



ARF Pet Hug Pack (therapy animal team): Requirements to Join, Getting Started, Staying "Active"

Pet Guardians (Handlers): must be ARF Volunteers in good standing (go to http://www.arf.net/Help/volunteer_form.html) to reserve a seat at an ARF Volunteer orientation. Must have been the pet candidate's guardian and primary handler for at least six months.

- Teams (handlers and pets) must work (make a visit, support an onsite program) at least once per month to stay in active and approved status. If inactive status is appropriate, the vest must be returned. To become active again, team must pass re-evaluation by team coordinator.
- Handlers are expected to attend quarterly Pet Hug Pack team meetings.
- Volunteers may join the team as a handler without their own pet dog (this option is not available for cats or other species) is completion of ARF Dog Socializing training and coaching through level II (Campus Canine), plus 10 hours of independent experience at that job. Once completed, the handler must establish a relationship with the team animal(s) that they would work with. That may be a one hour handling session or as many as needed until handler and animal guardian/owner are comfortable that the visit 'team' has connected and understand each other's queues. The specific plan would be worked out by the handler and the therapy pet's guardian. Once ready to work, the handler would schedule monthly commitment (minimum).

Dogs

- Pre-requisite: must hold current (earned within prior 24 months) Canine Good Citizen certificate (CGC certification from AKC). Must also pass assessment conducted by ARF Therapy Animal Team Coordinator. This assessment includes animal's tolerance for noise, unusual human gaits, various human genders and sizes, heavy handling, new (to the dog) people, dogs, and cats. Dog and handler must demonstrate good communication/response connection in basic obedience behaviors. Components of this evaluation will identify any special handling considerations to ensure pet's success if approved for the team.
- No puppies, adults only. At least one year old. Adult in some breeds could mean 2 years of age.
- No aggression issues of any kind toward people or other dogs. If dog has a history of aggression/reactivity toward dogs or people he/she is not suitable for ARF's therapy pet program.
- Calm and gentle temperaments needed. Dogs that are easily excitable, high energy, and hard for the handler to settle are not appropriate for this team.
- Aloof and independent need not apply. Dog must enjoy tons of affection and be able to politely engage people to him or her.
- Dogs that have body sensitivity issues or are invasive, rough, and unaware of their own bodies are not suitable. 'Jumpers' are not suitable for this team.
- In keeping with ARF's mission and belief that overpopulation is a key factor in our homeless animal problem, ARF Therapy Animal dogs (and cats) must be spayed or neutered.
- ARF Therapy Animal dogs must maintain current vaccinations (Rabies, DHLPP, Bordetella). A Vaccination Certificate (updated annually) must be provided to ARF for file (and/or distribution to facilities as required by their Health & Safety requirements).

ARF Pet Hug Team – Requirements to Join – Getting Started – Staying Active

Cats

- Must be harness and leash trained.
- No kittens, adults only. Adult in some breeds could mean 2 years of age.
- Must pass assessment conducted by Therapy Animal Team coordinator. This assessment includes animal's tolerance for noise, unusual human gaits, human genders and sizes, heavy handling, new (to the cat) people, dogs, and cats. Identifies special handling considerations to ensure pet's success if approved for the team.
- No aggression response issues of any kind toward people. If cat has a history of aggression/reactivity toward dogs or people he/she is not suitable for a therapy animal.
- Calm and gentle temperaments needed. Cats that are easily excitable, high energy, and hard for the handler to settle are not appropriate.
- Aloof and independent need not apply. Cat must enjoy tons of affection and be able to politely engage people to him or her.
- Cats with body sensitivity issues or are invasive/rough in their interactions with people -- not suitable.
- In keeping with ARF's mission and belief that overpopulation is a key factor in our homeless animal problem, ARF Therapy Animal cats must be spayed or neutered.
- ARF Therapy Animal cats must maintain current vaccinations (Rabies, FVRCP, FeLV (recommended)). A Vaccination Certificate must be provided to ARF for file (and/or distribution to facilities as required by their Health & Safety requirements).

Rabbits and Guinea Pigs

- Must be certified Delta Society pet partners.

Upon qualifying to join the team:

- Facility roster/schedule and Visit guidelines will be provided to guardian/handler. Further training will be provided if team elects to participate in children's programs (e.g., Reading).
- Animal guardians will be provided a therapy animal vest (or scarf) their pet is required to wear when 'working' as a ARF Therapy Animal. If therapy team (handler/pet) become inactive in the program, the vest must be returned to ARF.
- If trading cards are requested, guardian will pay \$75 toward the cost of each trading 500-card order.
- Guardians will identify which facility(s) they will be visiting. At each facility, new team member will be assigned a visit coach for 'on-the-job training' and facility orientation. New team guardians should visit the facility the first time without their pet, to shadow their coach and become familiar with the facility layout, rules, visit protocols. Exception: participants in ARF on-site programs only.
- Depending upon facility selected, more applications and health forms may be required for the facility prior to first visit.
- First visit to any facility with team pet should be limited to a 15-minute walk through the facility and partner visit with coach and maximum of two patients/residents. Watch the animal closely for signs of stress. At first sign, leave the facility. Allow pet to become familiar and comfortable with the setting(s) and visit activity at their own pace.

Please feel free to call me to discuss this further or to set up an appointment for a team assessment.

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