

# **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

## **Welcome**

Volunteering at the La Crescent Animal Rescue (LAR) is a rewarding and meaningful way to contribute to the care of homeless animals. There are several ways to be involved that require different time commitments and focus. We look forward to working with you to find a volunteer role or opportunity that matches your skills, interests, and schedule. This handbook is to familiarize you with our policies and guidelines. Welcome to the LAR team!

## **Mission**

It is the mission of the LAR to:

- Provide a safe shelter for stray/abandoned/surrendered/abused cats and dogs.
- Promote the placement of animals through adoption and foster-care homes.
- Reunite lost animals with their owners.

## **History**

Established in 2005, La Crescent Animal Rescue is an all-volunteer, non-profit 501(c) 3 organization dedicated to the protection and welfare of animals in Houston County Minnesota. Our shelter depends solely on the support and generosity of our volunteers and community to help give animals the best care and love they so richly deserve.

## **Volunteer Protocols/Procedures**

The La Crescent Animal Rescue relies on its volunteers to be dependable and effective during their volunteer hours by following established protocols and procedures. This allows our shelter program to operate smoothly and with the maximum benefit to the dogs, cats and volunteers. All shelter volunteers are required to abide by the policies detailed in our Volunteer Handbook.

Written protocols and procedures for role specific duties can be found in the Protocol/Procedures binder behind the front desk.

## **Age to Volunteer and Training**

We require volunteers to complete and sign a volunteer application. Each volunteer will be required to participate in a minimum of three (3) role-specific trainings. The minimum age to volunteer is 14 years old. Volunteers under the age of 18 must be accompanied by their parent/guardian/family member who has also completed a volunteer application and completed training.

## **Documentation of Volunteer Hours**

Volunteer hours are entered on a sign-in sheet at the front desk. Time should be rounded to the nearest quarter hour. There are several reasons that we need to record volunteer hours:

- It allows us to apply for certain local and national grants
- It allows us to recognize volunteer services.
- It allows us to provide documentation to the City of La Crescent.

## **Personal Hygiene**

Many diseases are transmitted from human to human or animal to animal. In addition, some diseases are transmitted from animal to human. Therefore, good personal hygiene is necessary. The following recommendations are for your protection:

- Wear old, clean clothes and closed-toe shoes when performing chores at the shelter.
- Wear protective clothing and gloves when handling sick animals or possible contaminated material, such as when working in the ISO room.
- Keep your hands away from your mouth, nose, eyes, genitalia, and wounds after handling animals, their urine, or feces.
- Always wash your hands with soap and hot water before you start your volunteering shift, after handling animals, after using the restroom, and before handling food.

## **Dress Code at the Shelter**

We recommend you wear non-skid, rubber-soled shoes with a back or heel strap. For reasons of safety, the following are not recommended to be worn:

- Slip-on shoes or open toed shoes
- Shorts and/or Tank tops when working with the cats
- Hoop earrings and long necklaces can be caught by an animal's paw causing damage or injury to you or the dogs/cats that you are handling.

## **Formal Complaints and Grievances**

*If you feel comfortable, please speak to the person personally prior to coming to the committee.* If you have any formal complaints or grievances with another volunteer, or the LAR rules and regulations, please speak to either a volunteer coordinator or the chairperson of said committee in which you are experiencing a problem. Please be prepared to give written documentation of your complaint or grievance.

## **Discipline**

All volunteers are to meet the shelter standards for work performance and personal conduct set forth in the volunteer code of conduct as well as in the written policies and procedures. Written policies and procedures are located in cabinets behind the front desk. When a volunteer fails to conform to proper standards, that person should receive notification and have the opportunity to correct the problem. Consistent standards must apply to all volunteers. Appropriate corrective action will be taken in accordance with the steps listed below.

**All steps in the disciplinary process are to be documented in an objective, specific, detailed, and chronological manner. Documentation is maintained in the disciplinary file kept by the LAR board.**

Verbal Warning – The volunteer committee Chairperson or a board member will discuss the problem and steps needed for improvement. The conversation will be documented for future reference if needed.

Written Warning - A board representative will complete a written report and meet with the volunteer and volunteer committee chairperson to describe the problem and the action needed to correct the problem. Depending on the situation, a volunteer can receive multiple written warnings for the same offense but this is up to the discretion of the board.

Suspension or Termination - After a serious infraction, or if a problem has not been corrected after both oral and written warnings, the volunteer may be suspended or terminated from any further volunteer duties. The decision of termination or suspension comes at the discretion of the board.

Certain situations warrant an immediate indefinite suspension until next steps are determined by the designated committee and/or board. The following situations will be cause for immediate suspension:

- Drug or alcohol use on premises
- Abusive, destructive, or violent behavior on the premises
- Physical abuse to animals
- Causing physical harm to others
- Unauthorized use of shelter property
- Theft
- Falsifying records

This list is not exhaustive. Other situations may warrant an immediate suspension. During the suspension, the volunteer will meet with the volunteer committee chairperson and board members to discuss the situation and determine the appropriate course of action.

### **Harassment**

LAR strives to maintain a workplace that fosters mutual respect and promotes harmonious, productive working relationships. Our organization believes that discrimination or harassment in any form constitutes misconduct that seriously undermines the integrity of the volunteer relationship.

LAR prohibits discrimination or harassment that is sexual, racial, or religious in nature or is related to gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability. The policy applies to all volunteers throughout the organization.

Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, or other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a harassing nature. There are other forms of harassment such as race, age, ancestry, religion, national origin, and disabilities. Harassment also includes threats of violence or physical harm, real or implied, which may lead to an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

If a volunteer feels that he/she has been subjected to any form of harassment or discrimination, that person should firmly and clearly tell the person engaging in the harassing or discriminatory conduct that it is unwelcome, offensive, and should stop at once. The volunteer should report the incident to a volunteer committee member or a member of the board of directors.

LAR will investigate the matter in a confidential manner; however, complete confidentiality may not be possible. If the allegation is substantiated the offender will be disciplined. This may include termination.

Retaliation against any volunteer for filing a harassment complaint or participating in an investigation is strictly prohibited. Retaliation can result in suspension of volunteering.

### **Emergency Protocol**

In case of **fire**:

- Call 911 immediately.
- Use a fire extinguisher if the size of the fire warrants.
- Exit through the nearest available exit, closing doors and windows behind you.
- Leave all animals in their assigned area. NO animals are to be removed from the building except by emergency personnel.
- When emergency personnel have arrived, notify them of the location of animals inside the building.

In case of **severe weather warning or tornado**:

- Move immediately to an interior room or bathroom until the danger has passed.
- Leave all animals in their cages. NO animals are to be removed from the building or cages during a weather emergency
- When emergency personnel have arrived, notify them of the location of animals inside the building.

In case of **suspicious activity**:

- Call 911 immediately.
- Do not enter (or leave) the building until emergency personnel have arrive

In case of **injury or medical emergency on premise** (including dog bite, cat bite or any injury requiring visit to medical services):

A dog or cat bite is considered significant when a puncture wound is left on the skin. Many puncture wounds require medical attention and possible antibiotics. Severe/deep scratches may also need medical evaluation and antibiotics.

- If the injury is life threatening or there is a medical emergency, call 911 immediately.
- Report any injuries, no matter how small, to the volunteer committee or board of directors within 24 hours of incident
- Fill out an incident report form that is located in filing cabinet behind office desk
- If the injury involves an animal, please inform the cat or dog coordinator so appropriate action can be taken. Some incidents may require animal isolation
- The volunteer committee and board will review all injuries and medical emergencies to determine if any further action or investigation is needed. Once reviewed, the reports will be kept on file by the board.

### **Volunteer Code of Conduct**

The La Crescent Animal Rescue (LAR) exists to provide a clean and safe environment for stray and surrendered animals, and to place animals in well-matched permanent and/or foster homes. LAR relies on volunteers to make these goals happen. Every volunteer is a representative of LAR. We need to be conscious of how our conduct influences animal well-being, and the community's perception of LAR. The following Code of Conduct is to be followed by all who volunteer at LAR, in any and every capacity, both inside and outside the facility.

1. **Everyone is entitled to respect.** Our volunteers have many different personalities and ideas. LAR volunteers should respect shelter operations and policies, as well as other volunteers. Treat others the way you want to be treated. This includes not only interactions within the shelter but also platforms such as email, social media and interaction out in the community.
2. **Confidentiality is crucial.** Work seen and heard at the shelter does not need to be shared outside LAR. This includes talking about illnesses, plans, or ideas being considered. We are not trying to hide anything; we are simply operating professionally.
3. **Professionalism matters.** Those who come to LAR looking for a new pet companion should be treated as customers and everyone should be welcomed.
4. **Be reliable.** If you volunteer for a specific task on a specific day, please honor your commitment. If unable to perform your duties as planned, please find someone to take your place, as far in advance as possible. If you are unable to find a substitute, please email or call the volunteers who coordinate or also perform this task. Animals need to be fed, watered, dosed with medications, and/or walked more than once a day. Failure to appear when scheduled for any duty harms LAR: the animals and the organization.
5. **Leave medical decisions to veterinary professionals.** Volunteers must follow veterinary recommendations and prescriptions made for LAR animals. Volunteers may not dose animals with prescription medications not prescribed for the animal or make their own judgments about

what prescription medication an animal should receive. Volunteers should not skip a dose of prescribed medication unless the animal appears to be doing worse on the medication. In this situation, the prescribing vet should be contacted promptly to discuss the problem. Volunteers who medicate animals must note every dose on the medical chart for that animal, with the volunteer's initials and date. This requirement applies for both prescription and non-prescription medications. Volunteers who have not been trained in medication administration should not be giving medications to any animals.

**6. Medical records stay at LAR.** Every animal's full medical history must be documented in that animal's record. Original charts of medications with dates and volunteer initials, rabies tags, and all records of medical care by vets or at LAR must be retained in the animal's record. Animal records must be retained in the LAR building; copies should be made if records must be sent to a vet.

**7. Confine activities to your areas of responsibility.** Each volunteer will be trained for specific tasks. Volunteers must refrain from activities that are outside their individual areas of training and qualification. Failure to follow this precaution puts animals and potentially volunteers at risk. Examples include (but are not limited to): Entering the Isolation Room (ISO) when not trained in LAR's ISO practices, handling cats and/or dogs when you have not been trained to do so

**8. Limit broad communications on our platforms to need-to-know information.** Please limit your broad email distributions to medical or other need-to-know information or inquiries. Please refrain from social commentary on our communication platforms so important information is not missed.

**9. Keep the shelter secure.** Volunteers should keep doors locked when they are in the building outside of open hours. You are not to open the door for a visitor outside of open hours. Volunteers MUST re-lock ALL doors when entering and leaving the building. Windows may not be left open when there are no volunteers in the building. Volunteers should not answer the phone unless they have been trained to do so.

**In All You Do, Please Remember:** We are all here for the animals. They are the reason LAR exists. Keep their needs at the top of your mind in every decision you make, every email you send, and every action you take. Calibrate every choice by whether it truly provides *care for the animals*.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge I have received the La Crescent Animal Rescue volunteer handbook, and I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained in this handbook and any revisions made to it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/guardian signature (if under 18)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date