

## 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 our volunteer teams. For more information about this wonderful organization, visit [www.petpartners.org](http://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 recommended but not required for canines.

### *What is the Pet Partners® handler training?*

The handler must complete this training before evaluating (performing a series of exercises) with an animal companion. Pet Partners® Therapy Animal Handler Course (**for the handler only**) that accomplishes this training is offered twice each year by Tufts Paws for People. The workshop is educational and a lot of fun! The fee for the workshop is \$150 and includes all materials, lunch and snacks. The handler training is also available as an on-line course directly through Pet Partners® ([www.petpartners.org/volunteer](http://www.petpartners.org/volunteer)).

### *Who can be a Pet Partners® handler?*

Handlers must be 10 years old or older, and children ages 10 to 16 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian on all parts of the registration process and on visits. Multiple handlers can use the same animal, but all handlers must complete the handler training, and all must evaluate separately.

### *What happens after the handler training?*

After completing the workshop, you may sign up through your Pet Partners® registration page on the Pet Partners® website for an evaluation whenever you feel you and your animal companion are ready to do so. We offer evaluations nine 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 do not pass the first time), then you may sign-up for a retry evaluation when you feel ready to do so. Whether or not you pass, we will go over the results of your evaluation with you thoroughly so 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 will 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 complete an online registration packet with a 2-year registration fee on the Pet Partners® website (this will provide you liability insurance while visiting as a volunteer) to become a formal Pet Partners® team. If you choose to become a member of our group, Tufts Paws for People, we will provide mentoring and support when you begin your visitation career, as well as help you to visit in a facility that matches your interests. For membership information, please contact us directly at [pawsforpeople@tufts.edu](mailto:pawsforpeople@tufts.edu).

### *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. You can also visit our website for more information at [hai.tufts.edu/paws/](http://hai.tufts.edu/paws/).