



**VOLUNTEERING @**  
THE SAN MARCOS REGIONAL ANIMAL SHELTER

Animal Services | City of San Marcos

## WHAT YOU WILL LEARN TODAY

- Brief introduction to San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter (SMRAS)
- Why volunteers like you are SO IMPORTANT!
- Basic safety and animal handling information (videos included!)
- The fun things you get to do when volunteering with SMRAS
- How to sign up for an in-person, hands-on orientation to start your time as a volunteer!



## ABOUT THE SHELTER



Adoption Building

- The SMRAS was established in May 1977.
  - The original facility was located closer to the river behind the current water treatment facility.
  - The first phase of the current shelter was completed in the early 2000's, with the second phase completed nearly a decade later.
- We are an open-admission shelter, which means we must, by law, accept all animals from Hays County, including Buda, Kyle, Wimberley, Dripping Springs, and San Marcos areas regardless of breed, temperament, or medical history.
- The shelter has 89 dog kennels and 60 cat kennels, and is almost always at or near-capacity.
- In fiscal year 2019 (October 1-September 30), we had a live release rate of 84.6%. In fiscal year 2020, we improved that to 91.9%!
- We received 3,499 cats and dogs in fiscal year 2020, of those:
  - 1,368 were adopted
  - 786 return to owners
  - 1,078 animals transferred to rescues

# WHAT WE DO

## Placement of pets through adoptions and rescue groups

Our dogs and cats are available for adoption at our shelter

Our standard adoption fee is \$97

Our rescue partners help us avoid overcrowding our facility by taking in pets from us, as well!

## Lost and found

We attempt to contact owners if a pet has a tag or microchip. We also encourage every pet owner to register with <https://lost.petcolove.org/>

## Working cat program

Working cats are unsocial cats that cannot be adopted into traditional pet homes and are happiest outside or in an indoor/outdoor setting. We adopt out working cats to loving barn/warehouse/shop homes with no adoption fee

- Pet licensing within city of San Marcos
  - All dogs, cats, and ferrets must be registered with a current rabies certificate annually
- Animal protection
  - Our animal protection officers provide a variety of services within San Marcos city limits
- Community cats
  - Community cats are unowned, free-roaming cats living among us in our neighborhoods. We loan out humane traps for Trap-Neuter-Return
  - We host Emancipet (a low-cost clinic) monthly for public spay/neuter appointments
- Owner surrender
  - Some owners cannot or choose not to fulfill the commitment to their pet. They may bring the pet to us Monday-Friday 8am-6pm

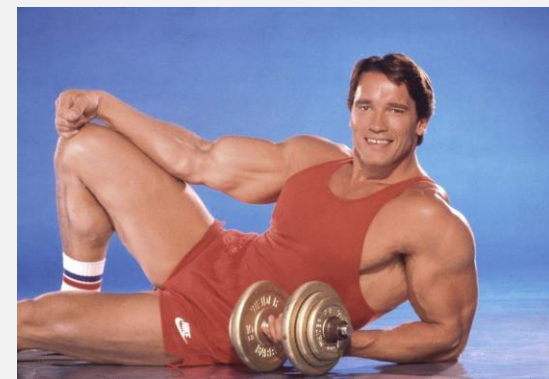
## WHY WE NEED YOU!

- We're embarking on the "[Paws-itive Outcomes Plan](#)" -- otherwise known as the "Implementation Plan" - an ambitious plan to approach a 90% live outcome rate in Hays County! In many circles, a shelter/municipality/region that saves 90% or more of its animals is considered as achieving a high level of success in life-saving.
- Under this rubric, around 10% of our yearly intake would still be euthanized. Unfortunately, there are times when we must make tough decisions. The following animals are most often ones possibly considered for euthanasia:
  - Animals with advanced injuries or medical conditions
  - Animals who exhibit severe behavioral concerns and could be a risk to the community
- We won't be able to save as many lives as we possibly can without your help! We need volunteers to help in nearly every aspect of our shelter's operations – everything from adoptions, to kennel cleaning, to reuniting lost pets with their families to behavior enrichment and training, to matchmaking with adopters! All of these will have a tangible and lasting effect on our push toward a 90% live outcome rate!



# WHO CAN VOLUNTEER?

- Volunteers must be 18 years of age or older. To accompany an adult volunteer, minors must be at least 8 years old, be listed on the application, and be supervised by an adult *at all times* at the shelter.
  - Minors 12 years old or younger may not work directly with the animals
- All volunteers must participate in the remote orientation (you're doing this now! Way to go!) and the hands-on orientation held at the shelter.
  - Additional trainings will be available for volunteers interested in trying out new roles!
  - If friends & family want to come volunteer, they must go through orientation
- Not the Arnold? No problem! If you prefer sitting or avoiding heavy lifting, we have MANY volunteer roles for you at the shelter from cat enrichment to adoption counseling to lost pet redemption!



# IMPORTANT VOLUNTEER POLICIES

- Yes, you may absolutely fall in love and adopt an animal(s) while you are volunteering! Please also consider fostering (taking a pet into your home temporarily while we seek an adopter for it)!
- There are NO monthly hour requirements for volunteering or a fee to begin. Volunteers are encouraged to participate in each and every program we offer! (More on this later).
- Volunteers have access to 90% of the shelter!
- You CAN take pictures of the animals and share them across social media! **Some quick exceptions:**
  - No photos of animals with gaping or untreated wounds or conditions
  - No photos of staff performing behind-the-scenes duties (like vaccinations, cleaning, etc.) without permission
  - Volunteers may not take pictures of animals in Cat Isolation without permission
  - Never post a pet's owner, adopter, or finder's information on social media
  - Please tag the shelter!
    - **Facebook:** @San Marcos Regional Animal Shelter
    - **Instagram:** @smtxanimalshelter

# IMPORTANT VOLUNTEER POLICIES CONT.

- Our pets depend on you!
  - If you must cancel your shift, please notify [sproler@sanmarcostx.gov](mailto:sproler@sanmarcostx.gov) ASAP. Missing 3 or more scheduled shifts without notification will result in your removal from our program
- Respect
  - As a member of the SMRAS team, you represent the shelter & our animals. Respect your fellow volunteers, the SMRAS staff, our clients, and our pets. There will be good days and sad days. If you need to take a moment for yourself, please do.
- Privacy & accuracy
  - Please avoid sharing information you may not know to be true with the public or on social media
  - Do not disclose sensitive information or any contact information from our customers
  - Avoid terminology such as 'aggressive,' 'dangerous,' or 'dominant' when describing our pets. If you are struggling to come up with the appropriate words to describe a pet, please see staff.



## DISCIPLINARY POLICY

Volunteers who do not meet performance standards or those who violate the Volunteer Handbook are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination from the volunteer program, as outlined in the Volunteer Policy & General Release.

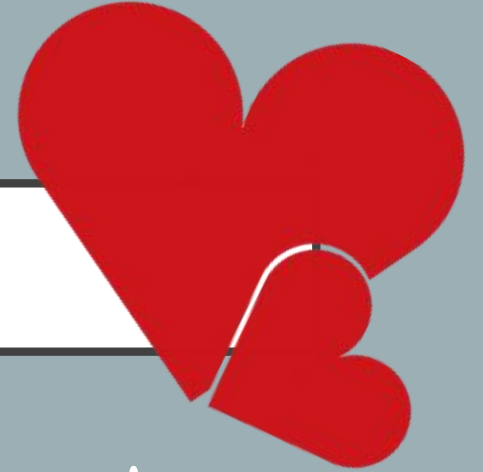
Discipline will be handled by any of the following staff members: Program Coordinators, Animal Shelter Supervisor, Animal Protection Supervisor, or the Animal Services Manager (collectively referred to as the “Shelter Leadership Team”).

# VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

The following activities are super awesome and amazing, and there will be more where these come from!

While the program coordinator has created these activities, we want YOU to run with them! We are always looking for leaders to take on a program and make it the best version of itself!

## ADOPTION AMBASSADORS



The very heart and soul of the adoption process!

Adoption Ambassadors are responsible for greeting guests and getting to know potential adopters, explaining the adoption process, facilitating meet and greets with animals, and helping match our shelter animals with their most complementary forever homes.

# DOG WALKING & ENRICHMENT



**Our dogs are bored!** They need you to walk them, play with them, and teach them basic life skills to help them be A++ family members for their new families!

As a volunteer with the dogs, you will learn the following:

- How to clean and set up kennels to help the dog feel more at home

- How to spot fearful or concerning dog behavior BEFORE there is an issue

- How to teach our dogs to sit, wait at the door, and other great life skills

- Awesome techniques and tricks for reducing a pet's stress – from scent therapy to Kong recipes to quiet time

- How to become an advocate for our doggos – helping adopters get to know them better and make our dogs' time here as low-stress as possible

# CAT ASSISTANT & SOCIALIZER



Our cats are THE BEST, and we are totally not biased. Not one bit.

As a cat assistant and socializer, you will help our cats think of our shelter not as a shelter, but as a premium spa! Duties include:

- Cleaning and setting up their kennels to make them feel safe and cozy

- Learning about cat behaviors and scaredy-cat warning signs *before* there is a problem

- Brushing and loving on them to help develop that human-kitty bond

- Teaching them tricks (What? Cats can learn tricks?) like 'high five'

- Lowering their stress through scent enrichment and play

- Advocating for our cats – barn cats, our Trap-Neuter-Return cats, *AND* our adoptable kitties!

# PHOTOGRAPHER & ASSISTANT

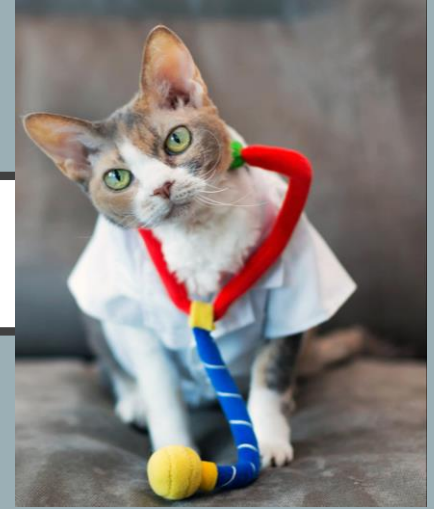


Our pets are super photogenic, but they are not the best at taking selfies!

We need photographers and assistants to help all of our pets put their best paw forward! No special equipment needed! An iphone, a few treats, patience, and a steady hand are all you need! You will complete one shadow shift with our volunteer mentor, then you'll be on your way to taking stellar photos!

Our assistants help get the pet out of its kennel and hold or distract and entertain our pets during the photo shoots. If you can help, but aren't photographically inclined, join us as a photo assistant!

# VETERINARY ASSISTANT



Interested in learning more about the science of shelter medicine?

Excited to be a part of the action on surgery days?

We need veterinary assistants to help us prepare and clean surgery packs, monitor our pets while undergoing surgery, prepare medications, and much, much more!

We are most in need of veterinary assistants on Monday afternoons and Thursday mornings, but we would love the help any day!

\*This is a GREAT volunteer opportunity if you have a curious high school-aged student who needs volunteer hours!

# DOG'S DAY OUT

An animal shelter is a high-stress environment for many shelter dogs, who are rarely given the opportunity to get out of their kennels to exercise or play. Studies have shown that just a few hours outside of the shelter can considerably improve the mental wellbeing of shelter animals.

The Dog's Day Out Program seeks to address this issue. Approved volunteers are able to "borrow" a shelter dog for up to 3 hours, allowing them to leave the shelter to go for temporary outings or runs. Through this program, our shelter animals will be given the ability to relieve stress and anxiety in a healthy and fun way!

We help you find a pup that you feel comfortable taking out, and we love to see LOTS of pictures!

Sign up here: <https://www.givepulse.com/event/233664-Dogs-Day-Out>





# MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

Are you a super-organizer?


Do you love chatting with people on the phone?


Care deeply about reuniting pets with their families?

Our marketing and promotions volunteer roles are vital to help our pets get home as quickly as possible and help our shelter run as smoothly as possible! You do not need to go through our animal handling orientation or be able to lift or bend or even get dirty! All you need is a positive attitude and a willingness to work with amazing members of our community!




**BREAK TIME! GO GRAB A COOKIE**

Adoption Kennel Card




Adopt and Protect this pet with the 24PetWatch Trial of Pet Insurance. Visit us at [www.24PetWatch.com](http://www.24PetWatch.com) or call 1.877.291.1524.  
Make sure they can always find their way home with 24PetWatch lost pet recovery services. For more information visit [www.24PetWatch.com](http://www.24PetWatch.com) or call 1.866.597.2424.



Tel.: 512-805-2650

Zander

Animal ID: A46009261	Stage: Available	Review Date:	Location: Dog Adoptions/DA13
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Description:

Zander	Terrier, American Staffordshire/ Mix, Tan/ / , 80.00 pound
Dog	2y 1m 9d, DOB: 10/31/2018, Currently Altered: Yes
Male	Declawed: None
Adult	Collars: / , Bitten: No Bite History, Distinguishing Marks: None

Intake Info:

Intake Date/Time	Intake Type	Intake Sub Type	Intake Reason
10/31/2020 12:40 PM	Owner/Guardian Surrender	Surrendered for Adoption	Moving

Microchip Info:

Microchip #	Microchip Type	Implant Date
982126056272274	24PetWatch	1/31/2019 12:00:00 AM

Pet ID Info:

Pet ID Number	ID Type	Issue Date	Expire Date	Issuer	Issuer Phone Number
smtxkx6l	License Tag	10/31/2020			

Animal Profile:	Adoption Info:
<div> Housetrained: Unknown </div> <div> I Enjoy: Car rides </div> <div> People Describe me as: Active and Playful </div>	<div> Recommended Environment: Unknown </div> <div> I'm Afraid Of: Water </div> <div> Training History: Unknown </div> <div> Who is ready to party!? Zander is! There's never a bad time to go for a run, jump in the truck and take a spin, or have a backyard BBQ. Zander is WAY fun and loves pets and learning new tricks. Zander would prefer a cat-free home, but with this 80-pound hunk in your life, who needs a feline, anyway? He is house- and crate-trained and is raring to go home! Don't miss this wigglybutt! </div>

# KENNEL CARD 101

Every pet at the shelter has a card on their kennel. This is like their driver's license! Learn to read a kennel card to help you & adopters get to know a pet!

- **Location:** each kennel has a specific letter & number
- **Animal ID:** unique to each pet!
- **Description:** important info at a glance
- **Intake Info:** how did this pet get here?
- **Adoption Info:** this pet's bio! If this is blank, we encourage you to write a bio for the pet and leave it on the Program Coordinator's desk to update!

# SAFE HANDLING BASICS - DOGS

# Body Language

It is important to look at a dog's body to determine how they might be feeling so that you can decide how and if to interact with them.

Some important things to look at are:

\*Body      \*Mouth      \*Tail      \*Ears

## A DOG'S EARS



**EARS UP, FORWARD**

Alert



**FLAT BACK**

Fearful or defensive



**AIRPLANE EARS**

Mixed emotion



**EARS BACK**

Submissive or Cautious



# A DOG'S MOUTH



## **OPEN MOUTH**

relaxed or play



## **CLOSED MOUTH**

Tension which will also be seen in  
the face



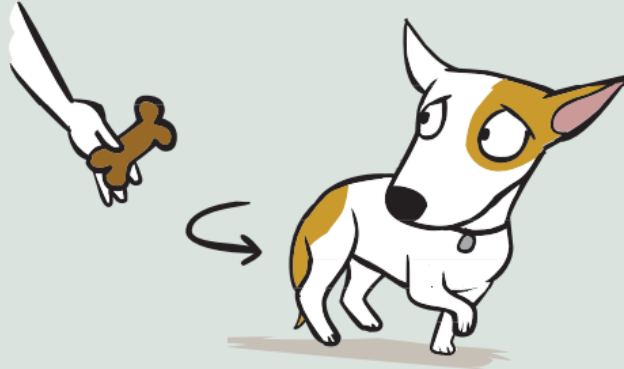
## **TONGUE FLICK, LIP LICK**

A sign of stress

# FEARFUL DOG SIGNS



**Major Cowering**



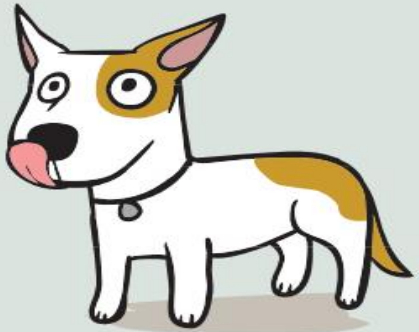
**Moving Away**



**Panting**  
when not hot or thirsty



**Acting Sleepy or Yawning**  
when they shouldn't be tired



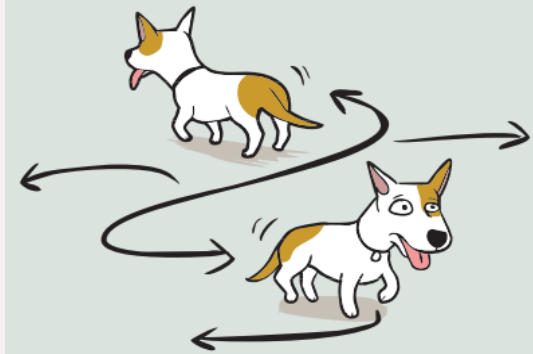
**Licking Lips**  
when no food nearby



**Moving in Slow Motion**  
walking slow on floor



**Brows Furrowed, Ears to Side**



**Pacing**



HAPPY/RELAXED DOGS! 😊



## MAKE A GREAT FIRST IMPRESSION!

**OBSERVE:** Always start with observing the dog within the kennel. If there is any concerning behaviors that you are not trained or comfortable to work with, do not take that dog out.

**GET ACQUAINTED:** Let the dog get used to your presence, smell, voice, and give the dog a treat. Once the dog appears more calm than aroused, you may begin the process of taking the dog out.

**NO PUNISHMENT:** We use positive reinforcement only. At no time are you to strike an animal. Never correct a dog by jerking the leash. Always apply gradual pressure to redirect a dog while on a walk.

**KEEP YOUR BALANCE:** Always keep your balance while with the dog. With feral cats and wildlife in the area, you never know when a dog with prey drive may spot an animal to chase.

**SPECIAL SIGNAGE:** Never walk dogs with special signage indicating they are staff only, quarantined, in the medical area, or just had surgery.

- Never enter into an adult dog's kennel. The only exception to entering a kennel is for litters of puppies under 6 months of age. This is the dog's space, respect its space.
- Approach from an angle.
- Turn sideways.
- Bend at the knees to get at the dog's level. Do not sit on the ground.
- Never lean over the dog. Looming may be intimidating to a fearful dog
- Stay relaxed as dogs can read your body language.
- Do not stare the dog in the face; keep a soft gentle gaze.
- Do not take a dog's food or other valuable items (toys, rawhides, treats)
- Never corner a dog. If a dog will not approach the front of the kennel for its walk, it does not want to go with you. The dog will be walked by staff.

## DOG WALKING DOS

[https://youtu.be/ZIP\\_5MEnb-g](https://youtu.be/ZIP_5MEnb-g)

**Do** trust your instincts. If you don't feel comfortable, find a staff member ASAP

**Do** give your pup at least 15 minutes of yard or walk time (longer is great, too!)

**Do** give them ALL the treats. Positive reinforcement & snacks are the best!

**Do** clean up after your pup. Poop spreads disease and makes our shelter look less awesome.

**Do** take pictures, write notes about the pup's personality, and share on social media!

## DOG WALKING DON'TS

- **Don't** walk a dog you don't feel comfortable handling. Know your limits!
- **Don't** approach another dog in its kennel or on leash with another handler. Maintain at least 10 feet distance from other dogs on leash -
- **Don't** ever use force on a dog – no pushing for 'sit,' no dragging it out of or into its kennel, etc.
- **Don't** be afraid to ask questions! We are a team! 😊

# SAFE HANDLING BASICS - CATS

# Body Language

It is important to look at a cat's body to determine how they might be feeling so that you can decide how and if to interact with them.

Some important things to look at are:

\*Body

\*Eyes

\*Pupil

\*Tail

\*Ears

*A note about purring: While cat generally purr when they are happy, they may also purr when they are anxious, irritated, or sick in order to comfort themselves, like a child sucking on their thumb. A more universal sign that your cat is happy is when they are kneading.*

# Content/Calm:

This is a cat who is napping, purring, or sitting in your lap.

- Body: Sitting or laying down
- Eyes: Soft, half closed
- Pupils: Narrow
- Tail: Mostly still
- Ears: Forward

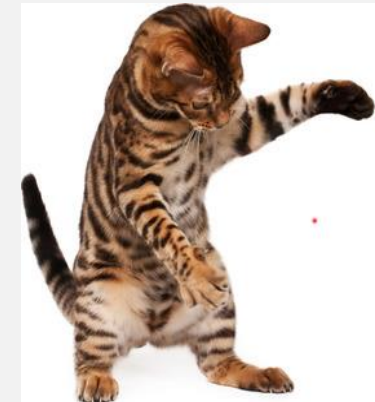




# Playful:

Cats are generally the most playful first thing in the morning and right before bed.

- Body: Stalk, pounce, wiggle, crouch
- Eyes: Wide
- Pupils: Semi-dilated
- Tail: Up
- Ears: Forward



# Scared:

This cat is stiff, flat, leaning or looking away, slinking around, hiding, avoiding, and very still.

- Body: Crouched and still
- Eyes: Wide
- Pupils: Dilated
- Tail: Low or tucked
- Ears: Sideways or back
- Scared cats may shut down and “freeze”
- If they feel threatened or cornered, they may lash out to try to defend themselves





# HOW TO HELP SCARED CATS

- ✓ Give them space and time to warming up
- ✓ Move slowly and predictably, talk quietly
- ✓ “Kitty kisses” or slow blinks
- ✓ If they like attention, pet them calmly and gently
- ✓ Use treats and patient handling to help form positive associations with people



# Common Shelter Problems

- Scared cats
- Overstimulated cats
- Cats who don't like other cats

The behavior of cats with ongoing medical problems or who are currently sick can be difficult to read and may behave differently than they will when they are feeling better. This can both hide problems as well as create problems.

# Overstimulated Cats

- Many cats in a shelter environment get very frustrated
- Young adults and adolescents, particularly males, are especially prone to frustration
- Cats who are overstimulated (OS) can be very grabby and mouthy and easily get themselves quarantined in a frenzy to play or get attention



# HOW TO HELP OVERSTIMULATED CATS

- ✓ Stop while you're ahead
- ✓ Time out of the kennel
- ✓ Regular attention
- ✓ Lots of playtime
- ✓ Mental stimulation
  - Puzzle toys
  - Bubbles
  - Busy boxes
  - Clicker training



# In Summary:

- ✓ Pay attention to the cats' body language
- ✓ Go with the flow and work with the cat and not against them
- ✓ Be sure to hold cats securely like the football hold
- ✓ Cats need to be in either a carrier or towel for any type of transport
- ✓ Avoid scruffing- use alternatives like toweling
- ✓ Don't forget to use towels to keep kitties calm
- ✓ Write your notes about each cat's behavior using objective language

## IN SUMMARY

Sign up for an in-person orientation because we can't wait to see you! <https://www.givepulse.com/event/227129-Volunteer-Orientation-Your-First-Stop>

- We need you!
  - Adoption Ambassador
  - Dog's Day Out
  - Dog Walking & Enrichment
  - Cat Assistant & Socialization
  - Vet Assistant
  - Photographer & Assistant
  - Marketing & Promotions
- We care about:
  - Your safety
  - The wellbeing of our pets
  - The members of our community
  - Having fun!