



Humane Society
of Manatee County

Compassion. Commitment. Community.

Volunteer Program Overview and Handbook

Welcome to HSMC

As a volunteer for the Humane Society of Manatee County (HSMC), you have officially become a part of a community force. Thank you for giving us your time and for giving the animals your attention. While you may have different reasons for wanting to volunteer, you chose HSMC-- and we can't thank you enough for choosing our organization.

HSMC's Volunteer Program allows you to work alongside other caring community members, as well as our dedicated and professional staff. As a volunteer, you play a key role in providing care and compassion for our animals during their stay at HSMC.

Being a volunteer is extremely rewarding, educational and fun. You can have a significant positive impact on the lives of homeless animals. As a result of the volunteer program, dogs get walked regularly and cats are more socialized. With the help of volunteers, many dogs' and cats' lives are saved by a simple gesture.

HSMC strives to find dogs and cats their forever homes. Our goal is to continually expand community outreach programs and place more animals into loving homes. Our organization is proud to provide programs and services to Manatee County and beyond. Our many accomplishments could not have been achieved without the hard work and dedication of volunteers like you.

This handbook contains information regarding our policies & procedures, tools for dealing with the public, and how to safely handle shelter animals. The information provided will assist you in your partnership with the HSMC.

On behalf of our staff, volunteers, and Board of Directors: welcome to the Humane Society of Manatee County family! We sincerely thank you for making this important commitment to serve HSMC.



HSMC Contacts and Hours

Events & Volunteer Coordinator:

Samantha Harris Ext 315 events@humanesocietymanatee.org

Shelter Director:

Alana Ruszczyk Ext 304 sheltermanager@humanesocietymanatee.org

Shelter Coordinator:

Tim Ramsland Ext 304 sheltersupervisor@humanesocietymanatee.org

Animal Behavior Specialist:

Email Contact Information:

Volunteer: Volunteer@humanesocietymanatee.org

Shelter Hours

Sunday and Monday: closed to public
Tuesday thru Saturday: 11am-4pm

Shelter Closed on Holidays

New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas (Shelter may close early the day before holidays)

About HSMC

HSMC Organization History

The Humane Society of Manatee County was formed in 1970 through the courageous efforts of a small group of dedicated people who took a stand for the humane treatment of animals in Manatee County. Caring people housed the abandoned at their homes and administered around-the-clock care to the sick, injured, and newborn.

After years of fund-raising projects and the assistance of a couple of "angels", HSMC moved into its current location on Tamiami Trail in November 1978, thus becoming the area's first "no-kill" shelter.

This shelter still stands as a monument to all the volunteers and donors who have given so generously of their time, love, money, and expertise to the animals, thereby easing the pain and abuse of untold numbers of animals.

Achieving a No-Kill Community

In 2007, HSMC's Board of Directors underwent a fundamental shift from the Humane Society's original mission of being a no-kill shelter, to leading Manatee County in creating a "No-Kill Community". This means a live release rate of no less than 75% or a save rate of 90% of all animals entering Animal Services.

Planning began to open the county's first and only high-volume, low-cost spay and neuter clinic with the goal of preventing homeless animals from entering the shelter system. HSMC's clinic opened in April 2009 after being selected to operate as an esteemed Humane Alliance Clinic. Within two years of the clinic's opening, intake of animals at Manatee County Animal Services dropped by a dramatic 20%, equating to 1,000 less euthanasia in the same period. From October 2016 to September 2017, our clinic performed 5,402 spay/neuter surgeries, and our shelter adopted out 1,046 dogs and cats to loving homes.

HSMC continues to operate its no-kill shelter and adoption program and has spearheaded a highly effective partner-based TNR (Trap-Neuter-Return) program. HSMC has also implemented a "Pet Safety Net" program focusing on keeping pets in homes. This program is essential in creating a no-kill community.

In October 2011, Manatee County Animal Services and state government officially joined HSMC's mission to create a No-Kill Community, unanimously approving a plan to achieve a save rate of no less than 90% at the county facility. The Humane Society is proud to have led the way by forming partnerships with other animal welfare organizations, community leaders, and local pet lovers; all who were necessary in creating a no-kill community.

About Us

HSMC offers four core programs to save lives. These programs are:

1. **Clinic:** Spay/neuter, wellness and preventative care, dental services (canine and feline), advanced in-house blood and serum analysis, minor surgeries, heartworm treatment and x-ray services are available to the public for a low cost.
2. **Shelter:** The adoption center boasts a diverse population of dogs and cats where on average, dogs spend less than 40 days and cats less than 50 days at our shelter before finding their new adoptive homes. The overwhelming majority of the animals in the adoption program are transferred in from neighboring Manatee County, Sarasota County and Hillsborough County shelters or are local owner surrenders.
3. **Trap Neuter Return (TNR):** The humane solution to controlling the population of feral/free roaming cats in Manatee County. TNR stabilizes the colony size by eliminating new litters. It also reduces the nuisance behavior associated with unsterilized cats. TNR of feral cats is made possible through partnerships with Gulf Shore Animal League and Manatee County Animal Services.
4. **Owner Support:** Pet retention programs provide a safety net for pet owners that includes a pet food bank, care and emergency help referrals and availability of low-to-moderate cost veterinary care.

We are a community-based private non-profit organization that relies entirely upon donations to do our lifesaving work. Our funding comes from people like you. We receive no monies from any national organization or government entity.

What is our relationship with other Animal Welfare Organizations?

The common goal for all animal welfare organizations is to end the killing of homeless animals in our community. HSMC does not have the ability or space to accept every animal into our adoption program. The solution lies in preventing animals from entering shelters and partnering with other animal welfare organizations to cover the many programs needed to achieve a no-kill status. It is essential to work together to save the lives of our community's animals. We have an excellent relationship with local rescues to reach this goal.



Working with HSMC

Media Relations

Volunteers are prohibited from speaking on behalf of HSMC to any representative of the media. All media questions are handled by our Executive Director, Rick Yocum – rick@humanesocietymanatee.org.

Authorized Areas

Volunteers are permitted to access the public areas of HSMC at any time. Admittance is prohibited to restricted areas such as Staff Only, Strayville kennels, Cat Cottage, the ISO room and Puppy Ward. Some volunteer activities may include access to restricted areas, but only for the described volunteer activity during the assigned time period only. At no time are any volunteers allowed to walk through or spend time in unauthorized areas, unless they are escorted by a HSMC staff member.

Euthanasia

Euthanasia is an unfortunate and rare occurrence at HSMC. This is our last option and we always strive to place an animal into a good home if available. Unfortunately, at times we will obtain dogs and cats that are medically too sick/injured to save or behaviorally too big of a liability to release to the public. Thankfully, we have amazing resources, donors and volunteers to help ensure this number stays as low as possible.

Disease Control

HSMC is responsible for ensuring public safety. As a volunteer at HSMC, you must be sure to wash your hands frequently as well as clean all animal handling equipment thoroughly to prevent the spread of disease in the shelter. Hand sanitizer stations are placed throughout the shelter and clinic.

If you are bitten or scratched, you must report the incident to the Volunteer Coordinator and/or a staff member immediately. The animal will be quarantined for observation. A bite report will also be filled out and sent to the Environment Health Department.

You are responsible for your own personal health and are advised to seek medical treatment from your doctor.

Volunteering at HSMC

HSMC values the dedication and hard work of its volunteers. Without people like you, it would be challenging to accomplish all that we do for animals and the community. We ask that volunteers schedule to volunteer at least 4 hours a month. Along with daily volunteer positions, other opportunities to be more involved are also offered at HSMC.

Programs Offered to HSMC Volunteers:

1. **Ambassadors:** Volunteers who have at least 60 hours of service and/or are **Blue Level** dog handlers will assist with new volunteer orientation. Ambassadors will be partnered with new volunteers after orientation to help guide them in feeling more comfortable with dog handling or cat cuddling. This program is designed to help the new volunteers feel welcomed at HSMC.
2. **Events:** Volunteers who are interested in assisting with offsite events such as Petsmart adoptions, Paws & Claws, and Paws in Motion. This group will be called upon to help setup/breakdown event space, organize transportation of adoptables, interact with event attendees, and help gather necessary materials for each event.
3. **Activities:** Throughout the year, HSMC invites schools and other organizations to the shelter to learn about HSMC, make cat/dog toys, or participate in a beautification project. With these types of groups, HSMC staff will need help setting up activities, creating crafts easy for kids to complete, and monitoring the beautification project.
4. **Fundraising:** HSMC is funded solely on donations received from donors and fundraising events. Volunteers will help plan and organize fundraising events, drop off and pick up coin banks, and participate in public outreach activities such as Riverwalk Dog Walk.

Volunteer Opportunities

Dog Walker / Canine Coach

HSMC uses a color system for the dog walking program. Each dog is graded on this system based on the dog's temperament, how well it walks on a leash, and if it shows any signs of previous training. **Green** refers to dogs not showing any behavior traits. **Blue** refers to dogs with minor behavior traits. **Purple** refers to dogs with poor leash training and jumping.

All new volunteers start as a Green Level Dog Walker. This provides adequate time for volunteers to adjust to walking a shelter dog and hone their dog handling skills.

For those who have an extensive background or previous work experience in fields of animal care may fast track to Blue or Purple Level Dog Walking. This will be on a case-by-case basis and must meet requirements satisfactory to Shelter Manager and Animal Behavior Specialist training/testing.

Dog Kennel Cleaner

Assist staff in cleaning and sanitizing kennels. After cleaning is complete, add new blankets and toys, and the “scent of the day” so our shelter dogs have a fresh start to their day. 8am to 10am; Monday – Sunday.

Feline Friend

Help our cats stay stress free during their transition from shelter to home. In Meow Manor and Kitty City, volunteers are responsible for ensuring all cats and kittens are comfortable with being touched and pet; socialization of the more timid and docile by promoting play; and giving lots of love and cuddles.

Cat Condo Cleaner

Assist staff in cleaning and sanitizing cat condos. After cleaning is complete, add new blankets and toys so our shelter cats have a fresh start to their day. 8am to 10am; Monday – Sunday.

Office Angel Shelter

Prepare adoption folders with brochures, pamphlets, and gift cards. Assist staff with filing post adoption folders, creating labels for folders, and other tasks related to administrative work. Other tasks may include calling previous adopters and asking pre-set questions about their new fur baby.

Volunteer Training

Volunteer Orientation

Orientation provides an overview of the volunteer program and the operations of HSMC. This class provides volunteers with the opportunity to better understand our mission and vision at HSMC. The orientation includes both class time, shelter tour, and beginner training.

Additional Training for Blue and Purple Levels

To achieve the higher levels of dog handlers for HSMC, volunteers must attend several training sessions which covers protocols and safety concerns as well as discussing frequently asked questions, scenarios, dog training techniques, tips and tricks, plus an introduction to dog behavior. Future classes to be announced.

Cat Clicker Training

What better way to make our cats more adoptable but to teach them high fives with clicker training. Future classes to be announced.

Neonatal Foster Care

Newborn puppies and kittens require acute foster care including regular bottle-feeding. This class provides a solid introduction and Q&A for new neonatal fosters, especially during kitten season. Training is offered by the Foster Coordinator on a 1-on-1 basis, but large classes are held when needed. Future classes to be announced.

Schedule and Participate

Volunteer accountability is vital to HSMC's overall success. To ensure coverage of volunteer activities, all volunteers should schedule their time through their Volgistics account at least 24 hours in advance. The importance of scheduling your time helps to eliminate overflow and underflow in areas that may have too much coverage or too little coverage.

Log Your Volunteer Service Hours

By signing in and out at the time of your shift on the dedicated iPad, your volunteer hours are automatically recorded in our system. Logging time is important for the shelter for grant purposes, community support, and program development as well as volunteer appreciation. The hour log can also be used to submit to schools, businesses and organizations for proof of completion of required volunteer service hours.

Shifts

All volunteer shifts are in two-hour increments. If you cannot volunteer for the whole two hours, still come in and work the time that you have available. Please schedule yourself through the on-line system and leave when you need to. If you need extra hours for service learning projects, work, school, or Bright Futures, sign in to other open shifts to accommodate your schedule and needs.

Missing Shifts

Your support matters – the animals and the HSMC team are counting on you. Missing volunteer assigned shifts leaves spots available that could have otherwise been staffed by other volunteers. You can change your volunteer assignment on-line 24 hours prior to the assignment date and time if you find that you are unable to fulfill a previously scheduled activity.

Daily Opening and Closing Time

All volunteers must be off the HSMC property no later than 4:00 pm each day, and will not be allowed on premise earlier than 10:00 am for scheduled volunteer activities, assigned through the on-line volunteer scheduling system. Several volunteer roles have earlier start times, these are the only exclusions because their mornings start at 8:00 am or 9am. Examples are Kennel Cleaners and Cat Condo Cleaners that start at 8:00 am. Anyone who comes earlier than 8:00 am, and does not want to clean kennels will be asked to come back at 10:00 am for regular volunteer hours.

Contact Information

It is important to keep your contact information up to date at all times. Therefore, volunteers should notify the Volunteer Coordinator of changes in address, phone number, emergency contact or email address in a timely manner.

Code of Conduct

Respectful Behavior

As a member of the HSMC team, you are a representative of HSMC's brand and image and are expected to conduct yourself in a professional manner. Be respectful and courteous in your interactions with the public and with staff. Disrespectful or unprofessional behavior, sexual harassment, threats, disparaging remarks, discrimination or vulgar language will not be tolerated and you may be asked to cease your volunteer work as a result of such conduct. This code of conduct applies to online and/or written material as well as personal interactions with staff, other volunteers, and members of the public.

Non-HSMC Guests/Pets

Anyone who is not a registered HSMC volunteer is not permitted during your volunteer shift. All HSMC volunteers must first register online, complete the initial volunteer orientation, sign the volunteer agreement, and have approval from the Volunteer Coordinator to proceed with further activities. Volunteers with unapproved guests or pets will be asked to leave.

Privacy Policy & Pertinent Information

Information pertaining to HSMC records or specific cases are strictly confidential and may not be discussed with others. Please refrain from offering the public information on fees or policies. When in doubt, refer the individual to HSMC staff. Volunteers are not to disclose any confidential information (contact, personal information, financial, etc.) of shelter customers or staff members. Only HSMC approved signage and messaging are allowed on premises and at HSMC events. Do not write notes or messages on kennel cards, on paper signs or affix any other signs or messages without prior approval from HSMC management.

Dress Code

Anything that you wear will get dirty. When working with animals, you may be exposed to zoonotic communicable illness, ringworm, mange (scabies), fleas and/or ticks. As an HSMC volunteer, you are required to wear the following during each volunteer activity:

HSMC volunteer shirt - It is imperative that all volunteers be dressed in HSMC apparel so that they are consistently recognizable to the public and staff. Only HSMC shirts are to be worn by volunteers while on scheduled activities.

Volunteer ID – You will be issued a name badge on your first day of volunteering. Name badges must be worn at all times when volunteering at HSMC or during any event you are asked to help at. Name badges can be kept at the HSMC Volunteer Lounge or taken home, however, lost or replaced name badges will cost \$5.

Long pants are required – Jeans, khakis or other long pants must be worn during your volunteer time. No shorts, skirts, skorts, or other garments that expose portions of the leg to potential scratches or scrapes.

Flat heeled, closed-toed shoes – Tennis shoes are the preferred shoe. Unpaved, gravel, and wet surfaces are throughout the shelter. It is a safety hazard to have anything other than flat heeled and closed toed.

Activities & Events

HSMC schedules and plans activities and events (on-site as well as off-site) for adoptions, awareness and other outreach initiatives several months in advance. As such, HSMC has established protocols, procedures, branding standards and assigned resources. Any and all activities and events, either on the HSMC premises or as represented as HSMC in the public must be coordinated, and approved by HSMC management at least 30 days in advance. Unscheduled or impromptu activities or events will not be supported or endorsed by HSMC.

Volunteer Groups or Organizations

Any groups or organizations wishing to hold an event or group volunteer project must contact the Volunteer Coordinator in advance to make such arrangements. Groups will not be allowed to assemble at an event or on-site to promote their business, cause or messaging without prior approval from HSMC Management.

Parking and Entrance

The parking spots along the side of the adoptions building are for public guests only. All volunteers must park behind the play yards. Do not block fire lanes or park in unmarked areas – park in designated areas only. Cars parked in fire lanes or unmarked areas may be towed at the owner's expense. All volunteers will enter through the gate near the play area and check in at the Volunteer Lounge.

Smoking

Smoking is prohibited in all buildings and on facility grounds. Volunteers who wish to smoke must do so behind the shed/garage in the back parking lot. While working at off-site events as a HSMC Volunteer, you may not smoke except when on breaks and out of public view.

Drugs and Alcohol

Under no circumstances shall a volunteer work at our facility or off-site event under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If suspected of being under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, you will be asked to leave immediately and will be subject to termination from the HSMC Volunteer Program.

Cell Phones

While you are here, we want you to keep your focus on the animals in your care and the customers in need of assistance. HSMC prohibits the use of cell phones and mobile devices that create unsafe situations. If it is necessary for you to have your cell phone with you while volunteering, set the ringer to vibrate or silent, and use your cell phone in non-working areas only.

Animal Care

It is expected that HSMC Volunteers will treat all animals in the shelter's care with compassion and gentleness. Ask for assistance from HSMC staff when needed, and use caution at all times. Do not hand write messages on kennel cards – notify HSMC staff of any observations or information you feel may need to be noted for an animal. Volunteers are not to diagnose medical cases, remove sick animals from the shelter without permission from the shelter manager, or take any animals from the shelter without proper documentation and approval from the manager on duty. Dogs are to be walked on HSMC property only.

Injuries

You are responsible for your own health and welfare, mind all signs and safety precautions. If you are injured while at HSMC, you must notify the Volunteer Coordinator or Manager on Duty immediately to fill out an incident report.

Comments and/or Critiques

Your point of contact regarding concerns and questions while volunteering at the shelter is the Volunteer Coordinator. Immediately bring any complaints or issues with HSMC policy to the attention of the Volunteer Coordinator for resolution. We want to resolve issues so that we can all work effectively as a team. Immediately report anything you interpret as harassment from staff, volunteers or the public to the Volunteer Coordinator or Manager on Duty to ensure your safety and the safety of everyone on the premises.

Volunteer Term

HSMC reserves the right to terminate any volunteer under any circumstance as they deem fit. Volunteers who commit minor violations of policy and procedures will be verbally counseled in an effort to achieve acceptable compliance. Such violations could include disruptive behavior, habitual absenteeism, misstatement of HSMC policies, etc. If after 2 written notices, conditions do not improve, said volunteer will be dismissed from duties. Dismissed volunteers are not permitted entry to HSMC beyond the public interactions.