

# **Volunteer Handbook**



**Ark-Valley Humane Society  
701 Gregg Drive  
Buena Vista, CO 81211  
719.395.2737  
[www.ark-valley.org](http://www.ark-valley.org)**

Dear New Volunteer,

**Congratulations and welcome to Ark-Valley Humane Society! We are pleased and grateful that you want to give your time and talents to our organization!**

The task of helping animals is not always an easy one, but it is a most rewarding experience. We are so glad you chose AVHS to volunteer your skills, compassion, and time.

We hope your time here gives you a better understanding of animal sheltering and care along with an increased awareness regarding animal welfare. We rely on volunteers in so many ways and hope you feel valued and appreciated while here. Your skills, uniqueness, and commitment can and will make a difference for all of our animals here at Ark-Valley Humane Society!

On behalf of all the staff, we look forward to working with you.

Thank you, and welcome!

Sincerely,

Desiree Bator  
Volunteer & Foster Coordinator  
(719) 395-2737  
[volunteer@ark-valley.org](mailto:volunteer@ark-valley.org)



# Ark-Valley Humane Society

## **About Us**

Founded in 1991, Ark-Valley Humane Society is a 501c3 non-profit animal welfare organization. Ark-Valley Humane Society operates an open admission animal shelter, serving Chaffee County with a location in Buena Vista. We do not euthanize for time or space and as a non-profit, we rely heavily on private donations and grants to fund our operations.

**Our Mission:** Ensuring the welfare of companion animals through compassion and care.

**Our Vision:** A safe and humane world for all companion animals.

**Our Key Values:** Compassion for the animals and people we serve. Leadership that inspires hope and kindness through education and example. Kindness towards people and pets that find themselves in difficult situations. Transparency regarding the work we do.

## **History**

Since 1991 our organization has helped tens of thousands of animals. AVHS embraces Socially Conscious Sheltering. Our programs and services helped 1,833 animals in 2022. In 2022 Ark-Valley Humane Society had a 98% Live-Release Rate. As the year drew to a close, we saw the length of time it took for an animal to find a home stay low (commonly referred to as Length of Stay), another indicator of our progress. Our community assistance spay/neuter programs provided over 230 animals in Chaffee County with free or low cost spay/neuter surgeries. Creating a foundation that supports ongoing growth, organizational maturation and provides the tools to face the challenges of tomorrow was and remains critically important to us. We are progressing to our goal of being a model animal welfare organization with a top-notch facility that offers progressive humane programs, which is a notable transformation in animal welfare from where AVHS began in 1991...

In the early 1990s Buena Vista, Colorado had only 'The Shed,' which was overseen by law enforcement. It consisted of unheated, short-stay kennels for stray dogs. Dogs sweltered in the heat of summer and water bowls froze in winter. No services were available for cats. A group of concerned citizens decided it was time for a change. In 1991, founding members established Ark-Valley Humane Society (AVHS) as a nonprofit organization to humanely care for stray and unwanted pets in northern Chaffee County. By 1995, the AVHS shelter had opened its doors in Buena Vista. Soon, hundreds of dogs and cats each year were cared for by staff and volunteers until loving homes were found for them.

Over the years, AVHS has steadily increased its capacity to serve the people of Chaffee County and animals in need. In 2003, AVHS built an isolation area for

incoming animals. Doing so helped to prevent the spread of disease among animals, while expanding kennel capacity overall. As a result, an increase in financial support was needed. In 2006, a mill levy campaign, driven by community members, saved the shelter from closing its doors, and coupled with donations and grants, helped to secure its financial future. In the years that followed AVHS launched a Trap/Neuter/Return (TNR) program for feral cats, and began accepting unclaimed strays from Mountain Shadows Animal Hospital from the neighboring city of Salida.

Yet there were still needs unmet. The shelter was commonly turning away animals at its doors for lack of space. A temporary trailer was purchased in 2009 to provide much needed office space and additional kennels. In 2010, a capital campaign was launched to build a second facility in Poncha Springs to better serve the Salida area and the rest of southern Chaffee County. In 2011, the Sunshine Shelter was completed and opened its doors. AVHS's overall intake increased by 34% over the previous year. In doing so, AVHS was able to continue its promise to provide animal sheltering, while no longer having to turn away in-county animals for lack of space. Today, AVHS serves all of Chaffee County with stray intake, animal relinquishment, reclaim, and adoption services from our Buena Vista location and law-enforcement impound in Salida. To combat pet overpopulation, AVHS provides humane education. Importantly, it spays or neuters all dogs and cats prior to adoption and provides community assistance programs to help with the cost of spaying and neutering at-risk animals.

Our policies are working to change the face of animal sheltering to be both more animal-friendly and people-friendly. An open-adoption policy puts trust in adopters and facilitates adoptions. This policy ensures that all needy Chaffee County pets are accommodated by AVHS. With a live-release rate of 98% in 2024, we ensure that no animal at AVHS is euthanized for reasons of time or space. We are so proud of the work AVHS has accomplished in our community so far and know none of it would be possible without our volunteers!

## **AVHS Hours of Operation**

Open Monday-Saturday: 12:00PM to 5:00PM

## **AVHS Board of Directors**

Allison Gergley, Chair  
Judy Hamontre, Vice Chair  
Sarah McMahan, Treasurer  
Angie Burgess, Secretary  
Denise Washer, Board Member  
Tara Ali, Board Member  
Debbie McCaleb, Board Member

## **AVHS Staff Team**

Nikki Ritter	Executive Director	<a href="mailto:executivedirector@ark-valley.org">executivedirector@ark-valley.org</a>
Krissy Zic <a href="http://valley.org">valley.org</a>	Operations Manager	<a href="mailto:kzic@ark-">kzic@ark-</a>
Casey Hampf <a href="http://valley.org">valley.org</a>	Outreach Manager	<a href="mailto:outreach@ark-">outreach@ark-</a>
Caleb Awe	Assistant Manager	<a href="mailto:cawe@ark-valley.org">cawe@ark-valley.org</a>
Michele Crago	Bookkeeper	<a href="mailto:bookkeeper@ark-valley.org">bookkeeper@ark-valley.org</a>
Abbie Fritz <a href="http://valley.org">valley.org</a>	Medical/Transfer Coordinator	<a href="mailto:afritz@ark-">afritz@ark-</a>
Desiree Bator	Volunteer/Foster Coordinator	<a href="mailto:volunteer@ark-valley.org">volunteer@ark-valley.org</a>
Bryan Russel <a href="http://valley.org">valley.org</a>	Animal Care Technician	<a href="mailto:brussel@ark-">brussel@ark-</a>
Lara Fischlein <a href="http://valley.org">valley.org</a>	Animal Care Technician	<a href="mailto:lfischlein@ark-">lfischlein@ark-</a>
Shelby Goehl <a href="http://valley.org">valley.org</a>	Animal Care Technician	<a href="mailto:sgoehl@ark-">sgoehl@ark-</a>
Sam Finnie	Animal Care Technician	<a href="mailto:sfinnie@ark-valley.org">sfinnie@ark-valley.org</a>
	Administrative Associate	

## **AVHS Programs and Services**

### **Receiving Animals**

#### **Transfer in from other shelters**

Ark-Valley Humane Society helps animals and other shelters by transporting animals to our facility for adoption. These animals come from both out of state shelters as well as those in neighboring counties. Our goal is for AVHS to be an option for shelters who may find themselves overwhelmed with animals and needing assistance.

#### **Owner Surrender**

Ark-Valley Humane Society accepts animals from people in Chaffee County and beyond who no longer want their pets or are unable to continue to care for them. These animals become the property of Ark-Valley Humane Society and are evaluated for adoption placement.

#### **Strays**

Ark-Valley Humane Society takes in stray dogs and cats brought to us from law enforcement and the public. Per Colorado statutes, stray animals are placed on a five-day stray hold when they first arrive and typically become available for adoption after the hold expires. Law enforcement can also drop off stray animals at our Salida Impound Facility. Impounded animals are either returned to their owners from this location or picked up by staff and brought to the shelter in Buena Vista.

### **Animal Outcomes**

#### **Adoption**

At Ark-Valley Humane Society, we aim to make the adoption process fun and informative. Our organization embraces a "Welcome Adoptions" philosophy whereby adoption counselors, through conversation, help the public find a pet that is a good fit for their living situation and lifestyle. We encourage the public to bring their family members to visit the animals at the shelter and spend time getting to know them. For dog adoptions, we ask that potential adopters bring any other dogs in the home to the shelter in order to find out if a new pet will be a good fit. Our outdoor dog yards and community cat room provide space for one-on-one interactions with the public.

Potential adopters fill out a short questionnaire that helps us to understand their expectations for a pet, their housing situation, and their lifestyle. Adoption counselors are able to provide additional information about specific animals as well as make suggestions based on the information collected through the questionnaire. All animals from Ark-Valley are spayed/neutered, microchipped, and up-to-date on vaccinations

prior to adoption. Adoption fees help us to cover some of the expenses associated with caring for each pet at the shelter. On average, we spend \$500+ per animal from the day we receive an animal to the day of adoption. This includes staff care, veterinary care, vaccinations, blood tests, dentals, and spay/neuter.

## Adoption Fees

<p><b>Kittens 7 Months and Younger</b> - \$100  <b>Cats 8 Months to 7 Years</b>- \$50  <b>Cats 8 Years and Older</b>- Priceless</p> <p><b>Puppies 7 Months and Younger</b> - \$300</p> <p><b>Dogs 8 Months to 7 Years</b>  Small Mixed Breeds (under 25lbs) - \$200  Medium to Large Mixed Breeds- \$150  Purebred Papered Dogs - \$300</p> <p><b>Senior Dogs 8 Years and Older</b>  Small Mixed Breeds (under 25lbs) - \$100  Medium to Large Mixed Breeds - \$75  Purebred Papered Dogs - \$75</p>
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### **Included in All Adoptions:**

(Please note: vaccines are all given at age-appropriate times)

<p><b><u>Dogs and Puppies</u></b></p> <p>Vaccinations: Rabies, Distemper, Bordetella, Dewormer</p> <p>Spay/Neuter</p> <p>Microchip</p> <p>Ears and Nail Check</p> <p>4DX Blood Test (Heartworm, Lyme, Anaplasma and Ehrlichia)</p> <p>Bloodwork Panel for Senior Dogs</p>	<p><b><u>Cats and Kittens</u></b></p> <p>Vaccinations: Rabies, FVRCP, Dewormer</p> <p>Spay/Neuter</p> <p>Microchip</p> <p>Ears and Nail Check</p> <p>Combo Blood Test (FeLV and FIV)</p> <p>Bloodwork Panel for Senior Cats</p>
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Free Vet Exam	Free Vet Exam
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### **Transfer out to other shelters**

There may be times throughout the year where Ark-Valley Humane Society's facilities are reaching or surpassing their capacity due to the number of animals in our care. When this occurs, we often look to transfer animals out of our care and into other shelters with greater capacity. We may also transfer an animal if they have been at the shelter for a long time with no little to no interest from the general public in order to improve their chances of adoption in a new area.

### **Euthanasia**

The term "euthanasia" is derived from the Greek words "eu" and "thanatos," which mean **good death**. We will resort to euthanasia only when an animal is beyond rehabilitation medically or behaviorally. We believe it is inhumane to try to save animals that are truly beyond medical help and that it is irresponsible to permit the adoption of an animal that has severe behavioral problems that we cannot remedy. Euthanasia decisions are made by our management team after careful and deliberate consideration. Volunteers are never a part of euthanasia decisions, but can inquire about them to our management team, who can answer any additional questions. In 2024, AVHS had a 98% live release rate.

## **AVHS Public Services**

### **Trap-Neuter-Return Program**

This program is available to all feral cats in Chaffee County. Community cats are humanely trapped, spayed/neutered, then released back to their original location or relocated to a caring barn home.

### **Behavior Intervention Training**

Ark-Valley Humane Society now offers assistance for those who are experiencing behavior issues with their dog and need financial support to obtain dog training. We partner with positive reinforcement dog trainers to offer you 4 individual training lessons for your dog. You must be a Chaffee County Resident to qualify for this program.

### **Community Pet Fund**

The Community Pet Fund (CPF) was established by Ark Valley Humane Society (AVHS) in partnership with Chaffee County Community Foundation (CCCF) to provide funding for life-saving veterinary care to Chaffee County pets. There are two funds. The Community Pet Fund (CPF) is used for pets that have a good prognosis, but have been suddenly affected by an accident or life threatening illness. The Low Income Community Pet Fund (LI-CPF) is an extension of the CPF that offers additional uses of funds to

verified low-income and unsheltered pet owners in Chaffee County. Funds may be used for emergent care with a positive prognosis, preventative care and/or humane euthanasia services.

### **Community Assistance Spay and Neuter Programs**

This program is available to residents of Chaffee County, and helps to subsidize surgeries for all owned cats and all pit bull breeds and predominately pit bull mixes, as well as other canine breeds belonging to verified low income/unsheltered community members living in Chaffee County.

### **Pet Food and Supply Pantry**

Ark-Valley Humane Society wants to help keep pets with their families, now more than ever. We know that anyone can fall on hard times. Through our Pet Food Pantry we provide cat and dog food and limited pet supplies to pet families in need.

### **Pet Emergency Boarding**

Ark-Valley Humane Society partners with the Alliance Against Domestic Abuse and other human service organizations to offer free pet boarding for Chaffee County families in crisis. We recognize the importance of the human – animal bond and support keeping people and pets together whenever possible. If you or your family is facing a medical issue, domestic violence, housing insecurity or other crisis and you need temporary boarding for your pet please contact us to find out more about how we can help at 719-395-2737.

### **Microchipping and Pet ID Tags**

Ark-Valley Humane Society wants to help keep pets with their families and offers microchipping and engraved ID tags to the public to help reunite strays with their owners in the future.

## **AVHS Volunteer Program**

Ark-Valley Humane Society strives to provide a volunteer experience that is rewarding for the volunteer, our organization, and our community. Whether you're looking to become a regular at the shelter or just have a few hours to volunteer a month, there are many ways to get involved and help enrich the lives of the animals at AVHS! You'll find information about these opportunities below, as well as our volunteer policies, which help ensure that we are able to offer high quality care to our animals, provide valuable support services to our community, and maintain efficient operations, while upholding a high standard of safety for our animals, staff, and volunteers. Welcome to the team!

### **Volunteer Positions**

#### **Cat Cuddler**

This is a flexible commitment volunteer role. As a cat cuddler, you provide enrichment opportunities to our adoptable cats. These can include: cuddling/petting, encouraging play/exploration with various available toys (cat wands, balls, tunnels, etc.), teaching cats tricks, etc. If you plan to "drop-in" on any given day, please text or call the shelter prior to your arrival to give our staff a heads up. There are some days/times when we may be unable to accommodate drop-in cat cuddlers due to scheduling/staffing.

#### **Cat Cleaner**

As a scheduled position, you'll be asked to commit to cleaning the adoptable cat room once a week, usually in the morning. This includes but is not limited to scooping litter, feeding and giving fresh water to each cat, cleaning individual kennels, and sweeping and moping the community room as a whole. If you would like to be added to the on-call cat cleaner list and act as a substitute when a regular cleaner isn't available, please let us know!

#### **Dog Walker**

Volunteers who have completed their dog training can walk dogs on a drop-in or regularly scheduled basis. If you plan to "drop-in" on any given day, please text or call the shelter prior to your arrival to give our staff a heads up. There are some days/times when we may be unable to accommodate drop-in dog walkers due to scheduling/staffing. The position of dog walker allows you time to spend walking the dogs, playing with the dogs in our fenced yards, or giving dogs general enrichment opportunities or one-on-one time through brushing, food puzzles, etc.

#### **Laundry/Dishes and Miscellaneous Cleaning**

This is a flexible commitment volunteer role. Volunteers can help us with various cleaning tasks, including laundry and dishes, on a drop-in basis. These tasks are essential to keeping the shelter running smoothly and presenting a clean and organized facility to the public. We can always use help with these tasks and appreciate it when dog walking and cat cleaning/cuddling volunteers are also willing to help out during their time at the shelter!

## **Photography**

This is a flexible commitment volunteer role. If this is one of your special skills, you can help us by coming to the shelter on a semi-regular basis and photographing our available animals. This helps to provide quality adoption photos for animal profiles and AVHS social media posts (which helps animals get adopted!).

## **General Maintenance**

This is a flexible commitment volunteer role. Volunteers play a vital role in keeping our facilities in tip top shape by helping to maintain our Memorial Garden, weed whacking our many dog yards, and assisting with other general grounds maintenance tasks!

## **Animal Transport**

This is an intermittent volunteer role. As an animal transport volunteer, you may be asked to assist in transporting animals to/from the vet or partner animal shelters. This role involves driving animals in the AVHS van or a personal vehicle, most often to/from animal transfer facilities in Denver, Colorado Springs, and Pueblo.

## **TNR Volunteers**

This is a flexible commitment volunteer role. We can always use extra hands in our Trap-Neuter-Return program. Duties of a TNR volunteer include setting traps in areas with known feral cat populations, scheduling/transporting cats to their spay/neuter appointments at local vet offices, and communicating with AVHS and the public when releasing/rehoming spayed/neutered cats.

## **Fundraising and Special Events**

This is an intermittent volunteer role. Volunteers work with our Outreach manager, Casey Hampf, to assist with special events (Tails on Trails, local pet food drives, etc.) and other various community outreach related tasks.

## **Volunteer Training**

All volunteers interested in working with our animals receive training by an AVHS staff member during a scheduled training session at the shelter.

### **Dog Training:**

Attending a dog volunteer training session is required for all volunteers who plan on handling dogs. During this training, a staff member will give you a tour of the shelter and an overview of our policies and protocols regarding dog handling at AVHS, which are intended to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of animals, staff, and volunteers. This session will include information on reading dog body language, utilization of AVHS radio equipment (walkie-talkies) while volunteering with dogs, and AVHS' commitment to positive reinforcement techniques only. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask them during the training session! You can schedule your dog volunteer training session by reaching out to our Volunteer/Foster Coordinator, Desiree Bator, at [volunteer@ark-valley.org](mailto:volunteer@ark-valley.org).

## **Cat Training:**

Attending a cat volunteer training session is required for all volunteers who plan on interacting with and handling cats in our Adoptable Cat Room. During this training, a staff member will give you an overview of the cat room as well as our cat handling policies and protocols at AVHS, which are intended to prioritize the safety and wellbeing of animals, staff, and volunteers. During this session, you will learn about the layout of our cat kennels, the different types of signage we use in our cat room, the location of brushes, treats, and toys, and, depending on your interest, the duties of a regular AVHS cat cleaner. This training is intended to give you the confidence you need to handle the cats in the adoptable cat room as well as lay a foundation for those interested in becoming cat cleaners. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask them during the training session! You can schedule your cat volunteer training session by reaching out to our Volunteer/Foster Coordinator, Desiree Bator, at [volunteer@ark-valley.org](mailto:volunteer@ark-valley.org).

## **AVHS Volunteer Basics:**

Volunteering at AVHS also means supporting the shelter's mission and goals of providing high quality, compassionate care to our animals. We are committed to providing our animals with the Five Freedoms everyday and using only Positive Reinforcement Training Techniques at AVHS. Volunteers play an essential role in helping us to achieve these goals - from keeping our cat kennels clean and comfortable to taking dogs on walks to get them out of the shelter - and we need them to understand and share our commitment to the following:

- The Five Freedoms:
  - a. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst: by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigor.
  - b. Freedom from Discomfort: by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
  - c. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease: by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
  - d. Freedom to Express Normal Behavior: by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal's own kind.
  - e. Freedom from Fear and Distress: by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.
- Positive Reinforcement Training Techniques:
  - a. Never force an animal to do something it doesn't want to do.
  - b. Use rewards to encourage desired behaviors.
  - c. Help to strengthen the bond between humans and animals.
  - d. Are backed by science!

## **Communication**

The main point of contact for our volunteers is the AVHS office phone (719-395-2737), which also receives texts. For less time sensitive matters, you can contact the volunteer/foster coordinator, Desiree Bator, directly at 719-239-4762 or [volunteer@ark-valley.org](mailto:volunteer@ark-valley.org). If you are unable to make your regularly scheduled volunteer shift or if you are planning on dropping-in to volunteer, please let us know ahead of time.

## **Introductions**

We enjoy meeting and getting to know our volunteers! If you're new to AVHS, please take the time to introduce yourself to the staff team. We want your time with us to be rewarding and impactful - and connecting with each other is an important part of becoming part of the AVHS team! It also helps us to know what type of activities you are able and willing to lend a hand with - especially on days when the shelter is busy and we fall behind on tasks like laundry and dishes!

## **Signing In**

All AVHS volunteers log their hours. Please make sure to clock in and out at the volunteer iPad, which is located through the front door of the shelter on the left. Signing in and out helps us keep track of everyone's volunteer hours - we present these statistics to our Board of Directors each month and also use them when applying for grants!

## **Dresscode**

Once you begin volunteering with us, you will receive an AVHS volunteer t-shirt. Please make sure to wear this shirt each time you volunteer - this helps staff as well as members of the public identify you as a volunteer! Closed-toe shoes and long pants are also recommended to help protect you from scratches, bites, and/or chemicals.

## **General Safety**

Safety is important to all of us. In order to keep all volunteers, staff, and animals safe, please remember the following:

- Read all signage and listen to staff instructions when interacting with animals.
- Report any actual or potential safety problems to a staff member.
- Never put yourself into a situation that makes you feel uneasy or afraid. Know your boundaries, trust your instincts, and notify a staff member if you feel uncomfortable handling an animal or completing a certain task.
- Immediately report any personal accidents or injuries that occur while volunteering with us to a staff member and/or manager. We have insurance for our volunteers so it's important to alert our Operations Manager as soon as the incident occurs.
- Understand safety protocols and feel confident asking for help when you need it!

## **Sanitation**

There are a variety of viruses that can spread throughout the shelter and may present themselves in different ways. ***Staff and volunteers should be careful to wash hands or use hand sanitizer in between visits with different animals and before eating. For the protection of your own pets, we advise that you keep them current on vaccinations while volunteering with AVHS. Staff and volunteers should also disinfect their clothing or change clothes before interacting with their pets at home. If you ever see an animal who appears sick, please tell a staff member right away.***

We use RESCUE in our daily cleaning procedures. It is a powerful disinfectant that helps kill common bacteria and viruses, such as Parvovirus, Feline Leukemia virus, Feline AIDS virus, Upper Respiratory Infection virus, Bordetella, Ringworm, and intestinal worms. RESCUE is diluted with water and is used to clean dog kennels, cat kennels, floors, and countertops and is used as laundry detergent. You will find bottles throughout the facility. You must never use RESCUE directly on an animal or person.

We must properly clean every kennel, floor, and surface to ensure the safety and health of every Ark-Valley Humane Society animal. Shelters that are not properly cleaned can harbor a variety of bacteria and viruses that can spread quickly throughout the building.

The most common virus that shelters see is **Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)**. URI is a viral infection that occurs in cats and can affect the nose, throat, trachea, and eyes. It often presents itself as a cold but, if left untreated, can become life-threatening if secondary bacterial infections occur. URI is an air-borne virus and can spread quickly in AVHS cat rooms. It is important to carefully clean every surface that a sick cat may have sneezed on so other cats in the shelter don't get infected. Ark-Valley Humane Society does vaccinate against the virus but some cats will still become infected. If a cat becomes infected with Upper Respiratory Infection, they are placed into our cat isolation area and treated with antibiotics.

**Bordetella** (or Kennel Cough) is a common virus that can affect shelter dogs or dogs who are exposed to many other dogs. Kennel Cough can be transmitted dog to dog by sneezing or coughing or by coming into physical contact with the virus on surfaces, toys, or food bowls. We vaccinate every dog available for adoption against Bordetella. However, some dogs can still be infected with the virus due to their age, physical condition, or stress level. The best way to prevent transmission of Kennel Cough is by properly cleaning toys, blankets, dishes, and kennels with RESCUE.

Proper cleaning procedures also ensure that intestinal parasites or worms are not spread from animal to animal. This includes **roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, tapeworms, coccidiosis, giardia and toxoplasma**. They are found in feces and can easily spread from animal to animal if contact is made with an infected feces. AVHS is careful to pick up all feces from kennels and outdoor spaces and disinfects all surfaces and objects that come into contact with animal feces with RESCUE.

## Additional Volunteer Policies:

### Answering Questions for the Public

As an AVHS volunteer, there may be times when you are interacting with the general public during our open hours (everyday 12-5pm) or on social media. You may come across situations where a member of the public approaches you and assumes you can answer all their questions - about specific animals and/or about Ark-Valley Humane Society in general. It is important that you let members of the public know that you are a volunteer and that there are certain questions only a staff member can answer. Below is a list of common questions and approved responses for AVHS volunteers.

- **“Can I adopt this animal?”**
  - It is important that the public is not given the impression that a volunteer can ‘adopt’ an animal to them. Try not to make comments like, “Sure! You can adopt them!” Instead, please tell them that they will need to fill out an adoption application for the animal they are interested in and then speak with an adoption counselor. You can help them by getting them an adoption application, clipboard, and pen and finding a staff member to assist them with the adoption.
  
- **“What is the history of this animal?”**
  - You may help the public find more information about the pet by reading their kennel card, which includes information about their known history. For cats, this information is listed on their feline facts card or adoption fliers. For dogs, staff can supply this information to the interested party directly. **If the public asks for more specific details that you do not know, please don’t guess!** Find a staff member who can relay any additional information that may be in our computer system.
  
- **“What is the adoption fee and what does it cover?”**
  - You can let the public know that adoption fees vary by animal and help to cover the care the animal received during its stay at Ark- Valley Humane Society. This includes a health exam, initial and age-appropriate vaccines, standard blood tests, spay/neuter surgery, and microchipping, as well as any other medical treatments received while in our care. The fee also helps to cover the cost of food and shelter during the animal’s stay. Please refer any further questions to staff.
  
- **“Is AVHS a “no-kill” shelter?”**
  - In 2024, AVHS had a live-release rate of 98% and therefore qualifies as a “no-kill” shelter. Please refer all other questions about euthanasia to a staff member.

## **Confidentiality, Impartiality, and Publicity**

Confidentiality regarding personal information about clients and the outcome of individual animal situations must be maintained at all times. Volunteers may be exposed to information about members of the public who surrender and adopt pets from Ark-Valley Humane Society as well as information about animals that are not available to the public, including those in isolation or on quarantine, medical treatment, or hold.

- All information should be considered confidential and is not to be repeated or shared.
- Volunteers should refrain from sharing any information that they are unsure of or do not know the validity of with the public.
- If you have negative preconceived notions about certain types or breeds of animals, please make those known to the Volunteer Coordinator. Please refrain from pushing your opinions and views onto members of the public, staff, and other volunteers. We are here to help and to educate and, like the old saying goes, “if you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.” Please do not confuse this with stating known facts about the animal, even if they may not be all positive.
- No volunteer shall make statements to the media that may be seen as representative of the opinions and policies of Ark-Valley Humane Society. Please refer all media requests for statements or information to an AVHS manager.

**If you have any disagreements about any policies or decisions made by the organization, you MUST voice these to an AVHS manager.** This gives us the opportunity to reevaluate the decision or explain why the decision has been made. You must refrain from using social media, other volunteers, or employees to discuss such complaints, as this will not solve the issue at hand and could reflect poorly on the organization.

**Volunteers who break these rules will be subject to disciplinary action and possibly asked to resign from their volunteer duties.**

## **Social Media Policy**

Ark-Valley Humane Society uses social media sites (such as Facebook, Instagram, etc.) to promote homeless animals, upcoming events, adoption specials and animal-related news to a large network of supporters. Social media helps Ark-Valley Humane Society to reach a large audience we wouldn’t have a connection with otherwise.

Ark-Valley Humane Society encourages our volunteers, staff, board members and foster families to participate in social media outlets to highlight positive, animal-related information such as homeless animals currently available for adoption, upcoming events and positive, animal-related information.

Please be mindful of the following Best Practices when posting on our social media outlets and your own personal social media outlets about our organization.

- **Confidential Information:** Please refrain from disclosing any confidential or proprietary organization information and contact information for our staff members, volunteers, adopters, or vet clients.
- **Be Positive and Respectful:** Please keep posts positive and respectful to the audience and the integrity of the organization.
- **Policies and Guidelines:** Our social media pages are positive, open forums that welcome positive and/or constructive comments relevant to the subject at hand. Posts to the contrary will be deleted and continual negative feedback will be banned.
- **Copyright and Fair Use Laws:** Please respect the laws governing copyright and fair use copyright material owned by others.
- **Ark-Valley Humane Society Brand:** Only those authorized by the organization may use brand marking or logos in communications.
- **Correct and Factual Information:** If you are not sure about how to respond or make a specific comment about Ark-Valley Humane Society policies, guidelines or animals, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

**If you have any disagreements about any policies or decisions made by the organization, you MUST voice these to an AVHS manager.** This gives us the opportunity to reevaluate the decision or explain why the decision has been made. You must refrain from using social media to discuss such complaints, as this will not solve the issue at hand and could reflect poorly on the organization.

**Volunteers who break these rules will be subject to disciplinary action and possibly asked to resign from their volunteer duties.**

### **Smoking Policy**

In order to promote a safe and healthy environment for employees, volunteers, clients, visitors, and resident animals, smoking is PROHIBITED inside the building at all times. Any volunteer under the age of 18 found smoking on the grounds of Ark-Valley Humane Society will be sent home and his/her parents will be notified.

### **Harassment & Discrimination**

Ark-Valley Humane Society will not tolerate harassment or discrimination of any employee, client, visitor, or volunteer. An individual who believes he/she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination should immediately report the incident to the manager on duty. The matter will be promptly investigated and appropriate action will be taken depending on the nature and severity of the incident.

### **Mishandling & Mistreatment of Animals**

There will be no mishandling or mistreatment of animals. If a volunteer is found mishandling or mistreating an animal, the volunteer will be asked to resign from his or her volunteering duties. Improper handling of an animal includes allowing them to consistently slip out of your care and/or allowing them to harm themselves, a person, or another animal through carelessness and lack of attention. Mistreating an animal includes, but is not limited to, yelling, hitting, or striking an animal. Additionally, as outlined elsewhere, we only use Positive Reinforcement Techniques at AVHS. If you cannot abide by this policy, and are using negative reinforcement techniques with AVHS animals, you will be asked to resign from your volunteering duties.

### **Dismissal of Volunteers**

A volunteer may be asked to resign from his or her volunteer duties at any time at the discretion of staff. Volunteers who do not follow the rules and regulations as outlined in this manual will be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and/or dismissal of duties.

### **Former Employee Volunteer Policy**

Employees who were terminated from Ark-Valley Humane Society are not permitted to become volunteers at any time following their termination. This includes fostering, transport, volunteering at the shelter, or any other form of volunteering. Management on a case-by-case basis will handle employees who resign from Ark-Valley Humane Society and are interested in volunteering following their resignation.

### **Volunteer Feedback**

We encourage volunteers to make suggestions, voice concerns, and give ideas about how AVHS fulfills its mission to the community. We are always looking for new ideas so if you have any ideas to share, please speak with the Volunteer Coordinator.

## **AVHS Foster Program**

In keeping with our goal to adopt as many animals from the center as we can, Ark-Valley Humane Society has developed the Foster Care Program. The purpose of the foster program is to increase the chances that animals entering Ark-Valley Humane Society will be adopted into permanent homes.

We have many wonderful animals walking through our doors every day. Many of the animals brought to Ark-Valley Humane Society are not suitable for adoption when they first arrive, and some simply need the blessing of more time until the right home comes along for them. These animals have the potential to be excellent pets, however sometimes they need time and a loving support system before adoption is possible. Foster volunteers take these animals into their homes and provide a safe environment for them to mature, become more socialized/better trained, and/or heal from a wound or illness.

Animals are released, on a temporary basis, to volunteer foster care providers. Fosters care for the animal until such time as it can be spayed/neutered, eat solid food, heal from an injury, or become better socialized. Once the animal is suitable for adoption (which in many cases is immediately), the animal will be listed as available on our website.

By becoming a part of our foster care program you could be the difference between life and death for animals that cannot be adopted right away. This can be an intense short-term commitment, but also one of the most rewarding things you will ever do.

If you have questions regarding the foster program or would like to become an AVHS foster, please email Desiree Bator at [volunteer@ark-valley.org](mailto:volunteer@ark-valley.org).

Volunteer foster home guidelines, rules, and regulations are outlined in the Foster Care PowerPoint. Volunteer foster homes are representatives of Ark-Valley Humane Society and are subject to the same rules and regulations as all other volunteers, as outlined in this handbook and in Foster Care PowerPoints.



**We sincerely thank you for your interest in  
volunteering at Ark-Valley Humane Society!**

**Ark-Valley Humane Society  
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