

How is volunteering for SHELTER PET SAFETY NET different from volunteering at the BASTROP COUNTY ANIMAL SHELTER?

Thank you for your interest in volunteering! We'd like to explain the main ways in which volunteering for us is different than volunteering at the shelter. It can be confusing at first, but read on for understanding. Here are the main points - and the table below gives more detail.

1. Shelter Pet Safety Net is a public charity (IRS 501(c) (3)) that helps the shelter in many ways, and we have our own rules and insurance for volunteers (more about insurance later - it's a big reason we have designate our own, official volunteers). The shelter belongs to Bastrop County and is funded by the county (taxpayers).
2. Shelter Pet Safety Net and the shelter have written guidelines about how we work with each other, so it is clear who is involved in decision-making and processes.
3. Volunteers for Shelter Pet Safety Net DO NOT have to be volunteers for the Bastrop County Animal Shelter. However, someone can volunteer for both groups by filling out both applications.
4. Volunteers who want to volunteer for service at the county shelter (such as walking dogs, working at offsite adoptions for the shelter, fostering shelter animals, transporting shelter animals to other rescues) must sign up through the shelter's volunteer program to become shelter volunteers. Shelter Pet Safety Net is not involved in these hands-on services for shelter animals, though our volunteers who are also shelter volunteers do hands-on work in conjunction with Shelter Pet Safety Net work.
5. A necessary and significant part of Shelter Pet Safety Net work involves fundraising, through events, grants, and so on. This enables us to support shelter animal needs that the county will not fund. Fundraising involves a lot of effort and planning, and is not something the county shelter does to any great degree. We also do a lot of marketing, primarily to benefit shelter animal adoption and support. Much of the work can be done from home.
6. Because of the above differences - the skill set of the volunteers needed for Shelter Pet Safety Net differs from that needed for shelter volunteers. We must have reliable adults with good communication skills. It does not matter if the volunteer is good at handling animals, they just need to love them.

Here are specific examples of some differences between us and the shelter.

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Activity	Shelter Pet Safety Net	County Shelter
Events for the public	Events such as Education, Fundraising, Training – other than Shelter Animal Adoption Events*	Onsite & Offsite Adoption Events*.
Spay/Neuter assistance for the public	We administer programs to help the public get their animals fixed. Volunteer role is administrative with public interaction. We can approve funding for difficult situations and emergency spays for the public if we want to.	Spay/Neuter is provided for shelter animals (not owned animals) and for some Bastrop CATS kitties. Medical clinic volunteer roles available to shelter volunteers.
Emergency medical care for shelter animals	We determine funding for animals the shelter recommends for help. We coordinate the effort to get it done, talk to vets, work with shelter on transport or foster or rescue placement. We are often involved in transporting or fostering these animals for the shelter (must also be shelter volunteer to foster)	Shelter management selects the animals and asks us to help. Shelter volunteers may be asked by shelter to transport animals to vet or foster them.
Volunteer Coordination	Onboarding/management is done by a board member. Volunteer FB group separate from shelter's group.	This is done via Wendy Ballard/Deanna Montgomery
Foster Home Support (shelter animals)	We offer the "Foster Family Care Package" program for food/litter. We have a cabinet at the shelter with supplies fosters need that they can check out.	Shelter funds vaccinations, basic meds, spay/neuter but not food or litter, by policy.
Volunteer Support	We are developing/funding a recognition program for shelter volunteers & our volunteers; did a little in 2020	

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Transporting	We sometimes fund transport for animals to go out of state to rescues. We also get involved in transporting shelter animals to vets.	Shelter volunteers do transports of shelter animals to local rescues
Shelter Physical Needs	We have supplied everything from hot dogs, medication, a deck, autoclave, kennels, microchip reader, clippers...requires request from shelter management and a Board vote.	Paid by the county. If shelter has no budget and can't get county money, they approach us for funding.
Social Media	We try to have accounts everywhere to advertise animals, shelter, and our work for fundraising. Our volunteers manage these. We have complete freedom to edit our website and add info.	Shelter has some social accounts and a spot on the county website.
Fundraising	We hold online, mail, and in-person fundraisers; as a charity it is a significant part of what we do, and what we need volunteer help to do.	This is not something that is part of the shelter's mission nor is it something they have staff to handle. They do get unsolicited donations that technically belong to the county, but that they are allowed to use for the shelter.
Fundraising - Grant Writing	As an IRS-recognized public charity, we are eligible for many grants and write proposals to get our programs funded. A high level of communication skill and understanding of the process is needed.	The shelter gets some grants from various organizations that support shelters.
Communications	In addition to social media and grants, we have donor & client communications. These require good written	Facebook posts primarily. Mostly advertising animals or requesting emergency help for shelter supplies.

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	communications skills. We do a lot of follow-ups to thank and engage donors, and check on spay/neuter clients.	
Data Entry	Similar needs. Difference is in the systems used.	
Photography	Similar needs and some overlap. we need people to take good photos and videos of the animals we help, as does the shelter. Often the subjects are shelter animals.	
Insurance	Through private insurance for animal-related charities. Coverage: General liability, directors & officers, non-owned auto, volunteer accident.	Through county. Shelter management would not tell us what was covered for volunteers. They stated they would not indemnify shelter volunteers.

* Due to county’s insurance – only volunteers for the shelter may handle animals in the shelter’s custody. Shelter Pet Safety Net has some volunteers who are also shelter volunteers, but not all Shelter Pet Safety Net volunteers are shelter volunteers. We have our own liability insurance for our volunteers, but nevertheless have been asked not to hold adoption events for shelter animals. Shelter Pet Safety Net is piloting its own foster-based rescue program to keep some animals from having to enter the shelter, reducing the load on the shelter. If that turns into a permanent program, Shelter Pet Safety Net will hold public adoption events for animals in our care.

A FEW OTHER THINGS TO KNOW!

As a small, non-governmental organization – we are able to do the following:

- Act quickly to help or take advantage of an opportunity (no bureaucracy to involve). Quick action was one of the reasons we were founded!
- Be transparent & communicative about what we are doing or planning on doing
- Take time to listen to our volunteers’ ideas and give them authority to make things happen

One of our objectives is to avoid taking up the time of paid employees at the shelter, so they can do their lifesaving work. So if we don’t have to involve them in a process, we try not to.

Just like the shelter, we partner with other organizations (such as Save An Angel) as much as we can to help the animals.