

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Tom Thibodeau, Volunteer

TO: Jess Townsend, Director of Operations

DATE July 17, 2020

Introduction

In January 2020, I began recognizing a problem in the greater Portland area: the local stray animal population was steadily increasing. At the time, I was encountering abandoned animals in several different areas in and around Portland. On Wharf Street alone, I discovered a new stray every week, and believed it would be necessary to address the problem head-on.

Background

In February 2020, I began working as a volunteer with the Animal Refuge League of Greater Portland. The ARLGP estimated a 40% increase in the number of stray animals within the area between 2019 and 2020. In order to properly rehome strays, the ARLGP needed volunteers to help with retrieval and rehabilitation efforts.

The ARLGP was/is also looking for volunteers to become dog and cat fosters, as some animals do not acclimate well to a kennel environment. My home in Westbrook, Maine can comfortably accommodate one foster dog or two foster cats at once. I am currently paying for supplies, food, and other items from my personal budget without assistance. However, my foster contributions will qualify as tax write-offs, as I am working with a 501c3 status non-profit (ARLGP).

Work Completed

I have dedicated approximately 10 hours per week as a volunteer with the ARLGP, primarily with rescue and rehabilitation efforts for upwards of 30 strays (dogs and cats) thus far. During a typical shift as a volunteer, I am briefed by Canine Manager, Kathleen Fobear and Feline Manager, Molly Draper. During the briefing, both managers inform volunteers of the last known location of strays in the area. Once briefed, I and another volunteer drive to the various locations to search for strays. When a stray is located, we attempt to coax it toward us, using food. If successful, we leash the animal and bring it to ARLGP headquarters. Upon arrival, the animal receives a medical examination to determine what attention it may need, whether it is malnourished, etc. When required, volunteers assist with stabilization and medical/nutrition assistance. Once the animal has been examined, I assist with transferring it to its own space in the kennel, where it will be given the necessary food, water, and medical attention.

Work in Progress

In May 2020, I decided I had gained an ample amount of experience as a volunteer, and started to evaluate next steps. Due to the increasing number of strays arriving at ARLGP, I chose to sign up as a foster. In order to safely and effectively prepare my home for the arrival of foster pets, I started making several modifications. Thus far, I have dedicated my spare bedroom as an area for fostering, rehabilitation, dog/cat birthing, and veterinarian home visits. By June 25th, I had outfitted my spare bedroom with a variety of equipment, including extra blankets, towels, one large and one small animal crate, a makeshift examination table, several cat and dog toys, gauze pads, and other similar items.

Work to be Completed

Keep records of all relevant expenses as I continue my work as a foster. Doing so will allow me to write off anything that qualifies for reimbursement. I do not anticipate any problems completing this. Record-keeping will be an ongoing process with no definitive completion date.

Inquiries to local veterinarians regarding discounted services for foster animals. I will start by checking with the veterinarian ARLGP utilizes. If I am unable to utilize their services at a discount, I will conduct a search for a different veterinarian. It is possible that vets may not provide discounted veterinarian services unless I have established 501c3 status. However, I believe ARLGP can help as an advocate in the event a vet is not able to assist. Goal completion date: August 2020.

Network with fellow animal fosters, which I can accomplish via social media, phone calls, and in-person networking at ARLGP events and meetings. Networking will help me to learn more quickly, and creates an opportunity to rely on others for assistance when needed, and vice versa. Fosters are generally accessible and willing to help/receive help. I do not anticipate any problems completing this. Goal completion date: August 2020.

Continue home modifications as I refine my techniques and gain more experience. Additionally, I will be fencing off a 1,000 square foot area on my one-acre property to give foster dogs a space to roam freely. The fence will be built out of discarded pallets, as this option is sturdy and mostly free of cost. It may be a challenge to locate the number of pallets needed. In addition, the number of additional modifications I can make to my home will be limited by availability of funds. However, I can mitigate issues by setting a realistic goal date and by searching for deals/freebies. Additionally, local manufacturing and packaging businesses are likely to have a surplus of pallets. Goal completion date for all home modifications: January 2021.

Conclusion and Recommendations

I am currently on schedule and am aware of the potential challenges I may encounter. With continued support from ARLGP, their network of fellow nonprofits, other fosters, and veterinarians, I am confident I will meet my goals within the allotted timeframe. When home modifications are completed, I will be able to house more animals. For the moment, I recommend that I take only one dog or two cats at one time. I also will not be able to foster pregnant animals until January 2021. I will reach out, should I need information or assistance getting established.