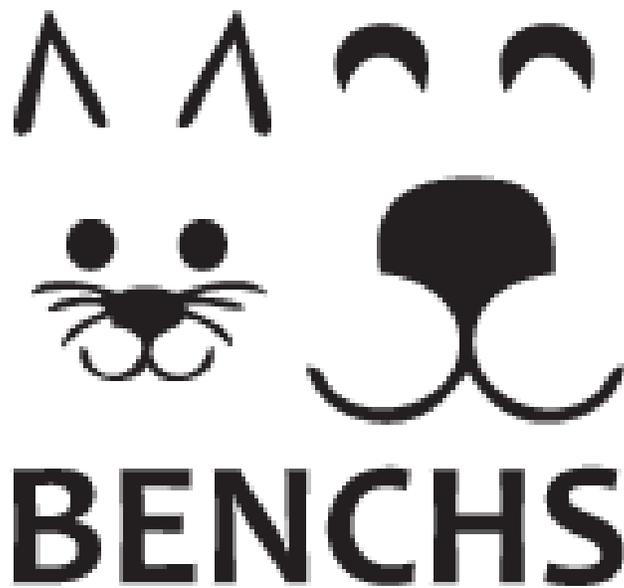


Volunteer Handbook



Blue Earth Nicollet County Humane Society

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Welcome

Welcome to the Blue Earth Nicollet County Humane Society (BENCHS). We are very excited to welcome you to the volunteer program we have at BENCHS. Giving your time is one of the best things you can do for the pets at the shelter. We rely on you to help us continue to provide the highest level of care we all want for the pets during their stay.

This handbook will help you to familiarize yourself with BENCHS' policies and procedures. Its purpose is to give you guidelines to follow during your time with BENCHS. Please contact the shelter manager if you have any questions about the policies and procedures. All questions are important; please do not hesitate to ask.

As a volunteer for BENCHS, you have the opportunity to help animals in their transition to new homes. Your goal is to help improve the adoptability of the animals at the shelter by providing physical activity and socialization. We depend on you to be an advocate in our community and educate your friends and family on issues that affect the lives of shelter pets everywhere. You can make a difference to the animals in our community!

We look forward to working with you. Thank you for joining us!

Mission

The Blue Earth Nicollet County Humane Society is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to finding loving homes for lost, abandoned and neglected animals. BENCHS is a regional no kill shelter serving the needs of the greater Mankato area.

General Overview

BENCHS is not only about caring for animals, but also about humanity. The love and comfort of a pet sustains a person through the most difficult of times, providing unconditional friendship and love. The services of an animal shelter reach all segments of society.

The volunteer's general function is to support the efforts of BENCHS as we help with socialization and the physical needs of the shelter animals to prepare them for adoption.

Responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Maintain a positive image with the public.
- Help maintain healthy living conditions for the animals and remove fecal and other matter throughout the day as necessary to ensure their well-being.
- Feed, exercise and interact with the animals in accordance with BENCHS' policies.
- Watch for health or behavior problems in animals and report them to BENCHS' staff immediately.
- Keep outside grounds neat and orderly by cleaning up animal waste and garbage.
- Perform other duties as assigned by authorized personnel.
- Please notify BENCHS if you are scheduled to volunteer and you cannot attend. Call our answering service at 507-625-6373. Tell them who you are and what activity you had been scheduled for.

How to Become a Volunteer

1. Complete online interest form. <http://www.benchs.org/volunteer-interest-form.html>. Select "Yes" after reading the Liability Wavier. The wavier must be signed prior to participation in volunteer activities.

2. Complete a dog walking orientation or adopt a condo training if you plan on volunteering in direct contact with the animals.

Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers must be 18 or older. Only trained volunteers are allowed to work with the animals. The shelter animals need your full attention while you are here, so you are not allowed to invite your friends or family to accompany you during your shift. Please feel free to recruit friends and family to become volunteers.

Any volunteer who knows or suspects she is pregnant must consult with her physician and review the scope of her volunteer activities.

We welcome volunteers that may have a disability. The individual must be accompanied by support staff; the staff person will be within arms reach of the volunteer 100% of the time. BENCHS manager or a BENCHS appointed supervisor, in consultation with the volunteer's support staff, will determine when and if the individual may work independently in our program. All volunteers who are accompanied by a support staff must provide for us the program they are working with when at BENCHS, an emergency contact person and phone number, and the name and phone number of the support staff. (See Appendix A)

As the health and safety of our volunteers and animals is our primary concern. BENCHS retains the final word on an individual's ability to perform as a volunteer.

Volunteer Schedule

Volunteers are invited to come in during scheduled volunteer time opportunities. Each volunteer is responsible for logging his or her own hours. Volunteers do not have permission to have a key to the BENCHS building. Volunteers can only be in the building when a staff member is present.

If you would like to bring something to eat or drink, please label it with your name and leave it in the Apollo Room kitchen area.

Dog Walking

Dog walkers must be registered as a volunteer. The community dog walking hours are posted on our website, www.benchs.org.

Guidelines for youth and dog walking

Often times the population of dogs at BENCHS is dominated by large powerful dogs. Bearing that in mind the parent/youth combination of walkers will be able to walk a dog only when an appropriately mannered dog is available to walk. If the staff and/or desk volunteer feel that the available dogs pose a challenge to the pair they will not be sent to walk with a dog. As disappointing as that might be, we must insure that the adults, youth, and dog all remain safe.

Youth who are 10 years old or older may walk with a parent. Non-parents over the age of 18 must provide a letter from the parents of youth to indicate they are acting as guardian to the youth. The parent/guardian will complete the volunteer application and sign the liability waiver. The parent/guardian accepts all responsibility and liability for the activities of the walk and insures that all return to the shelter safely.

We strongly suggest that only one youth walk with the parent/ guardian.

Any combination of parents or guardians and youth that are active in the walking program prior to April 1, 2018 and are not 10 years old may continue to participate and be “grandfathered in”.

The parent/ guardian will maintain control of the leash and dog AT ALL TIMES. Youth will not hold the leash.

Dog Walker Attire & Etiquette

Dog walkers must wear:

- closed toe shoes with socks
- boots in the winter
- long pants
- weather appropriate outerwear.

Wearing dangling jewelry is strongly discouraged.

The first time you walk you will need an orientation. This is conducted 15 minutes prior to the start of dog walking hours. You may be assigned a dog to walk after the orientation.

You must agree to:

- Walk on the trail or approved area.
- Stay off the neighboring business's property. BENCHS' dogs and walkers are not welcome on the Harley Davidson dealership property. This includes their boulevard, lawn and Uncle Mark Park. If you are walking on the bike trail you may not drop down into their lawn area.
- Not take the dog to the dog park
- Take bag along, pick up poop, deposit in designated can or **if bloody, diarrhea or strange objects in stool-bring back for staff to observe**
- Notify staff of any physical or behavior concerns you have. (Coughing, limping, lumps, injuries, etc.)
- Always have hold of leash and control of the dog
- Only allow adults age 18 or older to have control of the leash
- Keep shelter dogs away from other dogs. (**Always step off trail**)
- Walk with the dog. No running or jogging with dog without permission from staff.
- Go on short walks (10 minutes or less) during extreme weather conditions (hot or cold)
- Bring dog back to shelter before end of dog walking hours
- Walk the dog with your full attention. No cell phone or ear bud use allowed.

- Not pull or yank on the leash inappropriately to control dog unless **it is a dangerous situation with no other option.**

Cautions:

- Do not put your face in front of the dog close to its nose. Some dogs interpret this as a challenge and might bite.
- With reactive dogs you must get far off the trail and control the dog on a short leash.
- If the dog you are walking is too challenging for you to manage easily turn around and go back. Do not attempt to tough it out with the dog.
- **HANG ON TO YOUR DOG'S LEASH AS IF IT'S LIFE DEPENDS ON IT. BECAUSE IT DOES!**

Personal Appearance

Volunteers are expected to arrive at BENCHS with a neat, well-groomed appearance. BENCHS requires wearing long pants and a shirt. Scrubs are provided for volunteers in the locker room, but are not mandatory. Closed-toed shoes and socks are a requirement for your own safety. Having a separate pair of shoes is recommended in order to prevent contamination. Please wear only stud jewelry when volunteering. Any inappropriate apparel may result in being sent home by a staff member. This includes crop tops, inappropriate logos, sandals, etc.

Hand Sanitizing and Washing

Diseases and parasites can be spread from animals to people by germs on your hands. Always wash your hands between moving from different condos or different animals. It is crucial that you wash your hands well with soap and water before eating or drinking anything after working with shelter animals. Always wash your hands before leaving BENCHS. Please take into consideration your pets at home, as these diseases can be spread through you.

Zoonotic Diseases

Zoonotic diseases are diseases that can pass between animals and people by coming in direct contact with the infected animal or with the animal's urine, feces, hair, or respiratory fluids. Some zoonotic diseases include:

- *Ringworm* – This is a fungus, not an actual worm, which shows up as a raised, red, circular patch of dry itchy skin on the body. Children are more susceptible than adults. This is not common at the shelter, and animals with known cases of ringworm will be housed in an isolated “**staff only area**”.
- *Roundworms, Tapeworms, Whipworms, Giardia* – Intestinal parasites in dogs or cats. Transmitted by ingestion of microscopic eggs in feces. (Avoid letting dogs lick your face!)

- *Hookworms* – Parasitic intestinal worm in dogs or cats. Transmitted by ingestion of eggs in feces or larvae that penetrates skin. (Protect your feet and always wear close-toed shoes and socks while volunteering.)
- *Toxoplasmosis* – Parasitic disease. Transmission is possible from ingestion or inhalation of infected cat feces. Disease is most harmful to fetuses, and it is recommended that pregnant women avoid scooping cat litter boxes and cleaning litter pans of felines that are potentially infected.
- *Rabies* – Viral disease causing acute encephalitis in mammals. Transmission is through saliva when bitten by an infected animal.
 - All animals arriving at BENCHS will be vaccinated for rabies as soon as possible, age permitting. Many have been vaccinated before they arrive. Only a licensed veterinarian can give a rabies vaccination. Some animals arrive at BENCHS without the vaccine and on a day we have no vet in the building. These animals can be cared for by BENCHS staff only. Volunteers may not feed, walk, cuddle or interact with any unvaccinated animals. No exceptions.
 - **FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THIS POLICY COULD RESULT IN THE VOLUNTEER BEING EXCLUDED FROM BENCHS.**

Restricted Areas

No volunteers are allowed in the following areas of the facility unless escorted by a BENCHS' employee:

- Cat Isolation Room
- Condos that are noted quarantine
- Elin's suite (surgical suite)
- Dog kennels clearly labeled

Confidentiality

As a volunteer for BENCHS, please understand that during the performance of your duties as a volunteer, you may be exposed to information about BENCHS which is proprietary and confidential. Such confidential information may include, but is not limited to, information about members, clients, families, employees, volunteers, donations, gifts, unevaluated animals, and other associate organizations, as well as any other information otherwise marked or known to be confidential. Confidential information may be in any form, e.g., written, electronic, oral, overheard or observed. Accordingly, as a volunteer you agree not to reproduce any of the confidential information without prior written consent from BENCHS, not to use confidential information except in the performance of your duties as a volunteer, and not to divulge all or any part of the confidential information in any form to any third party, either during or after your term as a volunteer. If for any reason, you are terminated as a volunteer or you decide to no longer serve as a volunteer, you agree to cease using and to return to BENCHS any confidential information that may be in your possession.

Use of Shelter Electronic Equipment

The use of BENCHS' computers, printers, thermostats, cellphones, telephones, and cameras are limited to equipment which you have been trained to use and required for your volunteer duty of the day.

Volunteers are not authorized to download programs and change settings on BENCHS' equipment.

Discipline

Volunteers are expected to adhere to all BENCHS' policies and procedures. Volunteer violations will be subject to a meeting and a written disciplinary statement. BENCHS has the right to cancel your volunteer participation at any time for any reason.

Engaging in certain behaviors may also result in police involvement. These behaviors include but are not limited to:

- Drug or alcohol use during volunteer hours
- Physical harm or abuse to animals or people
- Theft
- Destruction of property

Drug and/or Alcohol Use

Volunteers are prohibited from unlawfully consuming, distributing, possessing, selling, or using controlled substances while on duty. In addition, volunteers may not be under the influence of any controlled substance not prescribed by a physician or that alters or impairs physically or mentally your ability to function appropriately and safely while volunteering on BENCHS' property or offsite activities.

Volunteer Theft

BENCHS maintains a “zero-tolerance” policy as to theft of BENCHS property or assets. All products, property, cash, and services are considered assets of the organization. Removing these items from BENCHS or failing to reasonably secure these items from theft, loss, or damage without supervisory authorization is strictly prohibited.

Any product, property, cash, or service that has been donated to BENCHS is immediately considered a BENCHS asset.

Harassment

BENCHS prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, veteran status or any other status protected by applicable law. Each individual has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and is free from discriminatory practices, including without limitation harassment. Violations of this policy will not be tolerated.

Any volunteer who is subjected to sexual harassment or intimidation by an employee, supervisor, fellow volunteer, or any volunteer who is aware of such harassment occurring must immediately contact the shelter manager or the President of the Board of Directors. If those individuals are not available, the volunteer must contact a supervisor or another Board member. Complaints of sexual harassment will be promptly investigated. BENCHS cannot guarantee confidentiality but will strive to keep the investigation as confidential as possible.

Respect

BENCHS will not condone any disrespect to their animals, staff, the public, or other volunteers. BENCHS will not tolerate any disrespect to animals such as: derogatory comments, teasing, name calling, swearing, etc.

Volunteers are to respectfully work under staff direction, not direct staff on what should be done.

Emergency Protocol

In case of **FIRE** the following steps must be taken:

1. Call 911 immediately.
2. Use fire extinguishers if the size of the fire warrants.
3. All persons exit through the nearest available exit, closing all doors or windows behind them.
4. Once emergency personnel have arrived notify them as to the location(s) of animals inside the building.

In case of **TORNADO** the following steps must be taken:

1. All person immediately move to an interior room or bathroom in the building until danger has passed.
2. All animals are to be left in their cages. No animals are to be removed from the building.
3. Once emergency personnel have arrived notified them as to the location(s) of animals inside the building.

Injuries/Work Related

BENCHS is committed to a safe environment for volunteers. Therefore, volunteers are required to comply with all safety regulations and rules. If a volunteer is bitten or otherwise injured while volunteering, the shelter manager or staff member in charge must be notified immediately. The shelter manager or staff member in charge is responsible for arranging medical attention and transportation in emergency situations. BENCHS insurance does not cover medical care for bites or injuries. If you have any questions concerning your safety requirements, contact the shelter manager.

An incident report must be filled out and given to the shelter manager or President of the Board of Directors on the day of the accident.

Wound Care

1. Wash your hands. This helps avoid infection.
2. Stop the bleeding. Apply gentle pressure with a clean bandage or cloth.
3. Clean the wound. Rinse the wound with clear water for five to 10 minutes. If dirt or debris remains in the wound after washing, use tweezers cleaned with alcohol to remove the particles. See a doctor if you can't remove all of the debris. Clean the skin around the wound with soap and a washcloth.
4. Apply an antibiotic. Apply a thin layer of an antibiotic cream or ointment (Neosporin, Polysporin). Certain ingredients in some ointments can cause a mild rash in some people. If a rash appears, stop using the ointment and seek medical care.
5. Cover the wound. Bandages help keep the wound clean.
6. Change the dressing at least daily or whenever the bandage becomes wet or dirty.
7. Watch for signs of infection. See a doctor if the wound isn't healing or you notice any redness, increasing pain, drainage, warmth or swelling. **Seek prompt medical care.**

Get immediate medical help if the wound:

- Keeps bleeding after a few minutes of direct pressure
- Is the result of an animal or human bite
- Is deep, dirty or caused by a metal object

If the injured person hasn't had a tetanus shot in the past five years and the wound is deep or dirty, a physician may recommend a booster. The injured person should have the booster shot within 48 hours of the injury.

If the wound was caused by a cat or a dog, confirm that its rabies vaccination is up to date. If it was caused by a wild animal, seek advice from a physician about which animals are most likely to carry rabies.

Visitor Safety

All visitor injuries, regardless of how minor, must be reported in writing to the shelter manager. Injured visitors may be offered use of a first-aid kit and instruction on wound care. Volunteers are prohibited from treating visitor injuries. In a life-threatening emergency, please call 911.

Social Media

Volunteers should be aware that BENCHS may observe content and information made available by volunteering through social media. Volunteers should use their best judgement in posting materials that is neither inappropriate nor harmful to BENCHS, its employees, or customers.

BENCHS reserves the right to take disciplinary action against any social media related incident that is found to be inappropriate or harmful.

APPENDIX A – Support Staff Contact Information

NAME _____

PROGRAM _____

CONTACT PERSON FOR THIS VOLUNTEER _____

CONTACT PERSON PHONE # _____

STAFF SUPPORT PERSON NAME, TITLE, & PHONE # _____

WAIVER AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY: I hereby Waive and Release, indemnify, hold harmless and without fault, and forever discharge Riverside Regional Pet Shelter and it's corporate owner, Blue Earth Nicollet County Humane Society and it's agents, employees, officers, directors, officials, and assigns, of and from any and all claims, demands, debts, contracts, expenses, causes of action, lawsuits, damages and liability of every kind and nature. I understand that animals may react in unpredictable ways, may become skittish or otherwise aggressive by certain "triggers", including, but not limited to sounds, sudden movements, people or other animals that could result in injuries to people or animals or damages to property. I also understand that Blue Earth Nicollet County Humane Society does not know what each animal's past has been and what circumstances or triggers might frighten or anger the animal. By this waiver, I assume any risk and take full responsibility for any type of injury, damage or personal property loss incurred while I am volunteering. I further agree that I assume all responsibility for the health and safety of any animal in my care. I further agree to abide by all shelter policies and regulations as determined by the board and staff, and I understand that I may be prohibited from volunteering by the board or staff for any reason at any time. I understand, confirm and agree that by signing this agreement I am giving up considerable future legal rights. I am signing this agreement voluntarily, under no duress or threat of duress, to waive and release Blue Earth Nicollet County Humane Society of all liability to the full extent of the law. I am at least 18 years of age and am mentally competent to enter into this Waiver.

Volunteer Signature

Date