



South Suburban Humane Society Foster Program FQA

They say in times of economic trouble one of the first things people cut out of their budget is charitable giving. There are many non-profit charities and groups that have seen their donations go down during this recession. What people do not realize is that there are many ways to “give back” without spending money. Case in point, the Foster Program at South Suburban Humane Society.

In 2009, more than 40 homes joined our Foster Care program, headed by volunteer Heather Risser. More than 300 animals have been saved as a direct result of the program!! How does it work?

Individuals or families interested in fostering should start by emailing Heather the foster care coordinator at heathersfosterdogs@att.net. Heather will contact you to set up a quick home check and help you determine which type of foster animal or animals would be right for your home.

What kind of animals can I foster?

There are many different situations requiring foster care. All of our animals must be at least 8 weeks old and weigh 2 pounds before being spay/neutered and put up for adoption. So for example, if a person were to drop off a litter of 3 week old kittens without their mother cat, for the next 5-6 weeks, these kittens need a safe place to get weaned to solid food, and grow to the desired weight. Keeping them out of the shelter greatly lessens the risk of them getting sick, since underage puppies and kittens are very vulnerable to infection without the benefit of their mother's milk.

Occasionally the shelter will receive a pregnant mom who needs a safe, quiet place to deliver. One foster mom provides a quiet space in her basement for just such a situation.

Sometimes animals are sick – either with a simple upper respiratory infection that requires medication or an injury that requires cage rest. Anyone with experience in treating sick animals is definitely needed, but training is provided as well!

Sometimes animals, dogs especially, do not put on their best behavior when at the shelter, simply due to the stress of being in a new place, with the sights and smells of many other animals. Consequently, they are not getting adopted because they are barking excessively, jumping, or just acting out of fear, depression, or stress. Animals seem to do so much better in a home setting, and getting them into a routine of living with people makes them that much more adoptable.

We also use foster homes to create space. South Suburban Humane Society is an “open door” shelter, which means we never turn an animal away. This also means we can quickly run out of space. By taking an animal into your home, you are freeing up valuable cage space at the shelter and allowing us to provide for more animals.

Anyone with experience in dog training or behavior issues is especially welcome and needed!!! Many animals end up in shelters simply because no one took the time to give them basic training and teach them to not jump, chew, etc.

What kind of a time commitment should I expect?

Depending on the arrangement with the foster care coordinator, you might have an animal for as little as a week, up to several months, depending on the type of care needed. Foster pets can take up to 1-2 hours of your day, depending on how much exercise, cleaning, attention they need.

I don't have a lot of money to spend on fostering. Can I still do it?

You don't have to spend ANY money fostering! That is the beauty of this program, and it makes it a great choice for retirees, at home moms, families, and those on a budget or fixed income. It is a great way for families to bond together and to teach children about kindness to animals. It is also a fantastic way for seniors looking to keep busy and give back without spending money. All that is asked is your love, patience and time with these animals. The shelter provides the food and medical care, bottles and formula if you are bottle feeding, crates for crate training, and more.

I have other pets in my home. Can I foster?

Yes! It is highly recommended that your resident pets are vaccinated, and if you are dealing with nursing kittens or puppies or an animal with an illness, that you keep your fosters separated from your pets. Many foster homes have a separate room or area of the basement that they set up for the foster pets.

I can't foster right now, but I'd still like to help. What can I do?

Our foster program and the shelter is always looking for donations of food, supplies, and money to provide for vaccinations and medical care. Purina Cat and Dog dry chow is always needed, as is canned wet cat food. We can also use nursing bottles and kitten milk replacer formula, found at Petco or PetSmart. Newspapers and paper towels are always welcome for cleanup, as are dog crates, gates, and cat/dog carriers. You can drop off donations anytime at the shelter, and if you'd like something to specifically go to the foster program, please let them know!

For more information call 708-755-PETS or visit us at 1103 West End Ave., Chicago Heights, IL 60411.