



Fostering: What's It All About?

In April 2000, my fiance and I responded to a request from the local humane society ([Western Pennsylvania Humane Society](#) in Pittsburgh, PA) for volunteers to foster dogs in their homes. After attending an orientation, we decided that this would be a great way for us to help dogs in need.

Our humane society tries to put dogs into foster homes after they have spent three or four weeks at the shelter without being adopted. This gives the dog a chance to recover from the stress of being kenneled, while providing space in the kennel for a new dog. Additionally, the foster volunteer has the opportunity to work with the dog to correct some of the behavior problems that may have led to the dog's surrender.

It seems that medium-to-large, adolescent, untrained dogs are prime candidates for foster homes. They may be overlooked at the shelter because they are too big, unruly, or ordinary-looking. They are past the adorable puppy stage, but still have plenty of puppy energy that needs an outlet. Given enough time, and some basic training, these dogs that might otherwise be euthanized for lack of space now have a chance at finding permanent, loving homes.

Aside from regular day-to-day care (feeding, grooming, exercise), the responsibilities of a foster home may include basic training (housetraining, walking on leash, sit, down); behavior modification (to correct problems such as jumping, mouthing, barking, destructive chewing, dashing through doors); socialization and temperament evaluation (to determine whether the dog is good with different types of people and other animals); medical care (dispensing medication, taking the dog to vet appointments), and of course plenty of playtime and snuggling.

After the dog has been nursed back to health, evaluated, and trained, the search begins for a permanent home. Possible methods for finding an adoptive home include hanging posters at the shelter, workplace, and pet supply stores; attending adoption events; putting an ad in the newspaper; posting the dog's picture on the internet; and simply spreading the word about the dog to anyone who will listen. Prospective adopters will have the opportunity to come and meet the dog in a home setting. All adoptions will take place at the shelter. (If you are placing dogs directly from your home, a kennel license may be required before dogs can legally be transferred. This is usually dependent on the number of dogs transferred per year. Check with your local bureau of dog law enforcement.)

Fostering a dog may seem like a formidable task, but it is a very tangible way to make a difference. Everyone benefits: The foster volunteer gets to spend time with a special dog, and the kennel gains space for a new dog. The foster dog gets a break from kennel life and a second chance at becoming a cherished pet. The new owners get a dog that is better

adapted to home life, and therefore has a better chance of remaining in the new home permanently.

Source: <http://www.fosterdogs.com/index.html>