RU Pet Fostering?

A Rutgers Pet Fostering Program

Tag Words: animal shelter; animal abandonment; fostering;

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Summary

In the current economy, many pet owners can no longer afford to take care of their animals. Many people then bring their pets into animal shelters or just abandon them on the streets. With the large influx of animals into the shelters, they run the risk of overcrowding. Shelter over crowdedness can cause stress on the animals and diseases can be easily spread. Animal shelters also can not focus on each animal individually so they each don’t get the care and training they need to become great pets. Pet fostering is great way to get the animals out of the shelter and into temporary homes. When a pet is fostered it is brought into a person’s home and is given the love and attention to become well socialized. The pet fosterer can train and get to know the pet and can help it find a good home. A pet fostering program at Rutgers would help many animals get the training and love they need to become great pets. Rutgers is a large school and there is a great amount of potential fosterers that can help the animals find homes.

Video Link

RU Pet Fostering: http://www.youtube.com/v/PkKYZZnNrtw?fs=1&hl=en_US
History of Animal Welfare and Protection
The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in 1824. It was the first animal welfare charity to be founded in the world. The first American Humane Society was founded by Henry Bergh in April 1866. It was the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA). Soon after the establishment of the ASPCA, the first anti-animal cruelty law was approved by the New York legislature. This law was designed to prevent cruelty to farm and work animals, work horses and later passed laws to protect cats and dogs. In 1894 the humane society took over animal control duties in New York, and created animal shelters and promoted the practice of animal rescue within the city.
In the early 1900s horses and work animals were not as prevalent as before and the humane society began to shift focus on adoption for dogs and cats. Eventually pet fostering came along to save the pets that could not find immediate permanent homes.

Pet Fostering Background (Michelle Dever)
Pet fostering is the act of temporarily bringing in an animal into ones home and taking care of it until it is found a new home. In today’s economy many animal shelters face overcrowding. People abandon their pets or drop them off at the shelter if they move or if they can’t afford them anymore. When people pass away and a family member cannot take in the animal, the animal is then sent to a shelter.

An overcrowded shelter is not good for the animals that are living in it. It is a noisy, stressful environment. Instead of getting their own cages, animals have to share living space. This increases chance of spreading diseases or injuries due to fighting or struggling over food. With all the animals placed in one shelter, the animals do not get the individual attention they need. Animals in shelters that do not get the proper attention they need and may not be socialized well enough to be adopted out to a new home.
Foster care is a good alternative to having an animal in a shelter. It makes the shelter less crowded putting less stress on the animals that have to stay in the shelter making them much happier and healthier. It also stops the spread of disease to many animals. Fostering helps the young animals that need special care. Some of the animals have certain feeding schedules or need to be bottle fed and need the added attention of a foster home to survive. When animals are sick or injured, foster parents provide them with the additional time, medication, and space they need to recover. This may include time to recover from emotional, fear, or stress based situations that the animal may have encountered in the past.
Pros and Cons of Pet Fostering (Michelle Dever)

Pet fostering allows animals to get the individual attention they need to become good pets for future permanent owners. They have the opportunity to get trained faster and have a better opportunity to get adopted because the fosterer gets to know the animal and can help find a suitable home for it. Pet fostering is also good for people who want to adopt an animal but are unsure of the pet that’s right for them. Fostering gives them the opportunity to try different breeds or species of animal that may be best for them.

Pet fostering requires a lot of time and patience from the fosterer. Some pets may have behavioral issues or may not have good potty training. These animals may need extra care and attention and require a lot of patience. If these animals are not trained enough they may not be able to find a home to take them in.

At first, the newly fostered animal may not be comfortable with the additional pets in the foster family’s home. The family pet or pets may also not be comfortable accepting a new animal in the home. Equal attention to all animals in the household is then needed to keep the animals at peace. Feeding the animals in separate places would also help prevent any problems that could occur between pets.

There are many health benefits of keeping a pet. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, pets can decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels & triglyceride levels. They also create opportunities for you to exercise and socialize (“Tips”). Pets encourage owners to get out and exercise. Dogs force their owners to go on walks, because the dogs need to go out and exercise. People are more likely to enjoy a walk when they have companionship. Dog owners do spend more time walking than non-pet owners when living in an urban setting. Since exercise is good for stress management and overall health, owning a dog can be credited with increasing these benefits (Scott).

Pet Fostering at College (Michelle Dever)

College can be the best but also the most stressful time in a person’s life. According to Rebecca Johnson, director of the Research Center for Human Animal Interaction at the University of Missouri in Columbia, "Pets are becoming more integrated as members of the family and so it's only logical that students leaving home would experience great loss if they can't take their pet,”(Mott). Pets can give their
unconditional love and companionship to the students to help them cope with the anxiety they may have from moving away from home.

Pets can help with social support. While out walking, having a dog with you can make a person more approachable and give people a reason to stop and talk and play with the dog. This can increase the number of people someone can meet, giving us them the opportunity to increase their network of friends and acquaintances (Scott). For some people college can be very intimidating, especially in making friends, having a companion can make it easier on a student to go out and meet new people. If there are other people out walking their dogs, they can form friendships through arranging puppy play dates and also make new friendships with people who have common interests.

Rutgers Fostering Program (Michelle Dever)
Pet fostering at Rutgers is only available to the students living off campus, faculty and staff. Each volunteer will have to fill out application forms before being able to foster an animal. There will be supervisors and people in charge of all of the incoming and outgoing foster pets. There will be people that manage the volunteer foster parents to ensure that they have everything they need to take care of their pet and also to be sure they are giving the right care to the animals. The program wants to ensure that the pet fosters will be responsible and be able to take good care of them.

Every week a meeting will be held to check upon the currently fostered animals. During this meeting, incoming animals to the program will be given to their new foster parent. The foster parents need to be monitored to be sure that they are treating the animal right and are properly preparing it to be adopted. If someone is inappropriately caring for one of the pets, they can have the animal taken away and lose all fostering privileges.

The pet fostering program will hold fundraisers around the campus to promote the adoption of the animals in foster care and also raise money to help the volunteer fosterers. Pet fostering can cost a lot of money, so to ease the financial burden of the volunteers and increase the influx of potential volunteers. Knowing that they can get financial assistance may help in the decision of whether someone wants to join the pet fostering program or not.

Flyers promoting the animals in foster care will be posted weekly around Rutgers campus. Every week in the Daily Targum, a special “Pet of the Week,” article will be published with a picture and description of one of the animals in foster care. Posting pictures of the animals in the Targum and around campus will give people visuals of the
animals in need of a home. This could cause more people to be interested in adopting an animal. Being able to actually see the animals in need of homes may cause more potential adopters to learn about the program and adopt pets from Rutgers. The people that have adopted from Rutgers could then tell other people whom may not attend the university about the fostering program and then more people may be interested in the schools program.

The Rutgers fostering program will also be involved in the Ruff Love program, where the fostered dogs will be taken to a nearby juvenile detention center, for the prisoners to train.

Ruff Love Program (Michelle Dever)
The dogs will spend much of their time in the homes of the foster parents who will be doing the majority of training for the dogs. One or two days a week the students/faculty will bring their dog to school and a team of students, that have been trained on how to work with the dogs and how to teach training methods, will take the dogs to the prison. (The students helping in the prison can be the same as the students that are fostering the dogs.)

The first day each prisoner will chose the dog they want to work with and from then until the end of the program that will be “their dog”. The prisoners will be taught how to train and socialize their dog. The sessions will be a few hours long and there will be group during every session. Each day will consist of a lesson on the command being taught that day. Then each team will work that command individually. Next there will be some sort of organized play time. Then there will be group socialization, where all the teams participate in an activity together. And at the end of the session each team will exhibit how well they taught the command to their dog. (At no point during the day will the dogs be off leash.)

The program is set up using teams; each team is made up of an instructor, student, a prisoner and a dog. These teams will stay the same for the duration of the program (12-15 weeks). At the end of the 12-15 weeks the dogs are put up for adoption, the fosterers have first choice, and the program starts over with new dogs. The instructors and fosters can remain but it would be preferred if the prisoners changed.
The Service Project: Facebook

*Pet Fostering @ RU:* (Brittany Crawford)

**Facebook Group**
A facebook group will be created for the program. The purpose of the group “Pet Fostering @ RU” will be to communicate with students and professors interested in fostering at Rutgers University. We’ll share information about pet fostering, its pros and cons, benefits, and links with helpful information. Members can share advice on how to choose the right pets for their households and proper training techniques. All members and non-members of the program may join the group; however it is exclusively accessible to Rutgers students and professors.

**Animals to be Fostered**
The program will allow students to foster birds, cats, dogs, ferrets, and rodents. Although the program observes that a student may foster the animals mentioned, the student must keep in mind the pet regulations and rules of their residence while living in off-campus housing. For example, if a student has been cleared by us and an animal shelter/local organization to foster a bird but their residence does not permit birds, then the student cannot foster a bird while living in that residence. With respects to the different species, care for each species will vary. Therefore a student will be required to perform a weekend test run to demonstrate that he/she knows how to properly handle the animal. As our program is just getting on its feet we will only allow for students to foster cats and dogs for now. Records of every animal fostered and their foster parent will be kept and maintained by program officials.

**Middlesex County Animal Shelters and Local Organizations**
- Cascade Beagle Rescue-East (North Brunswick)
- Cattitude Inc. (Highland Park)
- Just Big Black Dogs (Highland Park)
- Paws and Whiskers (Piscataway)
- Ray of Hope Rescue (East Brunswick)
This is a list of just a few animal shelters and local organizations that provide pet fostering services within Middlesex county. A link to their websites and others can be found in references and on the blog-site. The program will work only with local animal shelters and local organizations. I have contacted many shelters and organizations about pet fostering at the university. They have all neglected the idea of allowing students to foster animals in a university environment and setting. This is why joint cooperation between them and our program outside of campus is essential, pet fostering at the university must take place off-campus. I will try another attempt at persuading local shelters or organizations to allow students to pet foster in off-campus housing.

**Blog-Site**
A blog-site will be maintained and updated by program officials. It will provide a directory and list of local animal shelters, organizations, and pet fostering programs. The primary function of the blog-site will be to allow pet fosterers to share their personal
experiences while fostering. They can also post profiles of animals they fostered and share any stories about fostering. It could potentially build a network and community among members, as well as new members so that they feel welcome into the program. Nonmembers are allowed to view the blog-site.

**Fosterer & Student Credentials**
A license is preferred but not required. (It is preferred because a mode of transportation will be necessary to bring animals to and from places. Depending on the shelter or organization the student may be required to bring animal to a shelter for weekly checkup. If a fosterer does not have a license or mode of transportation, he/she may ask a club member or fellow fosterer. The risk with that is other members may not be available at the times he/she needs. If a fosterer misses one appointment or violates the visitation agreement, then he/she will be subject to relinquish their animal and present fostering duties and future fostering opportunities. In such cases fosterers will need to sign papers noting that they are expected and responsible for abiding a shelter’s or organization’s policies regarding visits.)

Must be reliable and responsible. (If a student wishes to foster an animal they must first prove that they will be caring, responsible, and reliable fosterers. They must volunteer for the club. They can do so by participating in fundraising events for the club. They must consistently attend club meetings. They can assist in writing for public relations, such as write and submit a profile of a foster animal in the Targum or local newspaper. They can produce, put up, and hand out flyers about our club and program to students and faculty. They may also make class announcements about the club and program. We would urge students to participate and volunteer as much as they can prior to requesting consideration to be a foster parent. So that we can ascertain that they are aware of the program’s goals, practices, and purpose.)

**Off-Campus Housing**
Pet fostering will be available only in off-campus housing. Students interested in fostering should familiarize themselves with the regulations and rules for pets in off-campus housing. A link to these regulations and rules can be found in references. We will allow only one foster pet per residence. Student must provide paperwork as proof of their residence in off-campus housing. If persons living with a potential fosterer have any oppositions to living with animals, then the potential fosterer cannot foster any animal from our program. If persons living with a potential fosterer have no oppositions to living with animals, then everyone in the apartment/house must handwrite and sign an apartment agreement. It will state that no one in the residence has no opposition to living with a fostered pet. Fosterers will have to address and comply with any other additional concerns of the shelters or organizations. Students that would like to locate off-campus housing can find a link to an apartment complex directory in references.

**Pet Fostering @ RU Application Process**
Anyone interesting in pet fostering should apply at least eight weeks before the start of a semester. Proof of residence in off-campus housing must be submitted with the pet fostering application. Applicants will receive a response in less than a week. Those
notified of approval are advised to move in their residence at least four weeks before the start of a semester. This will give the fosterer the opportunity of personal time with the foster animal. Also at some point within those four weeks the fosterer will be evaluated twice; once by a program official and twice by a shelter or organization representative. This will allow us to affirm whether the person is fit for fostering and if the environment is appropriate for the animal.

*Extension & Joint Program-NJDA*

(New Jersey Juvenile Detention Association) Students that are fostering dogs have the option to participate in a NJJDA Project. It will serve as an extension and joint program of Pet Fostering @ RU. The purpose of this program will be to assist in the emotional and mental treatment for persons aged 12-20 in juvenile centers. By the end of the day everyone benefits in one way or another.

*NJJDA Procedures*

On a designated Saturday in each month, dog fosterers who chose to participate, will bring their dogs to a specified campus location. At that location the dogs will be loaded into crates and then into a van. The fosterers are free of charge for transportation to the center.

Each dog will be assigned to an individual. Each individual will be instructed to care for, teach basic commands, and train their animal to perform a unique trick.

*Benefits*

Those participating individuals will gain experience while working with their dog. They will learn how to properly care for and train an animal. They will directly benefit by learning overall responsibility and they will also progress their emotional and mental health treatment. In doing so they are more likely to become proper citizens in the state of New Jersey. They may even qualify to adopt an animal, or their dog that they trained, once they are released from the juvenile center.

Animal shelters and organizations will benefit if those individuals decide to adopt an animal in the future. Any individual that participated in this program, while in a juvenile center, and plans to adopt in the future then they will be giving an animal another chance and possibly a forever home.

Each dog will be trained to perform a specific trick, no two dogs will do the same trick. This adds to their character and makes them special individuals. Since individuals will train the dogs to do basic commands they will be even more adoptable. They are more likely to be adopted if they are already trained and can do some special trick that people will adore. Likewise they have better chances of finding a forever home. Student fosterers can be assured that their animal is getting the proper care and training that they would provide otherwise.
(Sample Application)

**Foster Volunteer Application**

Name:__________________________________________________

Address:____________________________________________________

Home Phone:______________________ Work Phone:_____________________

Other Phone: ______________________ E-mail:__________________________

Why would you like to participate in this program?

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Times available for in-house interview:____________________________________

Type of animal(s) you are willing and able to foster:_________________________

Please list the current animals in your household:

**Pet's Name Species Sex Spayed or Neutered? Age**

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

Are your pets good with other animals? ___________________

If you have cats, do you keep them indoors or do you let them outside?

If you have dogs, do you keep them primarily indoors or outside?

Do you have a fenced yard? Yes No

Please indicate your housing status:

__ Rent an apartment

__ Rent a house

__ Own a house or condo

__ Live with parents

If you are renting, please provide your landlord's name and phone number:

_________________________________________________________________

Do you work outside of the home? Yes No

How many hours a day are your pets home alone? __________

Where are they kept when you are away from home? __________

Do you have children in your household? Yes No

If yes, how many? __________

Please list their ages: ______________________________

Your veterinarian's name: ______________________________________

Telephone number: _______________________________________

Please list two personal references whom we may contact:

Personal reference #1: ______________________________

Phone number: _______________________________________

Your relationship: _______________________________________
Foster Care Agreement

Between Shelter and Foster Caregiver

The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) provides this form as a sample. If you plan to use this sample form, The HSUS strongly suggests that you review it carefully and have it reviewed by your attorney before using it.

This agreement made this ________ day of _________________, 200__ by and between ___________________________________________ (hereinafter called "Foster Caregiver"), and __________________________________________ (hereinafter called "Shelter").

Certain animal owners in the __________________________________ area have been activated for military service; and said owners can no longer care for their animals and desire to place them with the Shelter and for the Shelter to try to find foster homes which will adequately care for said animals.

Foster Caregiver acknowledges that he or she is not becoming the owner of any of said animals, but is only willing to provide humane care for any such animal until its owner returns to the __________________________________ area.

In consideration of the premises and the covenants herein contained, it is agreed between the Shelter and Foster Caregiver as follows:

1. The Shelter delivers to Foster Caregiver and Foster Caregiver hereby accepts from the Shelter a certain animal described below and Foster Caregiver agrees to humanely take care of said animal until the owner returns to the ___________________________ area and reclaims said animal, but in no event shall Foster Caregiver become obligated or have any right to keep said animal for longer than twelve (12) months from ___________________________________________________________. Foster Caregiver agrees that upon the return to the ______________________________________ area and the reclaim of said animal by its owner, Foster Caregiver will immediately, peaceably, and voluntarily deliver said animal to the ___________________________.
Shelter upon request, and will make no claim of ownership, title, right, or interest in and to said animal.
Animal Name: _______________________________________
Species:____________________________________________
Breed:______________________________________________
Male: ________ Neutered? Yes No
Female: ________ Spayed? Yes No
Description (color, special markings, etc.):
__________________________________________________________________________________________________________

2. Foster Caregiver agrees to let the Shelter inspect Foster Caregiver's premises where the animal is being kept at any time to ascertain and satisfy itself or the animal's owner that the animal is well cared for. Foster Caregiver agrees to keep a collar and identification tag on the animal at all times.
3. Foster Caregiver agrees not to alter in any way the appearance of the animal being fostered without written permission of the Shelter. This includes declawing and cropping of ears or tails.
4. Foster Caregiver agrees to provide adequate food, water, shelter, and kind treatment for said animal at all times. In addition, Foster Caregiver must adhere to all state and local animal laws. Foster Caregiver agrees to follow all additional written instructions from the owner and/or Shelter.
5. Foster Caregiver agrees to notify Shelter as to any behavioral or health problems of the animal. The Shelter reserves the exclusive right to determine the proper course of action to take upon such notification.
6. Foster Caregiver will notify Shelter in the event any change occurs in the address or telephone number listed below. Foster Caregiver understands and acknowledges that he/she does not have any right or authority to keep the foster animal or place foster animal in other homes or place with other individuals unless permission is given in writing by the Shelter.
7. Foster Caregiver is undertaking these obligations with no claim, now or in the future, to any type of compensation or reimbursement for caring for said animal, and the further consideration for undertaking this obligation and caring for said animal is that Foster Caregiver is receiving satisfaction and enjoyment from undertaking this obligation of his or her own free will and because he or she wants to do so and derives satisfaction from doing so.
8. Foster Caregiver agrees that accidental animal bites or other injuries to humans and other animals do occur, and agrees to hold harmless and indemnify, and protect the Shelter, from any claim or suit filed by anyone as a result of such an incident. In addition, the Shelter will not be responsible if animal should damage or destroy property belonging to Foster Caregiver, or shall transfer any disease or internal or external parasites to other animals belonging to Foster Caregiver.

9. If the owner does not reclaim the animal, and Foster Caregiver wishes to adopt said animal, Foster Caregiver must go through the Shelter adoption program screening process. The Shelter reserves the right to determine final disposition of the animal.

10. This Agreement is the entire agreement of the parties, and there are no oral promises or representations made in addition to this contract and it may only be changed in a writing signed by both the Shelter and Foster Caregiver.

__________________________ __________________________
Shelter Name Foster Caregiver

__________________________ __________________________
Shelter Representative Address

__________________________ __________________________
Date City, State, Zip Code

__________________________
Phone Number
References

**Pictures:**
Dog and Cat-<http://www.bestbullysticks.com/blog/3/>

**Websites:**
Mott, Maryann. ‘Pets at College can Ease Homesickness”, May 4, 2009
Scott, Elizabeth, “How Owning a Dog or Cat Can Reduce Stress; the Health Benefits of Pet Ownership.” November 01, 2007
<http://stress.about.com/od/lowstresslifestyle/a/petsandstress.htm>

“Tips for Students Taking Pets to College” July 31st, 2010
<http://thoughtsfurpaws.com/dogs/tips-for-students-taking-pets-to-college/>


http://www.petfinder.com/index.html
http://www.petfoster.org

**Participating Animal Shelters/Organizations:**

East Cascade Beagle Rescue
http://www.cascaderescue.org/east.html

Animal Rescue Force
732-257-2779
http://members.petfinder.com/~NJ16/default.html

Paws and Whiskers Rescue
732-469-7682
http://members.petfinder.org/~NJ350/index.html

Cattitude, Inc
732-491-5696
Dear Editor,

According to the Human Society’s website, a cat or dog is put down about every eight seconds in U.S. animal shelters. Many animal shelters are overpopulated and simply cannot keep up with the increasing number of animals coming through their doors. Many animals that end up in shelters are often victims of some form of animal neglect. In an effort to alleviate animal neglect, and ultimately reduce the issue of overpopulation in animal shelters; I believe pet fostering programs should be brought to the public’s attention. Pet fostering programs allow people to foster animals, temporarily, until they find a permanent home. Participating in a pet fostering program can help potential and seeking owners chose the right pet for their household. It may also provide hands-on experience for the proper care of our beloved companion animals. In my opinion if people knew what to expect and how to properly care for and train animals so that they do not become neglected, then animal neglect will decline.

Pet fostering programs can be found in many municipalities. For people interested in pet fostering programs, or who know that they are ready to adopt an animal, here is a useful website: http://www.petfinder.com/index.html. This website allows you to search for adoptable animals from adoption groups and animal shelters.
Foster care is a great way for people to take care of an animal while finding the animal a temporary home. Fostering keeps animals out of the shelter, gives the animal the individual attention it needs, and is also beneficial to the fosterer themselves. A college is a great place to have a foster care program; there are many people around that could have potential to foster or adopt the animals and it’s a great place to network and spread the word about the animals in need of a home.

In today’s economy many animal shelters face overcrowding. People abandon their pets or drop them off at the shelter if they move or if they can’t afford them anymore. When people pass away and a family member cannot take the animal, the animal is sent to a shelter. An overcrowded shelter is not good for the animals. It is a stressful environment that can spread disease and the dogs don’t get the individual attention they need to become good pets.

Foster care is a good alternative to having an animal in a shelter. It makes the shelter less crowded putting less stress on the animals that have to stay in the shelter making them much happier and healthier. It also stops the spread of disease to many animals. In a foster home, the animals get the individualized attention they need to become a good pet for their future owner. The fosterer also gets to know the animal and can help find the right home for the animal when it comes time for adoption.

A foster care program in a college would be a great way to give many animals a great place to get the attention and love they need to be good pets. Colleges are large with many people around with great potential to find fosters and/or adopters. College can be a very stressful environment; studies have shown that taking care of an animal reduces stress. Pets provide companionship and when people are going through a tough time, they go to their animal for support. Dr. Sara Staats (PhD, professor emeritus of psychology at Ohio State University) stated that "College is a very stressful environment for them and sometimes they can feel isolated or overwhelmed with the change. Many feel their pets will help them get through these difficult and stressful situations, and many more say that without their pet, they would feel lonely." She also concluded that "pets provide important benefits to young person’s as well as the better-known benefits provided to the lonely, elderly, or ill.” Pet fostering would also help students learn responsibility which they will need when they graduate college and begin life on their own.