

**THOMAS J. O'CONNOR**  
**ANIMAL CONTROL AND ADOPTION CENTER**  
**WELCOME SESSION – REMOTE PRESENTATION**





# ABOUT TJO

MISSION, FUNDING, SERVICES, SERVICE AREA



## WHO WE ARE



- MUNICIPALITY: City of Springfield
- TOWNS SERVED: Springfield, Chicopee, Holyoke
- PRIMARY GOAL: Public safety & the welfare of animals
- FUNDING SOURCES: The **Foundation for TJO Animals**, and the city of Springfield.



## TJO MISSION

### **To Provide:**

*Comprehensive animal control services and programs to our communities for the protection of animals, public health, safety, and the environment.*

*To responsibly place unclaimed animals and those relinquished to our care into new adoptive homes.*

## ONCE ANIMALS ENTER THE SHELTER, TJO:

- Keeps pets and families together
- Provides a safe haven for unwanted or homeless pets
- All animals that are healthy, **socialized** (definition next slide), and safe, will be placed for adoption
- Every homeless animal has safe shelter and care



# DEFINITION OF **SOCIALIZATION**

- Many think of socialization as bringing a pet to a park to be 'social.' Here is a description of socialization with a link to the full description and checklist from **the Pet Professional Guild**:

## YOUR PUPPY SOCIALIZATION CHECKLIST

SOCIALIZATION is the **process** of introducing a puppy to the world in a way that will help him be confident and unafraid of people, places and things that he will encounter throughout his life. The most critical socialization window occurs before the age of 12 weeks, and that window is considered to be closing by 5 months. Generally, the younger the puppy is when he is socialized, the more quickly and easily he gains confidence. Waiting too long can result in a need for the more difficult process of rehabilitation instead of socialization. Most aggression issues are simply a result of inefficient socialization. Socialization must be at the animal's pace, not forced to interact or participate if afraid but instead allowed to explore when ready. FULL CHECKLIST:

SOCIALIZATION DESCRIPTION AND CHECKLIST, PET PROFESSIONAL GUILD  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1LGldZiycoCWgvGvd19PWuk6PCco9coEh/view>

# THE FOUNDATION FOR TJO ANIMALS



The Foundation for TJO Animals is a nonprofit organization devoted to raising funds for:

- TJO Operations
- Veterinarian and Vet Tech salaries
- Extraordinary medical care

Foundation website: [www.tjofoundation.org](http://www.tjofoundation.org)

Interested in making a monetary donation or learning more about the foundation? Please follow this link for additional information.

## EXAMPLES OF MEDICAL CARE

There are so many examples of life saving, and life changing surgeries for countless animals that find their way into our care, including issues such as those listed below. Once animals have received vet care and are medically cleared, they can be evaluated for placement:

- Removal of obstructions
- Life saving amputations
- Eye surgeries
- Severe matting and skin damage
- Problematic pregnancies
- Painful dental issues and extractions





# **TYPES OF SHELTERS**



---

# LIMITED ADMISSION, OPEN ADMISSION, SANCTUARY, MUNICIPAL SHELTER

- Limited admission” shelters usually **accept only selected animals that they feel they maximize their organization’s unique skills** – some focus on only highly adoptable animals that they can rehome quickly, while others might concentrate on special needs animals that their local open admission shelter doesn’t have the resources to care for.
- “Open admission” typically means the shelter **takes in any animal in need**, including very elderly, ill, aggressive, or injured animals that may not be able to be rehomed. Frequently these are municipal animal control agencies, although many private organizations also choose not to turn away any animal in need.
- Sanctuary: While the term is often used flexibly, a true animal sanctuary is a **place where animals that are unlikely to find a forever home** live out their lives surrounded by comfort and all the care they require and desire. As a rule, sanctuaries do not adopt out animals.
- Most **municipalities** are required by law to have some form of “animal control”, typically a branch of government charged with enforcing animal laws. Most are legally required to take in all stray dogs regardless of their health, temperament or age (since rabies is commonly seen as the most pressing public health concern relating to companion animals), and many voluntarily expand their operations to accept surrendered pets, cats and other types of animals in need. TJO is a municipal shelter.



# **TJO SERVICES**

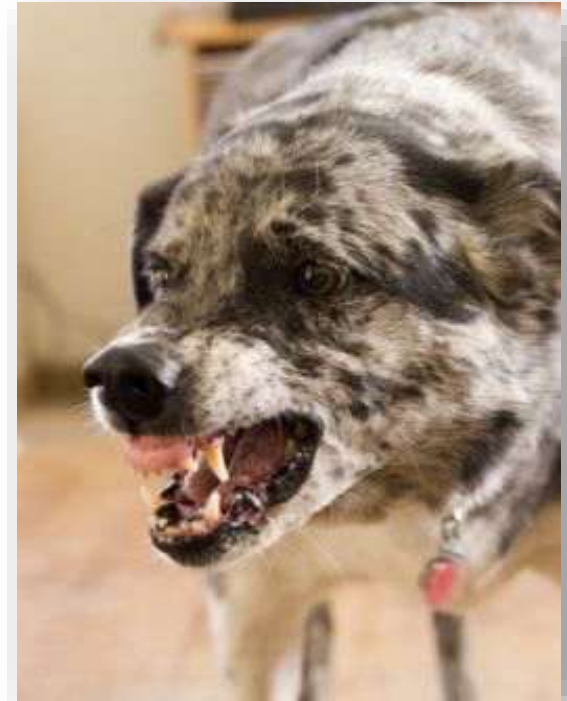
ANIMAL CONTROL, MEDICAL CARE, ADOPTION CENTER SERVICES



# ANIMAL CONTROL

## PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY:

- Emergency response: Sick and injured, dangerous/aggressive, 365 days a year, 24 hrs/day
- Routine service calls, 7 days a week, 7 am – 10 pm
- One overnight ACO
- Animal cruelty investigations
- 6,000+ calls annually



# ANIMAL CONTROL

- Certified by the Massachusetts Animal Control Officers Association
- Service population of 265,000
- Largest ACO department in Western MA

\*\*Animal Control does not respond to wildlife calls\*\*



## NOT JUST DOGS



# SAVING LIVES



# SAVING LIVES



#4 | 3 animals





# **ADOPTION CENTER**



# ADOPTION CENTER SERVICES

- Safe haven for 2,600 + / yr
- Lost / Stray / Abandoned
- 7 day stray hold for dogs. While not required by the state, we also do a stray hold for cats
- 10 – day rabies quarantine





# ANIMAL ADMISSIONS

- **Animal Control**
- **Animal Surrenders**
- **Returns**
- **Note About Owner Surrenders:**

As an animal control facility our focus is primarily displaced, stray, or injured animals. Because we are often at capacity to serve those animals, we are rarely able to take in owner surrenders and refer folks to Dakin Humane Society.
- **Note About Returns**

While we work hard to match animals with appropriate homes and ask that adopters give an animal a sufficient amount of time to decompress and acclimate to a new environment, sometimes it's in the best interest of all involved to take the animal back into shelter to ensure the best fit.

# PLACEMENT DECISIONS

- Owner history (when available)
- Health
- Daily behavior observations
- Safety / risk assessment  
(volunteers, staff, adopters, community)
- Ongoing behavior evaluations
- Collective decision-making



## SURRENDERS | ANIMALS IN NEED | SHAMING

- When it comes to owner surrenders and requests for help, owners can be reluctant to admit they are surrendering their pet. It can also be difficult to ask for help whatever the circumstances are. We are living in financially difficult times with many obstacles to keeping pets, including a shortage of vet care and qualified behavior consultants. Another contributing factor is the amount of **shaming** that takes place on social media. In recent years, comments and attacks on Facebook and other platforms have become vicious and are rarely based on a full appreciation of all the facts. **Shaming only hurts the animals, and serves no other purpose.** When owners are worried about asking for help for fear of nasty comments and public shaming, the animals may not get the help they need. For many cases, particularly cruelty cases, we are prohibited from making details public, but so much is done behind the scenes to help animals that come into to our care. Please refrain from making negative comments, and help us educate the community to prevent needless shaming so animals can get the help they need when owners are dealing with difficult circumstances.



## BEHAVIORAL TRENDS

- COVID / lack of appropriate socialization (\*remember the definition of socialization, tossing dogs into play groups is NOT proper socialization and can lead to more problems such as increased anxiety and aggression)
- Financial burdens
- Difficulty accessing qualified, positive reinforcement trainers/vet behaviorists (\*Google is *not* a good source of information when it comes to the pet industry - so much misinformation and dangerous information).
- Misinformation, and outdated information on the internet in this unregulated industry leads to difficulty properly helping pets when behavior issues arise.

---

# HUMANE EUTHANASIA

- Responsibility to ensure public safety
- Behavioral or temperamental characteristic that poses a health or safety risk
- Alleviate suffering from untreatable disease, injury or congenital condition





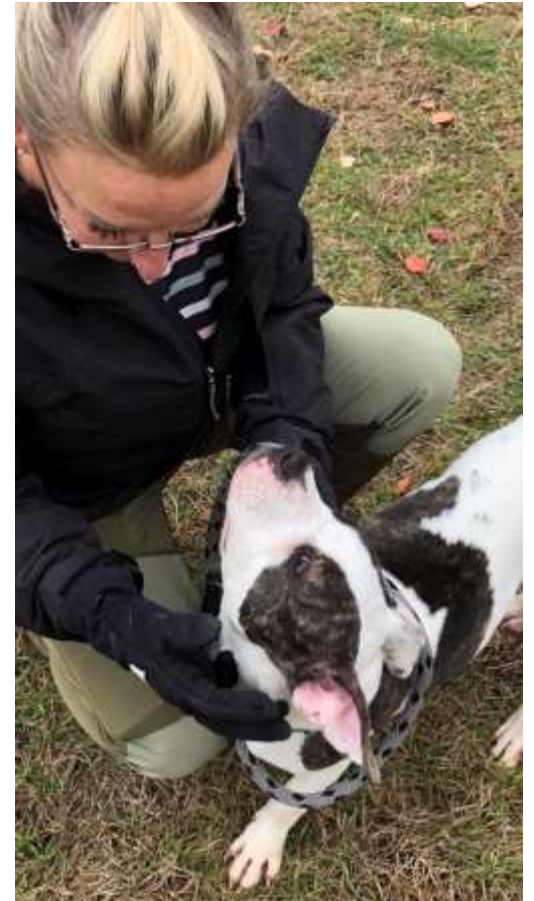
# **VOLUNTEERING AT TJO**

REQUIREMENTS, WHAT TO EXPECT, VARIOUS ROLES



# VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

- A desire to make a difference in the lives of animals and people.
- 18 + years of age.
- Volunteers in animal care positions must be able to read, write, hear, see, and have the ability to physically respond and move in order to keep themselves safe. Volunteers must be able to complete all aspects of the volunteer process **independently**.
- Specific cognitive and physical requirements to safely perform volunteer tasks.
- Work **independently** and follow verbal/written instructions.
- Effectively communicate with TJO staff, volunteers and the public.



## WHAT TJO EXPECTS

- Understand and implement policies and procedures.
- Dependability.
- Initiative and self-direction.
- Open to constructive feedback.
- ADVANCE notification of absences.
- Communicate feedback, comments, and concerns.



## WHAT PEOPLE IMAGINE

**NEVER** PUT YOUR FACE IN AN ANIMAL'S SPACE, **NEVER** HUG, **NEVER** KISS!



Even owned pets are uncomfortable with hugs and kisses, but they learn to tolerate such interactions. In a shelter setting where animals are dealing with high levels of stress, this invasion of space is dangerous and makes animals feel threatened.

# REALITY – SHELTERS ARE EXTREMELY STRESSFUL

Please **never** do the following:

- Hug
- Kiss
- Lean over
- Reach hands out
- Invade space
- Squaring off
- Hard stare / direct eye contact
- Collar grab

\*These will be covered in detail in the Safe/Ethical Animal Handling session, but for volunteers in non-animal roles, please be sure to give animals plenty of space to pass **without interacting**.





# 8 THINGS **NOT** TO DO DURING **HUMAN-DOG** INTERACTIONS

THESE ARE UNSAFE FOR ANY DOG, BUT PARTICULARLY UNSAFE IN THE SHELTER SETTING



---

## THE NEXT SLIDES

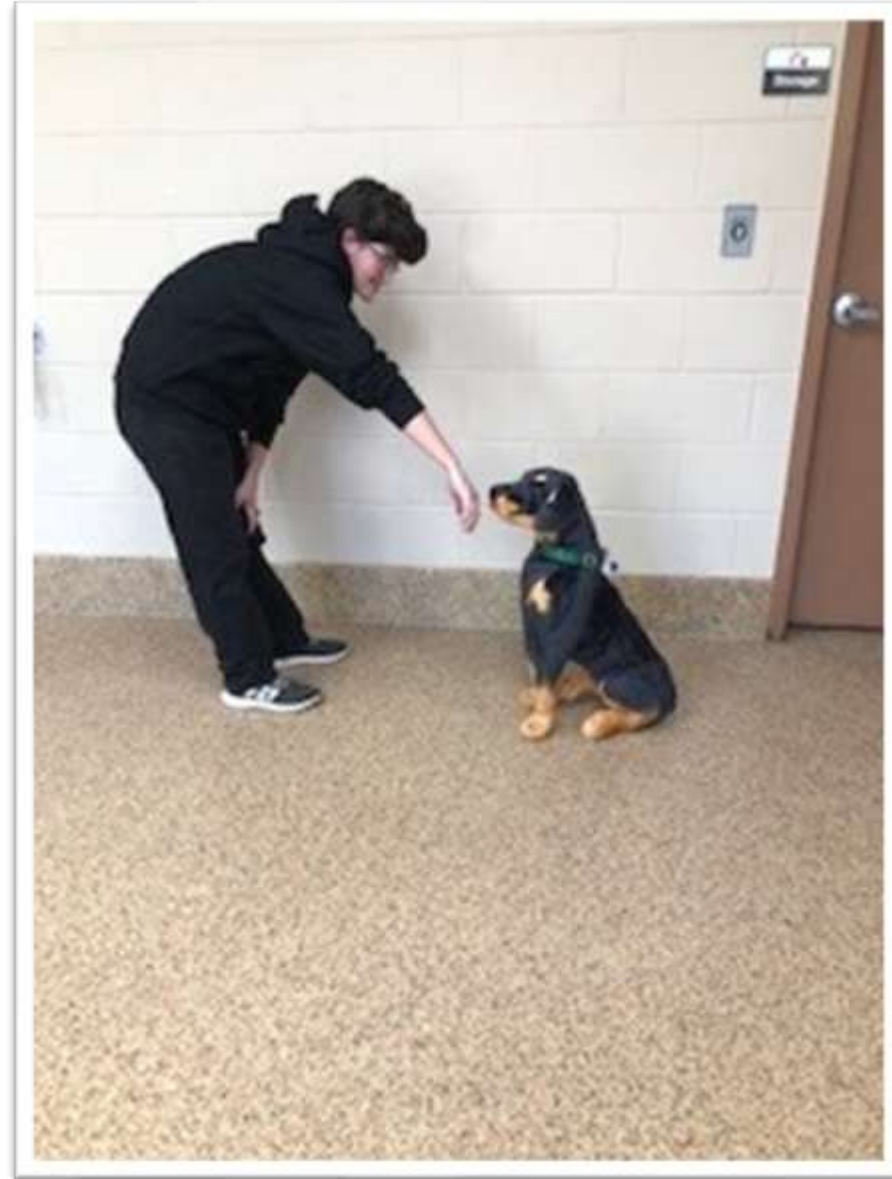
The next 2 sections contain information about safely interacting with dogs. If you are not planning on working directly with dogs at the shelter, **please remember *not* to interact with dogs and step aside as dogs are walked through the building.** Dog volunteers should only be interacting with dogs on the adoption floor.

Most of us will encounter dogs in our personal lives at some point if not regularly, and this information is useful for anyone who wants to improve their dog-human interactions and bond. If you would like to increase your knowledge of subtle signals and body language, consider attending the DOGS session.

- Because dogs are often walked through the building, it is important that volunteers **NOT** approach or interact with dogs. We don't have enough information about dogs for interactions to be safe.
- Even if an owner is asked, owners themselves may not have the ability to accurately read their own dog's body language, especially in a stressful environment.

## OFFERING A HAND

Dogs can smell about a football field away. Dogs don't need this invasion of space to smell you and gather information about you.



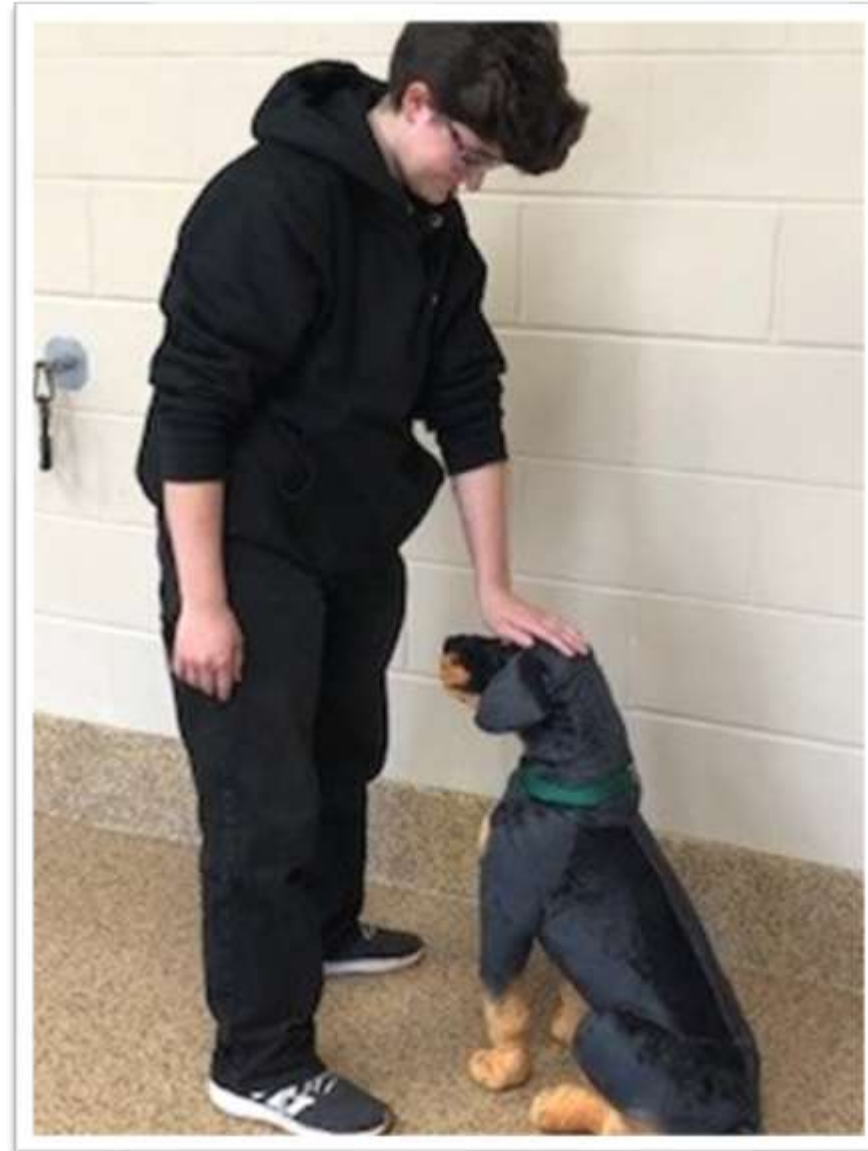
*PICTURED IN  
FOLLOWING SLIDES:  
HANNAH, ANIMAL  
WELFARE SPECIALIST*

# THE HEAD PAT

Includes the lean-over

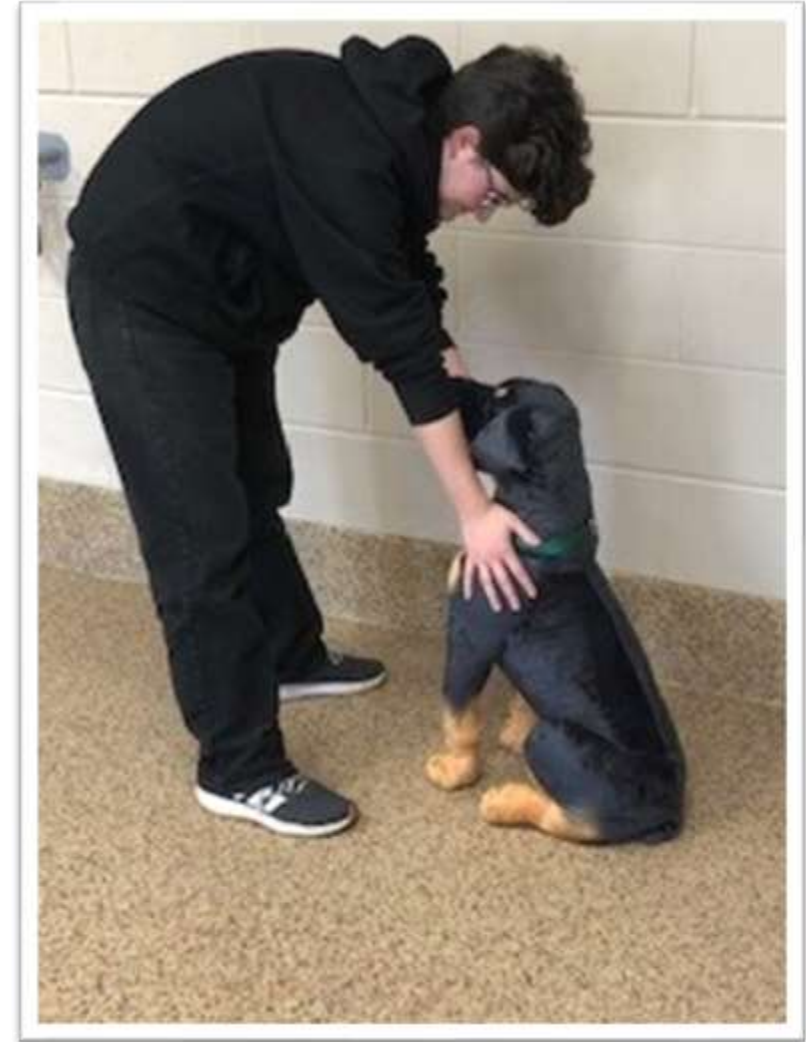
Blocks vision

Also includes squaring off – standing directly in front of a dog, making direct eye contact, and looming over a dog are all invasive and potentially threatening



## THE LEAN OVER

Another invasion of space, the lean over can make a dog feel crowded and trapped.



---

## THE FACE CUDDLE

Another smothering invasion of space as we humans attempt to show affection.



## THE HUG

Hugging a dog is the ultimate invasion of space.



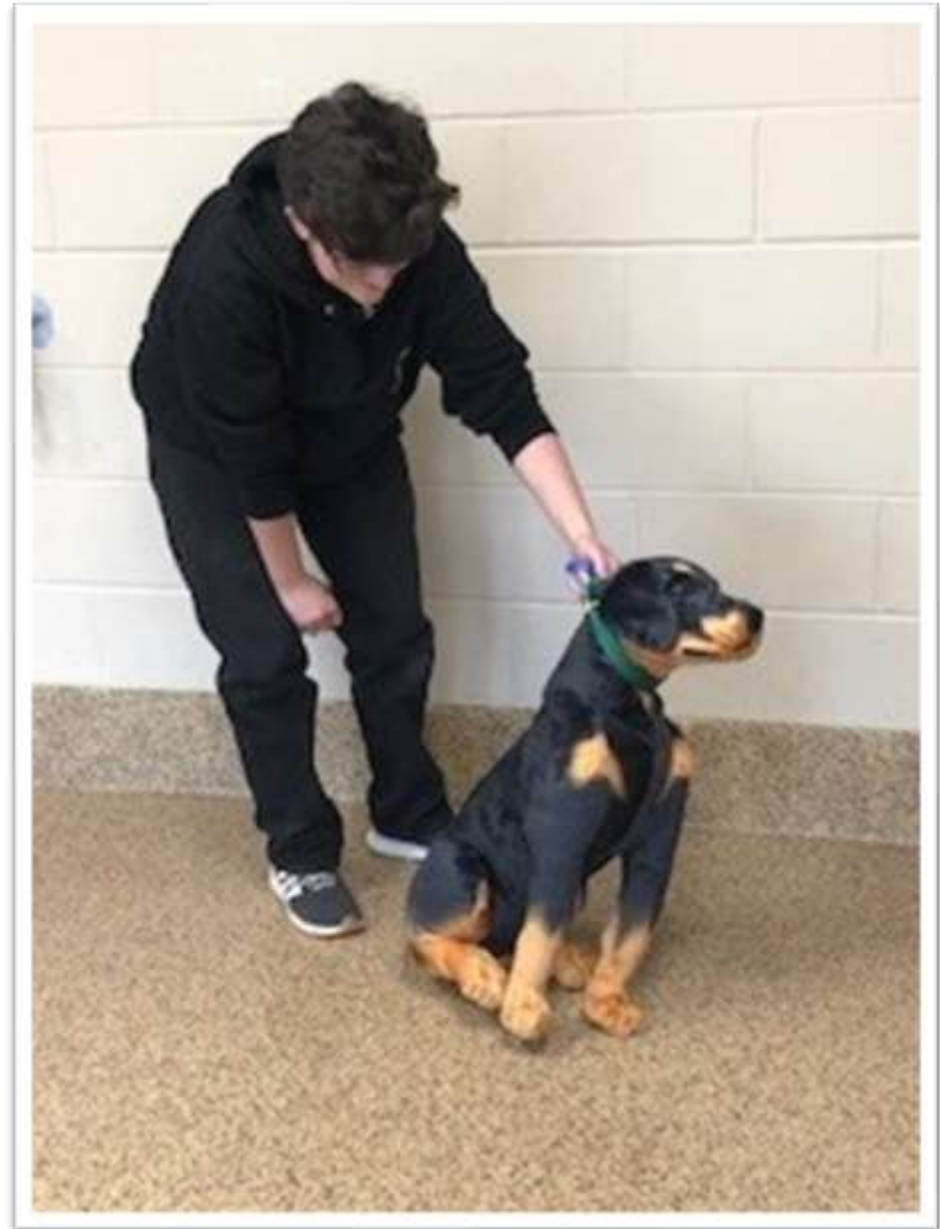
## THE KISS

Can it be affection? If the dog is the one who approaches and initiates, yes it's possible. But we should not approach and kiss a dog. Licking in response to our approach is often a sign of stress and a request for space.



## THE COLLAR GRAB

This maneuver can seem non-threatening, but again, putting a hand towards a dog's face and making contact, can cause a dog to feel extremely defensive and redirect onto the person grabbing the collar - especially if the dog is in a heightened state of arousal. Always toss food, a toy, or use recall to move a dog.





# HOW TO **INVITE** AN INTERACTION WITHOUT INVADING SPACE

ALWAYS ALLOW A DOG TO INITIATE AN INTERACTION. SNIFFING IS NOT A REQUEST - PAWING, USING THE SNOUT TO NUDGE, LEANING INTO YOUR BODY – ARE ALL CLEAR REQUESTS



---

## SAFER INTERACTIONS

- This information is for anyone **working directly with dogs** here at the shelter, or for anyone interested in learning more about safe interactions **in the community**. Body language can be very subtle, even for those with a trained eye. Dogs who have been punished for growling or attempting to communicate their discomfort, may skip this step and potentially escalate to a bite without the early signals. Please don't punish the growl or other early signals, these provide important communication and the opportunity to remove the dog before a bite occurs. We can also learn from the growl what is frightening to a specific dog. Children can be particularly vulnerable without the ability to observe subtle signals, and can be uniquely scary to dogs. Parents should **actively** supervise dog-child time together to be sure a dog's space is respected. When active supervision isn't possible, baby gates and separate spaces will keep everyone safe.

## OPEN HAND INVITATION - **KNEELING**



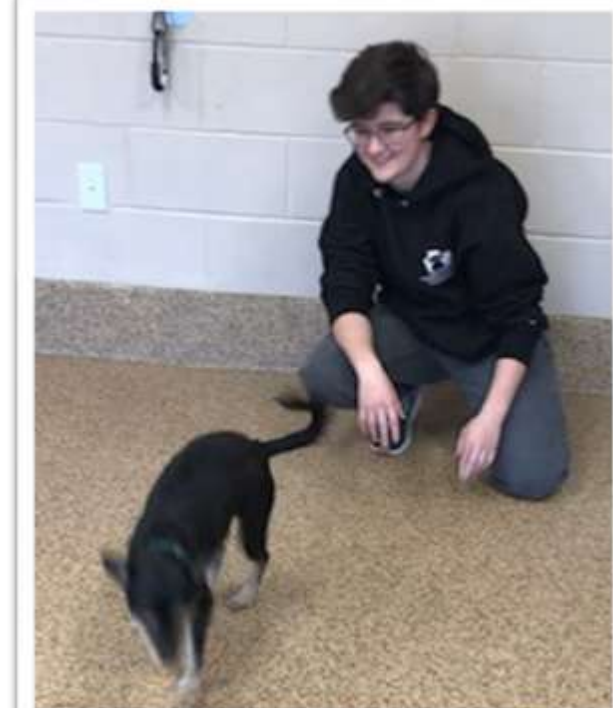
Low to the ground, open hands, angled body, allow dog to sniff/gather information



Continued sniffing/info gathering, with no pats

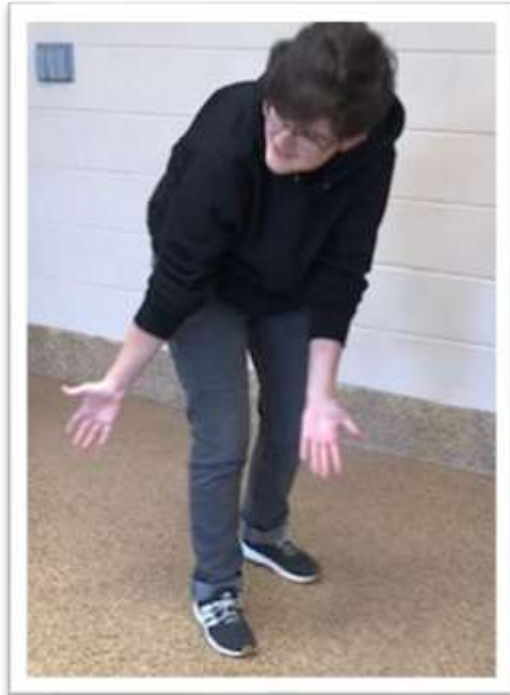


Continued sniffing/info gathering with no pats

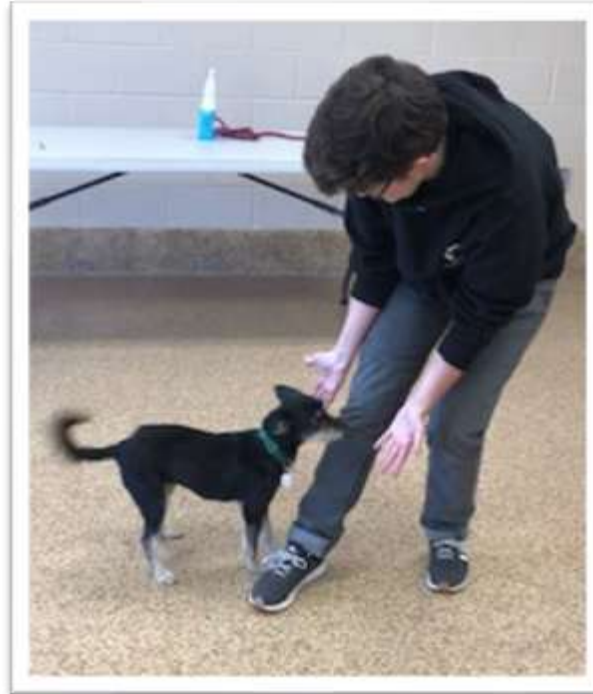


Pup was free to walk away, did not solicit further interaction

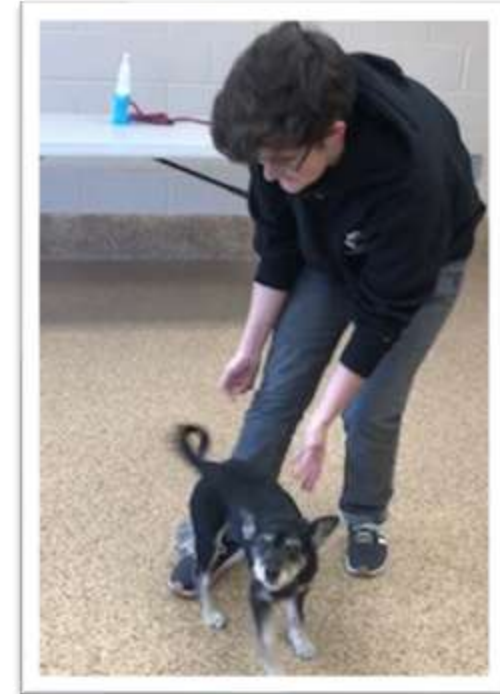
## OPEN HAND INVITATION – **STANDING**



Open hands/angled body



Sniffing/info gathering  
with no pats



Pup was free to walk away,  
did not solicit further  
interaction

A few repeats of these invitations will allow a dog to build trust, allowing the pup to approach more frequently. It may take several sessions of invites before an unfamiliar dog eagerly approaches for interactions, but taking it slowly communicates to a dog you are safe. Build up the trust bank!

---

## **SUMMARY: INTERACTING WITH A DOG**

- Stand sideways – angle your body
- If you speak, use a calm, reassuring tone
- Avoid staring/direct eye contact
- Let the dog come to you **without** extending a hand
- Allow a dog to sniff to gather information, it's not an invitation for pats (invitations from dogs are pretty clear – pawing, leaning in, nudging with snout.....)
- Not ***all*** dogs love ***all*** people, it's ok!!

Once you've started to build a relationship with a dog you can offer physical contact / affection.

Observe the dog's reaction and routinely use **CONSENT TESTS:**

<https://eileenanddogs.com/blog/2012/09/16/more-on-petting/>

# TYPES OF VOLUNTEERS

- Adoption Center Volunteers
- Fosters
- Events
- Projects
- Facebook Assignments (pet transports, projects, events, errands)

Link to a description of roles (copy and paste if not clickable): [www.tjoconnoradoptioncenter.com/get-involved/volunteer-roles](http://www.tjoconnoradoptioncenter.com/get-involved/volunteer-roles)

## NEXT STEPS

- Thank you for viewing all of the Welcome Session Slides! By progressing to the next steps in the volunteer process, you acknowledge and confirm you have thoroughly read each slide of the Welcome Session presentation in order to be a volunteer with Thomas J. O'Connor Animal Control and Adoption Center (TJO). If staff feel it's necessary, you may be asked at any time to revisit the information in the Welcome Session packet, or other training, to continue volunteering with TJO. This is to ensure everyone's safety.
- \*\*All volunteers MUST have a Facebook account to volunteer. If you don't have a Facebook account, you can create one specifically for TJO communication\*\*
- Please visit the following page for next steps in the volunteer process:

Copy and paste into a browser if not clickable

[www.tjoconnoradoptioncenter.com/volunteer/volunteer-next-steps#c116](http://www.tjoconnoradoptioncenter.com/volunteer/volunteer-next-steps#c116)