

Tales for Tails

Tales for Tails is an NEAHS program that promotes literacy, community service, and animal well-being. Volunteers can schedule times to come to the shelter and read to the animals (cats or dogs) to practice their reading skills and to help socialize the animals. Calm and positive interactions with people other than staff will reduce the stress of animals in the shelter and prepare them better for their future adopters' homes.

[Click here](#) for more information so that you will know what to expect when participating in the program.

Volunteer Guidelines

- Volunteers should be between the ages of 6 and 15 years old and, thus, must be accompanied by an adult who remains in the building and who signs the volunteer waiver form that will be provided.
- Volunteers must wear close-toed shoes while in the shelter.
- All reading sessions must be scheduled in advance and may last anywhere from 30 to 90 minutes. To schedule a session, volunteers can call or email the shelter.
- For those reading for more than 30 minutes, different animals should be read to, with no more than 20 minutes spent with any one animal.
- Cats can be read to on any day, between the hours of 11 am and 4 pm. Dogs can be read to on weekday afternoons (1-2 and 2:30-4 pm) on weekdays only.
- Individual or small groups of volunteers are welcome. Small groups should consist of no more than 6 readers and must be accompanied by at least 1 adult.
- Volunteers can choose reading material from the shelter "library," or they can bring their own materials.
- While reading, volunteers must not lean on the kennels or stick their fingers through the kennel doors. Physical contact with any animal must be supervised by a staff member. If treats are given, volunteers should toss them into the kennel rather than allowing an animal to take the treat from their hand.

Volunteer Steps

1. Call or email Darla to schedule a reading session. Please schedule your session at least 24 hours ahead of your desired time.
2. After arriving at the shelter at the appointed time, sign in on the volunteer log. The adult accompanying the volunteer should sign the provided waiver at this time.
3. On the first visit, meet with a staff member who will explain how the program works and what the guidelines are. That staff member will also educate you about the shelter rules, what commandments volunteers must keep, how to interpret animal behavior, and what gifts they'll receive as their participation in the program grows. Staff will then show you where the supplies are.
4. On all visits, retrieve your nametag/badge, your reading material (if you didn't bring your own), and something to sit on (cushion or folding chair).
5. Proceed to the area you are reading in (with staff assistance if this is your first visit).
6. Choose an animal to read to and situate yourself in front of their kennel. If you're reading to a dog, sit "sideways" outside of their kennel so that you're not facing them head-on.

7. Read to one animal for 20 minutes. After that time period, if you'd like to continue reading, choose another animal.
8. Follow the volunteer guidelines and Hooch's Commandments at all times.
9. Get a staff member if you notice any stress signals being expressed by the animal you're reading to.
10. After you're finished reading, return your materials to the area you got them from, and sign out on the volunteer log.

Captain Hooch's Commandments

All Tales for Tails volunteers must always follow Captain Hooch's Commandments.

- I. Remain calm and quiet
- II. Ignore jumping and barking
- III. Never put fingers through a kennel door
- IV. Watch for stress signals
- V. Tell staff if you need anything

Volunteer Incentives

Volunteers who regularly participate in the program will receive rewards based on the amount of time spent reading.

- Every reader gets NEAHS stickers on their first visit.
- 4 hours of reading earns them a bookmark.
- 8 hours earns a permanent cadet badge.
- 12 hours earns a treat pouch.
- 16 hours earns a NEAHS notepad.
- 20 hours earns a NEAHS water bottle.
- 24 hours earns a Captain Hooch t-shirt.