

# Volunteer Handbook



**Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter**  
1855 SE Inner Loop  
Georgetown, TX 78626  
512-943-3322  
[www.wilcopets.org](http://www.wilcopets.org)

**Public hours:**

**Monday - Friday 12:00 - 6:00**  
**Saturday - Sunday 11:00 - 5:00**

**Volunteer hours:**

**Monday - Friday 8:30 - 6:00**  
**Saturday - Sunday 8:30 - 5:00**

# WELCOME

Welcome to the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter! Giving your time is one of the best things you can do for the pets at the shelter. We rely on you to help us continue to provide the highest level of care we all want for the pets during their stay.

Volunteering at the shelter will not only be rewarding for you, but also for the animals at the shelter. We need you to work together with us to find good homes for every healthy and behaviorally sound companion animal and to save all dogs and cats that can be medically treated and behaviorally rehabilitated.

This manual outlines our general shelter policies as they pertain to the volunteer program. Feel free to ask questions. All questions are important please do not hesitate to ask. We depend on you to be an advocate in your community and educate your friends and family on issues that affect the lives of shelter pets everywhere. You can make a difference to the animals in your community!

We look forward to working with you. Thank you for joining us

## *Shelter Management*

### **Contact Information:**

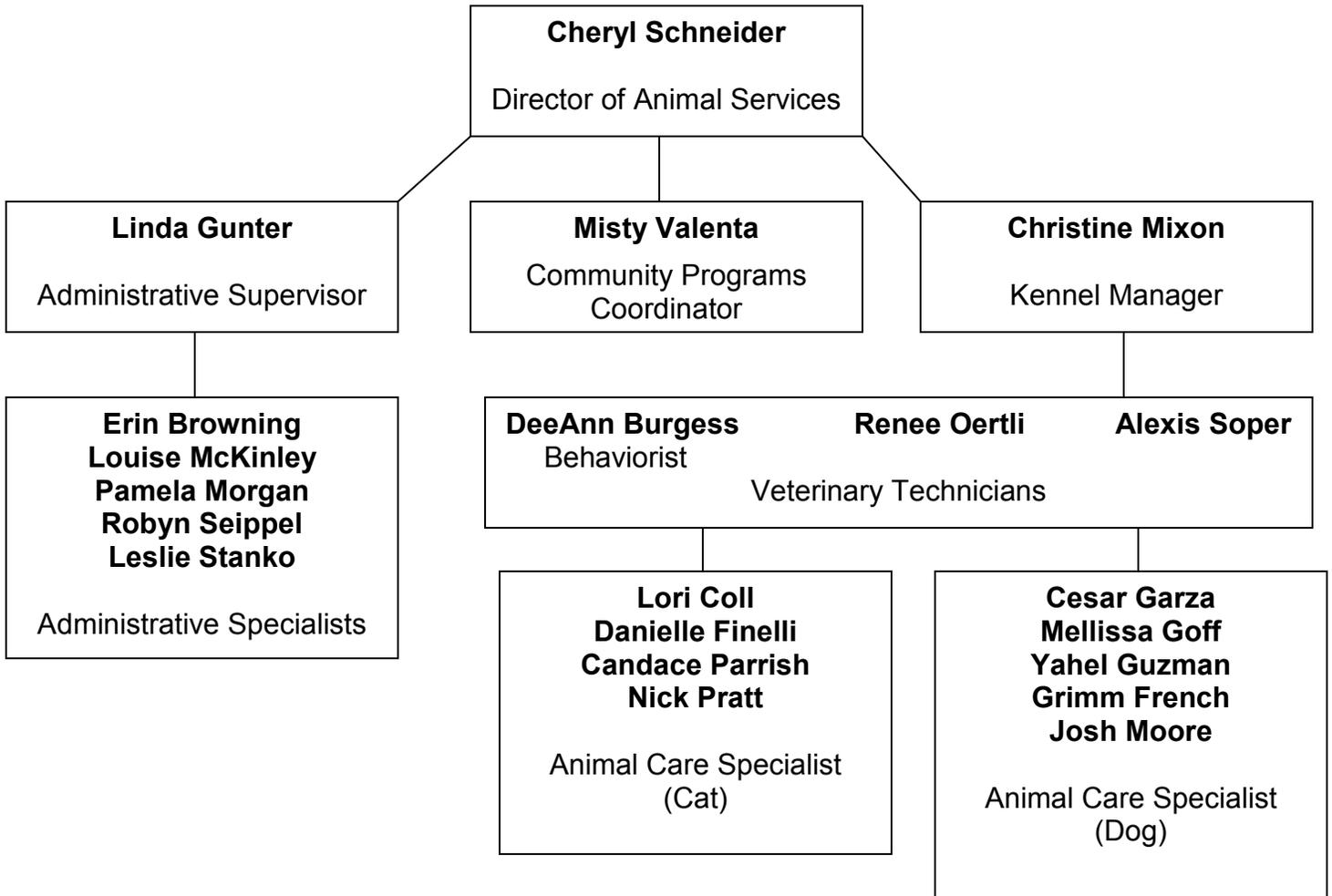
If you have a question or concern about volunteering, the shelter, or any shelter policy please contact:

Misty Valenta, Community Programs Coordinator  
512-943-3817  
mvalenta@wilco.org



## Shelter Staff

We have a dedicated and caring staff here at the shelter. Please refer to this chart to help you understand who can help you with your particular question or concern.



## How to Become a Volunteer

1. Attend one Volunteer Orientation/Animal Handling meeting (see [www.wilcopets.org](http://www.wilcopets.org) for times and dates)
2. Complete a Volunteer Application and sign the Liability Waiver. Parents must complete and sign for volunteers under the age of 18. The waiver must be signed prior to participation in volunteer activities.
3. Complete an Authorization and Release Form to authorize a background check. Volunteers aged 15 and younger do not have to submit this form.

### Qualifications

You must be an animal lover!

Be at least 12 years of age. Parents must accompany any minors below the age of 16 at all times while at the shelter. If you are volunteering with a child you **MUST** remain together. Children under the age of 16 are not allowed to volunteer alone.

All volunteers are asked to contribute at least 5 hours per month and participate in at least 2 shelter events. However, all volunteer help is appreciated. If it is noted that you have not logged any volunteer time within a few months we may remove you from active volunteer status. If placed on inactive status, a volunteer may be required to repeat orientation and/or handling classes if a significant amount of time has passed since their last date of volunteer service.

If you are pregnant or if you have any condition that might compromise your immune system, you must notify your physician of your intent to volunteer at the shelter. Your doctor may want you to limit or stop your volunteering or s/he may have medical advice/precautions for you.

You must complete both the volunteer orientation meeting and the handling classes (if you wish to have direct animal contact). Additional training may be required depending upon which area you would like to volunteer. Class times and dates are listed on the website at [www.wilcopets.org](http://www.wilcopets.org) under the volunteer tab and/or the events calendar.

You are an important part of the success of this shelter. Volunteers are an essential part of shelter events that are designed to promote the adoption of our animals, encourage donations, and provide information to the public about our organization. We rely on you! Volunteers who sign up to participate in events but are no-show for 2 events without just cause and notification will be removed from the volunteer database pending review by shelter management.

## **Shelter Policies**

### **Recording Service Hours**

All volunteers are required to sign in and out each time they work at the shelter. The shelter staff is required to keep track and report the number of volunteers serving the animals and their accrued hours. The Volunteer Sign In Book can be found behind the front desk of the shelter. (Time spent on any sanctioned volunteer event or activity away from the shelter should be entered on the sign in sheet as well.)

### **Emergencies**

Please report any injuries to yourself, other volunteers, visitors or animals to shelter staff immediately. If you are bitten and the bite breaks your skin, notify a staff member and shelter management immediately. We are required by law to file a bite report for every incident with Animal Control.

### **Dress Code and Conduct Code**

When involved in events or working at the shelter, volunteers are expected to present a good image of WCRAS at all times. This includes language and clothing. Volunteers must be easily identified with their badge at all times. Volunteers must dress appropriately while volunteering. (Wearing your WCRAS volunteer t-shirt is preferred, but not required.) T-shirts with suggestive or offensive words and suggestive clothing should not be worn. Volunteers should wear long pants and sturdy, non-skid, closed-toed shoes for safety. It is also advised to wear comfortable clothes that you don't mind getting dirty, stained, wet or snagged.

### **Drugs and Alcohol**

Drugs (including tobacco) and alcohol are not to be used by volunteers during activities. (This includes smoking.) The sale, use, possession, or transfer of a controlled substance or alcohol on WCRAS premises or during work time is prohibited.

### **Termination Policy**

WCRAS reserves the right to terminate a volunteer's service at any time, with or without notice. We advise volunteers to follow staff directives and to not represent themselves as employees. The following are some occurrences that may result in termination:

- Stealing or Substance Abuse
- Discourtesy/rudeness to another volunteer, staff member or citizen.
- Misrepresenting WCRAS or WCRAS staff in any way
- Unauthorized communication with media regarding shelter policies or practices
- Any deliberate act of cruelty to an animal
- Careless, negligent performance of volunteer duties

### **Restricted Areas**

No volunteers are allowed in these areas unless escorted by a WCRAS employee:

- The dog and cat isolation rooms located in the receiving or sally port areas
- The Stray Hold areas for both dogs and cats
- The examination rooms of the shelter including surgery room
- The walk-in freezer
- The dog and cat rabies quarantine rooms

## **Sanitation and Cleaning**

Our best defense against the spread of illness is diligently cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and hands. Everyone needs to wash their hands in between handling different animals and before eating. Many diseases are transmittable from animal to animal or human to human. There are some diseases that are communicable from animal to man. By your actions you can either limit or enhance the spread of infectious diseases.

For the protection of your own pets, we advise you keep them current on vaccinations. Volunteers should also change their clothing before interacting with their pets at home.

Bordetella (Kennel Cough) is a common virus that can affect dogs who are housed closely together such as in shelters, boarding facilities and grooming facilities. It is quickly transmitted through direct surface contact (with dogs, people, toys, bowls, etc) and also through the air by sneezing or coughing. WCRAS provides dogs with Bordetella vaccination after they arrive at the shelter however; some dogs still come down with the illness due to their age, general health condition or stress level.

Upper respiratory infection (URI) is extremely common in shelter cats because they are stressed and their immunity is compromised. To prevent the spread of URI, volunteers can socialize and play with cats inside the cat's cage or in the cat viewing room one at a time. If cats are taken out and held, the volunteer's clothes could potentially infect the next cat held. Please try to minimize the amount of contact of the cat with your clothing. Volunteers MUST thoroughly sanitize their hands after touching each cat.

If you ever notice an animal who is sick please tell a staff member right away. You can also write the symptom, day, and time on a sticky-note and leave it on their kennel card.

## **Euthanasia**

We do our best to place every adoptable animal that comes to our shelter. WCRAS does not have "time limits" for adoptable animals. A decision to euthanize is based on several different factors which may include but are not limited to: life threatening illnesses, extreme medical problems, and unprovoked aggression. This decision is always carefully made by experienced staff. Euthanasia is performed using a lethal injection of sodium pentobarbital. Staff is deeply saddened every time an animal is euthanized. We strive to be a "no-kill" shelter, which means our save rate is at or above 90%. However, since we are an open-intake shelter (which means we must take in any animal in need from our jurisdiction) that status is tremulous.

Volunteers do not take part in euthanasia. If you come to volunteer and are looking for a particular animal and cannot find him/her PLEASE ask the staff. The animal may have been adopted or transferred out to a rescue group. If the animal has been euthanized we will be honest with you. We are accountable for each and every animal who is euthanized and the reasons why.

We respectfully request that our volunteers understand this process and base their opinion on the facts each case is based on and the statistics on the number and types of animals we receive. You may be able to influence many other people to spay or neuter their pets, when they hear the reality of what shelters deal with daily.

## The Animals We Serve

### Stray Animals

WCRAS accepts stray animals from the public and Animal Control Officers. WCRAS accepts stray animals which were found within the area of the shelter jurisdiction. Due to space and resource limitations we do not accept animals from outside of our jurisdiction.

### Stray Hold

Strays are subject to a “hold” period of 3 or 7 days. Stray Hold animals are indicated by “Stage: Stray Hold” in the upper left section of their kennel card. (See kennel card example on the following page) Our hold period is 3 days for animals which came in without ID (tags or microchip) and 7 days for animals which came in with identification or some indication of owner. At the end of the 3 or 7 day hold period if the animal is behaviorally sound he/she will be placed up for adoption. Volunteers do not work with the stray hold animals unless directed by a WCRAS staff member.

### Owner Released Animals

WCRAS also accepts animals from their owners if the owner resides within the area of the shelter jurisdiction. Due to space and resource limitations we do not accept animals from outside of our jurisdiction. The fee for an owner release is \$25.00.

Many times animals are released to the shelter do to no fault of their own. Some of the reasons for surrendering animals to WCRAS include:

- |                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| “He won’t behave”           | “I don’t have time for her”                      |
| “I can’t housebreak him”    | “He doesn’t get along with other dogs (or cats)” |
| “I’m moving”                | “The kids don’t spend time with him anymore”     |
| “My landlord said no pets”  | “I can’t afford to take care of him”             |
| “My husband is allergic”    | “I got a divorce”                                |
| “He destroys the furniture” | “She is too big”                                 |

### Animals Available for Adoption

Volunteers will primarily be working with animals who are available for adoption to the public. Volunteers are encouraged to socialize and care for these animals to help reduce stress and illness. These are also the animals needing photos, bios, outings, and other methods of advertisement to increase their adoptability.



## Understanding Kennel Cards

Each animal housed at WCRAS should have his or her own kennel card. Kennel cards provide valuable information to staff, volunteers and the public. Please do not remove the kennel card from a cage unless asked to do so by a staff member. If you notice a cage does not have a kennel card that corresponds to the animal inside, please let a staff member know so that we can replace the card.

**Kennel Card** Tel.: 512-943-3322 | Fax: 512-930-8015



**Name** *streak*

**ID Number** *A09613390*

**Stage** *Available*

This pet is eligible for 30 days of pre-paid health insurance when adopted from our organization. For more information, please visit [www.sheltercare.com](http://www.sheltercare.com) or call 1-866-375-PETS. Our organization offers 24PetWatch *free* *Watch* pet *re* information call 1-866-597-2424.

**Animal ID:** A09613390    **Stage:** Available    **Review Date:**    **Location:** Stray Hold Bldg/

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**Description:**  
*streak* Bulldog, American/ Mix, White/ Tan/ , Large 76.00 pound  
*1 y 1 m 1 d* , DOB: 2/15/2009, Previously Altered: **No**, Currently Altered: **Yes** *Neutered?*  
**Medium Curly Coat**, Declawed: **None**  
 Collars: / , Bitten: **No Bite History**, Distinguishing Marks: **None**

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**Intake Info:**  
**Intake Date/Time**    **Emancipation Date/Time**    **Intake Type**    **Intake Sub Type**    **Intake Reason**  
 2/14/2010 12:32:00 PM    02/17/2010 12:32PM    Stray    Public Drop Off (No ID)  
**Jurisdiction**    **Location Found**  
 City of Round Rock    Red Roof Inn

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**Microchip Info:**  
**Microchip #**    **Microchip Type**    **Implant Date**  
 0A116F6825    24PetWatch

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**ExamID:** E08273474    **Exam Date:** 3/11/2010 5:20:00 PM    **Performed By:** Renee Oertli    **Entered By:** roertli  
**Weight:** 0    **Body Temperature:** 0    **Medical Status:**    **Temperament Condition:**  
**Vaccine**

Vaccine	Manufacture	Lot Number	Expiration /Re-Vac Dates	Pet ID Number /Type	Route /Body Part
DA2PPv	Shering Plough		03/25/2010 05:20PM		

---

**ExamID:** E08270001    **Exam Date:** 3/11/2010 12:29:00 PM    **Performed By:** Ovidiu Craciun, DVM    **Entered By:** ksnyder  
**Weight:** 0    **Body Temperature:** 0    **Medical Status:**    **Temperament Condition:**  
**Vaccine**

Vaccine	Manufacture	Lot Number	Expiration /Re-Vac Dates	Pet ID Number /Type	Route /Body Part
Rabies - 1 Year	Pfizer	S845209	2/10/2011 12:00:00 AM		Subcutaneous

The animal's Name, Identification Number and Stage are located at the top of the card. These are pieces of information that you will use frequently. Please be careful not to remove an animal whose stage is "Stray Hold" from his or her kennel unless instructed to do so by a staff member. You should only show potential adopters animals whose stage is "Available for Adoption".



### How to Talk to Potential Adopters

Volunteers must be polite, courteous and helpful when dealing with staff and the public. Please refer all questions regarding policies and procedures you are not familiar with to a staff member. It is extremely important that the public not be misinformed and that you report any potential conflict to a staff member.

### Adoption Requirements

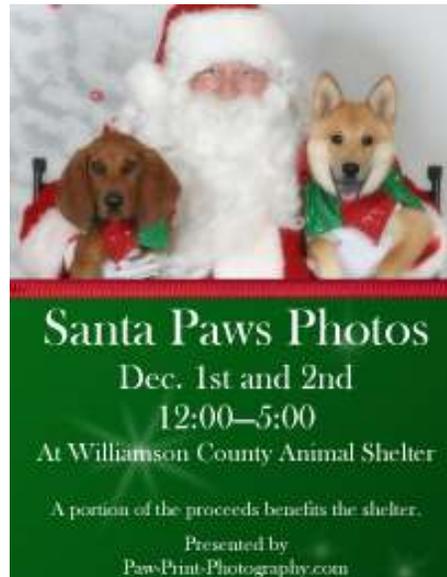
Adoption applications are available at [www.wilcopets.org](http://www.wilcopets.org) as well as at the front desk of the shelter. Before adopting, the adopter must fill out an adoption application and submit it to a staff member for review. Adopters must be 18 years old to adopt.

Please do not promise any animal to any adopter. Adoptions are first come, first serve.

Our standard adoption fee is \$75.00 for both cats and dogs. However, we frequently have special promotions and reduced fees. Be sure to let the potential adopter know to ask at the desk about any current promotions or special pricing.

The adoption fee includes:

- Spay or neuter procedure
- Microchip implant (and registration)
- Vaccinations
- Heartworm Test (for dogs)
- FeLV test (for cats over 4 months)



## General Volunteer Tasks

### **Helping Potential Adopters Visit with dogs**

Volunteers can take potential adopters to the front or side yard of the shelter to interact with adoptable dogs. If you feel comfortable with the potential adopter, he may walk the dog over, himself. When using the yard areas, never leave a dog unattended.

You may also take the adopter and the dog to one of the exercise yards located in back of the shelter to get to know each other. The dog may be taken off of the leash in the exercise yard after making sure all gates are securely closed. Do not leave the dog unattended in the exercise yard.

When potential adopters are visiting with multiple dogs outside or through the kennel bars, please inform them of our sanitation policy. We ask that all potential adopters and shelter staff sanitize their hands and arms after each interaction with an animal in order to suppress the spread of illness between animals.

### **Helping Potential Adopters Visit with cats**

Customers may visit with cats in the cat viewing room one cat at a time. However, if there is more than one cat housed together in the same kennel a potential adopter may visit with one or more of these cats together in the viewing room.

When in the Cat Viewing Room, please inform potential adopters of our sanitation policy. We ask that all potential adopters and shelter staff sanitize their hands and arms after each interaction with an animal in order to suppress the spread of illness between animals.

Monitor the interaction between the customer and the animal. Graciously remind them to practice safe handling if necessary.

After the customer is finished visiting with the animal make sure you place the animal back in the correct kennel and the door is securely latched and closed.

### **Cat Socialization**

Cats are very susceptible to stress. You can help reduce their stress and keep them mentally healthy by providing them with interaction. You can play with them in the cat viewing room or in their individual kennels. Socialize cats by petting, loving and talking to them. There are toys available in the cat area. Please ask a staff member if you have trouble locating them. You can also bring paper bags or shoeboxes to place in the kennels for the cats to hide and play in.

As always, sanitize your hands between touching animals and make sure the potential adopters do so as well.



### **Dog Walking/Socialization**

Walking dogs at the shelter is extremely important for their health and mental wellbeing. A white board located in the first kennel building has the dogs' names listed with instructions for the frequency he/she should be walked. For example, some "special needs" dogs need to be walked twice per day. Please walk the dogs that have not already been walked first. Walks are designated by clips on the kennel card. Each clip represents one walk. Before you remove a dog, place the clip on the dog's kennel card clip. Clips are located in the plastic bin on the kennel wall. It is crucial that you return the dog to his/her proper kennel and never take the kennel card with you unless directed by staff.



Dogs should be walked at least 15 minutes at a time. Most of these dogs have a lot of pent-up energy that needs to be released. Only taking them out for a short period of time will be extremely frustrating for them.

Only walk dogs you feel comfortable handling. In order to reduce unnecessary stress, contact a staff member if you need help getting a dog out of or back into his kennel. When you take a dog out, you are responsible for him at all times.

If you remove a dog from a kennel and soon realize that he is "too much dog" for you, put him back in the kennel immediately. Call a staff member to help you if necessary. Some dogs are more powerful than they look behind the kennel door. Remember, we want this to be a pleasant and safe experience for you and the dog. You do not need to keep him out for 15 minutes if you discover that he may be too much for you to handle.

Keep the dog on a leash at all times. (You may unleash the dogs in secured exercise yards and visitation rooms.) To reduce the probability that the dog will pull the leash out of your hand, loop the leash handle around your wrist and firmly grasp the handle section with the same hand.



In the interest of safety and infection control, please keep a safe distance (6 feet is recommended) between the dog that you are walking and all other dogs. We don't always know whether any given dog is aggressive toward other dogs, is easily startled, or is not spayed/neutered. Take special caution when exiting and entering the kennel buildings and the door to the outside backyard area.

Please do not walk very young puppies (6 months and under). Their immune systems are not completely developed and are at risk for infection if they are walked through the facility or outside in the yards. Potential adopters can visit with these young puppies in the viewing rooms which are adjacent to the dog kennel wings 1 and 2.

Sanitize your hands and leashes between handling dogs in order to minimize the spread of disease. Place used leashes in the bucket of disinfectant located in the dog receiving (Sally Port) area when you are finished using it for the day.

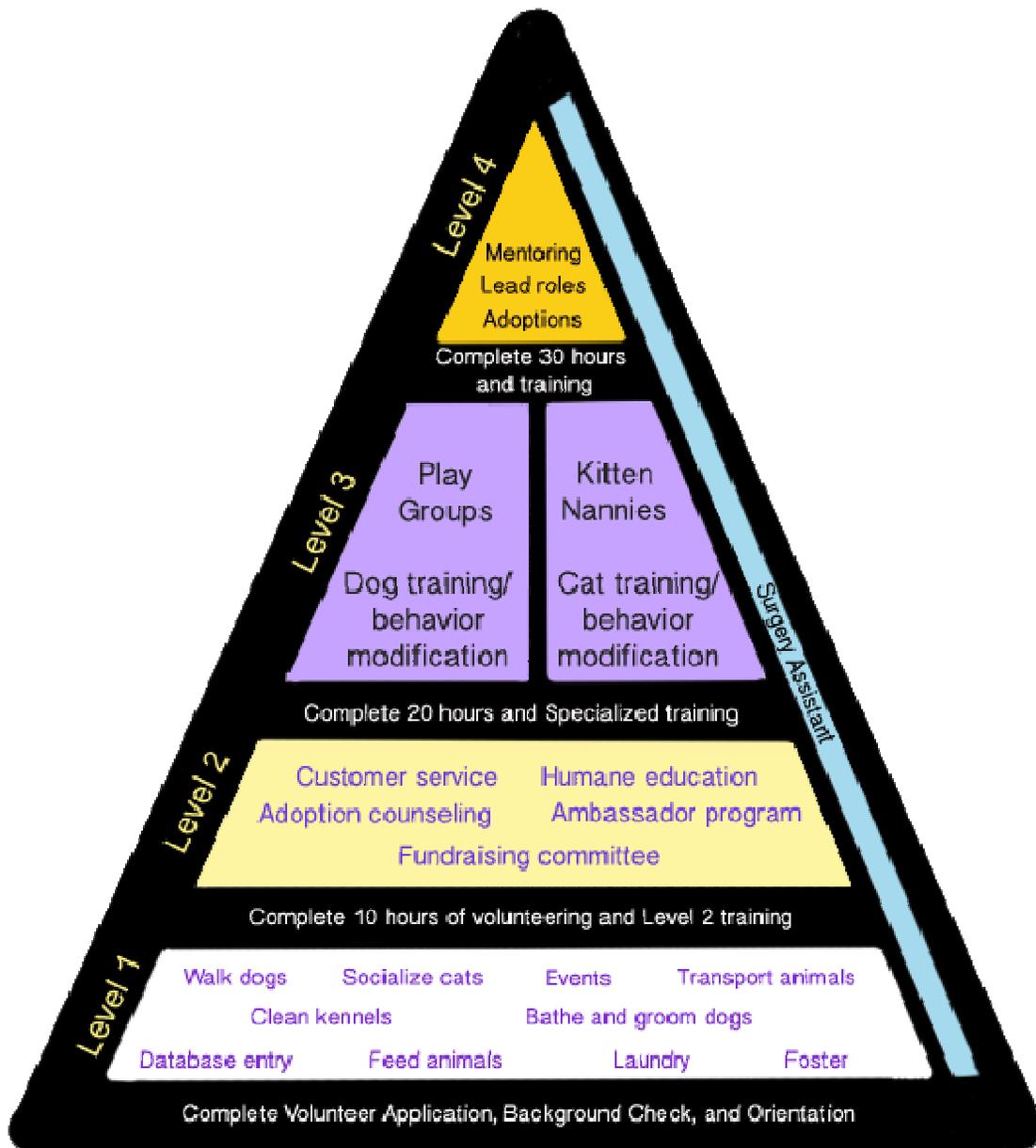
If you are interested in bathing dogs please see a staff member.

## Volunteer Levels

The Volunteer Program of WCRAS consists of 4 levels. Each level builds upon the next in volunteer responsibilities and interaction with animals. It is not required to move up to any level. Volunteers are encouraged to find the niche that best suits them.

If a volunteer would like to move up to the next level, she should work the required hours and then request to train for the next level. Colored badges will reflect the level of each volunteer as follows:

Level 1, White. Level 2, Yellow. Level 3, Lilac. Level 4 Goldenrod.



## **Body Language**

Safety is of utmost importance at the shelter. We want your experience to be a happy and safe one for both you and the pets you are visiting. You must complete the dog and/or cat handling class *prior* to volunteering with the animals. You should never put yourself into a situation where you feel uncomfortable or unsafe. If you feel uncomfortable with an animal's behavior do not remove the animal from the kennel.

It is important to read all the information on the kennel card before open a kennel door. Do not open the kennel door if there is a red STOP card on the front of the kennel. This animal could be territorial regarding it's cage, very frightened or under medical treatment for some condition. Spay and neuter procedures are performed at WCRAS 2 or 3 days a week. Make sure you find out from staff which animals have had surgery that day and do not remove those animals from their kennel. These dogs may be noted by an "I've Had Surgery" card on the outside of their kennel.

## **Dogs**

Be aware of your body language and tone when approaching any dog. Dogs have a remarkable ability to read humans. This is what you are communicating:

### **Friendly human body posture includes:**

- Look to the side of the animal
- Arms at side
- Move slowly
- Speak to the animal in high-pitched, soft reassuring tones

### **Threatening human body posture includes:**

- Direct stare
- Arm raised, with or without weapon
- Rapid movement toward the animal
- Shouting, growling commands

When first meeting a dog, always allow him to approach you and sniff your hand first. Only continue handling or opening the kennel if the dog's body language is telling you it is safe to do so.

Refer to the following chart on dog body language for information on what the dog is trying to communicate with you. As you work with the dogs more, these signals will be easier to pick up on.

If a fight occurs between two dogs, stay calm. Pull the dogs apart by their leashes. DO NOT USE YOUR HANDS to break up a fight. Try to distract the dogs so that they will release their hold on each other (a quick scream/shout or loud bang). If that does not work, tell the nearest person to get a staff member. Always report a fight to staff.

# TALKING DOG

Dogs communicate using body language more than they do vocally. Here's a quick guide to get a good idea of what your dog is telling you. Look at the whole of the dog: head, face, body and tail to get a more accurate idea of what the dog is saying.

## FEARFUL / ANXIOUS / STRESSED

In all cases, respect the dogs need for space and offer signs of appeasement and peace: See the Doggy Dos and Don'ts poster



If not read correctly, stress, anxiety and fear often lead to behaviour commonly termed "aggressive", as the dog attempts to make it clearer that they are uncomfortable: raised hackles are a sign of fear:



### TAIL POSITIONS

tucked



in line with spine



high and rigid

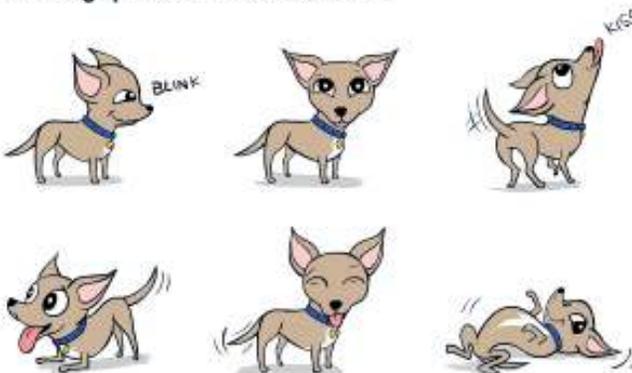


low and wagging slowly



## CONTENT / HAPPY / SOCIAL

These dogs pose no immediate threat.



### TAIL POSITIONS

relaxed



high and wagging quickly



casually at 45 degrees



Brought to you by **JezRose**  
canine behaviour specialist

For further resources and information on dog training and behaviour, see [www.JezRose.co.uk](http://www.JezRose.co.uk)

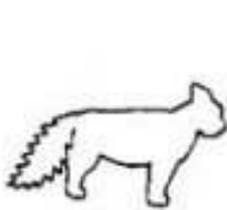
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## Cats

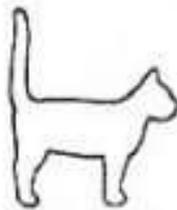
Some cats do not adjust well to being in a cage. On approaching the cat kennel, check to make sure the cat appears friendly and interested in your attention. If the cat is growling, swishing it's tail rapidly, ears are pulled back etc do not open the cage door.

If after approaching a cat's kennel it expresses friendly interest, turn the cat away from you, gently scruff the cat by the skin on the back of the neck. Slowly begin to lift the cat, and with your free hand, reach under the cat from behind and grab the back legs. Carefully walk the cat to the cat viewing room while holding her in position.

Be aware that shelter cats are under great stress and that they can become easily alarmed by things outside the safety of their cage (other cats, dogs, door opening and closing, etc.).



I am afraid



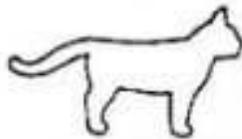
I am happy to see you



I am irritated



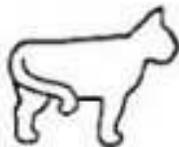
I am friendly



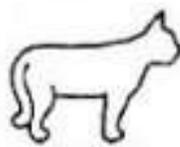
I am interested



I am crazy about you



I am in an amorous mood



I am concerned



I am angry

I have read and understand the Williamson County Regional Animal Shelter Volunteer Policy Handbook. I agree to abide by these policies and I understand that my volunteer service can be terminated by WCRAS staff at any time, with or without notice.

(Please print)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature if under 18 \_\_\_\_\_

Received by Staff Member \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Photo Release**

During my volunteer activities with WCRAS, I understand that my photo may be taken at various events and projects. By signing below I also hereby grant WCRAS permission to use my likeness in photograph(s) and/or video(s) in any and all of its publications or on the internet, whether now known or hereafter existing . I will make no monetary or other claim against WCRAS for the use of the photograph(s) and/or video(s).

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Signature                      Volunteer Name Printed                      Date

Parent Signature if under 18 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
WCRAS Staff Signature                      Staff Name Printed                      Date

**PLEASE RETURN THIS PAGE SIGNED AND DATED TO THE  
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPERVISOR OR FRONT DESK OF THE SHELTER  
PRIOR TO VOLUNTEERING**