**Friends of Strays Adoption thru Foster Program**

**Purpose:** In order to prepare for the potential impact that COVID-19 could have on shelters due to an increase of intake or a decrease in rescue pulls, foster parents must be empowered to complete adoptions without requiring a staff member to be present.  This will minimize human contact and expedite live outcomes.

**Why this program is important?**

* **Their Lives Matter**- The more pets we can get into foster the more lives we are able to save.
* **High Demand for Kittens/Puppies**- Kittens and puppies allow the shelter to have a steady stream of income to help care for the longer-term residents.
* **Community Support**- The more desirable animals we have the more traffic we will see at the shelter and the more animals we will be able to adopt out.
* **It’s Inexpensive!** – Foster homes do not cost the shelter anything unless medical treatment is required. Food and supplies for the fostered animals are donated to the shelter on a regular basis and provided to foster families.

**Foster Capacity:** 100+ cats and kittens, 25+ dogs or puppies depending on foster availability.

**Supplies needed:**

* Copies of important adoption information. (URI, FIV, FeLV, New cat, new dog, training information, adoption contracts)
* Adoption folders
* Medical history, Rabies certificates, tags
* Sample of dry food for each foster pet.
* For foster parents to care for the pets they may need food (can and dry), litter, litterbox, bowls, crates or pens, toys

**Process**

* Once foster animals are cleared for adoption, staff will provide the foster parent with all medical and behavioral information when they pick up a pet after surgery or last medical checkup. The foster parent may also use the dedicated contact method if they need information sent to them. (email- foster@friendsofstrays.org or call shelter extension 103)
* Foster parents can opt to receive direct contact from potential adopters. The adoption counselor includes this information with any PetFinder or website listing.
* Foster parents can opt not to receive direct contact from potential adopters. In this case an adoption counselor will communicate between approved adopters and the foster parent. The counselor will be notified when the foster parent is available to set up appointments or have the foster parent drop off fosters to the shelter.
* Foster parents may opt to have their own personal adoption email address to communicate with potential adopters.
* Foster parents act as a representative of the organization and follow the same open adoption guidelines. See Foster terms and agreement. Each foster parent will be provided an adoptions guide. It is important that the foster parent provide good customer service to the potential adopter.  If at any time during a meet and greet, a potential adopter has a question that a foster parent is unable to answer, they should contact the dedicated team member for an answer.
* Foster parents will follow the checklist to ensure that they review with a potential adopter all medical and behavioral records, paperwork, post adoption support and other organization documents.
* We will remind foster parents to minimize contact with groups, other humans, and public surfaces. Encourage hand washing and sanitizing between adopters.
* Foster parents must notify adoption counselors immediately if an adoption has gone thru. Within 5 days of adoption foster parents are required to bring in adoption paperwork and any fees or donations collected. To help this we may consider a complete online adoption process.

Marketing fosters: See the Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide: Getting Pets Adopted Directly from Foster Homes from Maddie Fund. Given to all foster parents.

**Adoption Counseling**

At Friends of Strays we believe that open, progressive adoption policies save lives. Our goal is to match animals to homes which are good fits while providing exemplary customer service that creates community support and turns visitors into animal advocates and lifelong Adopters. Open adoptions address this reality by doing away with rigid policies and adoption applications and instead focusing on conversations designed to help anyone walking into a shelter feel respected, and anyone walking out to be more educated, and hopefully, with a pet to love.

Our goal is to have an open, honest conversation with potential adopters that is both more encompassing than relying on an adoption application alone, but also less confrontational and judgmental to the potential adopter. Open also means we, the organization, are open and honest with the adopter about our process and the pets within our care.

The adoption process begins the moment a visitor arrives and is greeted by an adoption counselor or in this case foster parent. FOS has already pre-screened the potential adopter. It is the foster parent’s job to ensure it’s a good match. If the adopter is focused on an animal we believe would be a poor match, we strive to disclose why this may be a poor match before the adopter has spent a long time with the animal and would then be disappointed after falling in love with the animal. Our areas of concern lie in the home being a good fit for the individual animal and the adopter’s ability and desire to provide a safe, loving home. To that end, we only ask questions which address these major areas.

Our philosophy from the arrival of a visitor is that the visitor is a good person who came to or contacted an animal shelter to do the right thing: adopt a shelter pet or support the organization. When the adoption process starts, we come from a place of “yes”. This means we believe that when you apply to adopt an animal, we start from the position that the visitor is going home with that pet today unless the adopter presents a reason otherwise that cannot be overcome.

Even if the adopter presents a potential barrier to adoption, we will come from a place of

education versus denial or judgement. Not everyone has all the experience and knowledge we do from working in animal rescue our entire lives. We try to educate versus assume the worst in a person if a concern occurs. When discussing a concern, we also believe in being honest - while sensitive and professional - when expressing those concerns to an adopter. If we are judging someone to be an unfit adopter, we believe that person has the right to respond and maybe even change our minds!

We perform same-day adoptions, meaning the day you adopt a pet, the pet will go home with you. Again, waiting periods have proven to do nothing more than be a barrier to adoption. We do not contact landlords to ensure pet deposits have been paid or that you can have pets. In this case, the adopter is the one taking all the risk while there is no risk to the pet. (In the worst case, the pet is returned to FOS, which is not such a bad thing.)

**Data Driven Policies**

These policies on open and progressive adoption policies are not just anecdotal; multiple studies exist that dispel long held myths surrounding adoptions:

● Do free adoptions increase the risk of poor care and abandonment? Results from a

recent study conducted by researchers at Maddies Shelter Medicine Program at the

University of Florida say no.

http://www.maddiesfund.org/free-pet-adoptions-study-results.htm

● Black cats at Halloween? No problem! There is no evidence that adopting black cats

around Halloween poses any greater risk to the pets than adopting them at any other

time of the year.

http://blogs.bestfriends.org/index.php/2011/10/27/myth-buster-adopting-black-cats-at-halloween/

● Shelter adoption lore once held that pets acquired around holidays were more likely to be returned after the glow of the holidays passed. This myth has been solidly

debunked.

https://millioncatchallenge.org/resources/removing-barriers-to-adoption

For an explanation of adoption denials, including when we would deny an adoption, please see the below.

**Adoption Denial Guidelines** (for reference, a staff member can handle denials)

Denials are rare at Friends of Strays. When going over the application please always try to come from a place of education and matchmaking rather than interrogating. Remember to re-educate and steer potential adopters toward a more appropriate animal when possible. If someone is visiting us wanting to adopt a shelter pet, its reasonable assumption that they are coming from a good place. They may need education on how to care for the pet properly, or which pet is a good match, but our position should always be to educate them, assist them, and help them find a pet who is a good fit. Most people really are good. Assume that they are until they prove otherwise. That said, not everyone is a suitable adopter. No one wants you to send animals home with folks who are a physical threat to the animal’s health and wellbeing.

When denying an adopter becomes necessary for one or more of the reasons below, make sure to stay as polite and professional as possible even if you feel uncomfortable. Instead of outrightly denying, your best bet will be to put up a string of roadblocks and hurdles that they must overleap before getting to the adoption.

These roadblocks should only be used in a situation where you honestly believe the animal will be at a physical risk if they are adopted out to this individual:

● Ask for a vet reference

● Call their apartment complex to confirm they are able to have the animal

● Ask for all members of the household to come in and meet the animal before adoption

● Ask for all dogs in the home to come in for a dog/dog meet and greet before adoption

● Ask them to come in for multiple training sessions with a staff member before adoption

● Require a home visit before adoption

● Require proof of vaccinations for their resident animals

● Require proof of residence

● Require three references that you can call before adoption

Potential adopters who are denied should not walk away feeling that they have been judged, discriminated against, condescended to, etc. If the applicant becomes violent or threatening, ask them to leave and/or call 911.

**Reasons to Deny an Adopter:**(A staff member can handle the denials)

● Plans to have animal live solely outdoors.

● Plans to declaw or will not abandon declawing as a possible option in the future.

● Has previously had an animal die in their care due to suspect situations (poisoned, died of untreated heartworm, was lost/stolen under avoidable circumstances)

● Plans to use the animal solely as a guard animal

● Changes story of living circumstances, history, etc.

● Wants to adopt an FeLV positive cat but has cats who test FeLV negative at home.

● Intends to give FeLV+ cat loose outdoor access.

● Has unspayed/unneutered cats at home and refuses to alter them before adopting.

● Verbally abusive to counselors/staff/volunteers

● Under the influence of alcohol or drugs

● Plans to dock tail, crop ears, etc.

● Has unvaccinated animals in their home (unless unvaccinated for immunocompromised reasoning)

● Has been a part of a cruelty case, animal fighting, other suspicious activity based in animal cruelty in the future

● Is homeless and cannot provide proof of residence if asked

● Is under the age of 18

● Refuses to give heartworm preventative for life

**Step by Step Pet Point Instructions** (Staff Only)

Once an animal has been assigned to a foster family, the Pet Point file must be updated. We track all foster activity through Pet Point.

1. Care > Add foster.
2. Search the person who is fostering. All approved foster families are in Pet Point.
3. Select the animal(s)
4. Once all animals are selected go to the details tab.
5. Enter foster start date.
6. Enter a pending return(end) date.
7. Change stage and location.
8. Submit foster.

Once an animal is returned from foster the Pet Point file must be updated.

1. Care > Search/ Edit foster.
2. Select an animal that is being returned, most likely you will have to update the animals individually.
3. Go to details tab and update Foster Start and End to completed with the current date.
4. Update stage and location.
5. Submit foster.

If a pet is adopted, Pet Point’s outcome process will remove animal from foster automatically.

**Taking Payments**

Once an adopter has decided on a pet and approved for adoption its time to take payment for the adoption fee, if applicable. FOS staff will notify Foster parents of the fee.

Typical adoption fees-

Kittens under 1 year- $100.

Cats 1-7 years- $50.

Senior Cats over 7 years- $25.

Puppies under 1 year range from $200 (could range from $200- $400)

Dogs 1-7 years- $150

Senior dogs over 7 years- $100

FOS takes payments in cash or online from a debit or credit card thru our PayPal account. The email associated with our PayPal account is Info@friendsofstrays.org.