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**Ambassador Training Packet
Updated 2023**

**Welcome**

Thank you for becoming an Ambassador for the Connecticut Humane Society. We know that your poise, communication skills, and enthusiasm for the pets will make you an excellent representative! While it is impossible to give you every detail about the many aspects of the organization, this guide will assist you with the most common areas of inquiry.

**Objective**

Trained Ambassadors represent CHS in the community. They share information with the community about the organization’s history and future direction, programs and services, animal care, and raise awareness for animal welfare issues.

**Mission & Vision Statement**

"The Connecticut Humane Society is the leading resource in the state for companion animal welfare, enriching the lives of families and communities through adoption services, medical care, education, and prevention of cruelty."We envision a state where each companion animal finds a permanent, compassionate home,
where communities are enriched by the special bond between people and animals and
where cruelty no longer exists.

**Core Values**

**STEWARDSHIP:** We manage and allocate all our resources to remain steadfast to our mission, to achieve the greatest good, and to ensure the future of our organization.

**QUALITY CARE:**  Our actions and decisions are based on providing the best medical and shelter care and services to the most animals.  We respect the life of each individual animal, while focusing on the welfare of staff, community, and the animal population as a whole.
 **COMMUNITY-FOCUSED:** We enrich the Connecticut community we serve by placing safe, healthy companion animals in responsible, loving homes.
 **RESPECT:** We treat all persons with dignity and respect in a non-judgmental manner.  The general public, our staff members, and volunteers are all viewed as our partners in improving animal welfare and in fulfilling our Mission.

**General CHS Information**

* CHS is a private, 501c3 non-profit organization, founded in 1881 by Gertrude O. Lewis, an 18-year-old Hartford High School senior.
* CHS is not a state agency, nor is it affiliated with any other animal welfare groups including national groups like the HSUS and ASPCA.
* Original clients: abused and orphaned children, working farm animals, and companion animals (pets). In 1965, the state founded the Department of Children & Families (DCF), at which time the CHS mission shifted to care for companion animals
* In 2022, CHS had 1859 adoptions, with a placement/release rate of 95.4%.
* Cats made up 59% of adoptions, dogs 24% and small animals 17%.
* CHS has a $9M budget, 79 full-time staff members and over 433 volunteers. CHS does not euthanize for time limits, space, breed, or age and has one of the lowest euthanasia rates in the nation.
* All locations are open from 12:00 PM – 4:30 PM daily. Westport currently requires appointments due to staffing shortages.

**CHS Today**

* Statewide pet care provided through 3 locations: Newington, Waterford and Westport.
* The average stay of most pets from intake to adoption is 25 days or less. Animals are adopted quickly (within 48 hours). CHS makes new pets available for adoption daily. The best way to see the available pets is to visit the adoption section of the website regularly or visit the adoption centers in person.
* Core Services: Pet wellness and preventative care, surrender, adoptions, training/behavioral services, low-fee veterinary care, a pet food pantry, and humane education. CHS recently added crisis fostering to its services.
* Over the last several years, CHS has increased its focus on adoptions **plus keeping pets in homes**, providing resources for successful placement including access to low-fee veterinary care, a pet food pantry, humane education and crisis foster support.
* In the fall of 2023, CHS will break ground on a new animal resource center which will include adoption services, onsite veterinary care for shelter pets, a low-fee veterinary clinic for community pets, and onsite pet food pantry and education programs. Learn more at CThumane.org/Wilton
* CHS partners with in-state and out-of-state rescues as space and staffing permit.

**Donor/Support** [CThumane.org/donate](http://www.cthumane.org/donate)

* 100% of every donation is spent on the pets.
* Funding comes from private donations from individuals, foundations and corporations, fees for services, and from the interest on endowment investments. CHS does not receive federal, state, or municipal tax dollars.
* CHS accepts donations of pet food and supplies; see CThumane.org/wishlist.
* Donors that are interested in conducting a fundraiser to benefit CHS can find information on the website: [CThumane.org/serviceprojects.](http://www.CThumane.org/serviceprojects)
* To leave a lasting legacy for the animals, consider leaving CHS in your will when planning your estate. More information can be found at [CThumane.org/donate.](http://www.cthumane.org/donate)

**Volunteer Program** CThumane.org/volunteer

* CHS has over 433 volunteers between the three locations.
* Volunteers assist the organization in almost every program area; needs vary by location and change frequently.
* Volunteers are selected through an application and interview process.
* Some volunteers work on-site, while others foster pets in their own home.
* On-site volunteers must be over 18, and a six-month commitment is required.
* Fostering is a great opportunity for families with children that want to get involved.
* Students who need to earn service hours for a school program may conduct a service project (such as a fundraiser or collection drive).
* Service project ideas can be found at [CThumane.org/serviceprojects](http://www.cthumane.org/serviceprojects).

**Animal Care at CHS**

* Pets receive a medical examination, necessary vaccines, microchips, flea/tick preventatives and diagnostic testing and treatment for common illnesses.
* Dogs and cats are spayed or neutered at 2-3 months of age. Spaying or neutering at this age is safe and is endorsed by the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) because it promotes faster healing and has fewer complications.
* Pets receive a temperament evaluation to determine behavioral issues, as well as basic training and behavior modification for behavior problems.
* Pets receive daily enrichment. Dogs are walked a minimum of twice a day. Cats receive daily cuddling and playtime. Pets are bathed or groomed if needed.
* CHS does not provide 24-hour medical care for shelter pets. Pets in need of overnight care are placed in 24-hour veterinary clinics until the pet is well enough to return.

**Dog Training/Behavioral Services:**  CThumane.org/dog training

* Dogs receive basic obedience training during their stay from volunteer trainers and staff.
* Behavior modification techniques are used to correct problems (leash-pulling, jumping, and reactivity.)
* Foster homes are used if additional training or socialization is needed.
* Dog training classes are offered for the public at the Newington location by an outside training company. Classes are open to the public. Puppies adopted from CHS receive a discounted class fee.

**Pet Intake**

* CHS is a managed intake organization. This means we do not to accept every pet that comes through our doors, instead we take in pets that we can treat medically, as we have space and staff available, and which are good candidates for our adoption program. In general, CHS accepts pets of all ages, breeds and breed mixes, including dogs, cats, and small companion animals like guinea pigs, rabbits, hamsters, ferrets and birds.
* CHS does not accept wildlife. The DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection) maintains a list of wildlife rehabilitators.
* By law CHS cannot take in found/stray dogs. These animals must be brought to animal control and placed on a 7-day stray hold before they can be accepted into an adoption program.
* CHS does not accept feral cats into the adoption program or offer Trap Neuter Release services. Our focus is on putting pets in homes, and then keeping them there.
* Intake decisions are based on a phone interview and in-person evaluation. Surrender appointments are recommended. However, CHS can accept a limited amount of walk-in surrenders. An intake fee of $80 is requested for private surrenders to defray the costs of caring for the animal; this sometimes is waived if it is a financial burden.
* CHS accepts pets with health and/or behavioral issues that can be rehabilitated through wellness programs and safely placed in homes. CHS does not accept pets with a bite history or a history of severe aggression. Pets that cannot be adopted immediately may be placed in foster home.
* Statistically, the most common reason for pet surrender is “moving and can’t keep.”
* An owner-requested euthanasia and cremation program is available.

**Adoption:** CThumane.org/adopt

**Available Pets**

* Pets cleared for adoption will appear on the “Adopt” section of the website at [CThumane.org/adopt.](http://www.CThumane.org/adopt) Once a pet is adopted they are removed from the “Available Pets” page.
* Each available pet has been vaccinated, spayed/neutered, microchipped, and given flea/tick preventatives.

**Fees**

* Adoption fees vary based on the age and type of the animal, covering only a portion of the cost of caring for the pets during their stay.
* The adoption fee for all puppies under six months old includes six weeks of basic obedience classes post adoption.

**Adoption Process**

* Adoptive families fill out an adoption questionnaire and participate in a detailed interview with an adoption counselor in order to ensure a lifetime match.
* An adoption may be refused if the adopter does not meet the criteria for a particular pet.
* Proof of landlord permission to own a pet is required.
* Known medical or behavioral issues are disclosed to the adopter.
* After a family has met with a pet and has decided to adopt him or her, the pet can be put on hold on a case-by-case basis for up to 24 hours.
* Adoptions can typically be processed on the same day the adopter meets the pets.
* Adopters must bring a photo ID and either cash or credit to complete the transaction.
* Customer service staff place follow-up calls to adopters to make sure the pet is settling in and to answer questions that have arisen.
* Free training advice and in-person consultations are available for adopters. Information about the Behavior Consultation Program is available on the website.

**Low-Fee Community Veterinary Service (Fox Memorial Clinic)** CThumane.org/Fox

* Opened in 1999.
* Core services: vaccination clinics & general wellness program. Fox is not an emergency care center and cannot accommodate walk-ins. Due to high-demand, there is often a 6 to 8 week wait for a wellness exam.
* Cash or Credit Card payment is due when services are rendered. Fees are an average of 25-30% less than those at for-profit veterinary hospitals.
* A special assistance fund may discount or waive payments for pet owners on a case-by-case basis.
* The clinic is open M-F, 9-5. Appointments are required. Folks can call CHS for scheduling.

**Pet Food Pantry** CThumane.org/Pet-Food-Pantry-Program

* Food is collected by individuals and groups and then distributed from each of CHS’s locations.
* Pre Approval is required.
* The application is available for download on the website or can be picked up in person.

**Humane Education** [CThumane.org](http://www.cthumane.org)/Education-and-Outreach

* Educational programs serve youth groups (classrooms, camps, libraries, etc.) Three patch programs are offered to Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops: Pet Pals, Furry Friends, and Animal Advocates.
* Behind-the-scenes tours are offered at each location. Request a tour at CThumane.org/tour
* Free virtual PETtalk webinars are offered monthly.
* More info about outreach programs, pet tips and organization information are on the website.

**Animal Welfare Issues:** CThumane.org/legislative

* CHS opposes puppy mills due to health and care risks to the pets.
* CHS is advocating for updated standards for bricks and mortar shelters statewide.

**Being the Face of CT Humane:**

* Every person you meet is a potential adopter, donor, or volunteer. Your interactions will build relationships that result in long-term support for the pets. Follow the Core Values and you’ll do great!
* Smile. Say hello. Make eye-contact. Standing is better than sitting. Use open-ended questions to create good conversation. When in doubt ask about their pets at home or their first pet.
* Ask the owner before giving the dog a treat.
* ***Know what you know, and know what you don’t know.*** Refrain from giving out veterinary advice or behavioral training to the general public. If you don’t know the answer, you can look up the answer on the website or give them Barb’s business card for follow up.

**Donations:** CThumane.org/donate

* A donation box will be in the supply duffle. There is a QR code on the header for easy onsite giving. Put it back in the duffle after the event. You do *not* need to give this to the front desk or manager.
* When accepting donations: Say “Thank you!” Receipts can be sent if the donor provides their name/address and the amount given. Small cash donations do not need to be recorded. Politely ask donors to bring donations of goods to one of the three shelters.
* While the focus of events/programs is primarily for raising community awareness, it is also important to let people know that CHS needs the community’s financial support.

**Problem Solving:**

While most community members have happy stories to share about their experiences with CHS, on a rare occasion you may be approached by a disgruntled customer. Perhaps they attempted to surrender a pet and it did not meet CHS’s intake criteria, or they had a negative experience while visiting a CHS location. They may be argumentative, defiant, or in disagreement with CHS philosophies, in this instance:

* Give the community member your full attention.
* Listen and ask questions to gather information and identify issues.
* Repeat the problem so people know you are listening and understand the issue.
* Empathize and apologize even when it’s not your fault.
* Ask for their contact information so a CHS staff member can follow up if appropriate.

**Logistics**

***Ambassadors*** will be notified when a CHS representative is needed to attend an event. Ambassadors may attend events alone or accompanied by other Ambassadors or CHS Staff. Events may last an hour or two, or up to a full day. Some events cover multiple days. When necessary, events will be divided into multiple shifts of volunteers. Ambassadors may be required to assist with set-up and breakdown. This may include carrying and setting-up of a bin of materials, table, chairs, and pop-up tent. *Once you sign up for an appearance, make sure to mark the date and time on your calendar.*

**Event Details:**

A 10-14 days prior to your appearance, you will receive a detailed e-mail:

* Confirmation of the time and location of the event, parking info, and contact info.
* Staff will prepare a duffle bag of items needed for the event tabling, along with a folding table,
chairs and pop up tent. You will need to pick up/drop off the supplies back at the shelter.

**Prior to the Event:**

* Review the detailed event form. Note if you need additional driving directions.
* Make arrangements to pick up materials from CHS prior to the event if needed.
* Review the Ambassador packet, Frequently Asked Questions and current stats sheet.
* Getup to date by reviewing CHS’s social media, and reading recent newsletters.

**The Day of the Event:**

* Wear your volunteer uniform shirt and Ambassador name badge.
* Arrive at the event on-time. Allow time for set up and parking. This goes for shift changes as well.
* Bring your own refreshments if needed. If you are the only person staffing an event/program you must be at your booth for the entire shift and must not leave materials unattended.
* **Friends, Families and Pets:** Do not bring personal pets, family and friends along.
* Maintain control of your personal items and any supplies. CHS is not responsible for lost or stolen items during the course of public events.
* Do not leave until the next shift has arrived.
* Use the Event Engagement Reporting Form to track interactions with the public.
* Obtain receipts for any out-of-pocket expenses such as entry fees or parking. Expenses associated with the event/program will be covered, if requested. Food expenses will not be reimbursed.
* Clean up and appropriately close down the event.
* In case of an emergency, please contact your staff contact for the event/program.

**Following the Event:**

* Complete the Event Engagement Reporting Form and put in duffle.
* Return duffle bag (with donation box inside) back to CHS:
Newington, return tent, table and chairs to 2nd floor lobby off the elevator, put duffle in Barb’s office. Westport, return all to the cottage. If cottage is locked, return to staff in the shelter.

Waterford, return to staff in shelter.

* Submit receipts for reimbursement if necessary.

**Reminder: Keep Current**

Community members will expect you to share news about pets and programs. Please visit the website regularly and read the volunteer newsletter, Petcetera (the e-newsletter), PetLife (the printed newsletter), and the annual report. Follow CHS on social media.

One great spot to check out is playlist tab on the CHS Youtube site.

[https://www.youtube.com/@cthumanesociety/playlists](https://www.youtube.com/%40cthumanesociety/playlists)

(OR go to the CHS website, click on the YouTube icon, then click on playlists

It is full of training, enrichment and CHS info videos! A great resource to share at tablings.)

**Thank you!**

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**Summary:**

Thank you for being a representative for the animals and for raising awareness about the Connecticut Humane Society and the services that are offered to the community.