



You Can Do It!

Saving a life is easier than you think

By Cimeron Morrissey

"You can do it!" Every day, we say those four magical words to people around the country who want to help animals in need but are unsure of their abilities. With some friendly encouragement and guidance, you'll be amazed at what you can accomplish.

Each of us can help bring about a time when there are No More Homeless Pets. In fact, that's just what it is going to take — every person reading this article committing to do just a little bit to reach this goal. Sure, many of us think we can't make a difference for one reason or another, but the truth is that **no matter how little time, money or experience you have, you can still save an animal's life.** It's easier than you think, and makes you feel good, too.

We've heard from so many of you who want to help but aren't sure how, so we're going to tell you about simple ways that you can make a huge impact. It's time to do all we can to save the lives of homeless animals. They're counting on us — and we know you can do it!

YOU CAN CREATE A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR HOMELESS PETS.

1 I've never done rescue work before. I know more about spreadsheets than I do about saving homeless pets, but I'd like to volunteer and still make an impact. Is that possible?

Your professional skills can be an invaluable contribution for an animal welfare organization. Most rescue groups need volunteers who can help with professional services, such as public relations, graphic design, photography, project management — and even creating spreadsheets.

“When people think about volunteering with an animal rescue group, they often think that means socializing kittens and puppies,” says Melissa Riofrio, chairperson of the board of directors for Homeless Cat Network, a Best Friends No More Homeless Pets Network partner in the San Francisco area. “But what many nonprofits need most are management team members. It’s really challenging for groups to find professionals to help out with operational tasks. For example, we’ve been looking for volunteers with marketing expertise, but it’s been really hard for us to find anyone to help.”

By taking what you’ve learned working for “the man” and using it to help “man’s best friend,” you can save a lot of lives. To find rescue groups in your area, go to network.bestfriends.org and click on “Go Local.”



YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE! TAKE THE FIRST STEP TODAY BY VOLUNTEERING, DONATING, FOSTERING OR ADOPTING.

2 As much as I wish I could volunteer at a shelter, I just don't have the time. Are there quick ways to help?

If you can spare two minutes, then yes. You can save animals by joining Voices for No More Homeless Pets and helping to change your state, city and county laws. “The animals need our voice to create a time when there are No More Homeless Pets,” says Ledy VanKavage, senior legislative attorney for Best Friends. All you have to do is sign up to receive alerts about issues and ordinances affecting pets in your locale. “When you get an alert,” Ledy says, “you’ll get a chance to personalize an email to your elected officials on the issue. It can really make a difference and save lives, and takes just a couple of minutes.” To join, go to yourvoice.bestfriends.org.



3 I started feeding a family of feral cats in my backyard. Is there some other way to help them?

The best way to help them is to do trap/neuter/return (TNR). Spaying or neutering the cats will make them healthier and happier, and it also humanely prevents them from giving birth to future generations of homeless kittens. Check with your local shelter or rescue group to borrow trapping equipment and to find low-cost or free spay/neuter services. For lots more information about TNR, visit Alley Cat Allies’ website at alleycat.org.



4 I'm not sure I'm cut out to be a volunteer. Is there another way I can help the No More Homeless Pets movement?

You can make an immediate and direct impact by adopting a shelter pet; you can even adopt a rescued purebred. To find a new furry family member and save a life, check out Petfinder.com.

Another great way to help is to make a donation to Best Friends. "Financial gifts enable us to promote our national outreach efforts to increase adoptions and promote spay/neuter programs, as well as training and education for grassroots rescue organizations that are doing great work in their local communities," says Rana Smith, Best Friends' chief development officer. "There are lots of ways to provide support, such as financial gifts of cash, stock or real estate, or including a bequest in your will." You can also make a donation to Best Friends in the form of supplies, equipment, treats or toys to help the 1,700 animals at the Sanctuary.

IF YOU'VE EVER FELT THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF AN ANIMAL, PAY IT FORWARD BY HELPING PETS IN NEED.

6 My finances are tight. I want to donate to the local rescue group but I don't think I can swing it.

You're in luck — there are lots of ways to provide financial assistance without giving a donation. For example, you can use search engines and online shopping sites, such as GoodSearch.com and AdoptAShelter.com, that will donate their revenue to the rescue group of your choice. You can also volunteer with a local group to help with their fundraising efforts, such as by staffing their booth at an event or walking in their annual dog walk.

Another great way to help: Donate your unused items, services and airline miles for rescue groups' auctions. For shelters and groups that hold rummage sale fundraisers, you can donate unwanted holiday gifts and all that used stuff in the back of your closet that you've been meaning to get rid of anyway. Your trash may be another person's treasure, and these donations can add up to a lot of much-needed cash for shelters and the homeless pets they help.

"Local animal lovers give us a wonderful array of fun and unique treasures for our rummage sales, which help to fund spay/neuter efforts for Santa Cruz County's feral cats and kittens," says Lynne Achterberg of Project Purr, a Best Friends No More Homeless Pets Network partner in Northern California. "This year's two sales netted \$45,800. Over the years, our rummage sales have raised over \$350,000 for community cat spay/neuter services."

GoodSearch



5 My wife and I can't adopt a pet right now, but we still want to give hands-on help to animals in need. Is there a volunteer opportunity that's right for us?

If you miss happy wagging tails or head bumps but can't commit to adoption, you can get your fix — and help save lives — by fostering homeless animals. Many groups around the country lack a facility to house and rehabilitate rescued animals, so the number of homeless pets they can save is directly linked to the number of foster parents they have as volunteers.

"The more foster homes we have, the more dogs we can pull from shelters," says Laurie Cain of Pit Bull Rescue San Diego. "Shelters are overcrowded, since so many people are losing their homes or their jobs." The same goes for cats, too.

Go to volunteer.bestfriends.org to find a No More Homeless Pets Network group in your area where you can volunteer as a foster parent today.



7 Puppy mills need to be put out of business for good, but what can I do to help make that happen?

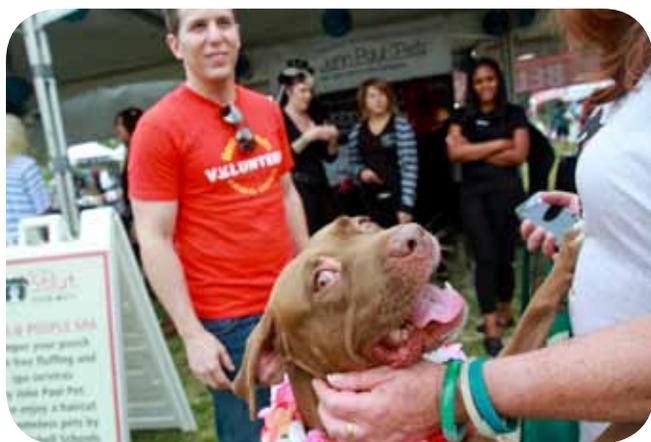
There are so many things you can do:

- Adopt your pets and encourage your friends and family to adopt pets. Most people don't realize that they're unknowingly supporting the puppy mill industry when they purchase animals from pet stores or buy a puppy online.
- Talk with the owners of pet stores that sell puppies and ask them to feature homeless pets for adoption instead. If the store chooses not to do so, you can organize peaceful demonstrations in front of the shop and letter-writing campaigns to the owners of the building.
- Add an advocacy message in the signature line of your email to help educate people about the issue, such as: "Help stop puppy mill cruelty. Don't buy — adopt."
- Convince your local government to ban the sale of animals in pet stores. "You can attend a supervisors' meeting or city council meeting and ask the legislative body to pass stricter laws for pet stores and dog breeders," says Elizabeth Oreck, Best Friends' national manager of puppy mill initiatives. "You can also write or call your city, county, state and federal officials and ask them to take the issue seriously. Your voice matters and you can make a difference."
- Go to Best Friends' puppy mill initiatives website at puppymills.bestfriends.org and click on "Take Action" to support the introduction of laws to regulate pet stores and puppy mills.



SOMETIMES SAVING A LIFE COSTS ONLY 5 MINUTES OF YOUR TIME.

8



I have a full house and can't adopt another animal, but I still want to help. What do you suggest?

There are countless ways that you can get involved, such as volunteering with a local group to do trap/neuter/return for community cats, spending time with rescued animals at a shelter to help them become adoptable, or even volunteering at Best Friends' Pup My Ride staging locations to help rescued puppy mill dogs.

To learn how you can get involved in your own community, use your skills at home to help animals, or volunteer for Best Friends at the Sanctuary and offsite programs, visit volunteer.bestfriends.org.



9 I'm 15 years old and want to help animals get adopted, but I don't drive yet. Is there anything I can do from home to help?

You can use your social networking skills to promote adoptable rescued animals. Ask your favorite local rescue organization if you can help with their Facebook or Twitter efforts, or simply share their posts on your wall to encourage your friends to adopt.



10 I want more people in my community to spay and neuter their pets, but I have no idea how to convince them.

First, try to understand the reasons why they're not spaying or neutering, such as cost, cultural issues or myths about the effects of spay/neuter. Then, address those issues directly with fliers, through letters to the editor of your local newspaper, and even with bumper stickers on your car.

Once you've educated people about the benefits of spay/neuter and convinced them that it helps reduce the number of homeless animals, provide them with ways to find free or low-cost spay/neuter services. SPAY/USA ([1-800-248-SPAY](tel:1-800-248-SPAY) or spayusa.org) and neuterspay.org are great sources of information. To promote spay/neuter of community cats, go to alleycat.org to order educational door hangers.



11 I worry that if I help a homeless dog or cat, I'll fall in love and end up keeping him or her.

Well, that wouldn't be so bad, would it? But if you can't adopt and you want to help without getting attached, don't worry. You can still save lives by volunteering as an advocate. Volunteers are always needed for outreach efforts, such as teaching children humane ways, advocating on behalf of pit-bull-type dogs and speaking up to protect community cats. To become a Best Friends outreach volunteer, visit volunteer.bestfriends.org.



12 I only have an hour here and there to spare, so would it even make sense for me to try to volunteer with a local rescue group?

Absolutely! Many organizations have volunteering opportunities for the time-impaired. You could join a team to help feed community cats (which can take as little as 15 minutes once a week) or walk dogs at a shelter for an hour or two. Even answering hotline calls and emails can be a huge help, and (bonus!) you can do that in your pajamas.

SEE FOR YOURSELF HOW GOOD IT FEELS TO GIVE A DESERVING ANIMAL A SECOND CHANCE.

13 I'm an avid rescuer and I want to save more homeless pets, but my time and resources are pretty limited. Do you have any suggestions?

Sleep less? (Kidding!) There are lots of ways to make your efforts more efficient and effective so that you can help more animals without putting in more time. You can learn how from the experts by viewing Best Friends' free webinars. For a full schedule, visit nmhpnetwork.bestfriends.org/Webinars.aspx. If you want more intensive instruction, Best Friends offers workshops at the Sanctuary that are as enlightening as they are rejuvenating. For more information, go to events.bestfriends.org/upcoming/sanctuary. 🐾

