



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

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### **Pet Foster Families Needed: COVID-19 Increases Demand for Loving Homes**

**ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO** – COVID-19 has not only had an effect on human lives, but on our four-legged friends as well. At the St. Charles County Pet Adoption Center in St. Peters, making adjustments for the pandemic has resulted in some positive news.

“Because of COVID, we’re doing things differently,” explains Katie Willis, Director of the St. Charles County Department of Public Health’s Division of Humane Services. “We follow social distancing guidelines for the pets in our care, and that means we have less space in our kennels. Pet fostering is needed to accommodate that change, and we’ve found that expanding this program is creating better outcomes for pet adoptions.”

Willis said pet fostering allows staff to learn more about the needs and habits of animals up for adoption from their foster families. The foster parents can determine which pets are good with children, how they get along with other animals, if they are active or more reserved and more — all information that is beneficial to someone looking for a pet.

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated a growth in the facility’s already robust pet foster program, and St. Charles County seeks additional families interested in joining this valuable volunteer program. With an increased number of foster families, the Division of Humane Services can care for more animals than what otherwise would be limited by the capacity of the shelter.

“We have always had great volunteer support for our pet foster program,” Willis says, “but with families spending more time at home during COVID-19, there has been increased interest in helping animals. What’s great about fostering is that shy or scared dogs or cats, who typically may not thrive in the shelter environment, are able to spend quality time with their foster parents. In the quiet comfort of a family home, these animals can show off their special traits, learn social and behavioral clues and develop into the perfect pet for someone who may not have noticed them otherwise.”

The growth in the foster program has led to a few “failures” this year, and that thrills Humane Services staff. When a foster pet creates a special bond and the family chooses to adopt that dog or cat, it creates a scenario affectionately termed a Foster Fail. Foster families have been able spend more time interacting with their animals due to the pandemic, and more of them have chosen to welcome their foster pets into their forever homes. This has resulted in nearly 100 foster fails in St. Charles County this year.

**(MORE)**

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In a typical year, the division places approximately 700 animals with foster parents, but already this year, nearly 1,000 dogs, cats, birds, reptiles and livestock have spent time in foster homes thanks to more volunteers. Whether the animal needs time to grow or a few weeks to recover, foster parents prepare animals for their future adoptive families and offer some one-on-one TLC. St. Charles County helps those families by providing food and care supplies, veterinary treatment, most medications, 24-hour support and other items.

For more information on St. Charles County's Foster Pet Program, visit [sccmo.org/PetFoster](http://sccmo.org/PetFoster) or call 636-949-7387.

**2020 Foster Facts (as of 9/24/2020)**

St. Charles County Foster Families – 52

Animals in Foster Care – 161 (143 cats, 16 dogs, 2 other)

Animals at the Pet Adoption Center – 142 (105 cats, 30 dogs, 7 other)

Cost of care at the Pet Adoption Center – \$100/week per pet (includes food, water, grooming, medical supplies, facility operations, staff time, etc.)

Cost in foster care (paid by St. Charles County) – \$20/week per pet (includes medical supplies and veterinary care, most additional supplies are donated by community organizations)

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**About St. Charles County's Division of Humane Services**

*The Division of Humane Services protects and enhances the quality of life for St. Charles County residents and animals. To learn more about services provided, to view pets available for adoption or to inquire about volunteer or donation opportunities, please call 636-949-PETS (7387) or visit [sccmo.org/humane](http://sccmo.org/humane).*