FOSTER TO FOREVER PROGRAM

ADOPTION AMBASSADOR PROGRAM
The Adoption Ambassador program has been created to help current shelter residents find their forever families while in foster care. This groundbreaking program empowers foster parents to recruit, screen and adopt pets straight from their homes.

Foster families are provided with adoption screening training, clinic services, behavioral support, and a media kit to help them care for their charge while seeking out their forever family. By sending adoptable animals out into the Adoption Ambassador Program, foster parents can help make successful adoption matches between pets and people.

**Program Benefits**
- Allows cats and dogs the opportunity to reside in a home, rather than shelter, environment as they await adoption
- Empowers our fosters to make successful adoption matches, resulting in lower return rates
- Allows adopters a chance to gain more intimate information about an animal’s personality
- Gives fosters the chance to connect with their animals’ forever families and build long-term relationships post-adoption
- Expands our shelter walls, engages the community, and spreads our message of caring throughout the city

**Program Requirements**
- Pet care experience
- Outgoing personality
- Support of The Anti-Cruelty Society’s mission and philosophies
- Access to a reliable source of transportation
- Primary caretaker must be at least 18 years of age
- Active email address and social media account
- Proof of vaccination for all animals already within the household

**Adoption Ambassador Responsibilities**
- Provide basic animal care
- Compile weekly animal update for Foster Blog
- Participate in at least 1 public adoption event each month
- Participate in 1 media appearance each month
Which Animals Are Eligible
Any animal that is currently available for adoption is eligible for the Adoption Ambassador program though we hope to focus on those who have longer length of stay. Every animal entering the program will already be spayed or neutered, have their vaccines, photo and personality profiles completed.

Foster Length of Stay
Each Adoption Ambassadors goal is to recruit an adopter within 1-2 months of the foster animal’s placement. This time frame has been set to encourage promotion of the pet and to ensure they are being connected with their adoptive family in a reasonable time frame. During these eight weeks the animal’s adoption profile will be visible on The Anti-Cruelty Society website and corresponding third-party adoption search engines. If eight weeks elapses, and the foster has not made progress in recruiting an adopter, the foster will be asked to bring the animal back to the adoption room. Fosters should also note that, as with any foster animal, if the cat or dog in their care is not a suitable match for their household or lifestyle they may return the animal ahead of schedule.

RECRUITING ADOPTERS
Marketing Adoption Ambassador animals is vital for adoption success. Adoption Ambassadors should think of themselves as "talent agents" for their cat or dog. They should use social media and their daily social activities to highlight the amazing pet in their care.

Adoption Ambassadors are encouraged to take lots of promotional photos of their foster animal and to engage the public about their current charge in a friendly and honest manner. They should always be willing and prepared to answer questions about the cat or dog, and they should give business cards to those who are interested in adopting or helping them recruit an adopter.

Media Kits
Each foster parent who takes part in the Adoption Ambassador program will be provided with a customized media kit to assist in the recruitment of potential adopters. The kit will include:

- Customized business cards
- Customized posters
- Customized graphics
- “Adopt Me” apparel: Collars for cats, vests for dogs

A sample of the media kits can be found at the end of this document.
**Foster Blog**

All foster parents who take part in the Adoption Ambassador program are encouraged to provide weekly updates, with photos, via the official Foster Blog. The website allows staff an opportunity to check on the progress of current foster animals while giving the public an inside look at the program. Adoption Ambassador fosters have several ways in which they can post the content:

1. Fill out the blog form at the link below to have a Foster Blog Volunteer create the post: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdcZl2QqebUbzmzwHDAuWa377CB2ecD9NMd9Y6_gDT73ddQTQ/viewform
2. Upload photos of your foster to our shared dropbox to have them added to the blog.

   **URL:** www.dropbox.com  
   **Username:** foster@anticruelty.org  
   **Password:** ilovepets1899

3. Send your content to the Volunteer Services team for them to post on your behalf.
4. Create a Wordpress account and have the Volunteer Services team as you as an official blogger to the main site. This way you can post photos, videos, and updates at-will.

**Special Events**

Foster volunteers taking part in this program will be notified regrading upcoming special events in which they are welcome to participate. Adoption Ambassador animals are encouraged to attend one public event each month, whether it be an onsite Meet the Fosters event or an Offsite Hot Spot. These special on and off-site adoption events allow fosters a chance to showcase their animal and recruit adopters. Details about upcoming opportunities can be found in the weekly Foster Newsletter.

**Media Appearances**

Adoption Ambassador will be encouraged to participate in media appearances as they are available to promote their foster. These may include:

- ABC Adopt-A-Pet: Thursday mornings
- On-Site Periscope participation
- Virtual “Meet the Fosters” broadcast via Google Hangouts
- Other media opportunities as they become available

The Volunteer Services team will coordinate appearances with participating Adoption Ambassadors.

**Promoting Cats**

Since cats are not mobile like dogs – recruiting an adopter requires more in-home visitation. Cat fosters are asked to give their foster cat a few days to acclimate to their new environment and then begin having people over to meet the kitty. Hosting a kitty meet and greet party, or video blogging about their cat, are two creative options to help get the word out about their charge. Fosters can also use more conventional methods, such as hanging fliers in their neighborhood, sending out mass emails or using social media.

**Promoting Dogs**

In addition to utilizing the animal’s customized media kit, foster parents will be encouraged to host foster “hot spots” in which they coordinate a mini adoption event at a local business of their choice. Fosters will plan these events at least one week in advance and will communicate the time and location to the foster coordinator so that The Anti-Cruelty Society can also promote the mini event.

Fosters are encouraged to bring dogs to places where shelter animals are not normally found. They should try to avoid special events for the shelter or off-site adoption venues. Rather, fosters should plan to
frequent places that dogs may not be expected, such as cafes, outdoor bars, farmers markets, restaurants and community events. The more visibility a dog receives, the greater the chances of recruiting an adopter.

PHOTOGRAPHING FOSTERS
A photo is worth a thousand words so when adopters are shopping online for their next pet – it’s important that we can grab their attention. The best way to do this is to provide high quality photos that let each pet’s personality shine. Here’s how Adoption Ambassadors can do just that.

**Photo Basics:**
- Turn the flash off for better picture quality
- All photos should be bright and in focus.
- Make sure the backdrop is free from distractions, so the focus is on the animal
- Show off the pet’s personality by taking photos of them playing, lounging or interacting with people

**Photo Tips:**
- Use the Macro (or flower) setting on the camera to take higher quality close-up images which will also blur out the background. Note that this setting only works well in good lighting situations.
- Capture the pets looking happy – no pity parties!
- Props, when used appropriately, can enhance a photo

**What behaviors will attract adopter attention?**
- Appealing behaviors in cats may include:
  - Relaxed body language
  - Sleepy eyes
  - Alert posture
  - Curled tail
  - Lounging on a blanket
  - Playing with a toy

- What makes a dog look friendly?
  - Open mouth (perceived as a smile)
  - Ears up
  - Tail wagging
  - Alert stance
  - Eye contact
The primary purpose of The Anti-Cruelty Society adoption program is to place animals into good homes. A “good home” is one in which an animal will receive love, attention, exercise, medical care, adequate food, shelter, grooming, and where the pet will become an integral part of the family or household.

1) Adoption Form
The first step to making a successful adopter/animal match is having the adopter complete a formal adoption application. The application requests general information regarding the prospective adopter’s responsibilities as a pet owner. Questions ask about past history of pet ownership and how they plan to care for the animal. The applicants should be asked to complete the form in complete detail.

Certain requirements must be met for the adoption process to continue:
- Adopters must have a valid ID/ Applicant must have a valid state ID or driver’s license.
- Passports are acceptable, but because they do not list a current address, one has to be verified (with a lease or utility bill). Mexico ID’s are acceptable as they have current address listed.
- Renters applying for a dog: Landlords will be called to verify if the apartment is pet friendly.

Fosters should remember to always use their best judgment and evaluate the application from the applicant’s perspective. There are many “right” answers and many different situations in which a new pet can happily flourish. Always ask, “Can this applicant provide a safe, healthy, loving home for this pet?”

2) Have an Open Conversation
One of the most important tools we have when screening an adopter is learning more about their lifestyle, while sharing the adoptable cat or dogs specific needs. Foster parents, having the most intimate
knowledge of the animal, can provide insight into an animal’s personality, behavior quirks and habits. That’s why having a conversation about each of these topics is so important.

Questions to Ask Applicants

- *Why do they want this specific animal?* You will learn a lot about an applicant with this question. If they select for a child-has the child meet the pet yet? We always recommend young children to meet the potential dog or cat prior to adoption.

- *Is the animal a companion for another pet?* If the family has a dog and they want to add a companion dog, a canine meet-n-greet can be recommended. Meet-n-greets with owned pets are just a glimpse of behavior. We cannot guarantee that the behaviors seen during the introduction will be replicated at home. Supervision and management is always recommended between new pets.

- *What do they do for a living?* During the interview, discuss what the person does for work. Are they able to financially support a cat or dog? Do they have the time to properly care for a pet?

- *Have they ever owned a cat or dog?* You’ll want to find out about their pet ownership history. Discuss with the adopters the pets they have had in the past five years. Find out where they got the animals from, and whether they still have them.

- *Are there other animals in the home?* If a potential adopter has an animal at home already, the health risk to that animal should be discussed carefully before a new animal is brought home. The Society is not responsible for any illness that may be caught from the adoption animal. The adopter should be advised to separate the adoption animal from resident animals for two weeks, to ensure no residual germs from the shelter are passed, and to help with the introduction process. The perspective adopters veterinarian can be contacted if 1) dogs reside in the home, or 2) if the quality of past animals care comes into question, an example-if the animal was hit by a car, or had an Upper Respiratory infection, was it seen by a vet prior to its death? Vaccination/ care records can be verified, as well if they have an outstanding balance at the veterinarian. Many people who have indoor cats will not vaccinate on a yearly basis. This is not a reason for denial.

In addition to fosters using the questions above to determine a successful match, they can also make use of our Adoption Match Program. Foster animals will be assigned to one of the four categories:

- **Novice:** Usually ideal for a first-time pet owner
- **Intermediate:** Usually needs a family that has some knowledge or experience with pets
- **Special:** Usually has special behavioral or medical needs or is just special
- **Advanced:** Usually needs a family that has knowledge of dog behavior and experience with training

By having an open conversation with the applicant regarding each cat or dog’s needs, fosters can get a better sense of whether or not the adopter is a good match for that particular animal. If a foster is objectively or intuitively unsure, it may be time for the respectful “Pend.” Details on how to respectfully turn down an applicant can be found below.

If the application review goes well and the applicant is a good match for the foster pet – great! The application has been formally approved.

3) **Finalizing Paperwork**

Once an adopter has been screened and approved they will need to complete a final set of paperwork prior to the final hand-off. Fosters each piece of documentation below with the adopter:

- Medical Summary
- Microchip Information
- Personality Information
- Basic Behavior & Training
- Additional animal-specific notes

All of the paperwork listed above will have been compiled and prepared for each animal and sent to the foster in advance.

After reviewing the information above, the adopter should sign the official adoption contract and receive a duplicate copy. The adoption contract asks adopters to commit to the basic standards of proper pet care.

After the contract is signed, the foster will need to accept the adopter’s adoption fee payment. Payments should be processed through our Adoption credit card portal at the following link:

https://www.kintera.org/AutoGen/Register/ECReg.asp?ievent=1114140&en=8rIFLRNvH7JOL1OyH6LLIXMiLiJLUOBLeKMLWNGHiLJYPHlKIVL5MEjIjSj_6OUE

Fosters will need to ensure that the adopters information, and requested animal information (name and animal ID #) are filled in, as well as the correct adoption fee.

Before handing over the animal to the adopter, be sure to snap a few photos of the happy new family together and send them to the Volunteer Services team so we can notify staff, volunteers and the public of the successful match.

4) Contacting the Shelter
Once a foster parent has recruited, screened, approved and placed their animal, they should contact the shelter immediately so the animal’s adoption profile can be removed from the website. The foster will need to provide the shelter a copy of the adopter’s contract and the adoption form. Foster parents should submit all of the following documents within 24 hours of a foster’s placement in their forever home.

ADDRESSING POOR MATCHES
The following list provides the most commons reasons why an adoption application may be “pended” or “denied”.

Unclear pet history: One or more instances of giving away pets, or losing them due to escape or theft. An instance of losing a pet to escape or accident without indication or remorse, personal responsibility, or making a reasonable effort to prevent an escape or accident from happening in the future.

Unclear or an absence of veterinary history for previous pets: Admitting to not providing medical care for a pet that was suffering. Admitting to not seeking veterinary exams or vaccinations for current or past pets for a significant period of time (be reasonable – 2 or 3 years would not be considered significant in most cases).

Unsuitable living environment proposed for the new pet: Confining cat/kitten to cage. Keeping cat/kitten in garage. Allowing cat/kitten to roam outdoors. Keeping the pet at a place of business. Keeping dog/puppy outdoors unsupervised (yard, doghouse, or tethered) or in garage or shed.

Adopting for a purpose other than companionship: Wanting a cat/kitten to primarily serve as a “mouser.” Wanting a dog/puppy primarily for personal protection or as a “watchdog.” A special note on Therapy and Service Animals – While The Anti-Cruelty Society does not offer special training for this purpose, qualified applicants are welcome to adopt pets for this purpose (in addition to companionship, of
course) and seek training at another organization. It should also be noted that intentions for therapy/service animal training does not release an applicant from any normally expected adoption requirements.

Absence of landlord consent (for dogs): Landlord/management company is unavailable by phone. Language barrier prevents communication. Landlord/management company does not allow dogs (in this case, applicant does not need to be referred to a Shelter Manager – it is a moot point). Dog chosen is a restricted breed/exceeds a weight limit, or if applicant already has maximum number of pets in their unit (in this case, applicant does not need to be referred to a Shelter Manager – it is a moot point).

Absence of consent from other adults in household: Other adults are not available by phone. Other adults do not want the pet in the home, or are unsure.

Unrealistic expectations of pet ownership: Applicant shows no knowledge of responsibilities of pet ownership (veterinary care, food/medical/grooming costs, animal handling/training) and our attempts to provide education or counseling are not well received, or gap in knowledge is too great for “on the spot” education. Applicant admits to, or screener senses, inability or unwillingness to provide appropriate pet care.

In very rare cases – inappropriate conduct: Overly rough handling of pets. Antagonistic/belligerent/disrespectful behavior toward volunteers, staff or other visitors. Reasonable suspicion of drug/alcohol influence or profound mental illness.

Note that we are not able to foresee every possible complication during the adoption process. For this reason fosters are encouraged to employ their best judgment and contact a shelter manager should questions arise. Shelter Managers can be reached at 312-644-8338. Dial “0” and ask for the shelter manager on duty.

ADDITIONAL SCREENING CONSIDERATIONS

Mousers: People wanting to adopt a cat exclusively as a “mouser,” and not as a general companion, will be turned down. Cats adopted to perform the function of a mouser are more subject to neglect. They may run the risk of ingesting poison, or illness if they catch a mouse that has been contaminated. Cats that catch mice may also leave the carcass as a gift for their owner, who may be detrimental to the humans’ health.

People who note cats as mouse detractors, but who do not consider this their sole purpose, can be approved if they meet the other requirements.

Watchdogs: If the adopter selects watchdog as reason for adoption, discuss their expectations of the dog. Many people just want a dog to bark in the event of an intruder trying to get into their house. This situation is fully acceptable as long as the dog will be kept indoors with the family. Individuals seeking to adopt a dog primarily as a guard, sentry, or security dog are denied because animals placed in such situations are often neglected.

Pets as Gifts: New pet owners need to be prepared for the full responsibility of bringing a cat or dog into their home. This includes altering personal schedules, devoting time to acclimation and training, a significant financial investment, and overall commitment to caring that must extend throughout the animal's full life cycle. For this reason, choosing to adopt a pet must be a group decision that has been made by an entire household.
If an adopter indicates they are applying for a cat or dog as a gift, discuss whether they have already received consent from their partner/family. If so – then adopting a pet as a gift should not pose an issue. If, however, the applicant is looking to give the pet away as a gift without prior consent, encourage them to purchase an adoption certificate for the giftee instead. These are available at the main Adoption Center at 510 N. LaSalle.

**Outdoor Cats:** The Anti-Cruelty Society encourages adopters to keep cats in their homes. Cats kept exclusively indoors live longer and healthier lives than outdoor cats.

If an adopter indicates that they will be allowing their cat outdoors, emphasize that any time outside of the home should be strictly supervised. Allowing a cat to go outside unsupervised exposes them to wild animals who carry parasites and disease, as well as other outdoor cats, greatly increasing their risk of getting feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV). Outdoor cats may also encounter predators, like dogs, foxes and coyotes, who could seriously harm or even kill him. They can also be hit by a car or could be exposed to poisonous substances like lawn chemicals, antifreeze or rat bait.

Because of these and other dangers awaiting the outdoor cat, it’s estimated that a cat allowed outdoors in the United States lives an average of one quarter as long as a cat living exclusively indoors. Keeping a cat indoors is the best way to prolong their life.

If an applicant is interested in offering cat outdoor time, it should be supervised and/or the cat should be harness-trained to ensure the cats safety. Applicants who plan on letting their cat outside unsupervised can be denied.

**Declawing:** The Anti-Cruelty Society is opposed to declawing cats for the convenience of their guardians. A variety of humane methods exist as alternatives and help to manage the problem of destructive clawing and to prevent injury from cat scratches. These include having a cat’s nails trimmed or filed down regularly in order to blunt the tips and providing scratching pads, posts and other appealing structures for the cat to use—and employing behavior modification techniques to induce the cat to use them.

If an adopter is interested in adopting a declawed cat for personal health reasons, refer them to our main adoption center where we frequently have previously declawed cats awaiting adoption. If an applicant indicates that they would like to have a cat declawed, discuss humane alternatives and repercussions of the procedure. Make it an educational opportunity. An interest in declawing is not reason alone to deny an applicant.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

**Main Shelter Hours**
The main shelter at 510 N. LaSalle Avenue is open every day of the year for animal receiving. The Adoption Center is open each day of the year, aside from certain pre-designated holidays.

**Adoption Fees:**
Kittens (5 months & younger): $100
Adult Cats: $60
Puppies (5 months & younger): $200
Adult Dogs: $120
Small Animals: $20
Note that the adoption fees at our satellite adoption centers vary. Check each animal’s individual profile for details.

**Adoption Fee Includes***:
- Spay/neuter surgery
- Rabies vaccine
- Distemper vaccine
- Bordatella vaccine (dogs)
- Leukemia screening (cats)
- Heartworm screening (adult dogs)
- Collar & Anti-Cruelty Society identification tag
- Microchip
- Leash or carrier

*Small animals such as birds, hamsters, guinea pigs, etc do not receive these full services.

**THANK YOU!**

Choosing to join the Adoption Ambassadors team is a big decision. Not only are you making the commitment to care for a shelter cat or dog, you’re also committing to help us find them their forever home. It’s thanks to caring people like you that we are able to continue the development of programs and services that improve a shelter animal’s quality of care, while providing the best possible experience for people looking to adopt.

On behalf of The Anti-Cruelty Society team, thank you for choosing to join the Adoption Ambassadors program! We look forward to working with you to help more people and pets than ever before!
2 Weeks to Adoption Tips

Day 1: Photo and video session at home
Try to use natural light and have dog interacting with a person. It’s a great time to learn what your new foster dog can do: Does she know sit, fetch or other simple commands? Is she housetrained? These are things adopters will want to know!

Day 2: Post those cute videos and photos you took to social media
Email your friends and coworkers about your amazing new friend who is looking for a home! Then hit the streets – parks, areas with a lot of foot traffic – for some in-your-face marketing. Stay at least two hours (and don’t forget business cards and Adopt Me vest!)

Day 3: Meet a friend for coffee and bring your foster
Be sure to snap pictures or videos of your animal out and about – tag the business you are at and they might even share your cute adoptable!

Day 4: Get active with your pup in a public place
Or just sit back and have a beverage in an outdoor café or bar. Don’t get discouraged if you haven’t found an adopter yet – keep trying and remember that the more people your dog kisses, the better!

Day 5: Take your dog to a local sporting event
Kickball, soccer – at the right time of year you can find events like that all over town. Take this opportunity to teach your dog a new trick or one of the basics like shake!

Day 6: Explore more of the great outdoors
Wherever there are a lot of people and a safe environment is a great place to just ramble with your foster.

Day 7: Take a day to decompress
Fill in all your friends & family on how your foster is doing. Email pictures around to your friends and colleagues and post them to any groups you are a part of.
2 Weeks to Adoption Tips

Day 8: Bring a friend & your foster to a lively in-town street
Take time to wander! Grab a coffee and chill or grab lunch at an outdoor spot. If you’re having no luck finding people, ask your Coordinator for ideas.

Day 9: Hit the tourist spots in your town
These are also great locales for snapping exciting pictures of your pooch!

Day 10: Find an outdoor festival
Festivals or farmer’s markets are great places to strut your stuff.

Day 11: Return & rewind
Go back to a place where you had the most interaction and hang tight. Smile and be approachable and your pup will have a family in no time.

Day 12: Repeat
Do the same as Day 11, and send out communications to your friends and family and ask them to share – the more people who know about your dog, the better!

Day 13: Expand your reach
By now we hope you have found at least one person interested, but if not just think further afield. Try an outdoor wine bar or other place where a new audience can be found.

Day 14: Adoption day!
Hopefully your pup is on his or her way home – but if not just repeat the process. Ask other Ambassadors and your Coordinator for ideas!

Every day: Post Facebook, Twitter and Instagram updates!

Material generously shared by Louisiana SPCA
ASPCApro.org/ambassadors
Adoption Ambassador Business Cards
ADOPT ME!

Darla
Name
A23672489
Animal ID 
7 months old
Age
Female
Sex
Hound Mix
Breed

Darla is a playful gal who enjoys running around with her dog-friends. She doesn’t always like to share her toys, so her new family should work on her manners with other dogs. She will need lots of supervision, patience, and love in her new home. She will require obedience training, house training, and socialization to become a well-mannered adult dog. Darla is currently available for adoption while in our Foster to Foster program. If you’re interested in meeting this adorable little lady in person, please contact our foster team at foster@anticruelty.org.

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Foster Contact

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Adoption Ambassador Web Graphic