

Cat Fosters Needed

Since Pet Haven of Minnesota doesn't have a shelter, we rely on a net work of volunteer foster parents to care for our rescued cats until they find a forever home. Foster parents have the opportunity to get to know each cat and help match it with a permanent home, as well as enjoy a furry friend on a daily basis. It's a great option whether you just aren't sure you can commit to a pet of your own, or if you are fostering in addition to other pets in the household.

“Fostering cats has been one of the most rewarding things I have done. I knew it was the right thing to do the first time I saw a scared, thin set of eyes and whiskers timidly peek out from the cat carrier, only to transform into a swirling fur ball with a roaring purr at the experience of pets and scratches, possibly for the first time in the little creature's life. So many of the cats we've had have been desperate for a little love and attention, sometimes begging constantly for pets until after a few days, we see them start to calm with the knowledge that love and affection won't be denied them -- as if they finally get their 'fill' and can relax. After that, our biggest concern was letting them go, especially for our young child. Turns out she had to tell US that we can't go around adopting every foster that comes through the door. We did indeed adopt the very first foster cat we had, but after that we are content with the knowledge that for every cat that leaves us to a good permanent home, another in dire need can then enter our home.” – Ande, cat foster parent



Many people worry that they will become too attached to their foster friend and that it will be too painful to give them up when an adoptive home is found. It's a legitimate concern, but if you focus on the positive aspects of fostering, you will find it's easier than you thought to watch your fuzzy friend leave in the arms of a happy new home.

Consider these additional points:

- You can save a cat's life - our cats come from a variety of situations and often Pet Haven in their last hope.
- You will make a difference in the life of every cat you foster.
- You will have an educational and rewarding experience filled with fun and love.
- You will see the joy in adopter's faces when your fostered cat has found a forever home.
- That empty place in your home, after an adoption, will be filled by another purring face who needs love and attention during its waiting period.
- You may even find your perfect cat - many of our foster parents 'fail' at fostering and become adopters!

Providing a foster home to homeless cats literally saves lives!

“My sons and I have been fostering for Pet Haven for about 13 years now. We love that its something we can all be involved in, and that we can make a difference, one cat at a time.

“There is great satisfaction when you have met the new adopters and know that the cat is getting just the right home for its personality and needs. Some people say “I don't know how you can foster, I would want to keep them all”, but in truth, we know we can't keep them all. By fostering, we know we can touch the lives of many, many cats and help them find the loving home they deserve.

“On the down side, people think that kittens and “bottle babies” would be the most fun to care for, and they are, in fact, the biggest heartache. Orphaned kittens can have a wide array of health issues, and sadly, many don't even survive their first 6 weeks. Those cases are heart-wrenching and yet, we know we did all we could for them in the time that they had.” – Kim, cat foster parent

Details about Fostering:

Responsibilities of a foster parent

All cats are vet checked and screened for health before being placed in a foster home. Your first foster cat will probably come from a current foster home, so that we can match the cat's personality and needs to your household situation. Some cats transition easily and others require some time to adjust to a new situation. Our cat coordinator will help you decide when your foster cat is ready to come to our adoption events. At these events, you will be your cat's advocate, helping to match your foster cat to what a potential adopter might be looking for. Our cat coordinator and other experienced fosters will assist you with this process until you feel confident.



Managing Expectations

We need foster homes with some cat experience (not necessarily expertise). It helps to have a room (laundry room, bathroom, bedroom) where you can let the new cat feel safe and where it can get to know you in a manageable space. After a few days of getting acquainted and assessing that your foster cat is eating and using its litter box normally, you can expand their range of access to your home. If you have other pets at home, you will need to facilitate introductions and reassure each animal and keep them safe. We expect you to keep foster cats indoors. Plan to spend an hour or two each day with your foster cat... watching a movie and enjoying some lap time, brushing, playing, etc. Some cats are happy just to follow you around on your normal routine.

Pet Haven will assign you a foster mentor (an experienced foster volunteer) to help you with any adjustment concerns you may have with your new foster. Patience and consistency can be the key to helping a meeker cat settle in and feel at home. Most often, within a week or so the foster cat makes itself comfortable, like it's been living in your home its whole life.



Our adoption events take place on the first and third weekends of each month at Pet Co stores around the Twin Cities. If you cannot attend an adoption event, we can arrange for another volunteer to pick up and transport your cat for you. Having your foster cat at the adoption events is critical to increasing the odds of it finding a forever home.

The Necessities of Life

Pet Haven provides all vet care, food and litter. Many foster families supply some of these items themselves, which Pet Haven greatly appreciates. If you need an additional litter box or cat carrier for your foster cat, we can get one for you to use.

Current Pets and Fosters

We'll work with you and your pets to ensure peaceful co-existence. We'll ensure ahead of time that the foster cat is safe and suitable to be around other pets, and match foster homes accordingly. Care must be taken when introducing a foster cat to your current pets, and techniques will be discussed to ensure that all members of the furry family will get along.

Sometimes having other pets around is very helpful to a foster cat. If a cat has been well socialized with other dogs, cats or other small furrries, it may ensure that the cat has more options when it comes to a permanent home.

Foster Participation in Adoption

An experienced screener is assigned to each cat and will review adoption applications for (with) you. If the application passes the initial screening criteria, the application will be passed to you for your review. The level of your involvement in screening and in the adoption process is up to you. As a foster, if you choose to, you have a large say about the kind of home your foster cat may go to. If you are uncomfortable with a potential adopter but uncomfortable with rejecting the applicant, there will be another volunteer available to say 'no,' if this isn't the right match. Whatever volunteer is leading the adoption event can always be called upon to assist with an adoption or screening process.



Foster Commitment

If you decide to become a cat foster, we ask for a 6 months minimum commitment fostering 1 or more cats, with scheduled breaks between cats if you need it. If that commitment is too much for you, then respite fostering may be the right fit - respite fosters watch cats on weekends, holiday breaks, or for a week or more when the primary foster volunteer is away.

Failing at Fostering

Falling in love with your fostered cat is an obvious risk when you become a foster parent! For some it never happens, for others it happens with their first fosters, others their fifth. At Pet Haven, foster parents always have first right of adoption when a cat is in the process of finding a new home. Please let the cat coordinator know if you are considering a permanent arrangement with your foster cat.

"I love the experience, and always wish there was more time to help more cats.

“I adopted my Pet Haven cat 2 years ago in January. Shortly thereafter, I received my first foster cat. I and my husband were still looking for a 2nd cat for ourselves. We now had to be very particular about finding another one that loved all other cats, since we would be fostering.

“We finally found the guy we were looking for from another rescue group. They have adoptions only out of the foster homes, so we went to retrieve him. The foster family had multiple pets of their own, including dogs and cats, but were also fostering one cat at a time. They had two young girls, approx. 5 and 7 years old. Because I was new to fostering myself, I asked the foster why she had started doing this, and this was her response:

“I know we have plenty of pets of our own. However, I wanted to participate in a volunteer activity that would involve my children. I want them to see how they, even at their age, can make a personal difference. This is one of the few ways very young children can actively participate in an organization, but not have to be put out of their household routine’.” – Sue, cat foster parent

How to Become a Pet Haven Foster Parent

The first step is to send an email to Volunteer@PetHavenMN.org with a completed volunteer application which you can download from <http://www.pethavenmn.org/volunteer-membership.php>. Next, a trained volunteer will call and thoroughly cover what to expect with a new foster cat, how to introduce a foster cat to your current pets, answer any questions you may have, and offer ongoing support the entire time the cat is in your home.

“I have been fostering cats for Pet Haven for at least 25 years. I grew up on a farm in South Dakota and was always surrounded by cats. I used to dress the tough old tom cats in doll clothes and put them in my doll buggy so fostering cats is just an extension of that passion. No, I do not dress up the cats anymore except for the Christmas hat with antlers and a Christmas tie. And I do have the doll buggy and at times think how cute Bernie or one of the regulars would look. Simply put, I foster because I love cats and it makes me feel good to know that I can make a difference even if it is one cat at a time.” – Becky, cat foster parent

Fostering is an exciting and rewarding experience. If you have the time, space and love to foster a cat please contact us. **Please consider fostering a Pet Haven cat!**

