McKinze Hefner

Volunteer Project

Tulsa SPCA Center

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Background Information

 The Tulsa SPCA has various activities such as adoption days and outings to expose the animals to potential forever homes. My job as a student volunteer would include socializing the animals by taking them for walks/runs, playing with them, teaching them proper behavior, and allowing interaction with other animals and humans. By exposing them to these various elements, the animals can be better suited for adoption. The motto of the Tulsa SPCA is “We speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.” With this purpose in mind, the organization strives to be a voice for animals in order to better their lives and their goal is to place these animals into loving forever homes with responsible, caring owners.

Evidence of Needs

 There is an obvious problem regarding the care of animals and the rights of animals to live happy lives. The Tulsa SPCA investigates cases of animal abuse and can remove animals if the safety of the creature is thought to be at risk. This ensures the safety of the animals and gives them the opportunity to thrive in environments suitable for the care of the animals.

Objectives

My objective for this volunteer opportunity is to develop a greater sense of awareness regarding the rights of animals. I volunteered with the Tulsa SPCA when I was a freshman and I felt like I was actually doing something meaningful. The animals at the shelter are so lonely and are extremely appreciative of the time and attention we give to them. Some animals became so attached to me that I had to walk them repeatedly or they would cry every time I walked by their cage. These animals need people that care for them and can show them the love and affection they need and deserve. No animal deserves to live a life of fear and neglect. Volunteers are required to attend an orientation day on September 26 from 10:00 A.M. until around 2:00 P.M. in order for us to become more aware of the procedures and policies of the center and how to properly handle and care for the animals.

Academic and Career Background

 I have experience with the organization previously and was greatly affected by my time spent there. The animals are a great stress reliever and help me focus on things other than myself and what is going on with me. While this does not directly fit in with my degree as a Liberal Arts major with an emphasis in English, it does affect my writing. Volunteering with these animals helps to clear my mind of distraction, enabling me to calm down and focus on ideas for my creative writing courses and ideas for essays in my other courses, as well. With my involvement in the organization, I will be bettering the lives of animals but they will also be helping me. It has been said that animals are the best therapists and through my work with the Tulsa SPCA, I hope to aid in the adoption of the animals and learn to calm my own mind and de-stress from my weeks.

Objectives

 My anticipated outcome for my volunteer service with the shelter is to simply aid the staff as much as possible and continue to assist the animals in socialization and giving them as much one-on-one attention as I possibly can. Through my involvement with the shelter, the quality of life for the animals will greatly improve. They will become more socialized with people, giving the animals a greater chance of being adopted, which is the main goal.

My Involvement

 Community service is important because it provides a sense of unity. A good, secure community is one that assists and helps others in need and provides a helping hand to those who need it most. For my volunteer project, I provided a helping hand to those who cannot even speak for themselves. To me, this community service meant that I was helping beings that were utterly helpless. Many of the animals came from homes that were not suitable for animals, other came from abusive situations, and some were simply abandoned. With the attention I gave the animals, I was able to help them trust humans again and become appropriately social so the animals would have a better chance of adoption.

 I did not make accomplishments on my own; that is not how the organization works. Through the time I spent with the animals, along with the time others spent with the animals, many were adopted over the past few months. I was present for three cat adoptions and while I was sad to see such precious animals leave, I was happy to know they were prepared for good homes. I spent much of my time with the cats and some of them came from neglectful homes, so they were very standoffish. It was difficult to approach some of them because they were not used to human contact; there were even others that came from abusive homes and did not trust humans at all. There were also some other cats that were simply abandoned and they were the ones who wanted the most attention. There was one cat in particular who liked to lie in my lap while I was in a ricking chair reading a book. While I hesitate to say that I made a huge difference in the life of any of the cats, I think I provided them with some hours of love and affection.

 I also spent some time with the dogs, but I mainly focused on the smaller dogs; I get really nervous around some bigger dogs so I did not think it would be a good idea for me to work with the bigger breeds. The dogs came from similar situations like the cats, but the ones who came from really bad cases of abuse or neglect were put in special cages behind the main building and we were not allowed to interact with them for safety reasons. However, there were also dogs that only wanted to be loved and patted. There was a smaller dog that I tried to walk one day and she kept getting under my feet and stopping in front of me. When I sat down beside her, she scooted closer to me, put her head on my knee, and started whimpering, so I sat with her for almost half an hour. It really struck me how lonely the animals in the shelter are despite the amazing care they receive from staff and volunteers.

 I also aided in cleaning the cat room, which includes disinfecting cages, changing litter boxes, cleaning litter boxes, changing food, changing water, sweeping the room, mopping the room, disinfecting shelves, and cleaning the outside portion of the cat area. I also helped do some laundry because many of the animals have blankets, and the cat room uses many towels since cats love to be warm and snuggly.

 My service was beneficial to the organization because I aided in socializing the animals so they have a better chance of adoption. I helped the animals by showing them much needed love and affection, and in regards to the community at large, the entire SPCA center aids in the betterment of animals. This provides loving, loyal pets to families and also gives stressed students like myself a place to go to play with sweet animals and feel like we are doing something worthwhile.

 I also volunteered on campus for about three hours. A class of Cherokee Promise students put together a fundraiser on campus. We played Cherokee stickball and Cherokee marbles on campus and taught others how to play the games. Baked goods and drinks were sold and donations were taken. The purpose of this was to raise money for at least one rick of firewood to donate to a Cherokee elder who burns wood in the winter for warmth.

 I volunteer with the SPCA center in September 26 for 4.5 hours with an additional 1:20 drive time. On that day, we had volunteer initiations where we were given information about the shelter and I participated in a dog handling class that is required for volunteers to work with the canines. I volunteered again on October 3 for 2.5 hours and an additional 1:20 drive time; I worked with both canines and felines that day. I volunteered with the SPCA center on October 10 for 2 hours and an additional 1:20 drive time; I aided in cleaning the cat room and socializing the cats. I went to the shelter again on October 31 for 3 hours and an additional 1:20 drive time; I helped clean the cat room and socialize the cats again. On November 10, I volunteered on campus with the Cherokee Promise students for 3 hours, and I played stickball and taught others how to play, as well. On November 20, I volunteered at the SPCA center again for 3 hours and an additional 1:40 drive time. This drive time was longer because I got caught in traffic on the way home since I left the shelter during rush hour. On that day, I spent my time socializing the cats and I also spoke with two families looking to adopt a cat.

 I did not report to an individual while volunteering at the SPCA center. There is a computer at the front office that volunteers sign in to. It records the member’s name, time of sign in, and intended activities while volunteering. We also use the same program to sign out when we leave. While my volunteer service did not relate to my academic background in particular, I do have a background of working with animals. I volunteered at the Tulsa SPCA shelter my freshman year and I also volunteered at the Claremore Animal Shelter during my sophomore year. I have a personal interest in working with animals because I believe no living thing should be mistreated, and cruel individuals are constantly taking advantage of innocent animals.

I most enjoyed working with the animals in the shelter and watching how they became more comfortable with me as I continued my service. I was fortunate enough to not encounter any problems at the shelter. The staff and other volunteers are very easy to work with, making my service extremely enjoyable. Presently, I do not have any recommendations for the SPCA center because I feel as if they are doing the best they can with the amount of funds they receive, which is minimal. In regards to my opinion of community service, my time volunteering with the shelter has reaffirmed my belief that community service does not have to stop at two-legged beings; love and help should be extended to all creatures.