



# Volunteer Information, Guidelines and Expectations 2017

**Good Mews Animal Foundation**

*Finding Good Homes for Good Kitties*

3805 Robinson Road | Marietta, GA 30068 | 770-499-CATS (2287) | [www.goodmews.org](http://www.goodmews.org)

Revised February 2017

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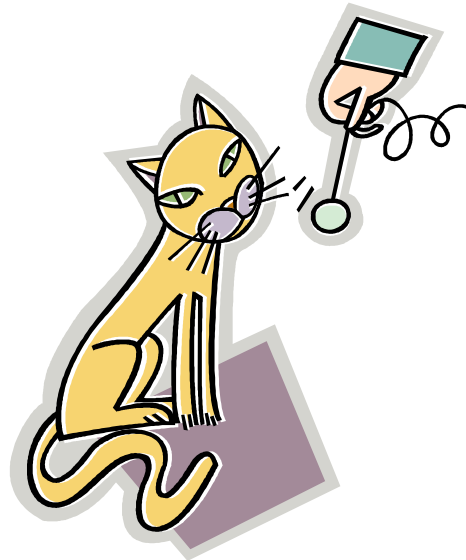
## **Volunteer Information, Guidelines and Expectations\***

### **Welcome and Thank You**

We would like to welcome you to Good Mews and thank you for choosing to volunteer with our organization. Volunteers are one of the most valuable assets Good Mews has; without you we could not accomplish what we do.

Being a volunteer is a very rewarding endeavor. Whether you are maintaining the cleanliness of the shelter, working on a fundraising event, petting a cat, or helping with adoptions you are very important to us. Your volunteer efforts can have a huge impact on an animal who has never known love and friendship. Sometimes the impact is immediate and sometimes it takes time, but, in either case, the result is very gratifying and uplifting.

This manual has been prepared for you as a reference guide. It contains information regarding our policies and procedures, tools for dealing with the public, and expectations for behavior. Please read it carefully so you will be well equipped to answer questions knowledgeably and to provide quality care to the animals you will be handling.



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## **Good Mews Mission Statement**

Good Mews offers an alternative to traditional animal shelters in the Metro Atlanta area by providing a no-kill, cage-free haven for homeless, abused, or abandoned cats until placing them in permanent, loving homes. Good Mews promotes public awareness regarding the value of pets, animal welfare, pet overpopulation, and quality human-animal companionship through education and outreach programs.

## **History of Good Mews**

Good Mews was founded in 1988 by Gloria Skeen who operated it out of her townhouse until obtaining a rental space at a strip mall on Sandtown Road in West Marietta. We remained there until moving to our Johnson Ferry location in late 2003. In 2010, we purchased a former dog grooming facility, and after many stops and starts, moved into our brand new facility on Robinson Road in October 2015. Ms. Skeen moved back to her home state of Illinois in 1994, but our commitment remains the same: finding secure, loving homes for cats and kittens.

We provide a non-profit, cage-free, no-kill environment for our residents with regular meals and extensive medical care. The cats are free to roam the shelter at will, interacting with each other, the volunteers, and visitors. The only time our cats are caged is for medical observation and a 14-day quarantine period upon intake. Once a cat has been accepted into the shelter population, it has a home for life. No cat is ever euthanized to make room for another, and euthanasia is performed **ONLY** when a veterinarian has diagnosed that the cat's quality of life is severely and permanently compromised by sickness or injury. Our cats come to us from a variety of circumstances. Many arrive abused, neglected, or terribly afraid. Often times, these cats are in urgent need of medical care. Our dedicated volunteers spend countless hours cuddling, grooming, and helping these cats to trust humans again.

Good Mews instituted the practice of pediatric spay and neuter for kittens to ensure 100% spay/neuter compliance in 2000. No animal has left our shelter without being spayed or neutered since the inception of this program. In addition, we microchip every Good Mews cat that is adopted. A portion of our veterinary services is donated or discounted by several veterinarians throughout the Metro area. Some of these services are provided on-site. Good Mews is home to approximately 150 residents at any given time, most of whom live at the shelter. Some also reside in foster care. We have an average adoption rate of approximately 5 cats per week. We have adopted over 8,000 cats since our inception.

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## Important Contact Information

**Website:**

www.goodmews.org

**Email:**

info@goodmews.org

**Address:**

Good Mews Animal Foundation  
3805 Robinson Road, Marietta, GA 30068

**Phone:**

770-499-CATS (2287)

**Good Mews Staff:**

Lisa Johns, Shelter Manager  
ljohns@goodmews.org

Ashley Adams, Feline Care Technician  
aadams@goodmews.org

Claudia Marlenee, Feline Care Technician  
cmarlenee@goodmews.org

**Good Mews Board of Directors:**

Lori Trahan, President  
ltrahan@goodmews.org

Robbin Yeager, Treasurer  
robbiny@fairgreen.com

Sarah Poland, Secretary  
spoland@goodmews.org

Elizabeth Finch  
efinch@goodmews.org

Georja Freedman  
heygeorja@bellsouth.net

Michelle Kirkham  
bogiedew@yahoo.com

Nancy Riley  
nriley@goodmews.org

**Committee Chairs:**

*Adoptions:*  
Michelle Kirkham, bogiedew@yahoo.com  
Jean Hess, jeanthes@hotmail.com

*Community Outreach:*  
Lisa Bass, lbass@comcast.net

*Disaster Recovery:*  
Lori Trahan, ltrahan@goodmews.org  
Robbin Yeager, robbiny@fairgreen.com

*Clean and Feed:*  
Anne Farmer,  
gmcleanandfeed@gmail.com

*Special Events:*  
Ruth Turner, ruthturner27@gmail.com

*Grants:*  
Sandy Napoleon-Hudson, snapoleon@hotmail.com

*Communications:*  
Sarah Poland, spoland@goodmews.org

*Medical:*  
April Taylor, arstaylor@gmail.com

*Volunteers:*  
Stella Blenner, goodmewsvolunteer@gmail.com

*Kitty Cab/Transportation:*  
Ashley Adams, aadams@goodmews.org

*Kitty Buddy:*  
Dawn Von Cramon, dawnvc@bellsouth.net  
Stacey Richolson, sricholson@goodmews.org

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## General Information

### General Volunteer Requirements

Good Mews requires that volunteers be a minimum of 18 years of age or **MUST** be accompanied **AT ALL TIMES** by a parent or legal guardian who is at least 18 years old when performing a volunteer function or attending orientation. Specific volunteer opportunities may have other requirements about age (i.e., people who work beverage booths at festivals must be 21). We do not recommend children under age 8 attend the orientation as generally we are not able to accommodate children under that age on the various volunteer committees. **Please note: Good Mews is NOT able to offer hours for court-ordered community service, or anticipation of court-ordered service. We are set up for ongoing volunteering to ensure consistency of staffing.**

Every person entering into the cat areas must sign an access agreement. If you filled out the access agreement at the time of your orientation you do not have to fill out another. However, any friends or family members you bring with you must sign an access form. Access agreements must be updated annually.

It is strongly recommended you don't leave personal items in shelter areas where cats are present. We do have a few kitties that will spray and we don't want your items getting ruined. You may store your belongings in the Volunteer Office in the shelter. Good Mews is not responsible if a cat destroys your belongings. Good Mews is also not responsible if your personal items go missing at the shelter.

Volunteers are prohibited from bringing their personal pets to the shelter.. Volunteers are also prohibited from allowing any cat from the outside to mix with cats in the general population.

### Abandoned Cats

Please see the guidelines for handling abandoned cats. These guidelines are posted in several areas of the shelter.

### Hours of Operation

Adoptions are held at the shelter on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm, or by appointment. We will also begin to offer some evening weekday hours. Please check the website for the most up to date hours of operation. These are the only times the shelter is open to the public.

Volunteers are welcome at the shelter any time between 7:00 AM and 11:00 PM, though we do ask if you notice the shelter is incredibly busy, you come back at another time. Volunteers are prohibited from allowing visitors into the shelter when you are there during closed hours especially during the evening when management is not available. This is for your safety. Please tell people that we are open to the public during set hours, or they can leave a message on the main line to schedule an adoption appointment during the week. Politely tell them we are closed during the week, and no tour guides are available.

**Entrance to the shelter is prohibited between the hours of 11:00 pm and 7:00 am when the alarm is activated.**

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### **Volunteer Hours**

When you arrive at the shelter, please make sure you sign in the book at the front of the shelter. When you leave, make sure you sign out. Volunteer hours are tracked for use for certain grants and sponsorships, so this information is crucial to helping our fundraising activities. If you volunteer at an activity or event outside of the shelter, please make sure you report these hours to the Volunteer Chair.

### **Smoking**

Good Mews is a smoke-free environment.

### **Keys**

Volunteers are essential to the support, operation and daily needs of Good Mews. After an initial period of time, and at the discretion of their Committee Chair and the Shelter Manager, volunteers may be issued a keycard providing them access to the shelter.

The volunteer shall provide a completed “Keycard Agreement” and a predetermined fee to the Shelter Manager. The fee is refundable when and if the keycard is returned. If the keycard is not returned or is lost, the volunteer forfeits his/her fee.

Should a volunteer lose his/her keycard and request a replacement, the volunteer shall provide another completed “Keycard Agreement”, as well as a predetermined fee (see Keycard Agreement for amount) to the Shelter Manager.

Good Mews reserves the right to refuse a keycard to any volunteer for any reason.

### **Deactivation of Keycards**

Good Mews Animal Foundation recognizes the value and convenience that allowing volunteers to have keycard access to the shelter provides. However, Good Mews must also consider potential security concerns that may arise due to the issuance of such a large number of keycards.

Should a volunteer notify Good Mews that he/she no longer wishes to volunteer, Good Mews may deactivate his/her keycard, regardless of whether the keycard has been turned in or not, with no prior notice to the volunteer.

Should a volunteer who works on a committee either within or outside of the shelter fail to participate for a period of three months or more, Good Mews may deactivate his/her keycard with no prior notice to the volunteer, even if he/she has not notified Good Mews of his/her intent to stop volunteering.

Should a volunteer inform Good Mews of a leave of absence with intent to return, Good Mews may choose to either leave the keycard active or deactivate it at their discretion.

Good Mews reserves the right to deactivate any keycard at any time with no prior notice to the volunteer, should Good Mews feel that there is a potential security or safety issue.

### **Absences**

Volunteers who are scheduled to work a set shift for any committee or event should notify the appropriate committee head and/or shift leader as soon as you realize that you will be unable to work your shift. If

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possible, please give us a minimum of 48 hours to allow us to schedule a replacement. If you are on the clean and feed committee, please contact your shift leader and follow the sub request protocol if your shift leader finds it necessary to arrange for a sub. A directory is available to all members of the feed and clean committee. Please notify the committee head of any changes to phone numbers or email addresses so the directory can be kept up-to-date.

### **Code of Conduct**

As a representative of Good Mews, you as a volunteer are required to become familiar with the volunteer handbook and any literature that is provided by your committee head. **All volunteers are required to abide by all policies provided to them.**

### **Volunteer Training**

All volunteers must attend a general orientation session. This orientation session will provide basic information and handouts on the many different opportunities and policies for the volunteer positions at Good Mews. It is recommended that children under 8 not attend orientation due to the numerous distractions of the cats.

The head of the committee that you are volunteering for will define the various training requirements for the volunteer position you are filling. Some positions require training before you can begin your volunteer work. Please attend the training at your earliest convenience.

### **Mews News**

As a Good Mews volunteer, it is recommended that you sign up for Mews News, the electronic volunteer/supporter newsletter. Mews News contains event updates, committee information, and general shelter information. To sign up for Mews News, use the link on the [goodmews.org](http://goodmews.org) homepage.

### **Changing or Leaving Volunteer Position**

Good Mews encourages volunteers to be active in any area in which they are interested. Any volunteer who wishes to move to another committee or try a different volunteer position should inform their current committee head of their wish to transfer. The volunteer should ask for additional information on the new position in which they are interested.

Volunteers who must resign or take an extended leave of absence from their Good Mews duties should inform the appropriate committee head as soon as possible.

The organization is only as good as the people who support it. While each volunteer's commitment is a valuable asset, over-commitment is detrimental to everyone involved. If at any time a volunteer is either physically or emotionally unable to support the organization, that person is obligated to take a leave of absence. Likewise, the organization reserves the right to remove a volunteer from their position for any reason. No volunteer will be removed until that person has had an opportunity to discuss the situation with members of the management structure. See the section on **Volunteer Dismissal** for further information.

### **Benefits and Recognition of Volunteers**

Volunteers will receive our quarterly newsletter, *Purrs & Prattlings*, which is sent to everyone on the mailing list. You may also sign up for *Mews News*, our monthly e-newsletter.

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## Management Structure

The organization and its management should always provide direction. Members of management will give clear, concise, and reasonable instructions. They will encourage personal growth and openly recognize and congratulate the efforts and achievements of volunteers. They will also actively work to correct behavior that is counterproductive to the organization (bullying, gossiping, demeaning others, etc.; see **Standards of Conduct** for additional information).

Good Mews encourages any volunteer who has a concern about his/her welfare, working conditions, job situation, or personal relations with other volunteers to express his/her feelings openly. Every effort will be made to resolve any problems or conflicts in a timely manner. The following are the procedures that volunteers should follow:

- Step 1: Set up an appointment with your shift leader to discuss the issue and its possible solutions. If this does not lead to satisfactory results or if you don't have a shift leader, then you may decide to proceed to Step 2.
- Step 2: Request a meeting with the committee head. If the problem is not resolved, then you may move to Step 3 in the process.
- Step 3: Make an appointment with the Shelter Manager of Good Mews.
- Step 4: Make an appointment to attend a meeting of the Board of Directors if the situation cannot be resolved in Steps 1-3 above.

All volunteers should respect the management structure which is shift leaders – committee heads – shelter management– board of directors. **Decisions by management should be respected and supported.** Disruptive behavior hurts the organization as a whole. It cannot and will not be tolerated.

## Standards of Conduct

By volunteering with Good Mews, you agree to adhere to the following commitments:

- **Solicitation and Distribution:** In order to avoid unnecessary annoyances and interruptions from your work, solicitation by a volunteer of another volunteer is prohibited while either person is working his/her shift. Distribution of literature on the premises is prohibited at all times. Trespassing, soliciting, or distribution of literature by non-volunteers on the premises is prohibited at all times.
- **Privacy:** The privacy of our volunteers and our visitors is to be respected at all times. Personal information of any sort is confidential and should not be shared without the consent of the person in question.
- **Safety:** All volunteers should remain safety conscious, to ensure the well-being of our residents, our guests, and our fellow volunteers. Incidents and unsafe circumstances should be reported to management and documented immediately, so action may be taken to prevent future recurrence.

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- **Courtesy:** Volunteers should maintain high standards of moral and ethical behavior. We should always treat each other with dignity and respect, remembering that our mutual purpose is to serve the residents and the organization. We expect you treat other staff, volunteers and our visitors with courtesy, sensitivity, tact, consideration, and humility. Good Mews does not discriminate against anyone based on race, religion, or sexual orientation.
- **Teamwork:** Teamwork is vital to our success. We strive to create an environment that is supportive and encouraging to all members. We should accept that we are a team, realize that there are differing roles among members of the team, and acknowledge that our combined efforts exceed the sum of our individual contributions. We should assist one another whenever possible.
- **Trust and Responsibility:** Trust and responsibility are the cornerstones of our organization. Volunteers are trusted and expected to complete all commitments. In cases of emergency, shift leaders should be notified in advance when possible to allow for re-staffing. Volunteers are responsible for requesting training if they have not been trained on a particular task.
- **Voicing Ideas:** Each volunteer has a voice. The organization can only improve through the ideas and actions of its volunteers. Therefore, every volunteer is encouraged to share their ideas for improvement. All ideas will be considered and discussed. Constructive feedback concerning organizational activities and practices is always welcomed and received with respect.
- **Official Representation:** While every volunteer is a valued asset, only designated individuals are permitted to officially represent the organization. Unless specifically assigned to such a role, volunteers are prohibited from entering into contracts or agreements, granting interviews or endorsements, or publishing material relating to the organization or its members.
- **Violence/Sexual Harassment:** Violence or sexual harassment will not be tolerated. The purpose of this policy is to minimize the potential risk of personal injuries to volunteers or the residents of Good Mews and to reduce the possibility of damage to shelter property in the event that someone, for whatever reason, may be unhappy with a decision or action by a member of management.

If you receive or overhear any threatening communications, report it at once. Do not engage in either physical or verbal confrontations with a potentially violent individual. If you encounter an individual who is threatening immediate harm to a volunteer, a Good Mews resident, a visitor or the premises, contact an emergency agency (such as 911) immediately.

Violations of this policy, including your failure to report an incident, may result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate discharge.

### Social Media Policy

Good Mews recognizes and values the role social media plays in raising awareness of the events we host and the cats who need homes. However, social media can also influence public perception of our organization. For this reason, please follow this policy when posting on Good Mews' social media (for example, our Facebook group), or when it's likely your content could be interpreted as representing Good Mews.

1. Good Mews values the conversations and contributions that arise from social media use. Always keep in mind your association with Good Mews, use good judgment and make sure your profile

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settings and content are consistent with how you wish to represent yourself personally and professionally.

2. You are personally responsible for the content you publish. Protect your privacy and understand a site's term of service.
3. As a Good Mews volunteer, you represent the Good Mews brand. Keep in mind what Good Mews represents.
4. Good Mews volunteers are encouraged to share social media and website content posted by Good Mews.
5. As a Good Mews volunteer, consider whether your post(s) could be interpreted as representing Good Mews' position. When publishing content that may bring confusion or controversy to Good Mews, include a disclosure such as "This posting is my own and does not necessarily represent Good Mews' position, strategy, or opinion."
6. Don't publish or publicly discuss Good Mews' or other organizations confidential information, whether or not the content ties back to your role as a Good Mews volunteer. This includes unauthorized release of images, video, or other content.
7. Good Mews occasionally takes in cats that have legal stipulations attached to them (hoarding cases, evidence in criminal cases, etc.). Confirm with shelter management that it is okay to post pictures and backstories of the cats prior to doing so.
8. When referencing information cited by someone else, be sure to include the link back to the source whenever possible.
9. Avoid publishing anything that is disrespectful, damaging or potentially damaging to an individual or organization.
10. Good Mews encourages open discussions and differing opinions; however, show consideration for others' opinions and privacy and refrain from engaging in topics that may be considered objectionable, obscene or inflammatory.
11. Be the first to correct your mistakes. Good Mews will monitor its sites regularly to ensure disclosure and truthfulness and attempt to correct all misstatements and misrepresentations.
12. Always get permission prior to using the Good Mews logo.
13. Respect copyright and fair use laws.
14. Good Mews may remove, or request the removal, of any posts/publications in conflict with this policy.

*Adapted from RedRover Responders Volunteer Social Media Policy*

### **Volunteer Dismissal**

Each volunteer has an obligation to observe and follow the shelter's policies and to maintain proper standards of conduct at all times. If an individual's behavior interferes with the orderly and efficient operation of the shelter, corrective disciplinary measures will be taken.

Disciplinary action may include a verbal warning, written warning, suspension and/or discharge. The appropriate disciplinary action imposed will be determined by the Board of Directors and the shelter management of Good Mews. The management of Good Mews does not guarantee that one form of disciplinary action will necessarily precede another.

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The following may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge: violation of the shelter's policies or safety rules; mistreatment of the Good Mews residents; insubordination; unauthorized or illegal possession, use or sale of alcohol or controlled substances on the premises or during volunteer shifts; theft or dishonesty; physical harassment; sexual harassment; disrespect toward fellow volunteers, visitors or other members of the public; failure to adhere to Good Mews policies and procedures; poor attendance or poor performance. These examples are not all-inclusive. We emphasize that discharge decisions will be based on an assessment of all relevant factors.

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

Below you will see the variety of volunteer opportunities available at Good Mews. If you are interested in a particular volunteer activity, please notify the appropriate committee chair or the Volunteer Coordinator (see **Important Contact Information**). Please note that some volunteer opportunities require additional training and may not be available to you due to number of volunteers currently serving, legal requirements, etc. If you have questions about any of these opportunities, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator. There are many opportunities available; some of the main opportunities include:

#### ***Adoptions:***

This position involves working with the public and conducting interviews to determine the appropriateness of the home and the best possible pet matches. Adoptions are held every Saturday from 10:00 – 4:00, the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of each month from 1:00 – 4:00, and by appointment. We are also beginning to offer some evening weekday hours. Please visit our website, [goodmews.org](http://goodmews.org), for the most up to date hours of operation. Adoption volunteers are required to commit to at least one adoption shift per month. Additional training on adoption policies and procedures is required. The shelter is also pursuing many offsite adoption opportunities, so adoption counselors should also be willing to do adoptions at other locations as the opportunities arise.

#### ***Communications:***

This committee produces and/or oversees the generation of all printed/electronic promotional materials, fundraising letters, quarterly newsletters, monthly e-newsletters, Kitty Keeper letters, etc. Tasks include researching, writing, editing, designing, and more. Most of the work for this position is conducted offsite from the shelter.

#### ***Community Outreach:***

Members of this committee work with community groups, such as students, Scouts and animal welfare groups, on projects or tours of the shelter. They may also be asked to represent Good Mews at speaking engagements, festivals, or other community functions to help publicize Good Mews and its mission, as well as educate the public about animal welfare.

#### ***Disaster Recovery:***

This committee creates and constantly revises the emergency preparedness plan for the shelter. Members of this committee have required courses that must be completed, including online FEMA classes, animals in disaster courses, and other specialized training.

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### ***Clean and Feed:***

This committee works closely with the cats. These volunteers come to the shelter in two shifts (morning and evening) per day to maintain the cleanliness of the shelter and ensure the cats are fed properly. Tasks include scooping litter boxes, vacuuming, mopping, washing dishes and feeding the cats, with shifts typically lasting 3-4 hours. Additional training on clean and feed procedures is required.

### ***Grants:***

Volunteers with this committee work to secure funding for Good Mews by seeking out possible grant opportunities, as well as applying for grants. Strong writing skills are needed. Time management, attention to detail and ability to meet deadlines are required, as many of the grant agencies have strict deadlines for consideration of applications.

### ***Kitty Buddy:***

Many cats at Good Mews require additional attention so they can become more adoptable to the general public. Kitty buddies are a major part of this. Kitty buddies are required to spend a minimum of 30 minutes a week with their buddy, helping the cat learn to trust humans. Whenever possible, we request that Kitty Buddies perform another volunteer function for a minimum of three months, so they can familiarize themselves with the organization and the cats of Good Mews.

### ***Medical:***

Medical volunteers are at the shelter twice a day (morning and evening) administering medication to the cats. Each medical volunteer is required to sign up for a regular shift (normally once a week or alternating weeks). Additional training on how to administer medication is required.

### ***Special Events:***

Events are crucial to the survival of Good Mews, as they bring in needed revenue. This committee helps plan, chair and/or coordinate fundraising events for Good Mews. Activities have included the annual Silent and Live Auction, the Flea Market, Birdies for Charity, etc. Volunteers are encouraged to come up with new ideas for the Fundraising committee.

### ***Transportation/Kitty Cab:***

These volunteers donate their time to drive cats to and from vet appointments. There is no regular schedule for this, although trips are usually M-F during regular business hours. All Kitty Cab requests are sent by shelter management.

### ***Volunteer:***

The volunteer committee works to provide a good orientation to the shelter, updates the volunteer documents as needed, and tracks volunteer hours for the grant committee.

***\* For the purpose of this document, the term “volunteer” applies to all persons associated with Good Mews, including volunteers, employees and board members. The term “management” applies to the shelter staff and board of directors.***

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