The Kids are Alright: Youth Volunteers in Direct Animal Care

Benefits of a Youth Program

- For youth
- For the organization
- For the community
- For the animals/humans/planet

Getting "Buy-In" from staff, Board, volunteers, community

- Creating a Welcoming Environment for Youth
    - Staff and adult volunteer interactions (creating a positive culture for all)
    - Building confidence and independence
    - Providing support/mentoring
    - Appreciation and acknowledgment
    - Engaging with youth
    - bullying/gender bias/special needs/disabilities

Recruiting Youth Volunteers

- Flyers, email blasts-current adult volunteers, social media posts, local schools, organization website, word of mouth
- Questionnaire/application
- Setting clear and easily enforceable expectations; follow up
- Training sessions
- Communication-email, REMIND app

Managing Liability and Safety

- Addressing Liability - possibly covered by general liability and/or volunteer add-on coverage
    - Injuries
    - consent/waiver forms/parental consent
    - insurance

St. Hubert's **Youth Task Force** utilizes an essential, yet tremendously underutilized resource--youth volunteers. The program consists of high school students, ages 15 to 17, who volunteer on a weekly basis in teams to support the needs of the shelter.   Tasks include:

- Providing exercise to well-socialized dogs in the dog runs; providing individualized attention to special needs dogs.
- Socializing shy cats and providing attention to highly social cats in need of interaction and stimulation.
- Promoting via social media animals for adoption.
- Fundraising for specific shelter needs or the needs of source shelters.

New members are on-boarded twice per year and are asked to commit to an assigned, 2 hour weekly shift for a period of 4 to 5 months. The program runs September to December and February to June. Prior to volunteering, interested participants attend 2 training sessions.

- Safe Interactions with Dogs
- Safe Interactions with Cats/ Social Media and Fundraising

Safe Interactions training sessions teach students to read basic body language, keep boundaries, and let the animals control the interactions. General procedures and guidelines for dog and cat interactions are discussed. Social Media and Fundraising training teaches students about taking quality pictures to use on social media, writing catchy posts, and best practices for fundraising.

HSHV's **Junior Volunteer** program is designed for youth ages 12-17 who have a natural love for animals and a desire to support homeless animals in their community. The Junior Volunteer program consists of six 2-hour training sessions that include humane education, hands on volunteer time, mentoring and coaching. When youth have completed the program, they are prepared to volunteer independently, in a variety of roles.

JV Roles (not an all inclusive list)

- Shelter cleaning
- Cat/dog enrichment
- Foster photography
- Administrative support
- Humane education program support
- Dog/cat/small mammal visitation
- Read to calm
- Cat feeding/ Feliway
- Foster program support

HSHV's Junior Volunteer program is offered twice monthly throughout the year. We require pre-registration and are able to welcome 20 new volunteers to our program each month. There is a fee associated with our program, but in an effort to keep it barrier free, we do offer full scholarships for families.

Our six training classes work to foster critical thinking and develop empathy and compassion for all animals, humans and our planet. They include the following topics:
- Customer service - internal and external
- Animal communication
- Responding to animal body language
- Enrichment and animal care
- Animals and their role in society
- Animal perspectives
- Challenges of working within a shelter setting
- Interconnections between humans, animals and our environment