

# **Faithful Friends Left Behind**

The goal of this program is to offer assistance to pet owners who are terminally ill; incapacitated due to surgery, illness or disease; or entering a nursing home and can find no one to care for their pet(s).

Each year our area has scores of dogs and cats surrendered to a shelter upon the death or incapacitation of their owners. These animals are not ordinary “owner surrenders.” These pets were once well loved family members; sometimes they were the only companions to their lonely owners. They come to the shelter confused and afraid, torn from all they’ve known and loved. They are “faithful friends left behind.”

On the human side, for pet owners who are losing independence or dying, the anticipation of leaving behind a beloved companion is extremely stressful, particularly when their pet’s future is uncertain. Sometimes, elderly pet owners will refuse necessary hospitalization or relocation to a nursing home for fear of what might happen to their pets. In the case of terminally ill pet owners, anxiety over their pet’s future only adds more anguish to what is already an extraordinarily difficult time.

## **Program Procedures**

Upon evaluation and acceptance into the program, the owner will sign paperwork giving custody of their pet to AAR. Then, a foster home will be sought to house the pet temporarily until either the owner is capable of reclaiming the pet, or, if necessary, a new forever home can be found.

Owners will be asked to provide a personal history for themselves and their pet. Potential adopters will be interested in knowing a little bit about the pet’s owners – where they’re from, places they’ve been and things they’ve accomplished. These details add a personal touch to an adopter’s overall picture of the owner’s life with his/her pet. A pet’s history should include copies of veterinary records and detailed information about the pet’s personality and habits, likes and dislikes. A form will be provided for this purpose, although owners are encouraged to submit additional information. Pictures of the pet as a youngster or pictures of the owner and pet together are always appreciated.

## **Requirements**

All pets must be spayed or neutered prior to acceptance into the program unless they are medically exempt, and all pets must be up-to-date on their vaccinations.

Pets must pass a temperament test to determine if they can be safely placed into another home. Dogs and cats or other animals that have a bite history or other severe behavior problems may not be accepted into the program.

Pets must also pass a medical exam. Dogs and cats or other animals that have severe health problems that might cause an undue expense for a new owner and make the animal difficult or impossible to place may not be accepted into the program.

We cannot accept a monetary donation in lieu of temperament and/or medical exam requirements. Our first concern is for the safety and wellbeing of our volunteers, foster families and potential adopters. In the event that the pet cannot be accepted into the program, AAR will be available to assist in determining other options regarding the pet. We can put the owner in touch with other pet welfare groups or breed-specific rescue organizations that might be able to provide advice or assistance.

An adoption, once formalized, is irrevocable.

### **Cost**

Participation in the program is free, although any donation to cover expenses is greatly appreciated. Our volunteers and foster families gladly donate their time and love, but caring for these “faithful friends” is costly and includes medical care, food and housing for the life of the pet.