Volunteer Handbook: Dog Walkers & Kitty-City Volunteers

Rules and responsibilities of volunteer dog walkers and cat volunteers

Stacy Engerbretson, MA, CPDT-KA
1/24/2014
Welcome Volunteers!

Thank you for your generous gift of time and talent by helping the animals and staff at the SPCA of Southwest Michigan. Thanks to you, our animals are given affection, socialization, exercise, and overall enrichment while they wait for their “forever home.” We want your volunteer experience to be fun, safe, and satisfying. For this reason, we have some rules and policies that you must adhere to while at the shelter. If we find you continually placing yourself, others, and the animals in danger or purposefully disregarding the rules: we will ask you to terminate your position as a dog walker and/or cat volunteer. Please use this handbook as a guide to your responsibilities.

Contents
About the SPCA of Southwest Michigan ........................................................................................................3
Where Do Animals Come From / Do You Accept Strays? ........................................................................3
Who Can Walk Dogs/ Go into Kitty City ....................................................................................................4
Hours for Volunteers ......................................................................................................................................4
Proper Attire ................................................................................................................................................4
Parking and Valuables ..................................................................................................................................5
Name Tags ..................................................................................................................................................6
Information on the Cages ..............................................................................................................................6
Dog Walkers: Choosing and Getting Out Dogs **read this section carefully** ........................................6
Dog Walkers: What Do I Do with the Dogs? Where Can I Go? ...............................................................8
Dog Walkers: Observation Sheet ...............................................................................................................8
Dog Walkers: General Safety Rules .........................................................................................................9
Dog Walkers: Supplemental Materials ....................................................................................................9
Kitty City: Supply Room and Cleaning ....................................................................................................9
Kitty City: General Rules **read this section carefully** .......................................................................10
Other Volunteer Opportunities ..............................................................................................................10
Quick Checklist for Dog Walkers ..........................................................................................................11
About the SPCA of Southwest Michigan

The SPCA of Southwest Michigan was founded in May of 2002 by just a few volunteers in an unheated barn. With their passion, hard work and generous donations from many local friends and supporters, the SPCA grew and the new facility was completed in December of 2009. The SPCA of SW Michigan is a registered as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit animal welfare organization. This means the SPCA does not receive funding from any government agency or national organization, but are funded by private donations, funds, and adoptions fees.

Pets that have been brought into pound facilities are often in poor health: full of worms, fleas, ticks and ear mites. They are often sick, malnourished and under-socialized. Through the years, the SPCA has developed cooperative relationships with many Animal Control centers to rehabilitate, rescue, and provide a better life for many animals. The SPCA provides full medical care for its animals; all of our rescued pets receive complete veterinary care, preventative care, and all are spayed or neutered to break the cycle of overpopulation. The SPCA will not euthanize adoptable animals due to space limitations.

Where Do Animals Come From / Do You Accept Strays?

Note that the SPCA is not part of any county's government-based Animal Control Services. As a result, we cannot take in stray animals, enforce animal law, provide licenses, etc. These are services provided by the county and thus all these affairs must be addressed by the proper authorities. The SPCA takes in and rehabilitates abused and neglected animals, but by law, we can only be of assistance after the local authorities have investigated, intervened, and receive custody of the pet. Depending on the circumstances (e.g., types and quantity of animals already in our care, the animal’s characteristics) the SPCA accepts a dog or puppy released by the owner. We also are part of Petsmart Charities Rescue Waggin®. This program rescues dogs and puppies from shelters in areas with low adoption/high euthanasia rates and transport them to shelters with higher adoption/low euthanasia rates. The SPCA of SW Michigan is proud to be an adoption shelter for Petsmart Charities Rescue Waggin®. As of June 30, 2013, the SPCA has rescued over 12,400 animals.
Who Can Walk Dogs/ Go into Kitty City

Only volunteers who have completed orientation are allowed to volunteer in the cat room and are allowed to accompany volunteers. Any children under the age of 16 must be supervised by an adult who has completed orientation. Finally, only one dog is allowed per person.

NOTICE: dogs must match the abilities of the walker. In essence, if I were to drop a juicy steak on the ground, you must be able to hold the dog back using only the leash. If you cannot do that with a certain dog- then you are NOT ALLOWED to walk it. See General Safety Information and Rules for more guidelines regarding safety.

NOTICE: It is your own responsibility to be aware of signs that a cat is uncomfortable with you. By going into kitty-city you accept responsibilities for injuries (e.g., bites, scratches) that you could potentially incur while interacting with animals.

Hours for Volunteers

Volunteers are welcome to come in anytime from 8:00am to 7:00pm, 7 days a week. Walkers are most needed in the mornings (i.e., 8am) and late afternoon (i.e., 5:00pm) after dogs have been feed. Note that there is no set schedule for dog walkers; you create your own schedule. You are not allowed to let people into the building during the hours that the shelter is closed to the public! (Especially in kitty city, you will be visible to people coming to the front door.) Please notify visitors that they will need to return when the shelter is open to the public. The SPCA holds public hours Tuesday through Friday 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm and Saturdays 11:00am to 4:00pm.

Proper Attire

As you will be working with many animals that have not quite mastered the rules of human interaction, you are bound to be jumped on, stepped on, scratched, etc. by a number of dogs that you will work with. In addition, you will be interacting with the public, and, therefore, representing the SPCA of Southwest Michigan. It is imperative that you dress appropriately both for your protection and as a representative of the shelter. Finally, complying with these rules will help us keep compliance with OSHA standards for animal shelters. Anyone not dressed in accordance with the guidelines will be asked to change into different clothing:
Footwear: Absolutely no flip-flops, sandals, or open toe shoes of any kind. You should wear shoes with a non-slip sole, such as sneakers or boots.

Pants and shirts (No skirts or dresses) No ripped, torn, cut, or overly stained clothing. Be aware that your work will require a lot of movement, including bending over, squatting, kneeling, etc. Clothing that exposes undergarments or excessive amounts of skin during such activities (e.g., low-rise pants, low-cut or midriff tops, etc.) are not to be worn. Shirts with profanity or other wording of a provocative/controversial nature are also not allowed. Shorts above the knee are permitted but are not advisable.

Other items
Sunblock & Bug Repellant If you are volunteering in the summer, please bring and use sunblock as well as bug repellant! You may also want to bring sunglasses and/or a hat for additional protection but note that these items obstruct your face and thus may make some dogs nervous.
Gloves/Coats During the colder months, please dress appropriately for being outside, including gloves that allow you effectively hold the leash, pick up waste, hold the leash, and operate doors.
Cell phones When using your cell phone (both texting and talking) you are only giving the dog partial attention (similar to driving). Dog walkers are NOT permitted to use cell phones for calling or texting (unless it is an emergency)! If you carry one with you for keeping track of time, turn the ringer off. It is dangerous to have only partial attention with a dog you have only known 10 minutes.

Parking and Valuables
Volunteers should park as far from the main entrance as possible; if needed, you are permitted to use the dirt area opposite the quarantine/intake exercise yard. This allows the public to use parking spaces closet to the entrance. Volunteers enter using the side entrance.

There are no lockers for volunteer use; please leave valuables either in your car or on your person. The SPCA is not responsible for theft or damage to unattended personal items.
Name Tags

There are many faces to keep track of at the SPCA, please use your SPCA name tag each time you are in the building. Please place it on your outermost layer so it is visible at all times. If you have forgotten/lost yours, replacements are $1.00 at the front desk.

Signing In and Out

In the main hallway, between the doors which lead into the dog-kennel, you will find a computer. There are instructions on the wall above the computer explaining how to sign in and out using your individual username and password. If you need assistance or the computer is not working, please notify someone from the front desk or a staff member. If none are available or if the problem persists, please log your arrival and/or departure on a piece of paper situated next to the computer.

Information on the Cages

DOGS: Please read the papers attached to each cage via the clipboards, especially the dog walker observation form. These papers give a description of each dog, any allergy information, heart worm or other medical conditions, other dog walker observations, and other important information. Staff and authorized volunteers are the only ones allowed to post or remove information from these clipboards with the exception of the dog walker observation sheet. If you have additional information you wish the public to know about an animal, tell the front desk or staff and they will post it for you.

CATS: Please read the papers attached to each cage for specific information about the cats. Staff and authorized volunteers are the only ones allowed to post or remove information from the cages. If you have additional information you wish the public to know about an animal, tell the front desk or staff and they will post it for you.

Dog Walkers: Choosing and Getting Out Dogs **read this section carefully**

As stated in the “Who Can Walk Dogs” section, you should select a dog that is within your physical comfort level. This is very important for not only your safety, but for the safety of other volunteers, and animals. To assist you, there are colored tags on each cage with a “Meet Your Match” personality profile. Each color gives you an insight into that dog’s motivation, persistence pursuing desired resources, and energy level (For more information on MYM, please see http://www.aspca.org/adopt/meet-your-match/meet-canine-alties).
In addition, if at any time a dog makes you feel uncomfortable, secure the dog in its cage and choose another. Just because you see one person walking a dog/petting a dog, does not mean it will react the same way when you try. It is NOT about your skills as a dog-handler; rather, it is matter of that dog’s individual history and experience.

If you and other volunteer wish to take out multiple dogs (1 dog per person), only take dogs who are in approved play-groups. Look at the play-group numbers on the ends of the kennels to find out who are friends. Dogs who get along will have the same number. Meet each other outside (i.e., do not linger in the kennel area with a dog).

Steps for taking out a dog:

1) WASH HANDS! Use hand sanitizer each time you touch a different dog
2) Place “I am on a walk” sign on the cage. Staff needs to know where dogs are!
3) Once the dog has 4 feet on the floor, enter the cage
   a. Keep one hand on the cage and block the entrance with your body
   b. If the dog keeps jumping up, wait until the BEST display of behavior you can see and sneak in the cage
   c. If the dog is an “escape artist,” toss a treat in the far edge of the cage and walk in
4) Shut the cage door firmly behind you
5) Put the harness on the dog, attach a leash
   a. Harness are custom fitted – DO NOT SWITCH HARNESSSES
   b. Do not walk dogs by attaching a leash to a collar; the risk on dogs slipping out of collars is too high for this method
   c. You may greet the dog but the more excited YOU are the more uncontrollable THE DOG gets. You may have to completely ignore some dogs before they calm down
6) When the coast is clear, slowly walk out of the cage.
7) Keep the dog close to your side and away from the other cages as you walk through the kennels. Don’t race through the cages, this over-excites the dogs. An overly excited dog is hard to manage and could become unpredictable.
8) You must pick up after your dog! Poop, fur, mud, scattered toys, dirty tennis balls, etc. If your dog made a mess, you MUST clean it up. Place dirty items in the laundry room or give them to staff. Alert staff to large messes and use a spray bottle/towel to clean up minor messes.

TIP: The best leash positions are around the wrist and through the palm of your hand. Keep the leash toward the center of your body for better balance:
Dog Walkers: What Do I Do with the Dogs? Where Can I Go?

You may take dogs anywhere within the SPCA’s property lines. In general, stay within the brush lines of the yard. Help maintain the yard by not allowing animals to relieve themselves on the landscaping. There is dirt walking path in the southern end of the yard. Please only walk on the portion of the path parallel to the shelter; do not wander past the grounds of the shelter. Also note that this is a narrow area, if you see another dog coming at you, please turn around and retreat in the opposite direction.

You can also take the dogs into the play area. ONE DOG IN THE PLAY AREA AT A TIME. Two dogs that are part of a play group may be in there together but you must have 1 person per dog in the area with them. Please close both gates when animals are in the play yard.

Thank you for making the time you spend with the dog as enriching and as fun as possible 😊 Besides just getting fresh air and a chance to sniff the ground, try working on basic obedience training or fun tricks! See supplemental materials for more information!

Dog Walkers: Observation Sheet

When dogs are approved for walking, you will find a dog walker observation sheet on the clipboard. If the sheet is absent but you believe a dog may be available for walking (e.g., you saw him at an adoption event, there is a harness on his cage, you saw a WMU student working with him) ask the staff about acquiring a sheet for the dog. Please read this paper before taking out a dog (even if you have taken him out before) and fill it out upon his return to the cage.

After returning a dog, note the time, your name, your activity, whether the animal went the bathroom, as well as any observations you would like to share with other dog walkers.
Dog Walkers: General Safety Rules

1) **Respect the dog’s personal space**
   These are NOT your dogs at home. You are NOT their owner. Dogs WILL respond differently to humans in a shelter and their owner at home. Just because your dog is tolerant of its ears, toes, or tail being touched does not mean the dog in front of you does.

2) **Assume all the dogs hate each other please keep 2-3 leash lengths between all dogs**
   If your dog or another dog starts to appear tense, uneasy, or aggressive, turn and walk in the opposite direction.

3) **Be mindful of the volunteer code of conduct**

4) **Always ask staff if you have questions or concerns**

5) **Everything you do will effect dog walkers after you**

Dog Walkers: Supplemental Materials

Training videos, diagrams, and handouts can be found online at muttswithoutmanners.com and clicking the “adopters & volunteers” portal. You can also access them by going to spcaswmich.org, click “Directory of Resources” under the “Pet Care” heading and then click the “Reference” hyperlink under the Training Tips section. Click the “adopters & volunteers” portal.

The last pages of this handbook also contain educational material.

**Kitty City: Supply Room and Cleaning**

Cleaning materials are in the supply room (aka “the galley). This room is on the other side of the door within kitty city. **DO NOT GO THROUGH THE SECOND DOOR** to the laundry area as this is our Intake/Quarantine area!

- If the floor needs sweeping, go in the gally and get a broom and dustpan in the far left corner
- If there is a mess to clean up, there is also a yellow spray disinfectant and paper towels on the shelves
- Any soiled laundry can be put on the floor by the door to the laundry area. (Staff will take care of washing it)
- In the galley is a drawer with brushes to groom cats. Feel free to use them!
Kitty City: General Rules **read this section carefully**

1) **Sanitize hands before going in** There is hand sanitizer by the entrance to kitty city.

2) **Look down as you enter the room** Many cats will take advantage of the open door to “escape” and run through the lobby.

3) **Be mindful of the volunteer code of conduct**

4) **Always ask staff if you have questions or concerns**

5) **Leave cats in their cages IN their cage** You can take them out to pet but do not put them on the ground and make sure the cage is secure when you put them away.

6) **Kittens should be held one at a time** Only have one kitten out of a cage at a time so the others do not get loose! This also helps you put the kitten back in the correct cage.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

If there are other ways you wish to help us out, we gladly welcome your assistance! Each role at the shelter requires unique orientation and training. Note that your dog walker/cat volunteer orientation has not covered answering the phone, front desk duties, medical, adoption process, fostering, and adoption events. Some of these opportunities are:

- Care for Cats
- Fostering
- Mentoring
- Help set-up/tear-down for adoption events
- Transport animals to/from adoption events
- Adoption Counselors
- Give tours of the SPCA
- Make follow-up phone calls on adoptions
- Take photos for our webpage
- Write bio’s for cats and dogs
- Write articles for our newsletter
- Help plan fundraiser events
- Volunteer to help at fundraiser events
- Assist in the office (answer phones, clerical duties)
- Help plan marketing/advertising campaigns
- Write grant proposals
- Make crafts to sell as fundraisers
- Take a dog or cat to the Springs Nursing Home

If you are interested in other volunteer opportunities at the SPCA, please contact the corresponding representative listed and we will try to get you trained as soon as possible:

Kitty City .......................................................... kittycity@spcaswmich.org
Office Help.......................................................... singleton@spcaswmich.org
Off-site Events................................................. adoptionevents@spcaswmich.org
Volunteer Recruitment........................................ voluntary@spcaswmich.org
Quick Checklist for Dog Walkers

1) Put on name tag, leave valuables in car
2) Enter through volunteer entrance
3) Sign in on the computer (use paper if computer is not functioning)
4) Sanitize hands
5) Grab an “I am on a walk” card, leash, and poop bag
6) Pick a dog: read its clipboard
7) Put on harness, leash
8) Exit through the dog walker door in the kennel area
9) Have fun with the dog!
10) Put dog back, secure cage, remove sign
11) Repeat steps 4-10 as many times as you like!
12) When finished, put away all materials
13) Sign out on the computer

Thank you!!!!!

Volunteers like you make the SPCA possible!
Doggie Language
starring Boogie the Boston Terrier

Alert
Suspicious
Anxious
Threatened
Angry

"PEACE!
look away/head turn
"STRESSED
yawn
"STRESSED
nose lick
"PEACE!
sniff ground
"RESPECT!
turn & walk away

"NEED SPACE"
whale eye
"STALKING"
stalking
"STRESSED"
scratching
"STRESS RELEASE"
shake off
"RELAXED"
soft ears, blinky eyes

"RESPECT!
offer his back
"FRIENDLY & POLITE
curved body
"FRIENDLY"
round puppy face
"PRETTY PLEASE"
belly rub pose

"HELLO I LOVE YOU"
greeting stretch
"I'M FRIENDLY!
play bow
"READY!
prey bow
"YOU WILL FEED ME"

Curious
Happy
Overjoyed
"MMM...."
"I LOVE YOU,
DON'T STOP"

© 2011 Lili Chin www.doggiedrawings.net
HOW NOT TO GREET A DOG

Most people do this stuff and it stresses dogs out so they BITE!
I don’t care how cute you (or your kid) think Boogie is. Please show him some respect.

1. DON’T
   Lean over the dog & stick your hand in his face
   Sniff, doggie, sniff!

2. DON’T
   Lean over the dog & stick your hand on top of his head
   AW! Pat pat cute doggie

3. DON’T
   Grab or Hug him
   Puppy!
   Argh

4. DON’T
   Stare him in the eye
   (This is an adversarial gesture)
   Oooh! Look at his eyes!!
   Yikes. Potentially Dangerous Human

5. DON’T
   Squeal or shout in his face
   Aaaah!! You are SOOOO Adorable!!
   Oh no

6. DON’T
   Grab his head and kiss it
   (This is an invasion of space)
   There’s only one thing left to do
   Kiss

Doing this to a dog who doesn’t know you is like a perfect stranger giving you a great big hug and kiss in an elevator. Wouldn’t that creep you out? And wouldn’t you have the right to defend yourself?

THE CORRECT WAY:

* No Eye contact
* Let the dog approach you in his own time
* Keep either your SIDE or BACK towards the dog (non-threatening posture)

* Pet or stroke him on the SIDE of his face or body. Or on his back.

www.doggiedrawings.net Lili
TEACHING YOUR DOG TO WALK POLITELY ON LEASH

PART TWO: Help! My Dog Is Pulling!

If pulling on the leash gets your dog where he wants to go, he'll keep pulling. To avoid teaching your dog that pulling is a good strategy, use one of the techniques described below.

TECHNIQUE 1: "I AM A ROCK"

leash hand at belly-button

When your dog pulls, stop in your tracks. Wait. As you wait, pretend you have no dog.

Then move forward again.

TECHNIQUE 2: "BACK & FORTH"

leash hand at belly-button

When your dog pulls, turn around and walk purposefully in the opposite direction. When your dog catches up to heel position...

Click and treat. Then turn around and continue in your original direction.

TECHNIQUE 3: "OFF AT AN ANGLE"

leash hand at belly-button

This is a great technique for dogs who are very strong. When your dog pulls, simply move away at a random angle that isn't 180 degrees.

Wait for your dog to catch up to heel position.

Click and treat. Then turn around and continue in your original direction again.

If your dog keeps pulling, the environment is probably too exciting. Go back to teaching your dog polite leash walking in a less exciting place. Then build up gradually to walking on leash in the exciting environment again. Remember to go back to PART ONE every time you practice in a new place.

CONCEPT & WORDS by Irith Bloom www.thesophisticateddog.com

DRAWINGS by Lili Chin www.doggiedrawings.net