

How to Start an HTA Service/Volunteer Group

and build vibration in your community

An HTA service/volunteer group is often requested by HTA Practitioners enrolled in the courses to give them a place to practice the skills they have learned in the HTA Program.

A service/volunteer group could be developed for this purpose alone where the HTA coordinator selects a time and place and the practitioners bring their animals and provide treatments on all the animals in the group. This is a good strategy and helps build confidence in their skills and work on animals other than their own.

However, the service/volunteer group is a wonderful opportunity to market the courses your coordinate, keep the practitioners engaged and returning to advanced levels, and to promote awareness of the needs in your community and the importance of volunteering.

To achieve these results, the following format is recommended to begin with. Then be ready and open to where it may lead you! And remember to have fun.

The Service/Volunteer Group Mission

Together a collective group of HTA Practitioners volunteer treatments at local rescues and shelters to make an impact and increase the vibration in their communities.

A successful service/volunteer group can accomplish the following and more:

- promote awareness of the HTA Program to rescues/shelters
- educate rescues/shelters about the science of energy medicine
- rescue/shelter employees experience and witness the benefits of HTA
- provide individuals considering the HTA Program a safe place to observe
- provide media with an exciting community awareness story
- educate practitioners of the value of volunteering
- open the door for practitioners to return and volunteer on their own
- promote awareness of the needs of animals in our community
- promote awareness of the rescues/shelters in our community
- provide a place for practitioners to enhance their skills and with a variety of species
- develop interest for practitioners to advance through the program
- provide treatment opportunities for practitioners getting certified
- inspire relationships with like minded individuals

Who Attends a Service/Volunteer Group?

HTA service/volunteer groups should be open to all individuals that have taken an HTA course, level 1 and above.

By providing service/volunteer groups in your area, it keeps the practitioners engaged and excited to continue their training so they are more likely to advance through the program than those who take a course then disappear.

It also builds confidence so they become comfortable with working on animals and species other than the ones in their home which is common when you first start the HTA Program.

It is important to remember that if practitioners divide up into pairs, they must do so with others at their level only. We must be mindful that we are not qualified and approved to “teach” HTA techniques and a level 1 practitioner would not know the techniques that a level 4 practitioner may choose to use if

they are working together. This will eliminate confusion and the temptation of teaching a technique to an eager to learn practitioner.

Service/Volunteer groups also provide level 4 practitioners with treatment opportunities for certification. It is important that they also seek experiences outside of the service/volunteer groups so they develop a comfort level in marketing themselves. The nature of the certification process and needing multiple classifications will tend to lead them to this regardless.

Don't hesitate to invite those interested but leery individuals to a service/volunteer group. There are many individuals that are not familiar with energy medicine and tend to be skeptical. Service/Volunteer groups provide a safe place for these cautious individuals to observe the science behind HTA and the hearts behind the practitioners. By gaining this comfort level, they may be more apt to register for your next level 1 course.

Service/Volunteer groups with a mission to volunteer and heart to make a difference for the animals in our community also provides a more marketable story for the media. Once you have made initial contact with a news station, publication, online radio show, other animal advocates, an invitation to a service/volunteer group is the perfect enticement for the media to witness the professionalism of HTA Practitioners and the response of the animals. It also provides free advertisement for the rescue/shelter and overall provides a great "feel good" story for the media. The secondary purpose can then be to market your next level 1 course.

Why Shelters/Rescues?

As we know, the need in rescues/shelters is great. They often receive animals under tremendous stress, possibly traumatized, injured or ill.

The main concern of rescues/shelters is that animals that exhibit anxiety are often overlooked for adoption because people fear the behavioral or health issues that have or could develop. This is especially true for no-kill shelters as every day an animal remains at their shelter, another animal cannot be rescued.

With HTA, we know that the techniques we learn can help tremendously with anxiety and all health issues. The Bridging™ technique is an incredible tool to help the animals understand they are in a safe place and to attract their forever new families. Level 1 practitioners can easily participate in the service/volunteer group and see the value of their investment in the HTA Program and in their continuing education. Even if they do not have the intention of starting a practice, the skills they are learning can benefit their community.

Unfortunately, rescues/shelters are typically desperate for help because their need is overwhelming and resources limited so they are willing to try just about anything to help the animals, even if they are not familiar with it. Use this open door to educate their staff about the science behind energy medicine (physiology chart) and the value it has in healing the animals emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritually. Often all you have to do is mention that HTA helps with anxiety and they want to know how quickly you can come and how often. Then schedule a service/volunteer group so they can witness the results and become true believers!

Remember to promote the professionalism and ethics of the HTA Program and practitioners.

Hopefully you will develop a respected relationship with the rescues/shelters and they will be willing to market your level 1 courses to their entire email database and in their newsletters and encourage their staff and volunteers to register. They may even be interested in developing a campaign to promote HTA courses to the families of their newly adopted animals to help the animals adjust to their new homes and decrease the return rate, another standard problem at rescues/shelters. You may also recommend doing a presentation about HTA if they promote and host such activities which many of them do. You can also

become a vendor at their fundraising events to promote the courses, often for a small fee. It is so much easier to tap into an existing network of animal lovers than to find them one at a time.

Keep in mind that the mission of the service/volunteer group is to promote awareness of the needs in our community and that involves numerous rescues/shelters. Though returning to the same rescue/shelter every time is still beneficial to the practitioners at that organization would probably prefer it, remember the overall purpose of the service/volunteer group is to increase the vibration in our communities and this is done by developing relationships with multiple rescues/shelters.

However, by arranging a service/volunteer group, you also open the door for other practitioners to return and volunteer until their heart is content. Often a level 1 or 2 practitioner is nervous about making that initial contact so this provides them with a list of rescues/shelters that now understand the benefits of energy medicine and are eager to have HTA Practitioners volunteer.

Hopefully one or two practitioners at each service/volunteer group will connect with the mission of each rescue/shelter and develop a long-term relationship with them. With this strategy the rescue/shelter benefits on a more consistent basis and the mission of the service/volunteer group is not compromised.

Service/Volunteer groups can also be a great way to provide practitioners with the opportunity to work on other breeds and species. If you do some research, you most likely will find a rescue/shelter for every breed and specie out there. What a wonderful opportunity for HTA Practitioners to learn how to work on birds, fish, rabbits, farm animals, donkeys, wildlife, raptors, snakes, lizards, and unique breeds. Engage the rescue/shelter representative at the service/volunteer group by asking them to share about their mission, the breeds or species they serve, and also ask them to teach the HTA Practitioners how to handle these species appropriately. Not only does this make it educational for the HTA Practitioners but it increases our probability of inducing the relaxation response if we know how to properly handle the animals we are working with. Then, we as HTA Practitioners will be ready when a client calls us to work on their macaw or boa. Again, rescues/shelters are a safe place to do this where there are numerous animals in need to practice on.

Service/Volunteer groups also teach the practitioners the value of volunteering. It is important to give back to our communities, especially if we develop a practice. With a practice, energetically it is important to have an exchange for your service. This helps the client engage and commit to their healing process and helps them experience the value in what you do and the training you have received. However, it is equally important energetically to give back and volunteering at rescues/shelters where the need is so great and their resources are so limited is a wonderful way to accomplish this.

How Often Do You Schedule Service/Volunteer Groups?

The coordinator should consider this carefully as you do not want to over-commit and the service/volunteer group lose its efficacy. Remember the goal is to build vibration! And by building slowly, you create a strong foundation that will endure and make a greater impact in your community.

Typically coordinators have other jobs, family and animals to attend to. And we have committed ourselves to coordinating and marketing the HTA Program in our community. This must come first, but as discussed, the service/volunteer groups can be used as a marketing tool for this purpose.

It does take time to research and contact rescues/shelters, contact practitioners, schedule the service/volunteer group, reschedule due to inclement weather, attend and do proper follow up.

Once per month takes some work but can be very rewarding. And typically you don't schedule during the holiday months. If this feels like too much of a time commitment, start with every other month or quarterly and grow as you become more comfortable with the process. As typical, everything takes more time in the beginning until you have a system down. Eventually the frequency needs to promote and fulfill the momentum the service/volunteer groups will generate.

Participants of the service/volunteer group are typically not charged a fee unless the facility requests a small fee/donation, in which case the fee should be split equally among all participants. In that case, coordinators should inform possible participants in the initial contact service/volunteer group announcement. Refreshments are not provided during service/volunteer groups.

Contacting the Rescue/Shelter

It is best to contact rescues/shelters that have a facility where the animals are located. If they use fosters it is more time consuming to arrange as you will need to coordinate a place to meet and all of the foster volunteers bringing their animals to that location for the service/volunteer group.

Initially you may decide to contact rescues/shelters that you met at community events. By either hosting a booth at these events or attending them, you can easily introduce yourself to the numerous rescues/shelters represented and start a conversation about HTA and the service/volunteer groups or ask if you can contact them the following week. Often they are busy and looking for donors and adopters at these events so it may be best to keep the initial conversation short and call them with more details.

Another great option is often other HTA Practitioners are familiar with rescues/shelters where they adopted their animals or already volunteer and this becomes an easy contact as you can drop their name or they may already know about the benefits of HTA.

Otherwise you start cold calling. And you will be amazed at how many rescues/shelters there are. Again the key is to find ones with facilities which will make your job easier.

Typically the rescues/shelters have a volunteer coordinator that will be the proper person to contact to discuss and set up the service/volunteer group.

Keep your initial statement to the point and focused on how they will benefit. Wait for their response then proceed with details.

“My name is (name) and I am the (city) coordinator for Healing Touch for Animals®. HTA is an energy program that is specifically designed for animals to promote healing. It is very beneficial for anxiety and many rescues/shelters have found that it increases their adoptability rate by reducing stress and related behaviors”.

(wait for response or question – sometimes they comment they heard about HTA or ask if it is similar to Reiki)

“We have started a local service/volunteer group for trained HTA Practitioners to volunteer treatments at local rescues/shelters and would love to come to (name of shelter).”

Based on their response you can go into other details of how HTA benefits the animals with trauma, injury, illness and disease. Keep the conversation simple and on the science side and use your judgment before speaking about attracting their forever homes. If they are not familiar or comfortable with energy work, they may need to witness the results before explaining law of attraction and some of the unique benefits of energy medicine.

Make sure they understand in the beginning your strategy of going to different rescues/shelters and do not mislead them about your intentions of returning infrequently as a service/volunteer group.

Scheduling a Service/Volunteer Group

If the rescue / shelter is interested, recommend setting a time and date that is convenient for the rescue / shelter and the participants. Most people work week days from 8-5 so this is not the best time to schedule

a service/volunteer group. Rescues/shelters will vary as to when they prefer you be there based on when their staff is available, when families come to view the animals, their training schedule, cleaning schedule, if they send the animals to fosters at night or on weekends etc.

Recommend 3-4 hours so there is time to sign waivers, for their representative to share their mission and provide training about their breed/species, handling, house rules, quarantined animals etc. This also allows each practitioner or pair of practitioners to work on 2-3 animals each to maximize your impact there.

Also remember to ask about their facilities. Select indoor facilities during the winter or rainy season and check to see if outdoor barns/stalls are large enough to work in safely and protected from the weather. Again, the goal is to induce the relaxation response and this is more difficult if you are miserable and shivering, for the practitioner and the animal.

If you go to a zoo, aquarium, wildlife rehab or other rescue/shelter where you cannot touch the animals, remember to schedule this after your level 3 course where practitioners learn distance work. If level 1 or 2 practitioners attend, you can recommend that they step back and do all of the steps of the techniques while watching the animals but again you cannot teach them the various surrogate methods. Otherwise, you would need to restrict that service/volunteer group to level 3 and 4 practitioners.

Once Scheduled

Once the service/volunteer group is scheduled, send an email to the practitioners in your area.

Subject: HTA Service/Volunteer Group Jan 27 – Please RSVP!

We are going to <http://www.freedom servicedogs.org> in Englewood on Wednesday January 27th from 5:30 pm-8:30 pm. Plan to arrive at 5:30 and we can get the forms signed, they will give us a brief history and then will start assigning dogs that are in need of treatments.

What is unique about this organization is that they rescue dogs with the intention of training them to be service/companion animals for disabled veterans. The dogs that don't make it through testing are placed in wonderful homes.

They have lots of dogs right now and many have anxiety/stress related issues so they need our help. The more they adopt, the more they can bring into the program.

Please RSVP if you are able to make it. With this being a new contact, I want to make sure we have a good size group committed! And again, please let me know if your plans change and cannot make it after you RSVP. I'll send a confirmation email with directions closer to the date.

Remember to bring your workbooks, pendulums, treatment forms, essential oils and tuning forks (level 3 and 4)... and your big hearts as we *raise the vibration in our community!*

Collect the email RSVP's and call the rescue/shelter one week before to confirm date, time, address, directions, which door to enter, where to park, who will be their representative during the service/volunteer group. Also recommend that they prepare a sheet with animal names, sex, ages and their health concerns as collecting this information is a good habit for the practitioners to get into before they do their energetic assessment.

Then send an email confirmation to the practitioners attending with date, time, address, directions, which door to enter and reminder of what to bring. Remember to include your cell phone number in case they need to contact you or get lost.

Ready for the Service/Volunteer Group

Again it is best to call the rescue/shelter the day of the service/volunteer group just as a kind reminder. It is also helpful to let them know how many you are expecting so they know how many animals to have ready. It is also polite to ask if there is anything else they need from you.

As the service/volunteer group coordinator you should bring the following:

- Service/Volunteer Group Waiver of Liability Form – copies for each practitioner (download)
- Business cards for rescue/shelter volunteer coordinator
- Name tags (if have a large group)
- Level 1-4 workbooks
- Tuning forks
- Essential oils
- Cell phone
- CD player and HTA CD volume 1 and 2 (optional)
- Camera (optional)

As the service/volunteer group coordinator you should arrive 10 minutes early and greet the rescue/shelter representative and ask for their volunteer waiver/liability forms.

As practitioners arrive, have each one sign the HTA waiver and the rescue/shelter waiver, create a name tag and then wait for everyone to gather. Although service/volunteer groups are not official HTA events, please send/scan and email a copy of the HTA waivers to the HTA office after the event.

Keep the HTA waivers on file for several months in case any issues arise but make sure and give the rescue/shelter their signed waivers before you leave.

If any accident or issue does arise from the group, please contact the HTA office immediately.

Then ask the rescue/shelter representative to present the following:

- Introduce their organization and mission
- Describe breed/species they specialize in
- Brief training on how to handle those breeds/species
- House rules, location of restrooms
- Special rules for quarantined animals *
- Review the list of animals (often they will prioritize regarding highest need)

* Often rescues/shelters will quarantine animals upon their arrival to make sure they do not have any contagious conditions before bringing them into the main facility. Or they quarantine animals that they know are ill or contagious. Some rescues/shelters will not want practitioners to go into these areas because of possibility of contamination. Others prefer that you do because the animals can greatly benefit from treatments if they are ill. Others ask that you go over there last and do not return to the main facility. It is best to respect their policies. They typically have a protocol for how to disinfect yourself before returning home to your animal companions. However, practitioners should be mindful if they have critical or auto-immune challenged animals at home in which case it may be best to avoid these areas.

If you feel comfortable, this is the perfect time to lead a quick grounding and intention meditation for the group so they are ready when they approach the animals. Again, this should be standard protocol before practitioners work on any animals! If you are not grounded and coming from a heart-felt intention, often the animals will reject your attempts to work on them, they are such amazing teachers!

Delegating the Animals

Typically it works best to have the rescue/shelter representative describe each animal and their health conditions and have this information prepared in advance. Encourage the practitioners to select the animal as they go through the list and this will expedite the process.

If they describe an animal that is in need of a treatment but aggressive or is challenging, you may recommend that a level 3 or 4 practitioner work with them so they can work safely from a distance or use advanced techniques.

Otherwise, it works best to let the practitioners select the animals they resonate with.

Remember if they work in pairs, they must work with practitioners of the same level as we are not qualified and approved to teach HTA techniques.

As the service/volunteer group coordinator your focus should be on the following:

- Make sure everyone is assigned an animal
- Work with rescue/shelter representative to assign second and third rounds expeditiously
- Answer questions *
- Handle concerns
- Make it a great experience for the practitioners and the rescue/shelter

* Questions are going to arise, especially from level 1 practitioners. Again because we are not qualified or approved to “teach” the program, the best way to handle this, depending on your experience and comfort level, is to refer those questions back to the HTA workbooks. Remember to be mindful of what level that practitioner has taken. You would not want to recommend a level 4 technique to someone who has only taken level 1 and 2. If requested, help guide the practitioners to their own conclusion about what techniques to use so they develop confidence in this process. It is proper to politely correct hand placements and walk practitioners through the steps of the techniques they select to help them remember the correct steps. Also have your level 3 or 4 workbooks for essential oil charts if you are working on cats.

This will test you and keep you on your toes but is a great way to advance your learning and skills as well.

Remember to quietly play the HTA CD’s to help create a peaceful healing environment for these animals. Not only does it help the practitioners stay centered but it is therapeutic for all of the animals in the facility even though they may not all receive treatments. If the rescue/shelter is interested in purchasing the CD’s, you can refer them to the HTA website or maybe someone in the group will donate them to the rescue/shelter.

Then enjoy the opportunity to help these animals and learn from them and each other. Remember to take photos for the HTA blog!

At the end of the service/volunteer group, ask the rescue/shelter representative if they are open to you distributing their email address or phone number so that practitioners can follow up on the animals they worked on, especially for those getting certified. Typically they are open to this and excited to share the changes they observed over the next couple of days. Also confirm if they are the contact person for those interested in returning to volunteer treatments or other services (ie grooming, training, fostering, office work, newsletters, events etc).

After the Service/Volunteer Group

Remember to send an email thank you note (or mail a card) to the rescue/shelter representative thanking them for this opportunity. Mention that you have other sites scheduled but would like to return to their

organization down the road and in the interim hopefully some of the practitioners will contact them to volunteer individually.

Send an email thank you to the HTA Practitioners expressing gratitude for their donation of service and providing them with the contact information for follow up. Take this opportunity to encourage those who felt a resonance with the rescues/shelters mission to walk through the open door and continue volunteering treatments for the animals or volunteering other services.

Other benefits:

While promoting the courses, mention the HTA Practitioner teleconferences, essential oil teleconferences, and your service/volunteer group as resources to those who attend a course. Not only does this promote the professionalism of the program, it provides tools to develop their skills outside of the course and shows them that even after level 1 they can provide this amazing service to the animals in their lives and community.

Often it is easier to promote something you believe in than promote yourself. As an HTA coordinator and service/volunteer group coordinator you will learn to promote the program, modality and service/volunteer groups with ease as you continue to market in your community. Eventually this should help you build confidence in yourself as a practitioner and you will become more comfortable promoting yourself which will help you build your practice.

As the first contact with these rescues/shelters, you have a wonderful opportunity to market your practice. Talk to their adoption coordinator about promoting your business to the families who adopt their animals. By explaining how treatments can be used to help the animals adjust to their new families and other animals in the home, you can become the referral of choice to work with their clients. While you build your practice with paid services, they reduce their animal return rate, a win-win for everyone involved, especially the animals! An animal successfully adjusting to their new home is critical for non-profits, especially for no-kill shelters. Often they have information packets that they give to all the families that adopt. Ask if you can add your brochure or business card.

There are many individuals that find their way to HTA because they are looking for a greater purpose in their life, a way to connect with animals, get back to their childhood dreams and make a difference. service/volunteer groups not only fulfill these yearnings but they also become a solid foundation for developing lasting friendships with like-minded individuals.

And finally, remember that we can make a difference in our selves, our families, our communities, our nation, our world by each taking steps to raise the vibration around us and then witness the ripple effects!

Enjoy!