Volunteers are the lifeblood of Marin Humane
By Lisa Bloch

Most often, the first person I exchange a good morning greeting with when I arrive for work at Marin Humane's campus is a smiling volunteer. Almost 800 dedicated people donate their time, energy, creativity and skills to ensure Marin Humane can achieve its mission on behalf of animals and the people who love them — and we couldn't be more grateful.

This week is an exciting one for Marin Humane — and the many nonprofits who rely on volunteers — it's National Volunteer Week. This special week is an opportunity to recognize the impact of volunteer service and the power of volunteers to tackle some of the greatest challenges facing communities. Volunteers are truly integral to what we do, and we couldn't do it without them.

Every day by 8 a.m., volunteers arrive to help feed every animal their breakfast, clean dog runs, cat litter boxes and other animal housing, and get dogs out for dog walks, while cats and other animals enjoy playtime or cuddles. Physical and mental enrichment continues throughout the day until it's dinner and bedtime for all creatures great and small. (Puppies and kittens are often fed several times a day to help them grow big and strong.)

When visiting our Marin Humane campus in Novato or our cat adoption center, Kitty Corner, in San Anselmo, you're welcomed by one of our awesome volunteer greeters or adoption counselors. Volunteer adoption counselors are expert matchmakers for people and pets at both our brick-and-mortar locations and adoption events in the community. Volunteers with our behavior and training department make post-adoption phone calls to make sure newly adopted pets are settling into their new homes and help coach pet parents and their dogs in our training classes as well as assist our behaviorists in private consultations.

Other volunteers help our tiny but mighty veterinary clinic staff, ensuring animals are safe and comfortable before and after surgeries and other treatments, as well as helping keep the clinic clean and organized.

With a dramatic increase over the past few years in requests for help from struggling pet parents, a team of volunteers delivers pet food, cat litter and other supplies throughout the community to those in need through our pet safety net program. They also help out at our busy community vaccination clinics.

Volunteers also perform important administrative work, which may mean fewer opportunities for cuddling critters but less pet hair on one's clothes at the end of the day. These volunteers assist with data entry, sorting through donations or taking and processing beautiful photos of adoption animals for our website.

And we can't forget the volunteers who expertly run the Marin Humane Thrift Shop in San Anselmo, which has been volunteer-run for more than 60 years. Their hard work and dedication supports the veterinary clinic.

Across the bay in Oakland, our Hopalong team of volunteers ferries animals to and from foster care, cares for animals during their brief stay at that location and also plays matchmaker between pets and people.

Out in the community, our animal-assisted program volunteers and their pets educate children and bring the love and companionship of animals to care facilities, libraries and schools, and much more.

And, of course, our foster parent volunteers are critical to our work, too. Whether they're opening their home to a new momma cat and her kittens, a stressed-out pup that needs a break from the shelter or an extremely shy dog that's learning to trust again, these volunteers are so important.

We're beyond grateful to our many volunteers and celebrate their generous spirit this week — and every day. To learn more about volunteering, visit marinhumane.org/volunteer.

Lisa Bloch is the marketing and communications director for Marin Humane, which contributes Tails of Marin articles and welcomes animal-related questions and stories about the people and animals in our community. Visit marinhumane.org, find us on social media @marinhumane or email lbloch@marinhumane.org.