



**Friends of the
Burlington County Animal Shelter**

Cat Co-ordinators:
Katrina Kates, Susan Basco,
Jess Ruggles
teamcats@friendsofbcas.org

[friendsofbcas.org](http://www.friendsofbcas.org)



Cat Volunteering Hours:	Thursdays: 11:30am - 7pm All Other Days: 11:00am - 4pm Holidays: closed
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We require a minimum of 4 hours of volunteering every month.

*We send out a monthly email newsletter
which includes volunteer news and
upcoming events.*

Beginner Cat Class Info for New Volunteers

Did you attend an orientation? If not pay \$15 for your shirt and badge.

Always park in the back of the shelter.

Wear your t-shirt, long pants & closed shoes (expect shedding/drooling/sharp claws).
To order another t-shirt, tank top, sweatshirt or hoodie, email barbaramoosathome@verizon.net.

Sign in and out using laptop, wear a volunteer shirt and badge, and bring a pen/pencil with you.

New volunteers may not show animals to customers. Shelter staff or a cat Volunteer Adoption Assistant (VAA)* can help customers with approved adopter cards. *look for paw print sticker on badge.

New volunteers may only socialize cats in AC, lobby cages and Community Cat Rooms (CCRs).

No grooming or brushing any cats. If you notice a cat matted or in need of other types of grooming, please email teamcats@friendsofbcas.org.

When you have successfully completed your Cat Evaluation and receive a green sticker you may socialize and volunteer.

After completing 30 hours and a minimum of 3 months of hands on socializing cats, you qualify to become a cat VAA. Contact Katrina at teamcats@friendsofbcas.org for information on the VAA class.

Health & Safety Rules for Cat Volunteers:

The health of BCAS cats is one of the most important factors a cat volunteer must consider when handling the cats. The natural environment of a shelter makes it very easy for contagious illnesses to spread between cats. Our shelter has a limit to how many sick cats it can treat at one time, so we must do what we can to help avoid outbreaks.

Cat Sanitation:

Cat illnesses like Upper Respiratory Infections (URI) are often highly contagious, so all volunteers must:

Wash hands when entering AC to socialize cats and wash your hands between touching cats, including petting them through cage bars.

- Instruct visitors to wash hands if they touch any cats to keep our cats healthy and prevent spreading of “kitty germs”, including petting through cages.
- Each cat should have at least 1 toy. Toys cannot be shared between cats.

Cat Behavior:

- If you are holding a cat and having difficulties returning it to its cage or if it's behaving in a way you're not comfortable with, ask a fellow volunteer or a staff member for assistance.
- Cat bites that draw blood, or serious scratches, **must** be reported to the shelter staff for your safety and the safety of future handlers of the offending cat.

Cat Sickness: Cats that appear ill should not be handled. To report signs of illness, fill out a “sick slip” and place in front of the cat’s chart inside the plastic bag.

Socializing Cats in the Adoptable Cat Room (AC)

Cats are not allowed to roam in AC. You may hold the cat or have it sit in your lap, however many cats prefer to stay in their cage to be petted and socialized.

Choosing a Cat to Socialize:

1. **Check Paperwork:** Before interacting with a cat, Remove paperwork from plastic and observe if any stickers are on the front page. These are often placed following the cat’s initial evaluation by the Vet Tech. Green, yellow and red stickers are sometimes used to possibly indicate some personality traits. Next, turn to the volunteer activity sheet and review comments. Check the date or time it was last socialized and notes about its personality. **If the cat has just been moved into the AC and there is no Activity Sheet attached to their chart, please pick another cat until you have more experience.**
2. **Sick Cats:** Check the cat for signs of illness. If the cat seems ill, do not touch it. If you’re not sure, consult with a senior volunteer if one is available. Check the Volunteer Activity Sheet to see if a sick slip has been turned in. If not, fill one out, and attach to the front of the cat’s paperwork and **make a note on the Activity Sheet that a sick slip was filled-out (include date and symptoms observed)**. A vet tech is available for serious cases.
3. **Scared Cats:** We see many scared cats at the shelter. Before socializing a cat, assess its behavior and its position in the cage (hiding, in litter box, avoiding eye contact or physical contact, etc.). Some cats may be too scared to be handled, and for very scared cats we encourage volunteers to talk softly to them, pay attention to body language, and move slowly and gradually. (Refer to the Body Posture handout). If a cat is in a cat den (feral box) as a new volunteer, do not socialize.

Socializing a Cat

1. **Go Slow:** Take time to read the cat's body language and reactions to you.
2. **Cages:**
 - a. If the cat is at the front of their cage, place one hand on their sternum (front chest area under their throat) and position your body in front of their cage, using it as a shield to prevent the cat from escaping.
 - b. Use caution when the cage door is open. Pay attention to your surroundings. If someone is trying to pass or open a door, close the cage door until they pass and then resume as if it's the first time opening the cage.
 - c. Bottom cages may be harder for some volunteers to maneuver. If you do socialize a cat in a bottom cage, expect to sit on the floor. Always go at your own comfort level.
1. **Picking up a Cat:** Proper ways of handling a cat will be shown during the Cat Evaluation.
2. **Closing the Cage:** If you remove a cat from its cage and then walk away from the cage, please close the cage door gently and completely so people don't injure themselves walking into it. Any time you close the cage with a cat inside, make sure it is completely shut by tugging on the door 3 times.
3. **Be Observant:** It is your responsibility to keep your attention on your cat at all times. Use common sense when handling kitty. Ask other volunteers for help or advice if you are unsure about something.
4. **If a cat gets loose:** Occasionally, a cat or kitten will get loose in AC. If this happens, don't panic! Alert others in the room that a cat has gotten out, shut all doors and then find a staff member to assist you. Do not attempt to grab a cat that is under the cages.
5. **Appropriate Volume:** Use your "inside voice" in the AC, as some cats may be scared or alarmed by loud voices or noises. Encourage others to use their inside voices whenever you are around the cats.
6. **Stop Handling the Cat If:** It's becoming agitated, overstimulated, or stressed, e.g. ears flat, tail flipping (refer to Overstimulation in Cats handout) or you notice any signs of possible illness or injury
7. **Toys and treats:** Toys may be distributed to the cats when available. We encourage toys to be given to any cat that does not have one. **Do not give a cat a toy that was given to another cat and not sanitized.** Treats are usually available on top of cages and may be given to cats.

After Socializing a Cat

1. **Returning kitty to cage:** If you're having difficulties, ask a cat volunteer or staff member to help you. Your kitty may be overly excited, reluctant, or indignant about being put back into its cage.
2. **Volunteer Activity Sheet:** Write notes about your experience on the Volunteer Activity Sheet. This helps us establish a behavior history with our cats which is useful for adoption matchmaking, temperament assessments, and can sometimes be useful for medical diagnosis. Be honest about your interaction. **Suggestions (mix 'n match):** Friendly, affectionate, loves petting, rolling around, outgoing, yes/no being held, yes/no lap cat, shy, cautious, warms up slowly, needs socializing, swatted or warning nipped, hiding/sleeping in litter box. Remember to note on sheet.

3. **Close the cage:** Do not slam the door closed as these are metal cages and the sound will reverberate through the cat's cage. Check cage door by pulling on door 3 times.
4. **Sanitation:** Before handling another cat, wash your hands. Washing hands with soap and water *preferable, however hand sanitizer is fine if it is too crowded to get to the sink.

Cat Volunteers in the Community Cat Rooms (CCR)

The Community Cat Rooms are where cats live together cage-free around the clock. Cats living in these rooms are chosen if they're in good health, behave appropriately with other cats and humans, and if they adapt well enough to living in the rooms.

1. **Volunteering in the Community Cat Rooms:** Active cat volunteers who' have passed their Cat Evaluation may visit the CCRs at will. Despite being in a more comfortable environment than a cage, the cats in this room still benefit from being regularly socialized.
 2. **Visitor/ Customer Access:** When visiting a CCR, shelter visitors must have completed an application and carry an approved adopter card. Visitors must always be escorted by a staff member or a Cat Adoption Assistant volunteer. If you are in a CCR alone and a customer wishes to come in, go to the desk and let them know assistance is needed.
 3. **Check Paperwork:** The paperwork for each cat in a CCR is located behind the front desk in colored folders that match the room color. The cats in the Community Cat Rooms will generally be friendly and social, but it is still worth checking the Activity Sheets for notes on behavior prior to handling.
 4. **Sick Cats:** If a cat seems ill, do not touch it. Check the Volunteer Activity Sheet to see if a sick slip has been turned in. If not, fill one out, hand into the office and **make sure someone is aware immediately since these cats are more likely to pass on any illness**, and note on Activity Sheet.
 5. **Cat versus Cat:** Not all cats love other cats, and some may only tolerate other cats. However, if a cat is becoming stressed or agitated due to another cat, or is pursuing another cat aggressively, report it to a staff member.
 6. **Sanitation:** Wash your hands at the sink located outside the AC room both before and after visiting the Community Cat Rooms. Sanitize hands between each separate room. This also pertains to customers and visitors to the CCRs.
 7. **Appropriate Volume:** Always use your "inside voice" in the Community Cat Rooms.
 8. **Volunteer Activity Sheet:** Write notes about your experience on the Volunteer Activity Sheet. These sheets help us establish a behavior history with our cats which is useful for adoption matchmaking, temperament assessments, and can sometimes be useful for medical diagnosis.
 - Suggestions (mix 'n match): Friendly, affectionate, loves petting, rolling around, outgoing, yes/no being held, yes/no lap cat, yes/no other cats, shy, cautious, warms up slowly, needs socializing, swatted or warning nipped, hiding/sleeping in litterbox
- CCR 1 = Pink paws CCR 2 = Black paws CCR 3 = Red paws

Sick Cat Information

As cat volunteers, we often spend more one-on-one time with our shelter's kitties than anybody else, including the shelter staff. This means we get a great opportunity to observe signs of possible illness, or symptoms of an overlooked injury or condition. The following are guidelines for how to identify and handle possible signs of illness in our kitties.

Some Symptoms Seen in Sick Cats:

- Frequent, repeated sneezing (*especially if it's cage wall has sneeze marks*)
- Runny or snotty nose (*may blow bubbles*)
- Watery, red, or puffy eyes
- Parasites (*such as ticks or ear mites*)
- Limping or acting as if in pain
- Lethargy (*very tired, may not get up*)
- Excessive diarrhea
- Vomiting (*especially frothy, yellow vomit*)
- Bleeding

If You Suspect a Cat May Be Sick

What to Do:

Always check the cat's medical sheet to see if it has already been noted or treated recently. Also **check the Volunteer Activity Sheet** to see if symptoms have been reported. Cats treated for URIs very recently may still have residual symptoms a few days after the most recent treatment.

If you're not sure, ask other volunteers what they think about the situation or symptoms. We understand that most of our volunteers are not medically trained, but we rely on your gut instincts to help monitor our cats. Also, remember that it's better to be safe than sorry.

Fill out a **Sick Slip** and place in front of the cat's chart. Do this even if you're not sure, just to be on the safe side. Sick Slips are located in AC and at the volunteer station in the old lobby.

Inform other volunteers in the room if you think the cat may be contagious.

Write on the Volunteer Activity Sheet that you noted symptoms and whether you filled out a Sick Slip.

What NOT to DO:

Do NOT touch or handle the cat. If you did already, immediately put the cat back, go wash your hands, and sanitize everything the cat touched. Do NOT handle any other cats for the day.

Still Have Questions? You can ask...

Cat Volunteer Coordinators: Katrina Kates , Susan Basco or Jess Ruggles at teamcats@friendsofbcas.org.

Ask any seasoned cat volunteer.

Ask a BCAS Vet Technician.

Ask a BCAS staff person.

A Special Note About Upper Respiratory Infections (URIs)

The majority of cats contract a URI in the first month of being at the shelter. Most cats recover just fine, but some cats can become extremely sick, and some do not survive. This is why we take symptom identification and cross-contamination prevention seriously.

Humane Euthanasia

Unfortunate things happen. ☹️ Everything that can be done for a sick shelter cat will be done. Very young kittens, senior cats, and those with underlying illnesses are most susceptible to sickness. After exhausting all treatment options, the cat's best interest must be put first. It is a sad day for our technicians, staff, and volunteers when euthanasia is performed. Be assured that this is not taken lightly and is done as a last resort. You're welcome to reach out to our Cat Volunteer Coordinators if you have any questions on this subject

Preventing Cross-Contamination

We hope this information has helped you better understand why we put such a heavy emphasis on sanitation at all times. Proper prevention such as washing hands between cats and avoiding touching sick cats are all excellent ways of keeping our animals safe.

Protecting Your Pets at Home

Volunteers concerned with keeping their cats at home healthy can be reassured that it's extremely rare to take illnesses home to pets. Veterinary professionals face this concern every day and manage it just fine with proper prevention, and you can too! In addition to the **shelter's sanitation protocols, we recommend changing your clothes** before interacting with pets at home, and ensuring that your vet is aware that you're a shelter volunteer so that they are informed when it comes time to update your pet's vaccinations. **We encourage you to speak with your veterinarian about any concerns you may have.**

Overstimulation in Cats

Overstimulation is something in a cat that we want to avoid. Oftentimes, cats who are easily overstimulated are friendly cats who will seek attention from people, but then strike out after a short period of petting. The cause of overstimulation is not known, but there are ways to reduce the incidences of biting and swatting.

Know the signs of overstimulation

Most cats will give you signals that they are becoming overstimulated. The signals may be very vague, depending on the cat. Warning signs that your cat may no longer want to be petted are: flicking or swishing of the tail, ears rotating to the side or back, staring, fur rippling on the back or sides, tensing of the body, growling, flattened ears or swatting.

Again, the signals may be subtle, so it is important that you pay close attention to your cat as you pet her and be aware of her body language.

Less is more

The best way to reduce incidences of overstimulation is to stop petting your cat before she gets to the point of reacting to the touch. As soon as you see signs that your cat is beginning to dislike the attention, stop petting her. This does not mean that you have to leave the room or ignore the cat; you simply have to refrain from touching her. Most cats will remain happily on your lap or by your side even though you are no longer petting them. If you are able to consistently read your cat's body language and stop petting her before she acts out, you can eventually reduce or even stop the overstimulation altogether.


More Ways to Help for Cat-Loving Volunteers

Want to help the cats beyond just socializing? Or maybe you can't make it to the shelter on a regular basis? Check out these other options that benefit the kitties either directly or indirectly.

With the Cats On-Site

- **Cat Posting, Photography, and Videography.** This is ALWAYS NEEDED! Training & support provided - www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help/post_online
- **Cat Kennel Enrichment** - www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help/kennel-enrichment
- **Local Cat Rescues** need help too! Volunteer at other adoption centers - www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help/alternate_cats
- **Become a Volunteer Vet Tech for Clinic Days** – www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help/veterinaryvolunteers.

From Home

- **Foster Cats & Kittens.** This is ALWAYS NEEDED!
- www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help/foster
- **TNR Group.** (friends.say.snip.it@gmail.com)
- **Posting Cats on Adoption Websites from Home.** Training and support provided!
- www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help/post_online
- **Cat Rescue Outreach.** Help us make partnerships with more local rescues!
- Contact Jackie at irishscot2@msn.com to help with this.
- **Follow us on  Facebook** and LIKE, SHARE and COMMENT ON all cat-related posts!
- www.facebook.com/FOBCAS

For more information, visit our website at www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help, go directly to the links listed above, or contact Cat Volunteer Coordinators Katrina, Susan or Jess at teamcats@friendsofbcas.org.

How Kids Can Help

We don't have a junior volunteer program at this time, though it's something we'd love to have in the future. We are unable to accept people under 18 years of age for most of our volunteer positions, but there are still many ways a kid or a teen can make a significant contribution.

- **Run a donation drive:** Kids do these all the time and they're extremely appreciated. Or you can have your birthday party benefit the shelter animals. You can ask your guests to bring food and toys for homeless cats and dogs instead of presents for you, and then bring them to the shelter. It's a big treat all by itself knowing that your birthday party helped feed a cat or dog who is waiting to find a loving home. Check out our wishlist on the following page for a list of items we need
- **Run a fundraiser:** Consider doing a bake sale, yard sale, coin collection, lemonade or hot chocolate stand, or some other creative way of raising funds to benefit the animals. We strongly encourage donating any proceeds to FOBCAS rather than BCAS directly, because FOBCAS can be more flexible with charitable spending than the shelter can.
- **Craft Workshops:** Attend one of our crafty workshops which teach you how to create things like cat and dog toys, cat beds, and more!
(www.friendsofbcas.org/ways/help/kennel-enrichment)
- **Help at Events:** We may be able to use your help with upcoming events that we participate in, with setup, talking to visitors about volunteering and adoption, handing out educational materials, and more (www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help/behind-scenes).
- **Foster a Pet:** With parental permission, provide a temporary home for a cat, kitten, or dog until they can find their forever home (www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help/foster).
- **Help Our Cat Rescue Partners:** Help take care of rescued cats at local pet adoption centers with our partner organizations. (www.friendsofbcas.org/ways-help/petsmart_cats).
- **Tell your family, friends, neighbors and community** about our programs and the shelter. Encourage your friends to adopt a pet from the shelter rather than buying one from a pet store, or to come volunteer with us.
- **Schedule a class or group tour** of the shelter and get a first-hand look at the adoptable pets and what the shelter does.

