

What Can One Person Do?

Plenty! Here are some suggestions about items to donate and ways to volunteer. The suggestions are based on what many local animal organizations and animal control officers typically need.

Please note: It's always a good idea to start by checking with your local rescue group or shelter to see what kind of help they really need. Some groups may be desperately in need of materials, like dogs beds, that you'd be willing to provide. Another group may benefit more by getting help with publicity. Checking with the staff first ensures that your donation or service will genuinely be of help to the organization.



How can I find a local shelter or humane organization?

If you e-mail us at bfnetwork@bestfriends.org, we can provide a listing of Best Friends Network member organizations in your local community. You can also contact Pets911 to find local groups and animal control shelters. Visit their website at www.pets911.com or call them toll-free at 1-888-PETS911.



Things You May Be Able to Give

You don't have to spend a lot of money. Perhaps you are no longer using some of these items around the house, or you may spot them at a yard sale or thrift store.

Basic things many shelters can use:

- Bedding: towels, sheets, blankets, cat or dog beds, carpet squares
- Cleaning supplies
- Cat and dog food, cat litter, toys, collars, leashes
- Scratching posts, metal bowls, dog crates, grooming supplies

Doghouses. If you have an old doghouse that isn't being used, you can clean it up and pass it along for a dog in your neighborhood who could use it. Or give it to your local animal control agency and ask that it be given to a needy dog. Sometimes feral cat groups can refurbish and use doghouses.

Office stuff. The next time your office is upgrading equipment, computers, or furniture, ask about donating the old stuff to the local shelter. Basic office supplies are often needed, too.

Coupons. Some shelters can use free or discount coupons for animal food or cat litter.

Medical supplies. Many spay/neuter clinics and some shelters can use medical supplies.

Humane traps. Feral cat caregivers are often in need of more humane traps for transporting cats to and from veterinarians for spay/neuter.

Use of a photocopier. Many groups cannot afford a copy machine and would appreciate an opportunity to duplicate flyers and forms.

Prizes for fundraising auctions or raffles. Many organizations can't afford to buy prizes for these events, so they appreciate any donations.

Things You May Want to Do

Be a foster home. Open your home to an animal who needs a place to live and learn until he/she can find a home.

Set up a donation coin can or food program. Create donation cans and place them in area businesses or put pet-food donation collection bins at local supermarkets.

Fix an animal. Help a friend or acquaintance fix their pet. To find a local low-cost spay/neuter program, call 1-800-248-PETS or 1-888-PETS911 (or visit their website at www.pets911.com).

Donate your special skills and talents.

- Computer skills: Create or manage a website for a local group, or help create a mailing list database.
- Desktop publishing skills: Create a brochure, newsletters, or posters.
- Sewing, knitting, or crocheting talent: Offer to make pet beds or catnip mice. Visit the Hugs for Homeless Animals website (www.h4ha.org/snuggles) for information on their Snuggles Project and information on making pet "security blankets" for shelter animals.
- Building/construction skills: Make repairs around the shelter, or build doghouses or feral cat shelters and feeding stations.
- Writing talent: Offer to write their newsletter or an article for the local paper.
- Organizational skills: Help out with administrative tasks or event planning.
- Gardening skills: Ask if you can help beautify the landscaping around the shelter.

Donate professional services. Legal advice, accounting, public relations, dog training, grooming, graphic design, and printing are a few of the services that most organizations can use.

Provide care for shelter animals. Volunteer to clean cages, or feed, groom, or walk the animals in a local shelter.

Feed a feral, or two, or three. Many organizations practice trap/neuter/return and can use help with feeding cats. An offer to help with feeding once or twice a week can provide a nice break for a busy caregiver. To learn more about trap/neuter/return, visit the Alley Cat Allies website at www.alleycat.org.

Promote animal adoptions. Here are some ways you can help:

- List homeless animals on an adoption website (contact us for a list of sites).
- Photograph shelter animals for use on adoption websites, newspaper ads or posters.
- Create adoption posters and hang them around the community.

Provide transportation. Here are some ways you can help:

- Pick up donated pet food and supplies from local businesses.
- Drive animals to and from the vet clinic or adoption events.
- Provide transportation for people who need to get their pet fixed but cannot drive.

Provide office help. Here are some ways you can help:

- Write thank-you notes.
- Return phone calls.
- Do paperwork, record-keeping, data entry.

Provide emergency help. Make yourself available on an emergency basis to do whatever is needed.

Speak up. Sometimes what's needed is a concerned citizen who will:

- Talk with local elected officials, attend city/county council meetings, and voice concern for the animals.
- Write a letter to the editor of the local paper to point out the contributions of a local organization, veterinarian, or others who have helped animals in need; to address current community animal issues; or to provide general information on spaying and neutering pets.
- Watch for pending legislation on local animal issues, and speak on behalf of the animals.

Ask the local paper to run a free ad. Many local newspapers will run a free ad to promote an animal in need of a home at the local shelter. You might be able to help by getting a photo and description to the paper each week. If the paper cannot donate the space, you may be able to get a local animal-related business to sponsor the ad.

Do tabling. Offer to set up an information table for a local organization at a community event or fair, or outside the local supermarket, pet supply store or health food store.

Focus on gathering addresses for their mailing list and handing out information about the group. Be sure to have on hand nice photos of animals that have been helped and, if possible, a real animal in need of a home.

Seek donations for a local group. Circulate a “Wish List” of items needed for the local shelter around your work place and gather the items on a set day. Or, offer to approach local businesses on behalf of an organization to raise funds or seek in-kind donations. Some stores will donate damaged packages of pet food.

Talk with your veterinarian. Thank your veterinarian for whatever help he or she may provide to homeless animals and local shelters. If your vet does not already help, ask if he or she would consider providing some discount services to the local shelter, or donating a few spay/neuter surgeries for feral cats.

Share information on animal care. Best Friends has many informative publications that can be downloaded from our website from the Resources section of No More Homeless Pets. We have publications that help promote adoption rather than buying pets (*The Adoption Option*), that provide information on spay/neuter (*Myths and Questions About Having Babies*) and how to help feral cats (*Caring for Feral Cats*).

Get publicity. Call the local TV station or newspaper to let them know about a special event or the work of a local organization and suggest that they report on it. Or, write an article for the local newspaper yourself.

Tell your friends and neighbors. Don't underestimate the value of word-of-mouth. Tell others what you are doing and why. Invite them to help out, too.

Join the Best Friends Network. Network members receive e-mail messages about local animal situations and activities, and a weekly e-mail newsletter from Best Friends. For more information, e-mail bfnetwork@bestfriends.org.

Larger Projects You Could Help to Organize

Plan a fundraising event. This could be as simple as holding a yard sale and donating the proceeds to a shelter, or as involved as planning a benefit auction or walk-a-thon. Our website has helpful information on planning some types of events. One example is the publication called *How to Run a Successful Walk for the Animals*.

Organize an adoption event. We have a manual on planning Super Adoption events and off-site adoption programs. Called *Super Adoption: Finding Homes for Hundreds at a Time*, you can download it from our website.

Coordinate a local feral cat spay/neuter program or one-day event. We can offer advice on how to do this.

Start a local organization or program. Create a community animal welfare group or volunteer brigade to help other local groups. To get started, you can download these publications from our website: *Starting a Nonprofit Organization to Help the Animals* and *Building a Volunteer Brigade*.

Start a community e-group. An e-group can help unite like-minded people, spread the word about animals in need of homes, promote local events, and advertise volunteer opportunities. An excellent model is the Austin Pets Alive No-Kill Handbill. You can get more information at www.austinpetsalive.org.

Create a local event to help promote a national day. You could plan a local observance of National Homeless Animals' Day (www.isaronline.org), National Feral Cat Day (www.alleycat.org), or Spay Day USA (www.ddaf.org).

Start a Week for the Animals. We have a manual called *How to Organize Your Own Week for the Animals* to help you create a Week for the Animals in your town, city or state.

Create a local directory. Create a listing of local animal services and humane groups, and provide it to local social service agencies and vet clinics. Information on one such guide, created for Dallas, Texas, can be found at www.ahimsatx.org/guide.htm.