

## No Job Too Small for APL Volunteers

**Volunteers of all ages can make a difference in the lives of shelter animals.**

*By: Angie Tonucci*

Springfield, Ill. – The Springfield Animal Protective League uses volunteers for a variety of tasks like walking dogs, socializing cats, cleaning, running off-site adoption events and fundraisers, foster parenting, and much more. The organization, founded in 1956, is always in need of more dedicated people to help out at the shelter and at events around town.

APL is a private, non-profit animal shelter that houses 20-40 dogs and 150-200 cats. In addition to the animals temporarily living in the shelter buildings, foster homes create space for many more, especially kittens and puppies. The APL Spay/Neuter Clinic offers low-cost spays and neuters for shelter and public cats and dogs. Up to 15 volunteers are needed in the shelter and clinic on a daily basis to help with cleaning and laundry as well as interacting with the animals. Weekend adoption events require 30-50 volunteers to transport animals and interact with

potential adopters, and some larger fundraisers may require over 150 volunteers in a single weekend.



*Foster dog Wrigley at the 2015 St. Patrick's Day Parade.*

APL Volunteers are made up of children, teens, and adults from many different backgrounds. The Junior Volunteer Program allows teens to volunteer without their parents during the summers, but kids and teens under 16 may volunteer with a parent or guardian any day of the year.

13-year-old Mikayla Oberreiter has been volunteering with her mom, Marsha, since 2012. "I love all animals," says Mikayla. "But my favorite

thing to do is walk dogs!" Mikayla, who is a very enthusiastic and helpful volunteer, says she wants to be a veterinarian when she grows up. APL gives her the opportunity to gain valuable animal-handling experience while offering her a chance to help her community.

Marsha Oberreiter does a lot to help with fundraisers and adoption events. She not only enjoys giving back to the community, but also spending time with Mikayla doing something they both love. "Mikayla and I both have a lot of energy," says Marsha with a chuckle. "We like having a positive outlet for it." *(Continued on page 2.)*



*Junior Volunteer Mikayla Oberreiter cleans a rabbit cage.*

Senior volunteers Rose Russell and Pat Roller have been volunteering with APL for over fifteen years. They can be found most weekends at PetSmart cat adoptions. Rose admits that being around shelter animals can be emotionally taxing. "It's hard sometimes to see them in cages," she says about the cats. "But that's why I do what I do – to find them forever homes."



*Long-time volunteer Rose Russell with Misty at PetSmart.*

Pat has always been drawn to cats, and because she can't have her own in her apartment, she gets her "kitty fix" at the off-site adoptions. "I'm so sad if I have to miss a weekend," she says. "I think we need them as much as they need us."

Deanna Muzzy agrees that volunteering is just as rewarding for the volunteers as it is for the animals. When she's feeling down, she heads straight to APL, where a wagging tale and few slobbery kisses pick her right back up.

Deanna loves dogs and has been working with hard-to-place APL dogs for five years. She has a special place in her heart for Pit Bulls, who often have a difficult time finding a home simply because of their breed's bad (and totally false) reputation. "I can't even count how many pits come through here that don't have a mean bone in their bodies!" she says. "All any dog needs is patience, love, and maybe a few treats from time to time."



*APL Volunteer Deanna Muzzy at an adoption event with Cole.*

While APL cats and dogs are certainly very well cared for by the amazing and compassionate staff and volunteers, shelter life does not compare to a permanent home. APL volunteers come from all walks of life, but one thing they have in common is their desire to see their beloved cats and dogs find a forever family of their own. "It's the greatest feeling," says Rose. "The joy that comes with putting a kitty in a carrier and watching her leave with her new family – nothing compares to that."

For more information about volunteer opportunities, adoptable cats and dogs, or making a donation, visit APL's website at [www.apl-shelter.org](http://www.apl-shelter.org)

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