

Furry friends make for healthier humans.



What if we told you that both dogs and cats should be considered man's best friend? It's true. Well, at least from a health point of view. Studies have shown that contact with animals can significantly reduce our stress levels, elevate our moods and provide an increased sense of well-being. Imagine that— the simple act of petting a pooch is actually a very healthy thing to do. It also represents an incredible opportunity to make your community a better place. You can begin today by visiting VolunteerMatch. Bursting with thousands of options for volunteering, this comprehensive site is dedicated to pairing people with their volunteer interests. It's your chance not only to help create a healthier community, but also to help create a healthier you.

If you love animals, this may be one of the best volunteering opportunities available.

Places like animal shelters can offer you the chance to make a real difference in the lives of so many pets and people. Or you may wish to foster a dog or cat. It's one of the easiest ways to bring love and companionship into your home. There are also many organizations that train service dogs to help people lead richer and more independent lives. By helping train animals, you'll also be helping people in your community for years to come, and that's a good feeling.

One simple way to make a big impact is to arrange to take your pet to visit people at a hospital or senior center.

The interaction between pets and people has a calming, reassuring effect. Many people report feeling less alone and generally much happier. Children undergoing uncomfortable treatments in hospitals can benefit greatly by the simple distraction of having a friend to pet. Some doctors have even gone so far as to call it "Pet Therapy."



There's no question about the health benefits of volunteering. In fact, recent research showed that eight in ten volunteers believe that volunteering improves physical health. Which goes to prove that by making other peoples' lives better, you become healthier yourself. However you decide to volunteer, taking action with animals is a great way to help stay healthy.

So you may be asking, "How do I get started volunteering with animals?" Below, you'll find some tips, questions and links to help find the right opportunity for you.

Some volunteering suggestions:

- Foster a dog or cat in your home.
- Volunteer at an animal shelter.
- Help train service dogs.
- Volunteer to take your pet to hospitals and senior centers.
- Become a dog walker.
- Help with animal socialization.

Is this opportunity for you?

Some questions to ask yourself:

1. Can I dedicate the time needed to care for an animal?
2. Am I physically able to do this?
3. How often am I available?

Visit dogoodlivewell.org to start volunteering with animals today.

You may also wish to visit:

- **ASPCA**
(aspca.org)
- **The Humane Society of the United States**
(humanesociety.org)
- **North Shore Animal League**
(animalleague.org)
- **Purina Caring For Your Pet**
(purina.com/caring-for-your-pet)
- **IAMS Pet Health**
(iams.com/iams/pet-health.jsp)

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