwise unwanted pets. The land and facility was acquired through a few large donations and the shelter was immediately able to start placing animals into loving adoptive homes. The land was originally owned by Father John F. Loviner; a retired member of the clergy who used the property to improve the quality of care for livestock animals. The shelter was named after him to honor his dedication to the welfare of animals.

As the years went by, the maintenance of the original facility was becoming increasingly difficult, so the decision was made to tear down the entire shelter and rebuild it. A large fund drive and challenge grant funded the project, and the shelter was rebuilt in 2012. The shelter now has the capacity to safely and responsibly adopt 600+ animals each year.

### Mission Statement and Organization Purpose

Our primary purpose is to provide love, companionship, shelter, food, socialization, and medical care for the many animals that come to us until permanent, loving homes can be found. Until then, we provide a temporary home where animals can receive the care they deserve and need. We are also a resource of information and service for the community to encourage responsible and committed pet ownership.

We are fortunate enough to be what is referred to as a "limited admission facility". This means that no adoptable animal is ever euthanized because of breed, age, space requirements, or a treatable condition. We will also take our adopted animals back if, for any reason, the adopter can no longer care for their pet. This is part of our dedication to provide for animals as best we can.

## **Volunteer Policies and Guidelines**

Father John's Animal House depends on our volunteers to be reliable and effective while participating in our volunteer program. This helps things at the shelter run smoothly, and creates an optimum benefit to the animals, staff, and volunteers.

**Every shelter volunteer is required to abide by the policies and guidelines outlined in this Volunteer Orientation Handbook.**

## Qualifications/Requirements

- Volunteers working directly with animals MUST have the willingness to follow instructions, and learn to properly interact with them under the direction of our staff.
- Must be 18+ to work *independently* with all animals. No volunteers younger than 13 will be permitted. Volunteers under 18 must have supervision at all times and are not permitted in kennels without a guardian. They may assist with walking once a guardian has retrieved a dog from the kennel.
- Be dependable, self-motivated, mature, sensitive, and a team player
- Have a readiness to work hard, get dirty, and pitch in with whatever is required
- Be able to meet assignments reliably, promptly, and with flexibility
- Be in general good health and be able to perform the tasks you have signed up for
- Complete the one-on-one training
- Sign the volunteer agreement and waivers for liability, tetanus, and rabies

## Time Commitment and Scheduling

Our shelter relies heavily on volunteers to help provide the care needed for our animals and the assistance needed for our staff. With this in mind, we ask that you commit to a regular schedule for your duties. This would be a weekly commitment that would require you to give a minimum of 48 hours notice in advance should you be unable to volunteer during your scheduled day and time. We will also require you to make us aware of planned vacations two weeks in advance. This is to ensure we have adequate coverage for your scheduled duties in the event you are unable to volunteer during your committed time.

On holidays where the shelter is closed, we will have a volunteer sign-up sheet available. You can opt to sign up for a morning cleaning shift for cats or dogs, or a morning or afternoon shift for walking dogs.

***\*Your schedule must be approved before beginning. Please contact me directly to discuss our current scheduling needs and your availability to volunteer at our facility.\****

### Sign in and Sign out

When reporting to the shelter or a sponsored event, please be sure to sign in on the volunteer sign-in sheet. It helps us to be more effective if we are able to track all volunteer activities. We can then better understand where volunteer help is most needed. If you are unsure of your duties or assignment when you arrive, please be sure to find a staff member who can help.

### Cleaning Times - **8AM - 11AM**

### Animal Socializing Times - **11AM - 4PM**

We are always in need of volunteer dog walkers and cat socializers. Socialization for our animals helps them show their best behaviors to adopters and increases their chances of going home sooner. You will be expected to adhere to all the rules and regulations of our shelter while volunteering with our animals.

*\*These hours are subject to change depending on observed holidays and days we are closed to the public due to emergencies, inclement weather, or for shelter events. Please refer any questions you may have about the times permitted for volunteering to our Volunteer Coordinator.*

## Dress Code at the Shelter

- NO short-shorts or skirts (shorts should be knee length or longer)
- NO slip on shoes (ex. flip flops/sandals/clogs/crocs)
- NO open-toed shoes OR high heels
- NO T-shirts with obscene or inappropriate graphics, and NO crop tops
- CAUTION WITH dangling jewelry
- CAUTION WITH long hair. Please be conscious around rowdy and playful animals.
- CAUTION WITH hats and hoods. They are not restricted but some dogs may be reactive towards them. Please remove them when inside the kennel.
- ALWAYS wear weather appropriate clothing, especially when walking the dogs.

Please keep in mind that you are representing the shelter when you volunteer, so it is important to dress appropriately not only to engage with the animals, but also for public perception.

## Accident Prevention and Safety

FJAH strives to provide an environment that is safe, clean, and hazard-free. We understand that accidents can and will happen but with appropriate training and personal responsibility we can keep these incidents to an absolute minimum. Please remember accident prevention is **EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY**. If you see a safety hazard, big or small, please address it or report it immediately.

All accidents, incidents and injuries involving a volunteer must be immediately reported to a staff member in charge, and the shelter Manager or Volunteer Coordinator. An incident form **MUST** be filled out for animal related injuries that cause lacerations or puncture wounds, and severe non animal related injuries. It must be reviewed and signed by the staff member in charge. It is important that you do not fabricate any information in this report as having the most accurate information allows us to address the issues appropriately.

### Personal Calls and Cell Phone Use Policy

This policy outlines expectations for personal phone calls and cell phone use during your volunteer duties. Father John's Animal House will not be liable for the damage or loss of personal cell phones or other personal devices brought into the shelter. Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action or termination of your volunteer relationship if the violation(s) persist.

### Personal Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

**Volunteers are required to limit the placing and receiving of personal calls and text messages during their volunteer hours. Personal calls and text messages should be made outside of your volunteer hours when you are not interacting with the animals in our facility.**

While volunteering you are required to exercise discretion in the use of your personal cell phones while at Father John's Animal House. The safety of our animals, staff, and volunteers is of utmost importance.

**Excessive personal calls and text messages during your volunteer activities, regardless of the phone used, can be distracting and is a safety risk.** If you are distracted by your phone it increases the risk of there being an accident or safety issue. It is also not fair to the animals that require and deserve your attention when you are interacting with them.

Please understand that you are representing Father John's Animal House when posting about the shelter on social media. Please check with a staff member to ensure an animal is available for adoption and it is ok to share before posting about that animal. Any comments or posts made in reference to FJAH should be made with the shelter's reputation in mind.

### Cell Phone Use While Driving

Volunteers who are using their personal vehicles or the shelter van for shelter purposes are required to use caution and good judgment while driving. Under no circumstances are volunteers allowed to place themselves or any animals at risk to fulfill business or personal phone calls.

- Volunteers are prohibited from using a cell phone, PDA, or other hand-held electronic devices while operating a vehicle. This applies to the typing or reading of text messages and emails as well.
- If not prohibited by state law, volunteers may use hands-free equipment to make or answer phone calls while driving without violating this policy. However, safety must always be the first priority and therefore calls are expected to be brief. If necessary please pull over and safely park before resuming a phone call.

Volunteers who are charged with traffic violations resulting from the improper use of their phone while driving will be solely responsible for all liabilities that result from such actions.

## **Professional Conduct**

FJAH is committed to a safe work environment free of all forms of violence. When dealing with staff, other volunteers, and adoptive families you must always be polite, respectful, and helpful. It is the policy of FJAH that unlawful discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, national origin, or any other status protected by the law will not be tolerated. Acts of violence are prohibited, and offenders will be permanently banned from Father John's Animal House. The handling of animals should be done in a professional manner, using the least amount of restraint, and treating them with kindness and respect at all times.

### Harassment

FJAH has a strict policy forbidding physical or verbal harassment of volunteers by anyone. Interfering with a volunteer's performance at an assigned task, or creating a hostile environment is unacceptable.

Conversely, volunteers harassing our staff, members of the public or potential adopters will not be tolerated. Please contact a staff member immediately if this ever arises so we can address the situation.

## Drug and Alcohol Use / Smoking

Reporting for duty at FJAH while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol is strictly forbidden. In order to perform volunteer work safely volunteers cannot be under the influence of any substance.

In order to protect our animals, volunteers, and property, smoking or the use of nicotine or tobacco products will not be allowed at FJAH. This includes the shelter property, buildings, or around the animals at any shelter sponsored event.

## Confidentiality

All volunteers are expected to maintain confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed while volunteering. This pertains to any records that include names, addresses, phone numbers, etc. of staff, volunteers, and adopters. None of this information may ever be removed from the shelter. This also includes information that involves board members, other volunteers, clients, sponsors, and donors and/or the overall business of Father John's Animal House. Volunteers are prohibited from discussing with any media outlet any information about Father John's Animal House records unless given permission. Otherwise, media personnel should be referred to the shelter Director.

## **Disease and Prevention**

The safety of our animals, staff, and volunteers is our number one priority at Father John's Animal House. Disease prevention is a large part of that priority.

**Zoonotic diseases are those that humans and other animals can contract from each other.** The following list details the most effective way to prevent zoonosis.

- Frequent hand washing with antibacterial soap, paying special attention to cuticle, fingernail and finger web areas. The length of washing is just as important as frequency. (*Tip: sing to yourself "Happy Birthday" twice while washing your hands.*) Please thoroughly dry your hands after washing. Wet hands attract and hold bacteria.
- Immediately disinfect scratches and bite wounds.
- Let your physician know you are working closely with shelter animals.
- When an animal enclosure states, "*wear protective clothing*" **only** staff are to handle them
- Make sure your own animals have their necessary vaccines up to date.
- Notify your veterinarian that you volunteer at an animal shelter.
- Change your shelter clothes before socializing with your animals at home.
- Keep a pair of shoes specifically for when you volunteer, and keep them in a bag in your vehicle.
- DO NOT come to volunteer if you are sick or showing signs/symptoms of a contagious illness.
- If you become pregnant, please speak with the Volunteer Coordinator about modifying your volunteer duties or times.

## Signs of Illness

**At FJAH, maintaining the health of our animals is everyone's responsibility. If you notice any signs of illness that have not been observed previously, please notify staff immediately.** Some signs to watch for include:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Eye / Nasal Discharge
- Sneezing / Coughing
- Anorexia (loss of appetite)
- Lethargy (lack of energy)
- Dehydration
- Abnormal gait / Muscle control
- Excessive salivation
- Aggressive or unusual behavior

## Volunteer Graduate System

We categorize our volunteers with a color coding system depending on the level of experience you have achieved. This color coding system correlates directly with the categorization of our animals that is determined by their behaviors and level of sociability. This is to further ensure the safety of all volunteers as you will be restricted to interacting with animals of the same category.

To graduate to the next volunteer level, all volunteers must complete a minimum of 2-3 requirements for each respective level. Please refer to the Volunteer Coordinator if you have interest in graduating to the next level to verify you have met the minimum requirements. Volunteers younger than 18 years old must remain at Green until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### **Level Green:**

- All new volunteers fall under this category (all volunteers under the age of 18 will remain in this category until at least 18 years of age).
- Complete online video program and necessary assessment.
- Complete on-site training with our volunteer coordinator or respective volunteer.
- Have completed and returned the signature page of the volunteer handbook.
- All volunteers of this level must abide by the rules to only engage in responsibilities and with animals with the corresponding color assigned.

### **Level Yellow:**

- Has had a minimum of 4 shifts as a green volunteer.
- Has shown a high level of reliability by appearing for all scheduled shifts or has notified appropriately when unable to make a shift.
- Has shown an ability to follow policies and procedures both independently and as a member of a team.
- You will undergo an observational assessment with a purple volunteer or staff member (these assessments must be pre-scheduled).
- Has been given permission to interact with animals in restricted areas under staff supervision
- Familiar with most animals in your department and has shown a propensity to understand animal behavior in the shelter environment.
- Understands shelter operating procedures and can perform them independently if need be.

### Level Red:

- All of the above plus;
- A minimum of 6 months of service.
- Has regularly met or exceeded expected number of shifts on a monthly basis.
- Generally at the shelter 2+ days a week
- Undergoes the necessary skills assessment with staff members.
- Has displayed extensive knowledge regarding animals and animal behavior
- Has authority to engage with animals in restricted areas with permission from staff

### Level Purple / Volunteer Royalty: *(Limited approval for this level)*

- Has had a minimum of a year of *above satisfactory* volunteer performance.
- Has shadowed staff member during counseling **at least three times**
- Has received 8 hours of adoption counseling training
- Has permission to work independently with all animals
- Understands adoption procedures and policies
- Is capable of engaging and counseling potential adopters
- Outgoing and willing to ask difficult questions
- Has been approved for leveling up by all administration

## Cat Handling and Care

It is likely that every volunteer at the shelter may be involved in the care and handling of cats and kittens at some point. For this reason it is important to be knowledgeable about proper cat handling and safety.

While some of the cats at our shelter will be friendly and easy to manage, a few will not. Certain ones will be terrified by their new environment, in pain from illness or injuries, be fearful due to abuse, or have anxiety about close contact with humans. All of these issues can cause a cat to react negatively to you.

Often, these signs of fear are not evident, unless you know what you are looking for. We ask that you approach every cat slowly and cautiously, being aware that its reaction can change in an instant.

### Precautions to use:

- **READ EVERYTHING!** There will be clearly posted signs hanging on cages, doors, walls, etc. These signs are to assure the well-being of our cats, as well as your and their safety.
- Approach every cat slowly and cautiously. Give them a chance to sniff you before reaching to pet them.
- Do not attempt to handle a cat that has shown any form of aggression, such as hissing, growling, swatting, charging, biting, flattening of the ears, licking lips, or spitting.
- **If a bite or scratch occurs immediately report the incident to the staff member in charge. You must wash the wound vigorously with soap and water. Dry, apply hydrogen peroxide on the wound area (if it is a puncture wound, Iodine soak/flush is recommended)**
- Monitor site for signs of worsening. Cat bites are VERY serious. Cats harbor more bacteria in their mouths than dogs so the risk of infection is greater. NEVER fabricate information to your physician as to the nature of your injury. Be completely honest so they can administer the proper care you need.

## Cat Behavior Color Coding System

All the animals in our facility are color-coded depending on the type of behaviors they display. The color code will be located on the front or back of their cage card. For the cats each color represents the following behaviors;

- **Green:** Consistently seeks interaction with other cats and people. They are affectionate and can be picked up and put on your lap.
- **Green-Yellow:** Have a positive response around people. They may be bonded with staff or frequent volunteers. Gets along well with other cats.
- **Yellow:** Non-aggressive towards people. Will eventually warm up under the right circumstances. Can coexist with other cats. **Each cat will be in this category for unique reasons so you must always ask before interacting with any cat of this level even after training.**
- **Yellow-Red:** Aggressive if provoked or feels threatened. Shy and fearful and will need socialization. **Each cat will be in this category for unique reasons so you must always ask before interacting with any cat of this level even after training.**
- **Red:** Offensive and defensive behavior. Unresponsive to human interaction. Unpredictable or unknown behavior. Only select volunteers will be permitted to interact with cats of this level.

## Dog Handling and Care

FJAH will always have dogs in our facility so we strongly recommend that our volunteers are familiar with our protocols prior to interacting with them. Although many of us have experience interacting with and being around dogs, it is very important to remember dogs in a shelter environment can be very different. Many of the dogs you will meet here will be happy-go-lucky and easy going, however, many others will not be. You may see dogs being fearful, barrier aggressive, stressed, anxious, and uneasy.

At FJAH we work very hard to mentally and physically stimulate our dogs. With daily enrichment, socialization, and exercise we cater to each dog's individual physical and psychological needs. With that in mind, a shelter is not a home. Our dogs need us to acknowledge their mental state, and accommodate their physical and emotional needs. For example, if a dog is obviously stressed by your presence (lip licking, wide eyes, tail tucks, quivering, etc.) please move on and remove yourself as a stressor.

Important things to remember when meeting/walking dogs

- **READ EVERYTHING!** There will be clearly posted signs hanging on runs, on doors, walls, etc. These signs are to assure the well-being of our dogs, as well as your and their safety.
- The easiest and safest way to introduce your-self to a dog is to ignore them. Most often if the dog is given the option of whether or not to approach you they will feel more comfortable with your presence. **When the dog has a chance to sniff you, please avoid leaning over them, reaching quickly for them, reaching above their head, or putting your face near theirs. This can cause them to react defensively if they feel threatened.**

- **We do not allow members of the public to walk through our kennel for one important reason; it is too stressful for the dogs. As a volunteer you must remember that because you are not here every day some of the dogs will think of you as a new person and will react as such.**
- As you walk through the kennel be calm, quiet, and respectful. Engaging with a dog that is barking, jumping, or lunging at the fence for attention or out of fear will reinforce these negative behaviors. Only interact with the dog if they are calm and have all paws on the ground.
- **Never walk without poop-bags in your pocket.** Picking up immediately after a dog eliminates is required of ALL dog walkers. It will also help keep our shelter clean, lessen the chance of spreading illness, and keep the animals in our care healthy. Please dispose of in a garbage can.
- **You MUST make sure your dog is securely fitted with slip lead before leaving their run.** Ask the kennel staff for assistance if necessary if you are unfamiliar with the technique.
- **All gates must be shut and secured with a clip.** This includes all dog runs and play yards.
- **You are NEVER to allow your dog to interact with any other dog unless given permission by a staff member.** You will be expected to adhere to our 10ft Rule. This means while walking a dog you will keep a minimum of 10 feet between your dog and any other dog. This is for their safety as well as yours.
- You shall only have 1 dog in a play yard at a time unless accompanied by a staff member or if given permission.
- **Read through a dog's entire run card and familiarize yourself with the information presented there prior to interacting with them. This will prepare you on how to safely handle that specific dog.**

## Dog Behavior Color Coding System

All the animals in our facility are color-coded depending on the type of behaviors they display. The color code will be located on the front or back of their cage card.. For the dogs each color represents the following behaviors;

- **Green:** All volunteers may interact with these dogs. They are easy to walk and know manners. New volunteers are encouraged to walk only green dogs for the first month of volunteering when possible.
- **Green/Yellow:** Entry level volunteers may interact with these dogs as well if solid green labeled dogs are not available during the first month. They are easy to walk and handle, but may have certain behavioral tendencies that are undesirable (pulling on the leash, jumping.) Please read their cage cards thoroughly and ask staff what to be aware of for each dog.
- **Yellow:** These dogs are yellow due to their size, energy level, or some undesirable behaviors (ex. playing rough, pulling hard, excessive jumping.) **Each dog will be in this category for unique reasons so you must always ask before interacting with any dog of this level even after training.**
- **Yellow/Red:** These dogs display very fearful, nervous, defensive or aggressive behaviors that make them flight and safety risks. Our staff will discuss with you all the appropriate handling techniques to properly interact with these dogs. **You must talk with staff prior to interacting with any dog of this level, even after training.**

- **Red: STOP!** Red dogs are **STAFF ONLY**. These dogs are red because they have not been medically or behaviourally evaluated. They may also have displayed behaviors that are deemed unsafe or dangerous. No volunteers will be permitted to interact with these dogs at any time.

## Other Color/Coding Symbols to be Aware Of



**Star (of any color):** Needs Socialization (any color star)

### What to do if something goes wrong

It is possible that in your time volunteering with us a dog will show aggression towards you, another dog, another person, etc. It is important for you to know how to react in a situation like this. Fear is also the ultimate motivator for a dog to use its mouth and is the most common cause of dog bites. Dogs will communicate emotions with their bodies and below is a list of signs of fear as well as aggression to look out for when interacting with our shelter dogs.

- **Signs of fear:** tail tucked between legs or under belly, eyes will be wide (whale eye), dog may be licking lips, curling lips, quivering, trying to hide, or crouching body language (to be as small as possible). The dogs may only show one or more of these signs when stressed so please always be cautious!
- If you note any of these signs in a dog immediately **STOP** what you are doing. Do not try to comfort or push the dog in any way as they may react defensively out of fear. Back out of the situation and notify staff about this interaction.
- **Signs of aggression:** wide eyes, stiff body, locked elbows, curled lips, hackles up, wrinkled brow, tail erect and stiff (may be wagging with small freezes in wag), snarling, growling, lunging, and weight shifted over front paws.
- If you note any of the above signs in a dog **STOP**. Begin to back away from the dog and out of the run. **Do not panic or turn your back on the dog.**
- When possible put a barrier between you and the dog (i.e. blanket, chair, or fence)
- If this aggression is directed towards another dog or person, safely distract the dog if possible and if not please return the dog to their run and notify staff if this is a behavior not previously observed from this dog.

### What to do if two dogs begin to fight:

**NEVER try to break up a dog fight by physically intervening.** We have air horns above the sink in our dog food preparation room as well as hanging in each play yard. An air horn is our preferred method of breaking up a dog fight. It maintains your safety as well as works very effectively. The dogs typically do not associate the loud noise with us and it is disruptive enough to break their focus from the fight. This should be used only in extreme cases where dogs are not breaking apart from a fight.

We ask that you refrain from physically intervening with a dog fight because it will guarantee you will be injured. The dog that is the aggressor may misinterpret your interference as physical stimulation from the victim and the aggressor may continue accelerating their aggression towards the victim or you as well. Your interference can also frustrate the aggressor to the point of them redirecting the aggression towards you.

#### What to do if bitten by a dog:

- If you are bitten you must immediately find a staff member for assistance. The wound must be properly cleaned and patched.
- We must determine the circumstances of the bite to understand why it occurred. There are many different reasons why a dog will bite. From play-biting, to over excitement, to redirection of aggression.
- A dog bite does not mean the animal will be euthanized, but a 10-day quarantine is required to determine if the pet has any medical concerns associated with bites.

***This concludes the handbook containing all volunteer policies and guidelines you must adhere to. Please hold on to this handbook for your reference in the future in case you need clarification on what will be expected of you as a volunteer. Any questions you have at any time can always be directed to the Volunteer Coordinator. Thank you again for your support and willingness to help us save the many animals that will come to our facility. We look forward to having you join the Father John's Family!***

# HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT

*This Handbook and other policies have been provided to me for informational purposes, and I understand that they are not intended to, and do not create, any contractual or legal obligations on the part of Father John's Animal House. Further, I understand that my volunteerism may be terminated at any time, by either me or FJAH, with or without cause and with or without notice.*

*I agree to read and keep this Handbook for future reference and to observe the requirements outlined in the Handbook. I understand that I am responsible for reading the handbook, familiarizing myself with its contents, and adhering to all of the policies and procedures of FJAH, whether set forth in this handbook or elsewhere.*

*I understand that the Volunteer Coordinator or the Shelter Director is available to answer any questions that I may have regarding the policies set forth in the Handbook.*

*I further understand that this Handbook will be reviewed periodically by FJAH and that FJAH reserves the right to modify or eliminate any provisions contained in this Handbook at any time.*

**I HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE STATEMENT AND AGREE TO COMPLY WITH ALL OF FATHER JOHN'S ANIMAL HOUSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.**

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**Signature of Volunteer**

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**Date**