

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **WANTED** ★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**LIFESAVERS**

Wherever you are, whatever your skills, regardless of how much or how little time you have, you can help Best Friends, our partners and others save lives, in your own neighborhood or beyond. Here's how.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ BY MARYANN HAMMERS ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**W**hen Takiko May and John Ewing planned their honeymoon, they decided against sipping mai-tais in Maui, beachcombing in Bora Bora, or kicking back in the Caribbean. Instead, they celebrated their marriage by walking dogs in Kanab, Utah, at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary.

“We had a wonderful time,” says Takiko, an internal medicine physician. And talk about a memorable souvenir — they came home with Lucy, a pit bull and Lab mix.

The couple so thoroughly enjoyed the experience that they repeated it for their recent sixth anniversary. After all, what’s more romantic than walking potbellied pigs, shoveling horse manure, cleaning bunny pens, cuddling old dogs and cooing over kittens? This time, they had their hearts stolen by Ethel, a sweet mutt who is now part of their family. “Despite the hard work, it was a wonderful vacation that made my heart and soul feel full,” Takiko says.

Volunteering at the Sanctuary has that kind of pull: Once volunteers realize how good it feels to help, how much an individual can accomplish, and how much the animals depend on them, they don’t want to stop.

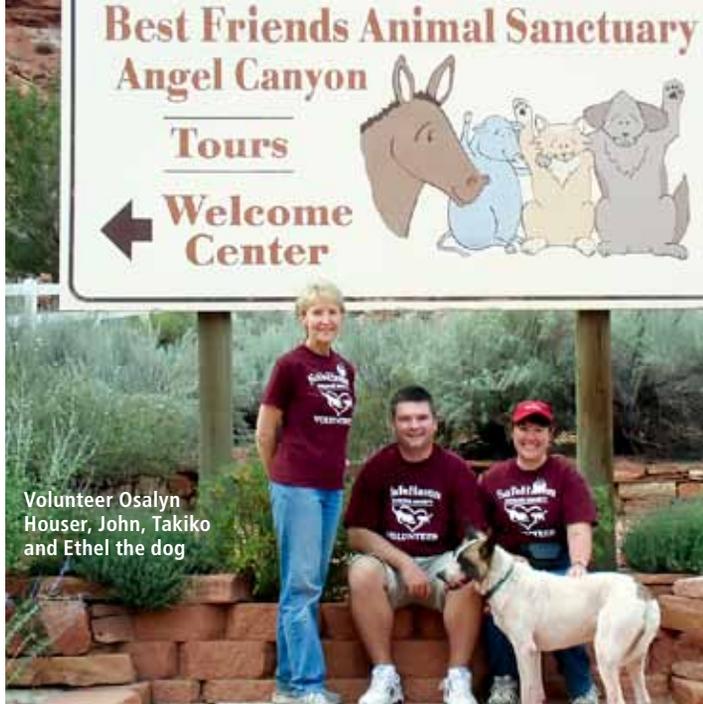
“It’s every animal lover’s dream to visit the Holy Grail of sanctuaries,” says Ida Schillaci-Noack of Burbank, California. “Volunteering with Best Friends fulfills a desire to be part of something bigger than yourself, to live a purposeful life. That [desire] doesn’t change when you go back home. The wheels in your head start spinning: ‘What more can I do?’”

The answer to that question: There’s no limit to what you can do. Whatever your talent, skill or passion, you can put it to work for homeless animals in your own community. Are you super-organized? Help plan an adoption event. A skilled wordsmith? Offer to write a grant proposal or marketing copy for an animal organization. Good at motivating groups of people? Consider a leadership role on a committee. Or, if you just want to be hands-on around animals, help is appreciated at adoption events, shelters and rescue groups.

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A side benefit: You’ll make new friends and meet like-minded people, says New Jersey resident Sheri Czar, who has volunteered for several Best Friends adoption events. “Best Friends staff and volunteers don’t let roadblocks get in their way. They do whatever it takes to help, and they do it all with fantastic attitudes,” she says. “Everyone jumps in together for the great cause. Who wouldn’t want to be a part of that?”

Here are some ideas for getting involved with volunteering through Best Friends.



Volunteer Osalyn Houser, John, Takiko and Ethel the dog



## Do good, and have a good time, at Best Friends events.

**BEST FRIENDS HOLDS EVENTS**, such as super adoptions and Strut Your Mutt, throughout the country. Such events help animals find homes, raise funds for spay/neuter and build community awareness. Oh, and they’re a lot of fun, too.

“I can’t wait for the next one,” Sheri says. She fondly remembers the Perfect Pairs adoption day held last June at Lord & Taylor stores. “There were a lot of smiling faces,” she says. “Having dogs in the Lord & Taylor shoe department is an unusual sight, so employees and shoppers came to check it out.”

In real life, Sheri is a full-time information technology manager and part-time yoga teacher, but for Best Friends she pitches in wherever she is needed — hanging signs, setting up tables, making sure animals have water and bedding, helping with registration, collecting donations. “[The work] is nonstop,” she says, “but knowing I am helping animals go home with a new family is all I need to keep going.”

**HOW TO HELP:** “Our biggest need is help with setup and tear-down,” says Best Friends–Utah volunteer coordinator Kristina Stromness. Or sign up to work on a committee, staff a booth, or care for cats and dogs at adoption events. If you have event-planning or management experience, you may be asked to chair a committee. In that role, you’ll be trained to manage a team of volunteers in charge of a specific responsibility (for example, publicity or entertainment).

**GET IN TOUCH:** Call (435) 644-2001, ext. 4119, email [volunteers@bestfriends.org](mailto:volunteers@bestfriends.org) or sign up online at [volunteer.bestfriends.org](http://volunteer.bestfriends.org). Find a list of upcoming events at [events.bestfriends.org](http://events.bestfriends.org).



## Crazy about cats? Passionate for pits? Mad at mills? You can initiate change.

**IF YOU'RE THE TYPE** who roots for the underdogs (or undercats) of the world, your heart no doubt breaks for stray felines, pit bull terriers and puppy mill dogs. Best Friends has three initiatives that focus on these groups of animals because they are the ones most at risk of entering and dying in shelters. Consider their plight:

- ★ Nearly three-fourths of cats who end up in shelters are euthanized.
- ★ Even though pit-bull-terrier-type dogs can make loving family pets, an inordinate number of them are killed in the nation's shelters.
- ★ Multitudes of adult dogs used as breeders live in squalid conditions as part of the puppy mill industry.

Through its initiatives, Best Friends works with local officials, rescue groups and municipal shelters to educate the public, oppose breed-discriminatory legislation, shut down puppy mills, implement trap/neuter/return programs, and transport and place rescued animals.

None of these goals, however, could be achieved without the work of local volunteers. "Our initiatives provide opportunities for people to create change in their own communities," says

Patty Hegwood, director of volunteer and visitor engagement for Best Friends.

Jayne Sage shows just how much can be accomplished at the grassroots level. When Jayne moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, 10 years ago, she and her partner, Alek DeWispeleare, discovered that their neighborhood — and in fact the whole city — was full of homeless cats. "At that time, our city shelter was killing 8,700 cats a year," Jayne says.

They began trapping and having the cats neutered and vaccinated, then releasing them. Now Jayne works closely with Best Friends' Albuquerque community cat program, New Mexico Animal Friends (a Best Friends No More Homeless Pets Network partner) and Street Cat Companions, a feral cat clinic, which spays or neuters more than 100 cats every day. Jayne also recruits and educates other community members.

"It is exhausting both physically and emotionally, but it is also rewarding because so many lives are saved," Jayne says. The results of the volunteers' efforts? In the last 12 months, there has been an 80-percent decrease in the killing of shelter cats, according to Jayne.

**HOW TO HELP:** Depending on which initiative you join, you may be tapped for tasks ranging from transporting animals to collecting blankets. You may be asked to help trap and bring cats to a spay/neuter clinic, write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper, canvass neighborhoods with flyers, become a foster parent, or speak out at a city council meeting.

If you have research or social media skills, put them to work as an advocate or research associate for a Best Friends initiative. "We need people to gather information and resources vital to a campaign's success," Patty says. "And through our volunteers' advocacy on behalf of animals, more and more people are reached, which means more animals are saved."

**GET IN TOUCH:** Call (435) 644-2001, ext. 4432, or email Lori Bernath at [lorib@bestfriends.org](mailto:lorib@bestfriends.org).

Learn more about the Best Friends initiatives, with tools and tips for getting involved, at [bestfriends.org/initiatives](http://bestfriends.org/initiatives)

## Help animals right in your own backyard.

IF YOU HAPPEN TO LIVE in or near Los Angeles, Salt Lake City or New York, Best Friends has satellite programs in these areas, so there's always something going on. You can choose from a multitude of ways to get involved: adoption events, public awareness campaigns, fundraisers and more. In Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, Best Friends operates spay/neuter clinics and adoption centers where volunteers are needed.

When the new Best Friends Pet Adoption and Spay/Neuter Center opened in Los Angeles (in the suburb of Mission Hills), Ida Schillaci-Noack jumped at the chance to volunteer. "I love working with dogs, walking and socializing them. But the cool thing about volunteering there is that I could end up doing something completely different and fun," says Ida, who works at Universal Studios when she's not volunteering for animals.

Variety is one reason that John Dwan, a student at the University of Utah, signed up as a Salt Lake City volunteer. John, who plans to study veterinary medicine upon graduation, has helped set up for events, walked and cared for dogs at the adop-

tion center, and answered questions from potential adopters. "The experiences I've had volunteering for Best Friends give me a firsthand look at the diverse needs of pets. I also really enjoy helping people find a special pet to help enrich their lives," John says.

**HOW TO HELP:** Whatever your skill or talent, it's sure to be needed, and there's plenty to do. "We need volunteers to assist with marketing, adoptions, maintenance and events, and also to work in the spay/neuter clinics," Patty says. "And the new L.A. center has several hundred animals who all need hands-on daily care."

**GET IN TOUCH:** In Los Angeles, call (818) 643-3989 or visit [bfla.bestfriends.org/volunteer](http://bfla.bestfriends.org/volunteer). In Salt Lake City, call (801) 432-2124 or visit [bestfriends.org/utah](http://bestfriends.org/utah). In New York, call (917) 733-3076 or visit [newyork.bestfriends.org](http://newyork.bestfriends.org).

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## Short on time? No problem. You can still be involved.

YOU READ ABOUT THE GOOD DEEDS of volunteers and feel inspired to help homeless pets. But your work and home schedules are already jam-packed and unpredictable, so you may feel that you simply can't commit. Well, can you give an occasional hour or two?

"We contact volunteers across the country as a need arises," Patty says. "It could be helping a local humane group with a pet food drive, a fundraising event, or an adoption event. We might need photographers or videographers. A local shelter may need painting. These short-term commitments work well for people who have a lot going on in their daily lives."

When it gets right down to it, volunteering just means sharing talent and time toward a cause that you believe in wholeheartedly. And as Patty says, "I believe we have just begun to tap into the wealth of knowledge and expertise our volunteers have to

offer. Their contribution is so vital to bringing about a time when there are No More Homeless Pets."

**HOW TO HELP:** Regardless of where you live in the U.S., reach out if you are available to volunteer. You'll be contacted if an organization in your area needs help. "We would love a little bit of your time," Patty says. "We are especially looking to build a database of professionals with particular skills, from architects to photographers to graphic designers to people with marketing and public relations expertise."

**GET IN TOUCH:** Call (435) 644-2001, ext. 4432, or email [Lori.Bernath@lorib@bestfriends.org](mailto:Lori.Bernath@lorib@bestfriends.org). 🐾

Best Friends' No More Homeless Pets Network partners can also use your enthusiasm and skills. Go to [nmhpnetwork.bestfriends.org](http://nmhpnetwork.bestfriends.org) to find a partner organization in your area — and help them save more lives by volunteering.