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St. James of the Valley

Unconditional Love

God and His people, parents and their child, a pet and her master- these are all examples of unconditional love. Love can help people get through difficult times. It supports them and makes them feel better. I help others by helping them find unconditional love. I volunteer at a no-kill animal shelter where we bring people and pets together to form families.

Since November of 2008, I have spent over 148 hours at HEARTT (Helping Each Animal Rescued Today and Tomorrow) Animal Shelter in Sharonville, Ohio. This started as service hours for Confirmation, but has become something I love. Saturday mornings are spent walking dogs, medicating cats, cleaning cages, cleaning up after vomit and hair balls, replenishing supplies, taking out the garbage, mopping floors, playing and holding animals so they will be comfortable with people, training new volunteers, and cleaning lots and lots of smelly litter boxes. Volunteers like myself keep the shelter open and help animals find families.

Most people don't know how many animals are abandoned. Some animals are dropped off, while others are left behind or tied to a pole and struggle to survive. Some just need to be cleaned up for their good nature to come out. Others need more medical attention such as pills, shots, and fluids. A few live only a short time. The animals in my shelter are all blessed; some are adopted into loving families while the remaining ones are safe, fed, and in good hands.

There are many reasons people come to my shelter. When one woman lost her husband suddenly, she fell into a depression. She adopted a dog who gave her a reason to get up each day. He helped her enjoy life again. A father promised his daughter a cat if she earned good grades at school. She worked hard for a year and a half before her father was convinced and she got her cat. Another young girl was lonely because she didn't have friends nearby. Her family adopted a cat and now she always has her best friend with her.

By supporting the shelter I'm supporting people's and animals' hopes for a better life. Having others rely on me has helped me grow and take on more responsibility. This experience has taught me to make the most of each moment and each other. What difference do I make in people's lives? I help people and animals find unconditional love and that helps them every day.