What is a foster home? A foster home is a temporary home for an animal prior to adoption. Fostering animals is a wonderful and personal way to contribute to saving homeless pets. Four-Legged Friends is always looking for responsible caring foster homes for our cats awaiting adoption.

Why do the cats need foster care? Because Four-Legged Friends currently operates as a network of foster homes, with no brick and mortar shelter, we can only take in homeless animals when we have a foster home available. Organizations that have brick and mortar shelters often need foster homes as well, for many reasons:

* Foster care can help save an animal’s life when a shelter is full.
* Some animals don’t do well in a shelter environment because they are frightened or need a little extra care.
* Newborn animals that need to be nursed or bottle-fed usually need foster care.
* Some animals need time to recover from an illness or injury before adoption.

Whatever the reason, these animals need some extra love and care before they can be adopted. Providing foster care for a few days, weeks, or months can be a lifesaving gift for an animal.

Would I be a good pet foster parent?If you want to do something to help homeless cats, fostering can be a ﬂexible, fun and rewarding volunteer job. Here’s why:

* It’s more ﬂexible than volunteer jobs that require you to show up at a speciﬁc time for a certain number of hours.
* It’s a great way to enjoy a pet if you are not in a position to make that lifetime commitment right now. Fostering can be an excellent option for college students or military families.
* Are you thinking of adding a cat to your household, but you’re not sure? Fostering can be a great way to ﬁnd out.

Taking animals into your home, loving them, and then letting them go requires a special kind of person. Your role as a foster parent is to prepare the cat for adoption into a loving home.

How much time will it take? The speciﬁc needs of the animal will determine how much time is involved. Newborn orphaned kittens, for instance, must be fed every few hours or even more often. A frightened cat who needs socialization or training will also require some extra time. You can discuss your availability with us to determine what kinds of cats you’re best suited to foster.

What skills are needed?Many of our foster parents already have cats, and therefore have some knowledge about cat behavior and health. But there’s no experience necessary to become a foster parent! Four-Legged Friends will provide the necessary information you need to take great care of the cat you decide to foster, and we are always here to answer your questions or solve any problems that may arise while you’re fostering.

Some of the animals most in need of foster care are those that require a little extra help or time. Shy cats often need time to learn to trust and need nothing more than the quiet nurture provided by a loving foster parent in a home environment. Just by getting to know the cat, you’ll help Four-Legged Friends learn more about the cat’s personality. Then we can write an accurate profile and get that kitty a forever home.

What else is required?The requirements for each individual cat will vary slightly, but in general you just need a little space and a desire to help.

What about food and medical care?Four-Legged Friends pays for all veterinary expenses, including medications, for our cats while they are in foster care awaiting adoption. Our budget is very limited budget, so we do ask that foster parents provide food and litter for their foster cat if at all possible. We will provide food and litter for approved foster parents with time and space who simply don’t have the financial resources to care for a foster cat. We will ask you to sign a contract that explains what Four-Legged Friends will cover by way of food and medical care, and we do require that you use the veterinary clinic of our choice for treatment of your foster cat.

What about my own pets?You’ll want to consider how the animals in your household will adjust to having a foster pet. Some animals do very well with a temporary friend and can help socialize the foster animal. Other pets have a harder time with new animals being added to or leaving the family. You’re the best judge of your pet’s personality.

For the safety of your pets and the foster cat, it’s important to keep your pets up-to-date on vaccinations. In most cases, the foster cat will need to be isolated from your own pets, sometimes temporarily and sometimes throughout the foster period. Four-Legged Friends will work with you to determine what’s best for each individual cat.

Will I have to ﬁnd a home for the animal myself?Four-Legged Friends will take full responsibility for ﬁnding your foster cat a new home, although you can help by telling friends, family and co-workers about your wonderful foster pet. Experienced fosters can choose to become trained adoption counselors, and be empowered to handle the adoption process from start to finish. What about when it’s time to say good-bye?Giving up an animal you’ve fostered, even to a wonderful new home, can be difﬁcult emotionally. Some people like to be there when the cat goes home with the new family. Seeing your foster friend ride off into the sunset will help you remember that he has found a lovely new home.

A lot of foster families get photos and updates of their old charges enjoying their new homes. Knowing you were part of saving a life and helping the cat ﬁnd a loving home is tremendously rewarding.

Sometimes a foster home turns into a permanent home. We call this a “foster failure” – but that’s a misnomer, because although a foster failure usually results in the foster parent retiring from fostering, the kitty gets an amazing new home…so really it’s an “adoption success”! Foster failures are why Four-Legged Friends is always on the lookout for new foster homes!

But is fostering fair to the animals?Some people are reluctant to foster animals because they are concerned that it is unfair to take in a cat, establish a bond, and then allow the cat to be adopted out into another home. Isn’t that a second abandonment?

Not at all! Being in a foster home can be a lifesaving bridge for a stray or frightened cat. It gives the animal a chance to get used to life in a house, and an opportunity to learn that people can be kind, that food is available, and that there’s a warm, secure place to sleep.

Foster care can help prepare a cat for a new life in a permanent home. There’s no shortage of animals who need this preparation time before finding their own people.How do I give fostering a try?When you are ready, contact Four-Legged Friends at fourleggedfriendsny@gmail.com for a foster home application. The completed application will get the ball rolling, and a Four-Legged Friends team member will contact you to set up a casual interview and home visit.

Our foster parents make an enormous difference in the lives of the animals they foster, and they directly determine how many cats Four-Legged Friends can save each year. Each year, millions of cats are euthanized in the United States because shelters don’t have space for them. Fostering one cat may not save the world… but you’ll have the satisfaction of knowing that for that one cat, the world has changed forever. Fostering is important, valuable work…and best of all, it saves lives.

I can’t provide foster care, but are there other ways I can help?Four-Legged Friends can use volunteer help with fundraisers and adoption events, and during “kitten season”, we often need help transporting animals to and from the vet. We need volunteers to photograph pets and help promote them online through pet adoption websites as well as on social media.

We always need talented, motivated people to help support our programs by raising funds for medical care, food, litter, and supplies. If you have a little time on your hands and want to make a real difference in the lives of homeless cats, contact Four-Legged Friends today. We’d love to have you join our team of dedicated volunteers!