

## Volunteering with Pixie's Pen Pals

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### **About the Program**

Through a partnership with the Virginia Department of Corrections, FETCH A Cure's Pixie's Pen Pals pairs inmates at Virginia correctional centers with homeless dogs from Virginia shelters.

With guidance and instruction from professional dog trainers, the incarcerated handlers work to socialize and train the dogs, preparing them for adoption while providing around-the-clock care.

The Pen Pals program not only reduces overcrowding and euthanasia in Virginia's shelters, but also promotes the rehabilitation of incarcerated men and women and minimizes recidivism by providing skills, education and mental health benefits.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

#### **Taxi & Transport**

- ◆ Drive dogs from point A to point B (FETCH office, shelter, prison, foster home, etc.)
- ◆ Vet Visits (typically pick up/drop off at the prison)
- ◆ Supplies (deliver crates, large bags of food, etc. to prisons)
- ◆ Requires use of your own vehicle
- ◆ Round trips are often 2 hours+
- ◆ Often requires weekday availability

#### **Event Handler**

- ◆ Handle a Pen Pals dog around a community event, adoption fair, meet and greet, etc.
- ◆ Assist staff in overseeing the dog's care (water, shade breaks, etc.)
- ◆ Must be confident controlling a dog on-leash
- ◆ Requires a lot of person to person interaction (showing the dog off, safely introducing to people, explaining the program, etc.)

#### **Home Visits**

- ◆ Assess the home of a potential adopter (in person or via FaceTime, Zoom, etc.)
- ◆ Helps staff ensure a safe environment
- ◆ Helps the adopter prepare the space for a particular pup

## Foster Care

### → Short Term Foster

- ◆ 1-3 nights in your home
- ◆ Purpose... to accommodate an extended medical visit, adoption fair, meet and greet, or simply give the dog a break from the prison
  - *Typically Friday afternoon - Monday morning*
  - *Typically pick up/drop off your foster at the FETCH office*
  - *Typically accompany your foster to their scheduled appointment or event, but not required*

### → Intake & Evaluation Foster **\*\*\*This role is essential!\*\*\***

- ◆ 1 week in your home *immediately after the dog is pulled from the shelter*
- ◆ Purpose... to help staff assess whether a dog can enter the program!
  - Our shelter partners will do their best to identify which dogs might be good candidates for the prison environment. This Evaluation Week is a “safety net.”
  - After Evaluation Week, if the dog is proven *not* fit to live in a prison environment, the shelter will take the dog back into their care. *They are receiving important information about the dog, and the dog gets a nice break from the kennel!*
- ◆ Goal... to get a feel for the dog's reality
  - Would they be distressed in a prison environment?
  - Do they have physical needs that would make housing difficult?
- ◆ Safely introduce a dog to various environments and stimuli, recognize/assess response
- ◆ Keep detailed logs about dog's behavior and temperament
- ◆ Work closely with Pen Pals staff
  - Expect frequent communication with Head Trainer and program coordinator
  - Receive full support and aid in evaluations

### → Long Term Foster

- ◆ Until adoption or other placement... This could mean weeks or months
- ◆ Purpose...to support Pen Pals dogs who cannot remain in the prison environment
  - Continue socialization and training
  - Full support of program staff
- ◆ These cases are rare! We hope our new Evaluation Week will identify issues before the dog is placed in a prison

\*We provide all supplies necessary for the care of your foster dog. This includes food, bowls, treats, leash, collar, tags, crate, bedding, heartworm/flea prevention, medications, and toys.

\*We require some training to serve as a Taxi, Event Handler, or Foster. For details, visit our website at [www.fetchacure.org](http://www.fetchacure.org) or contact Allison.

## Pixie's Pen Pals: Volunteer Training Seminars

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<p><b><u>Seminar 1 - Transportation and Public Settings</u></b>  <b><u>Wednesday 4/12/23, 6pm, 1 Hour</u></b></p>	
<p><i>Who must attend?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Taxi &amp; Transport Volunteers</li> <li>→ Event Handler Volunteers</li> <li>→ Short Term Fosters</li> <li>→ Intake Evaluation Fosters</li> </ul>	<p>What will we cover?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety in the car</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Handling around unfamiliar people</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Handling around unfamiliar animals</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Seminar 2 - Caring for a Foster at Home</u></b>  <b><u>Date TBD - 2 Hour</u></b></p>	
<p><i>Who must attend?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Short Term Fosters</li> <li>→ Intake Evaluation Fosters</li> </ul>	<p>What will we cover?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety-proofing the space</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Introducing household pets and people</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Maintaining routines and manners</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Seminar 3 - Evaluation</u></b>  <b><u>Date TBD - 2 Hour</u></b></p>	
<p><i>Who must attend?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Intake Evaluation Fosters</li> </ul>	<p>What will we cover?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Recognizing and categorizing environmental stimuli and behavioral responses</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Common medical red flags</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Common behavioral red flags</li> <li><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Etc.</li> </ul>

- Sessions will be held intermittently throughout the year. Exact locations and times will be announced at least 1 month in advance.
- Please RSVP via the FETCH a Cure website event calendar. *If you cannot attend a group training that is required for your desired role, please contact Allison.*
- These training seminars are free to attend, but only for Pen Pals volunteers! We ask that all who attend please commit to volunteering with Pen Pals *at least* once in the calendar year.