



# **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

## **Welcome to EASEL Animal Rescue League**

We are proud to have you join our team. This handbook is loaded with information to help you learn about us and will serve as your guide as you begin your volunteer work with us.

Feel free to ask questions! We believe all questions are important, so please do not hesitate to ask.

EASEL is not a branch or division of any other local or national agency. EASEL is a nonprofit ALL volunteer organization. We do not receive government funding. Donations and grants are chief sources of income.

# Welcome to EASEL Animal Rescue League

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## History and Background

The concept of the EASEL Animal Rescue League arose from the practical experience and deep concern for animal welfare shared by a group of Mercer County and Ewing Township residents. They organized as the Citizens' Committee of Ewing, a nonpartisan, nonprofit, issue-based organization.

Given the issues of increasing euthanasia and overcrowding and the array of challenges to animal welfare and population control in the area, the group established EASEL, the Ewing Animal Shelter Extension League. EASEL began working closely with the Ewing Township Administration to establish adoption programs, working with animals at the shelter, and resolving cleaning issues. However, the relationship became problematic due to the regional scope of the animal welfare problem and operational issues at the shelter.

EASEL is currently in negotiations to build a no kill, shared-services, regional state-of-the-art facility to serve Mercer County

At this point, EASEL Animal Rescue League began to be grounded in reality and is discussed in detail the subsequent sections of the plan.

**Office Hours:** Monday-Sunday 9am-5pm  
Phone 609-883-0540 Fax 609-882-6179

**Volunteer Coordinator:** Susan Hoffman  
Phone: 609-221-0086  
Email: [suehoff22@gmail.com](mailto:suehoff22@gmail.com)

**Foster Coordinator:** Barbara Amideneau  
Phone: 516-659-4363  
Email: [bea2233@comcast.net](mailto:bea2233@comcast.net)

**Website:** [www.easelnj.org](http://www.easelnj.org)

## Services and Programs

**Pet Adoptions:** EASEL adopts animals to loving families. We work to create lifelong relationships between people and pets. EASEL places dogs, cats and horses into loving homes where they will receive quality, stable lifelong care.

**Shelter:** EASEL's goal is to build a state-of-the-art facility to house homeless, unwanted and displaced dogs, cats and horses in Mercer County. Until then, EASEL helps local shelters clean, feed and adopt out current residents.

**Community Outreach:** EASEL teaches youth and adults about the advantages of humane treatment of animals. We encourage volunteerism as well as teaching lessons to others within the community.

**Trap/Neuter/Release:** EASEL is dedicated to reducing the homeless feral cat population in Mercer County. To that end, EASEL participates in the capture, spay or neuter and release of feral cats back into their environment.

**Low-income Spay/Neuter Assistance:** A main goal of our mission is to end pet overpopulation. To help control pet overpopulation, EASEL offers spay/neuter programs to the community. Every dog and cat available for adoption will be spayed or neutered. We also offer standard spay/neuter services, as well as income-based programs for those who cannot afford traditional procedures.

**Guardian Angel Program:** This Animal Foster Care program prepares each animal for placement in permanent home. Some animals require training, behavioral rehabilitation or just a loving place to stay until they find their forever homes. Angels(volunteers) in our foster program welcome pets into their homes for a specified period of time, bringing the animals to public events and veterinarian appointments.

**Microchipping:** Losing a pet can be traumatic for any family and dangerous for the animals. In order to ensure that lost pets are returned to their families as quickly as possible, all animals available for adoption are microchipped. We also offer this service for area families, for only \$25 per pet. Microchipping places a safe, permanent ID chip under the pet's skin that can be easily accessed by a scanning device at local shelters and veterinary offices. The scanner then provides the information necessary to return your pet as quickly as possible, safe and secure.

## Adoption Policies

There are 3 ways to find an adoptable pet through EASEL

- View available pets on [petfinder.com](http://petfinder.com).
- Meet with our adoptable cats, kittens, dogs and puppies at one of our Adoption Days, currently held at PETCO, PetSmart and Precious Pets. Go to [www.easelnj.org](http://www.easelnj.org) and click on "Adoption Events" at the bottom of the home page for our schedule.
- Make an appointment with our EASEL representative at 609-883-0540.

Adopters must fill out an adoption application. Trained adoption counselors will try to make the best match between adopter and pet. Adopters have 30 days to return an adopted pet. After 30 days, a surrender fee may be requested to return the animal. Those animals adopted that were too young to be spayed or neutered can only be fostered. After EASEL receives verification from a licensed veterinarian that the animal was altered, the adoption will be deemed complete.

Adoption evaluations consider the following:

- We recommend appropriate facilities to contain pets (e.g. evidence of fenced yards, etc.)
- We require adherence to all laws and ordinances
- We encourage all family members to be present during the adoption process. All adults must be aware of the potential adoption.
- We recommend that all children under 10 years of age are present during the adoption process to ensure compatibility.
- We encourage other family-owned pets meet and get acquainted with the potential new pet.
- We require that landlords approve pet ownership and maximum number of pets.

- We require that all animals receive regular veterinarian checkups. If adopters already own pets, there should be evidence of "regular" vet checkups.
- Adopted animals must be taken to a veterinarian within 7 business days of an adoption.
- We discourage adopting a pet for another person (not present) unless it is a pet for a child within the household.
- We do not adopt to anyone under the age of 18 years old. We do not adopt to college students living in dormitories
- Adoption matches are based on animal behavior, breed and any other extenuating circumstances and family dynamics.
- Adopters must have a working telephone number or cell phone in their household.
- Adopters must provide a work number or alternate contact telephone number.
- A family member in the household must be gainfully employed full time or show proof of their ability to finance animal-care expenses (food, vaccinations, accidents, etc.)
- If an adopter is single and living at home with parents, one parent must be present or reached by telephone at the time of adoption.

## Euthanasia Policy

Euthanasia is a very difficult subject. It is something you must understand before volunteering with our organization.

Every decision to euthanize is a painful decision for everyone and is not taken lightly. We ask that you question our decisions in a professional manner.

Euthanasia is performed under the following circumstances:

- The animal is in pain which cannot be alleviated
- The animal is terminal and at a point where the quality of life does not exceed the desire for life
- The animal has been deemed behaviorally unable to be rehabilitated by a licensed professional

## How to Become a Volunteer

All volunteers must attend a general meeting; sign a liability-release agreement and sign up for job-specific training before job placement. Volunteer general meetings are on the 2nd Thursday of every month at the Ewing Library, 61 Scotch Road, Ewing, NJ 08628 at 7pm. After the meeting, the volunteer coordinator can speak with you to determine the appropriate volunteer job for your needs, talents and availability.

On-the-job training is offered for all job descriptions. Each position requires a minimum monthly commitment, as well as a minimum hourly commitment. If unable to fulfill a commitment, volunteers should speak with the volunteer coordinator.

Volunteers under the age of 14 must be accompanied by an adult, both for orientation and when they come in for their volunteer shifts.

## Guidelines for Volunteers

Please read these guidelines and the agreement that follows carefully.

- Be polite and helpful at all times.
- Treat animals, clients, other volunteers and senior volunteers with courtesy and respect
- Take any conflict or problem to the volunteer coordinator or your direct supervisor. It is important to resolve problems quickly, so that we can all work together effectively.
- Ask senior volunteers for assistance with any questions for which you are not sure of the absolute correct answer.
- Maintain a professional attitude by limiting personal conversation while on duty.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding clients and business.
- Accept the decisions of the professional senior volunteers.
- Wear nametags and sign in when working. Record your time online; this helps us keep accurate records and helps to locate volunteers in emergency situations.
- Please give advanced notice if you are unable to fulfill scheduled volunteer hours.
- Dress comfortably and appropriately. Remember that you are working with animals and your clothes will get stained or dirty. You must remember that you represent EASEL while you are volunteering. No T-shirts with suggestive or offensive words should be worn. No suggestive clothing should be worn. Volunteers who dress inappropriately will be asked to leave. Every volunteer is required to purchase an EASEL t-shirt to wear doing volunteer hours.
- Wear close-toed shoes.
- Volunteers are not to be in any unauthorized or unapproved areas without senior volunteers approval.

- A parent or guardian must sign paperwork for all volunteers between 14 and 18 years of age. A parent or guardian must also accompany volunteers under the age of 14 at all times..
- Immediately report to senior volunteers any accident or injury to either a volunteer or an animal.
- Never undertake a task that causes you apprehension. If an animal makes you uncomfortable, ask a senior volunteer member for help.
- Do not bring guests with you while you are working.
- Volunteers are never involved in euthanasia.
- Please direct your suggestions and comments to the volunteer coordinator. Your feedback helps the volunteer program grow. We want you to be proud of the organization to which you dedicate your time and effort.

## Recording Service Hours

To be announced. We currently will be logging hours manually.

## Grievances

If you have any problems with another volunteer, or any rule or regulation, please speak to the volunteer coordinator or the Executive Director.

## Emergency Procedures

All emergencies must be reported to the volunteer coordinator or a senior volunteer. **It is only appropriate to make emergency decisions on your own if you are unable to reach a senior volunteer.**

## Termination Policy

Volunteers may choose to or be asked to terminate their volunteer service to EASEL. The procedures for termination are as follows:

- **Voluntary:** If a volunteer wishes to end their services, please notify the Volunteer Coordinator. Please let us know your intentions to leave our volunteer program as soon as possible.
- **Involuntary:** Volunteers that do not adhere to the rules and regulations of EASEL are subject to dismissal. No volunteer will be dismissed without fair warning or the opportunity to discuss the reasons for possible dismissal with a senior volunteer.

EASEL reserves the right to dismiss any volunteer for any reason.

## Opinion vs. Fact

Working at an animal rescue league can be a very emotional experience. It is vital that you only express facts about EASEL to potential clients, other volunteers or the general public. Despite the best of intentions, opinions are often misconstrued as fact and can put EASEL at extreme risk.

Never be embarrassed to say "I don't know". Put the burden on senior volunteers to respond to difficult questions.

**Passing along erroneous information, or personal opinions has caused other rescue groups to close their doors. Bad press travels much faster than good. We cannot impress upon you enough the importance of checking your facts before you offer any information. Remember your opinion will be taken as EASEL policy. If misconstrued it could hamper EASEL's ability to save lives.**

**NEVER speak to the press or speak on the subject of euthanasia with anyone on behalf of EASEL. Only the Executive Director can speak to the press and only senior volunteers can speak about euthanasia to the public.**

## Personal Hygiene

Many diseases are transmittable from animal to animal or human to human. There are some diseases that are communicable from animal to man. Therefore, very good personal hygiene is necessary.

Each individual must promote his or her own health. By your actions you can either limit or enhance the spread of infectious diseases.

We have included the following recommendations for your protection:

- You should change to work clothes and shoes when arriving at EASEL and change back to your "home" clothes and shoes prior to leaving.
- You should not smoke, eat, drink or apply cosmetics in the animal or work areas.
- You should wear protective clothing and gloves when handling sick animals or possible infectious material.
- You should keep your hands away from your mouth, nose, eyes, genitalia and wounds after handling animals, their urine or feces.
- You should avoid the use of common combs, hairbrushes, towels, drinking cups, etc.
- You should always wash your hands with soap and hot water:
  - After handling animals
  - After voiding bowels and/or bladder
  - Before handling food or eating

## General Safety

- All cuts, bites or other injuries should be reported to the volunteer coordinator or your senior volunteers' supervisor.
- Horseplay is strictly forbidden.
- If an item is too heavy to safely handle alone, get help. Avoid serious injury.
- When you must walk on wet, slippery floors, slow down and take shorter steps.

## Volunteer Job Descriptions

### Cat Socializer

*Purpose:* Play with, brush and love our in-house cats. This alleviates stress and gives the cats much needed attention thus increasing their chances of being adopted. It is also a great opportunity for teaching the cats basic socialization skills.

*Duties:*

- Take the cat out of its cage and into a visiting room.
- Brush, play with and groom the cat.
- Make sure the cat has water and a clean litter box.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and a cat training orientation.

### Dog Socializer

*Purpose:* Exercise, play with, brush and love our in-house dogs. This alleviates stress and gives the dogs much-needed exercise, thus increasing their chances of being adopted. It is also a great opportunity for teaching the dogs basic socialization skills.

*Duties:*

- Take the dog out of its kennel for walks.
- Exercise and play with the dog.
- Brush the dog and give it a bath, when needed.
- Make sure the dog's kennel is clean.
- Make sure the dog has water.
- Make sure the dog has a bed and toy (if applicable).

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and a dog training orientation.

## Kennel Cleaner

*Purpose:* Assist the animal-care staff in cleaning the cages and kennels of our resident dogs. Provide fresh bedding, toys and water to all of the animals.

*Duties:*

- Clean area assigned.
- Follow correct cleaning protocol for cleaning the designated area.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and a dog training orientation. A senior volunteer will schedule additional training sessions on cleaning protocols as needed.

## Cat Cage Cleaner

*Purpose:* Assist the animal-care staff in cleaning the cages of our resident cats. Provide fresh bedding, toys and water to all of the animals.

*Duties:*

- Clean area assigned.
- Follow correct cleaning protocol for cleaning the designated area.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and a cat training orientation. A senior volunteer will schedule additional training sessions on cleaning protocols as needed.

## Foster Parent

*Purpose:* Care for animals in your home that need a little extra care before they can go up for adoption. Animals requiring foster care can be ready for adoption or are too young, injured or sick to go up for adoption. Some need behavioral rehabilitation. Foster parents provide the much-needed time and attention that these animals require.

*Duties:*

- Bring the animal to EASEL adoption days and for scheduled vet appointments.

*Training:* After attending the general orientation, volunteers must complete a foster screening process, and attend a foster training session. Additional training courses are available, to advance the level of care that a foster parent may provide.

## **Event Organizer/ EASEL representative**

*Purpose:* Coordinate adoption days. Make sure we have enough volunteers for the number of animals we are bringing.

- Duties:*
- Maintain contact with the store or site manager.
  - Maintain contact with volunteers.
  - Coordinate arrival of pets.
  - Placing signage at location prior to event.
  - Supervising set up and breakdown (location of cats and dogs) .
  - Set up of table with informational pamphlets.
  - Make sure all shot records for all animals are at the adoption event.
- Answer questions related to the organization (or upcoming events).
- Monitor donation jar.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and a cat training orientation.

## **Adoption Day Animal Handler**

*Purpose:* Bring a cat or dog to the adoption day event.

- Cats:*
- Bring cat to the adoption event.
  - Have knowledge of all the cats at the event
  - Bring water bowl and litter box and towels
- Dogs:*
- Exercise dog before the event
  - Bring dog to the adoption event
  - 
  - Take dog back from the adoption event.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation.

## **Trap/Neuter/Release**

*Purpose:* Reduce the feral cat population in Mercer County.

- Duties:*
- Trap feral cats within Mercer County.
  - Take a group of ferals to be spayed or neutered
  - Pick up a group of ferals from the hospital and return to EASEL
  - Release cats back into their environment

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and a TNR orientation.

## **Donation Jar Monitor**

*Purpose:* Monitor a donation jar or jars at various locations throughout the community. As a nonprofit organization, we depend heavily on donations from all sources. Every dollar collected helps save the lives of homeless animals.

*Duties:*

- Collect donations from assigned locations on a routine basis.
- Deliver donations to Roberts Pet Shop, 1870 N Olden Avenue Ext; Ewing, NJ 08638.
- Update information on jars as needed.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation.

## **Build Feral Cat Boxes**

*Purpose:* EASEL is dedicated to reducing the feral cat population in Mercer County. Each feral needs a place to stay warm. EASEL has the plans to build the wood housing needed.

*Duties:* Build wooden boxes according to specifications

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and have basic carpentry skills

## **Fundraising/Special Events**

*Purpose:* Raise needed funding for the operations of EASEL.

*Duties:*

- Attend EASEL fundraising meetings.
- Offer fund-raising ideas
- Secure corporation donations
- Organize volunteers for any event
- Organize auction , food and liquor (if applicable) for events
- 

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and fundraising meetings.

## **Offsite Animal Transporter**

*Purpose:* Help the offsite coordinator take adoptable animals to various offsite adoption locations. This increases adoptions and visibility in the Mercer County area.

*Duties:*

- Pick up animals at a designated site.
- Transport the animal to a specified location.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation.

## Offsite Food Transporter

*Purpose:* Help the volunteer coordinator pick up and distribute donated food.

- Duties:*
- Pick up designated food at distribution centers.
  - Transport food to specified locations.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation.

## Offsite-Event Assistant

*Purpose:* Help at offsite events. These could be fundraisers or adoption events. These events help increase adoptions and visibility in Mercer County.

- Duties:*
- Help prepare animals for offsite events.
  - Talk to the public about EASEL and what we have to offer.  
Talk to the public about the animals present, as well as the ones available in our facility.
  - Help match an animal with possible adopters' needs.
  - Walk the dogs around the location or monitor cats in cages.
  - Show off the animals at the location.
  - Pass out EASEL literature, when needed.
  - Set up and take down displays for events.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and possibly an additional training session required by the offsite events coordinator.

## Adoption Follow-Up

*Purpose:* Call the families of recently adopted animals, to get updates on how their new pets are adjusting in their homes. This is a very important task within our organization, because there is no better way to track our adopters' progress with their new family members.

- Duties:*
- Call assigned families.
  - Ask designated questions.
  - Direct any questions or problems to senior volunteers.
  - Record information in the animal's file.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and complete additional training with an adoption counselor.

## Grant Writing

*Purpose:* Procure grant money for Spay/Neuter Program among many others. Grant money helps EASEL save more lives and reduce the feral cat population in Mercer County. Grants are an essential source of funding for any nonprofit organization.

*Duties:*

- Research Foundation sites online to determine best match with EASEL
- Write grant and submit before deadlines

*Training:* Previous Grant Writing experience

## Office Assistant

*Purpose:* Assist with data entry, mailings and general clerical duties. This is beneficial to both senior volunteers and volunteers, teaching volunteers quality office skills while assisting senior volunteers with large amounts of work.

*Duties:*

- Perform data entry.
- Conduct basic research.
- Stuff and label mailings.
- Answer phones.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and complete training with a senior volunteer.

## Petfinder Guru

*Purpose:* Help maintain our database of adoptable animals on Petfinder.com. By keeping our listings updated, our animals will be viewed by more people, which will facilitate their placement into new lifelong homes.

*Duties:*

- Check available animals in shelter and on foster against postings on Petfinder.com.
- Write creative descriptions of animals not yet posted.
- Update information on Petfinder.com.
- Use a digital camera to capture appealing images of adoptable animals and upload them to the website.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and complete additional training with an adoption counselor.

## **Barn Cat Volunteer**

*Purpose:* Help place feral cats into a local barn or farm.

- Duties:*
- Find barns or farms where cats are wanted.
  - Discuss availability with owner and responsibilities of owner to care for cats
  - Brings cats in cages to designated barn or farm.
  - Monitor cats in cages for the required 2 week period until cats are acclimated to their new environment. Make sure they are fed and clean.
  - Release cats into barn or farm. Retrieve and clean cages.

*Training:* Volunteers must attend the general orientation and complete additional training with Barn Cat Coordinator.

*Thank you so much for dedicating  
your time to help the animals!*

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*The mission of the EASEL Animal Rescue League is to reduce the number of unwanted animals euthanized in Mercer County through collaborative coalitions and community alliances.*

### **OUR VISION**

*Our vision is build and operate a state of the art facility, the Pride of Mercer County, to house and care for all the unwanted and homeless animals, while working diligently to quickly find them loving forever homes.*



**Visit the EASEL website at:**  
**<http://www.easelnj.org>**