YOUTH & GROUP PROJECTS

A guide listing fun projects our youth volunteers of all ages can do on their own at home, in school, or during Youth Group or Scout Troop meetings to support The Humane Society of Harford County!

Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not.
~Dr. Seuss

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Many volunteers from all over the community come together to help us in our work. Some of those volunteers come to the shelter to care for the animals on-site. These volunteers must be 12 years of age or older, and those under 18 must be accompanied at all times by an adult. Many of our volunteers are under 12 or simply choose to make a difference for the animals by helping us in ways that don't require being at the shelter.

This manual will help to guide our younger volunteers and those who cannot volunteer on-site. The manual is divided into sections that each give examples of ways to help with each of our four objectives: **shelter, care, adoptions,** and **education.**

Projects to Help the Shelter

Did you know that each and every year, the Humane Society of Harford County takes in almost 3,000 animals? That's an average of 8 animals each day! I'll bet you also didn't know that we have to raise about $1,400,000 each year to continue to operate.

In 2016, we moved into our new 19,000 square foot, state-of-the-art shelter on Connolly Road in Fallston on the same land we've been on since 1946. Our new shelter gives our animals more room to romp and play and a healthier environment to live in as they wait for a family to come and adopt them.

Keeping our shelter open is very expensive, and you can help us raise money to keep our animals fed and warm. How, you ask? We're glad you asked! Here are some suggested ideas, but you can also come up with your own:

1. Write letters to your friends and family, telling them why helping homeless animals is important to you. You can ask them to join you in helping the animals by donating just $1 (although they might choose to donate more) to help our shelter.

2. Call the Community Outreach & Volunteer Manager and ask about upcoming fundraisers. Ask if you can help distribute a flyer or other information about the event. Then, stop by the shelter to pick up some information that you can pass out in the community. You might take them to your church, or pass some out in front of your favorite store during a busy time.

3. Get your school involved!
   a. Ask your school principal if you can do a loose change drive at your school. You could decorate jars or buckets and ask teachers at your school if you can place them in their room for a week. Make it into a contest between classes to see who can raise the most! At the end of the week, collect the jars and bring them to HSHC. We'll take a picture of you and the donation and post it on our social media pages (Humane Society of Harford County) so everyone who donated can see how much you raised by working together.
   b. Ask teachers to participate by offering to dye their hair for a day or a week for the cause. Collect money in separate jars with each participating teacher's name on it. The teacher whose jar has the most money in it at the end of the week will fulfill the promise of dying his or her hair.
   c. If your school requires a uniform, you can ask your principal if you and your classmates raise a certain amount of money for the Humane Society, that you be allowed to come to school for one day in clothes other than your uniform.
   d. Go to your local pizza parlors and ask if they would donate a pizza party to the class that raises the most money for the Humane Society in a week. If one agrees, go to

your principal and ask to have the competition announced. At the end of the period, collect the money, tell your principal the grand total raised and which class won the prize.

    e. Hang pictures of students' adopted pets and vote for the favorites or the ones that look most like their owners.

    f. Hold a coloring contest at school. Charge students $1 to enter, and then have your teacher or principal be the judge. The entry fees should be brought to HSHC, and we can provide a small prize to the winner. We would also love to display the entries in our lobby!

    g. Host a class read-a-thon, in which students gather sponsors who will donate for each animal-themed book a child reads.

    h. If your school normally puts on plays or concerts, consider a "benefit" evening. Organize a school-wide student-teacher talent show with admission being a small donation. You might be surprised by others' talents you didn't know existed!

    i. Insert YOUR idea here. Be creative!

4. Yard Work for the Animals. Depending on the season and need, you can offer your services to shovel snow, pull weeds, or wash windows. Encourage people to use your services by reminding them that the money you earn will be given to the Humane Society to help build the new shelter.

5. Hold a yard sale/tag sale. Collect donations of gently used goods, advertise the date and place of your tag sale, set up your tables and sell!

6. Organize a community dog walk or dog costume parade. Participants pay an entry fee that benefits the Humane Society, and fun is had by all!

7. Ask your favorite restaurant to hold a "booster" night for HSHC, then invite all of your friends and family to participate. Many area restaurants will donate 10-20% of the proceeds from such an evening. The key here is to have as many people participate as possible!

8. Sponsor an art contest with an animal theme. Ask students and/or community members to enter photos, sketches, paintings, etc. Entry fees will help the Humane Society buy necessities for the animals.

9. Organize a community sporting event, like a bike race or a softball game. Ask teammates to gather sponsors for each mile accomplished or point scored.

10. Save aluminum cans and recycle them for cash or drop them off at the shelter. It's great for the environment and it helps the critters!

11. Make and decorate concrete stepping stones to place in our gardens.

12. Your Scout troop may wish to donate and plant flowers or mulch in the spring – or help pull weeds. Contact Dana at Danaw@harfordshelter.org for details.

13. Pick a product to sell: gift wrap, spring bulbs and chocolate bars are popular fundraising items.

14. Host a car wash in front of a local store that gets lots of traffic. Make sure you advertise ahead of time and make large posters that are easy to read from far away.

15. Gather used books from your friends and family and have a book sale. Or donate your books to our Little Free Library in front of our building.

16. Create an "Animal Lovers Quilt". Purchase scraps of materials at JoAnn's and cut into squares. Everyone can decorate the squares with ways to be kind to animals. Then the squares can be sewn together into a quilt. Raffle the quilt.

17. Go caroling during the holiday season. Have someone hold a sign that asks for tips that will help the animals at the Humane Society.

18. Hold a "Paw-Some Bake Sale." Ask friends and family to donate baked treats – for people and pets – and select a local business that gets lots of traffic to sell them.

Be the reason someone believes in the goodness of people.
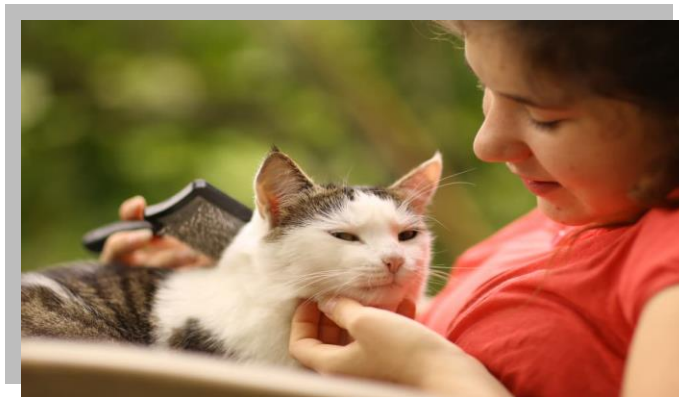
Projects to Help with the Animals' Care

Every animal in our care needs everything your pet at home needs: food, water, love, and exercise! To help us provide basic care for our animals, you can:

1. Make toys! Giving toys to shelter animals encourages them to play, which is a form of exercise. There are many types of toys you can easily make at home. For a whole booklet of fun DIY enrichment toys, visit https://www.harfordshelter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/DIYEnrichmentCrafts.pdf.

2. You can also help us care for our animals by having a donation drive at your school or in a local business. Check our website or email volunteer@harfordshelter.org for the most recent "Wish List" of most needed items and print it out – or make posters listing some of our desired items. Make sure you are clear about the location of the donation drive box and the date on which the drive will close.

3. Collect cardboard boxes like the ones at left. Drinks come in these boxes, but we can also use boxes that canned pet food come in. As long as they are rectangular in shape and have shallow sides, our cats and kittens will use them as litter boxes!

4. Make no-sew fleece blankets for the animals to snuggle with. Not sure what these are or how to make them? Google it!

5. Make pinecone ornaments covered with peanut butter and birdseed to hang from our trees to help feed the wild birds.

Projects to Help with Adoptions

We have a lot of really great animals at the shelter all the time, and all of them need homes. YOU can help them find homes—and when you do that, you've made the biggest difference in the world for that animal!

1. Print pictures of our animals directly off our website at harfordshelter.org and make "Adopt Me" posters. Each poster should contain at least one picture of the animal, the name of the animal, and the phone number, web address, and physical address of the Humane Society. These posters can be passed out at school or church, or handed out in public places.

2. Make "Adopt Me" apparel for our dogs to wear when we take them to off-site adoption events. One way to do this is to create "Adopt Me" scarfs with fabric paint and fabric. We love it when volunteers sew these on to dog collars so that we can just click and go—often dogs will scratch off neckerchiefs that are simply tied around their necks. You can also make "Adopt Me" dog vests if you have some sewing skills. To learn how, go to http://adoptmevests.wordpress.com/, a site created by a high school senior who made vests for her community's shelter.

3. If you have show and tell or if you need to write a report or an article, you could bring pictures of our animals to school and tell your classmates why it is important to adopt a shelter animal rather than to shop for one at a pet store. Please be sure to give out our address. We can provide you with business cards.

4. Construct, paint, and install heavy duty signs inviting your community members to: "Adopt rather than Shop!" "Support your Local Shelter," "Visit the Humane Society of Harford County," "Be kind to Animals," etc.

5. Advertise, advertise, advertise! Creative groups can create and distribute flyers of some of our adoptable animals and hang them in public places (with permission, of course!).

6. Seek out local businesses willing to allow pictures of the animals to be displayed for a day (or more!) in their store fronts.

7. Throw a party! No animal themes required—any old party will do: a Halloween party, a costume ball, a backyard Superbowl cook out. Charge your group members and friends and family a small admission fee to help raise money for the animals.

8. Does a party seem like too much work? No worries, many local businesses will let you turn your regular social event into a fundraiser by creating "booster" nights, where some percentage of your group's tab is given to the shelter.

9. Ask for donations for the animals at the Humane Society of Harford County instead of gifts at your next Birthday Party!

> The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.
>
> ~Gandhi

Projects to Help with Educating the Community

One of the very best ways to prevent animals from having to come to a shelter is to explain to people the causes for them being there in the first place. By talking to people and teaching them what you know, you can help protect animals now and in the future.

1. Make a goal to speak to 10 people in one day about the importance of spaying or neutering their pets. Spaying (for girl animals) and neutering (for boy animals) just means taking your pets to the vet so he/she can "fix" them so they won't have puppies, kittens or baby rabbits. Many animals come into shelters because a female pet becomes pregnant and has puppies, kittens or rabbits and the family can't take care of all the animals.

2. Do a report on how to be a responsible pet owner! For cats, this means providing food, water, attention, toys, vet care, a litter box cleaned daily and a scratching post for your kitty. Many cats are turned in to the shelter because they scratch the furniture (they wouldn't if they had a scratching post!) or because they go to the bathroom outside of the litter box (this can usually be fixed by making sure the litter box is always clean and in a quiet place OR by taking the animal to the vet). Dogs need food, water, exercise, toys, and training. Many dogs come to the shelter because they are too energetic and bounce around the house, knocking things over. Dogs that get enough exercise and go through basic positive reinforcement training school are unlikely to behave poorly in the house. Don't forget to remind people to pick up after their dog when he goes to the bathroom!

3. Do a research project and class presentation on puppy mills. Puppy mills are the operations that breed puppies for sale in pet stores. The breeding of animals for money is another reason why shelters get so full—especially in the American south and mid-west and areas closer to home like Pennsylvania and Ohio.

4. Write a letter to the editor or an article for your school paper on an animal welfare issue that is important to you. Some examples might include:
   a. Spaying and neutering animals.
   b. Helping to fight animal cruelty.
   c. Why dogs need to be indoor AND outdoor pets rather than always being left outside.
   d. Why dog obedience classes matter.
   e. The importance of socializing puppies and kittens from a young age.
   f. What basic vet care all pet animals should receive, and how the community can help those who can't afford that care.
   g. Your idea here!

5. Encourage your teachers to use class time to view and discuss a documentary on an animal welfare topic important to you.

6. Hold a responsible pet ownership event, bringing together vendors, trainers, and vets to educate the public about how to provide for their pets in the most appropriate way.

7. Take out an advertisement in the local paper that is an open letter reminding your community members to spay or neuter their animals. Finance the venture by having your group members visit area vets and asking if they would like to sign your letter in support of your message for a small fee. This same tactic can be used to forward other animal welfare issues too: opposing breed specific legislation, encouraging adoption over shopping for animals, etc.

8. Take a day to print and distribute any or many of HSUS's educational "mouthpiece" flyers (www.animalsheltering.org/magazine/animal-sheltering/mouthpieces.html) that are designed to educate people on common problems in pet ownership, such as why indoor living is much safer than indoor/outdoor living for cats and hot to help your cat make the transition indoors.

We thank you for your interest in using your skills and talents to support us in our mission to shelter and re-home the stray animals of Harford County. These ideas are just a starting point. If you have other ideas you'd like to share, we'd love to hear them! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Community Outreach & Volunteer Manager at volunteer@harfordshelter.org or 410-836-1090 x104.