

Getting Started with Tufts Paws for People and Pet Partners®

What is Pet Partners®?

Tufts Paws for People uses the national Pet Partners® program to register all of our volunteer teams (for more information about this wonderful organization, please visit www.petpartners.org). Our group, Tufts Paws for People, is a Community Partner of the Pet Partners® program. We chose this program for several reasons: they allow species other than dogs, the testing of the “team” is rigorous (handler and animal companion together form a team), retesting of teams is required every 2 years, they have excellent health and safety standards, and they are the only national organization that requires handler training. Formal obedience training is not required, but recommended for canines.

What is the Pet Partners® handler training?

The handler must complete this training first before evaluating (perform a series of exercises or tests) with an animal companion. The Pet Partners® Handler Training workshop (**for the handler only**) that accomplishes this training is offered multiple times per year. The workshop is educational and a lot of fun! The fee for the workshop is \$150 and includes all materials, lunch, and all evaluations if they are done through our group.

Who can be a Pet Partners® handler?

Handlers must be over the age of 10 years, and children ages 10 to 16 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian on all parts of the process and on visits. Multiple handlers can use the same animal, but all must have completed the handler training, and all must evaluate separately. Discounts are available for full time students, seniors (over 60 years of age), and multiple family members attending on the same day. Please ask if you think you may be eligible.

What happens after the handler training?

After completing the workshop, you may sign up for an evaluation whenever you feel that you and your animal companion are ready to do so. We offer evaluations 6 to 7 times per calendar year for the convenience of our Pet Partners® teams. Should you not pass the evaluation the first time (about 30% of teams don't pass the first time), then you may reschedule a retry evaluation when you feel ready to do so. We'll go over the results of your evaluation with you thoroughly whether or not you pass so that you will know exactly what worked well for you and where you can do some tweaking.

What happens after the evaluation?

When you pass the evaluation, you'll need to have a health screening done by your animal's veterinarian. This will ensure that your animal is up to the task of being a Pet Partners® member. You will send a registration packet with two year membership fee (this will provide you liability insurance while visiting as a volunteer) to become a formal Pet Partners® team. If you'd like to have membership in our group, Tufts Paws for People, we can help you with mentorship and support when beginning your visitation career, as well as help you to visit in a facility of your interest.

What should I do if I have questions?

Please feel free to contact us with any questions that you have after reading through this information. We can be reached by email at PawsforPeople@Tufts.edu. We can also be reached by leaving a voice message at (508) 839-8741, though email is the preferred method of contact. You can also visit our website for more information at vet.tufts.edu/paws.