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Los Altos resident finds time to help animals at Humane Society

Written by Carol Crites

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Animal lover Jann Freeman of Los Altos poses with one of her many four-legged friends.

Los Altos resident Jann Freeman volunteers at the Humane Society of Silicon Valley's (HSSV) new facility in Milpitas.

Q: Why did you select the Humane Society as a volunteer organization, and for how long have you been a volunteer?

A: I love animals and found out about HSSV through a friend. I was convinced this was a caring and friendly non-profit organization. Once the animals are in the adoption habitats,

they are there until they are adopted – they are not euthanized. I have been a volunteer for about 20 happy months, and I always leave smiling.

Q: How often do you volunteer?

A: I enjoy volunteering once a week for a three-hour shift, but there are many ways to volunteer your time. The minimum commitment is eight hours per month.

Q: What tasks do you perform?

A: My title is "Dog Socializer." Through my training, I've progressed to the position of taking the dogs out of their rooms for exercise, socializing and grooming. I walk the dogs, reward calm behaviors, teach them "adoptable manners," and can't help but give them lots of hugs and love.

There are other ways to volunteer, such as participating in the foster-care program, becoming a Cat Socializer, working in the pet store, being a front-desk host or assisting with fundraisers and community programs.

Q: What skills or training are needed to do this job?

A: HSSV believes in investing in their volunteers and has developed an extensive and successful training program. You must be 18 years old and take the training classes for progressive responsibilities with the animals.

There are six levels of classes: Dog Volunteering 101- 601. These classes teach safety, animal learning, dog body language and communication, and handling skills. After completing each class, you are tested by a Dog Volunteer Mentor or staff member, and then are able to volunteer at that level.

You must complete certain amounts of volunteer time before taking the next class, but volunteers are able to stay at whatever level they are comfortable.

With progression into each level, a color-coded sticker is affixed to the volunteer badge to inform the staff of your level of competence.

Q: What is the most interesting or rewarding experience you have had while volunteering?

A: It is so rewarding to see that an animal you have worked with finds a caring home. That makes me feel fulfilled and happy. The rewards come every time I see the animals and their gratitude for the care and love that is given to them.

Q: How may others contact your organization?

A: Please come see the animals in their beautiful new facility in Milpitas at 901 Ames Ave. Call (408) 262-2133 to schedule a tour or to learn how you can become involved. Visit our Web

site at www.hssv.org. The first step in becoming a volunteer is to sign up for a “Paw’er Hour,” where you can learn more about getting involved with HSSV.

Carol Crites is a Los Altos resident and longtime volunteer. Send suggestions for this column to volunteerprofiles@latc.co