

The Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide: Getting Pets Adopted Directly from Foster Homes



Maddie's Fund

Steps to Marketing Your Foster Pet

Now that you have all of the building blocks, it's time to get marketing. Here are some steps you should take in order to get maximum exposure for your foster pet.

Step 1: Gather Your Team

You can surely do this alone, but why not tap some of your friends and acquaintances to market with you? That new shelter volunteer who likes taking photos might be more than willing to meet up in a park and get some great outdoor shots of your foster pet. The friend who's always making you laugh could write a hilarious and touching biography.

Consider this story from an adult dog foster:

"My friend Jeanne was a professional photographer who volunteered with the Fairfax County Animal Shelter, the same shelter my family fostered dogs for. When we had a foster dog, she would invite us to her home studio for photos. It was a win-win proposition: When the shelter posted her photos, our foster dog would immediately get at least four or five inquiries from potential adopters, and when we came to her house for photos it would save her a trek up to the shelter so she could make her monthly quota for volunteer hours. One particular dog, Coco, found a home even more quickly because of this relationship."

"I brought Coco over to Jeanne's, where she made quite an impression.

While she was taking photos, Jeanne asked me what I thought would be the perfect home for Coco. She was quite energetic, so I told her I'd love for her to be adopted by someone athletic – maybe a runner or a hiker. Since we were talking about a dream family, even though I'd certainly consider families without all of these qualities, I threw in a high fence and no young children."

"No sooner had we arrived home than I got a message from Jeanne. She said that her neighbor, Jean, would like to meet Coco. Jean's senior Beagle had passed away several months before, and since then she'd continued on their 3-mile daily walks while carrying his collar. Jean's kids were grown; she and her husband lived together in house with a 6-foot fence surrounding the backyard. She did a marathon every month. As they say, the rest is history!"



Step 2: Market, Market, Market!

In order to create content that connects your foster with potential adopters, you need to make marketing as much as part of your experience as feeding your foster pet. Aim to create new marketing material (a photo, video, story, etc.) a minimum of every 7-10 days. Make sure your camera is always on hand for those great photo-op moments. When your foster does something memorable or touching, write it down so you can craft a post.

Step 3: Diversify Your Platforms

The shelter's social pages may be where you get the biggest return on investment for your marketing material, but don't stop there. Market to potential adopters using different avenues, such as your own personal social

media pages or ones you and others create specifically for the purpose of marketing pets, as well. Post on Craigslist. Post on Instagram. Ask the guy who runs that page that markets local shelter pets, too – or create one yourself!

“NoVa Cats uses social media to promote adult and senior cats in the Northern Virginia area,” says Stefanie Sacripante Hives. “It’s very easy. I get some good pictures, write some text, add some rudimentary graphics, and voila!”

The results have been extraordinary: through NoVa Cats, Hives has found permanent homes for dozens of senior and special needs cats in just the last few years.



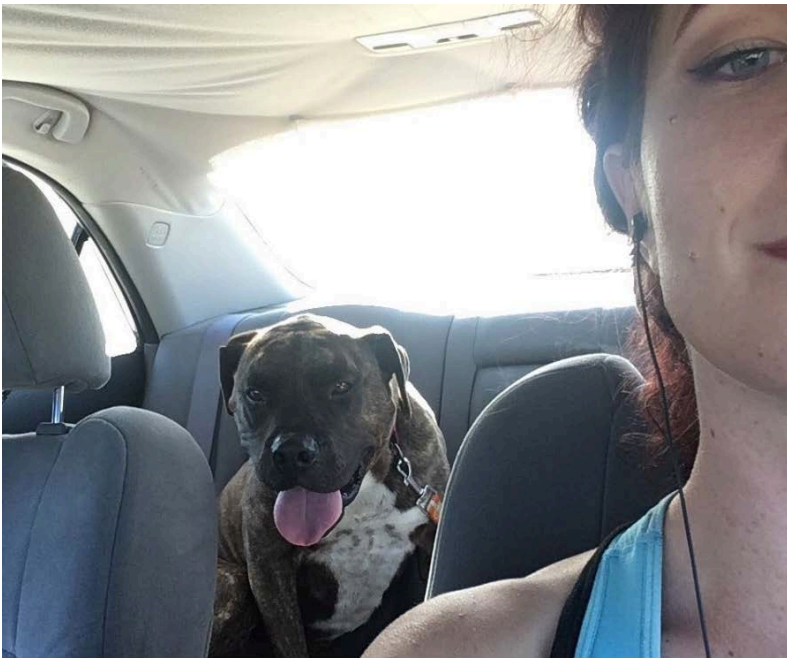
Social Media Sites to Try:

[Craigslist.com](https://www.craigslist.com)

Don't be afraid of Craigslist. Many shelters have found several wonderful adopters via this website. This doesn't mean don't take precautions, but definitely do not write off posting here. The section that will allow you to post an ad for your foster is **Pets & For Sale – By Owner**. You can also post shelter events in their Events section. Don't forget to “renew” your post every 48 hours to cycle it to the top of its listing page.

[Instagram](https://www.instagram.com)

Instagram is an excellent place to showcase for your foster pics and video. This is not only a great way to find potential adopters, but it's also useful as a place to direct interested parties to proof that the foster they are asking about is the best animal in the whole world. You can use your own Instagram account or create one specifically for marketing your fosters, favorite shelter pets or local adoptables.



prancersfosterpibbles • Following

prancersfosterpibbles The second you put pants on he will stare you down until you reassure him that he will be joining you.

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#vcasfoster #adopharley #vcas #pibble
#pitbull #pitbullmom
#rescuedogsofinstagram #venturacounty
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#spayandneuter #seniordog #goodboy
#adoptme #adoptdontshop #boxer #aww
#boxersofinstagram #dogsofinsta #love
#adoptdontshop #thedodo



Twitter

Post photos of your foster pet and introduce them to your followers. Twitter's limit of 280 characters or less may make it tough to tell stories, but you can post links to them from your account.

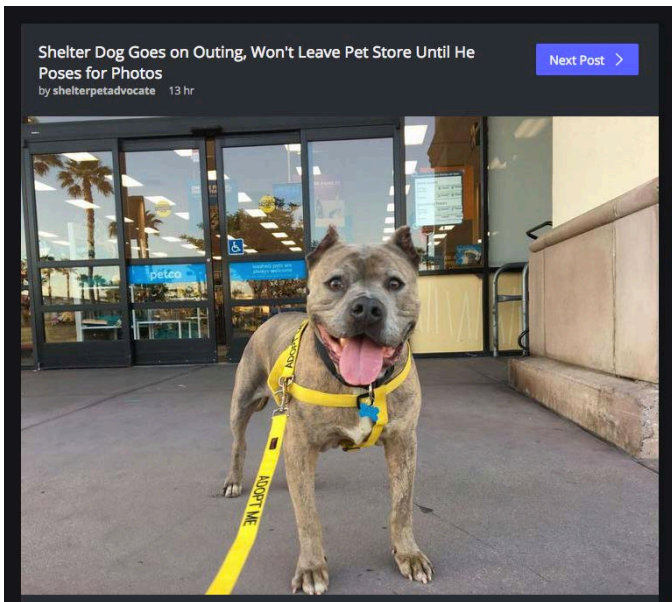
Nextdoor.com

Nextdoor is like social media for your neighborhood. You'll need to verify your address in order to register. We know several fosters who have found wonderful adopters via Nextdoor.

Imgur

A big dog foster shared the following tips with us: "Imgur, in particular, is a social media site to check out. While on Facebook, the majority of users are women, 70% of Imgur's users are men, opening your marketing up to a whole new demographic. Additionally, posts are seen by more people based 100% on the popularity of the post, not on "likes" or "follows" that your account has gained over time. This makes it easier for newbies to see their marketing material go viral. Posts are written much like articles, with a title, as many photos as you'd like, and text in between. Your title and first photo are crucial for making an impression.

My first experience on Imgur was awesome. I decided to try it out by posting four dogs I had fostered. Overnight, two of the posts went viral, racking up over 100,000 views each! Incredibly, there was a message in my inbox from a writer for iheartdogs.com, who asked if she could do a story on one of them. She interviewed me about him, and the article came out shortly afterward. Some amazing women from a rescue in Washington State read the article, hopped in their van and drove to California to adopt him!"



Reddit.com

Reddit is a worldwide community made up of a bazillion “subreddits.” There is pretty much a “subreddit” for everything. Try posting to relevant ones like [reddit.com/r/fosterdogs](https://www.reddit.com/r/fosterdogs), [reddit.com/r/dogs](https://www.reddit.com/r/dogs), [reddit.com/r/*yourcity*](https://www.reddit.com/r/*yourcity*), etc.

Rescueme.org

Rescueme.org is a nonprofit organization that aims to help all breeds of dogs, cats and other animals find good homes, anywhere in the world. You can post pets on the site, and they will send the pet’s information out to hundreds of potential adopters in your area within two hours.

Adoptapet.com

Adoptapet now has a “rehome your pet” option that you can use to list your fosters.

Pinterest

Post your foster’s photo or flier and add details and contact information below.

The Shelter Pet Project

The Shelter Pet Project is a free resource that can put a long-stay pet in front of a much wider, national audience. Anyone can submit a pet to be featured. Here’s how it works:

1. Find:
 - A URL to the pet’s adoption listing on the shelter website, AdoptAPet.com, Petfinder.com, etc.
 - If the pet is not listed on a site, or you have a better description than the one listed there, include that with the submission.
 - The email address or phone number interested parties can use to contact the adoption organization or foster caregiver about the pet
 - A great photo of the pet, preferably a close-up of his or her face, looking directly into the camera
2. Email this information to contact@theshelterpetproject.org
3. When you receive a reply, make sure the shelter knows. Post a message in your Volunteers & Fosters Facebook group with the date and time the pet will be posted. This way, other volunteers will know ahead of time and will be able to help promote the post and answer additional questions about the pet.

Step 4: Connect With the Community

Introduce your foster to friends and family. Put an “adopt me” vest or leash on your foster dog and venture out into the community. Make sure you have something you can write on, or even a card with information on how to adopt your foster in case you’re asked.

Even if those who meet your foster dog aren’t in the market for a new pet, they will often become his or her advocate. When the shelter does a post on your foster pet, the more people who like, share and leave positive comments, the farther the post will go. You can even ask them to post the pet to their social media to give them more exposure.

Field Trips

If your foster is comfortable in public, take them out! Not only are these A+ photo opportunities, but it gives your foster a chance to meet people organically and ham it up in their “Adopt Me” apparel. Try to think outside the obvious animal enthusiast locations. You know who loves pets? Athletes. Construction workers. Single adults. The possibilities are endless!

With dogs who like riding in cars and meeting people, taking them out when you’re running errands, picking up the kids or getting coffee is a great way to give them exposure. If they’re comfortable being around crowds and other dogs, head to an outdoor mall or visit dog-friendly stores. Make some business cards with the dog’s name and your contact information written on them and hand them out to anyone who stops to say hi.

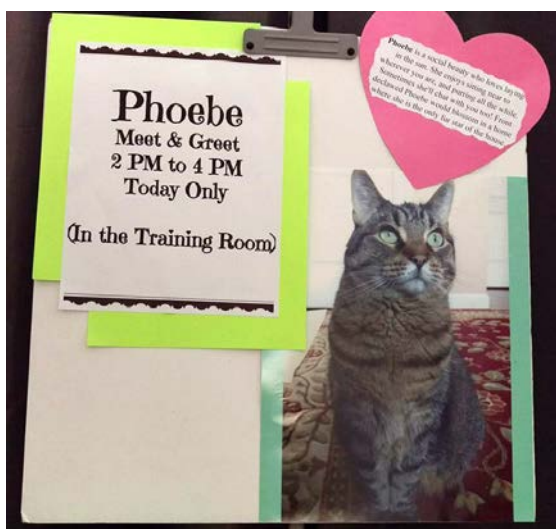
One amazing foster told us, “King Louie became my roller derby league’s team mascot. One teammate almost adopted him and another went on to become a foster mom and active shelter volunteer. I swear there is no demographic more animal-obsessed than female athletes. Imagine how many other untapped demographics there are!”



Attend Adoption Events

Anytime the shelter has organized an adoption event, bring your foster dog and join the fun! Some events are offsite, and shelter dogs are transported and get adopted from there. Those events have lots of promotion and draw in people looking to adopt, so show up and show your pet off and meet potential adopters. If your dog is extremely fearful or dog reactive, events like these might not be a great place for exposure, since they won't be on their best behavior.

Cats aren't generally candidates for field trips, but you can get extra exposure for cats (and dogs!) in foster by creating "meet and greets" for them. See if you can schedule a quiet room to hang out in for two hours or so during a big adoption event or even on a busy Saturday. Publicize the event the same as you would for any celebrity meet-and-greet (social media posts, Facebook Events, etc.) to invite potential adopters to visit with the pet during the time you'll be in attendance.



Word of Mouth

Simply telling your friends, neighbors, hairdresser, mailman, waiter, etc. about your amazing foster pet can create potential adopters. Make sure people know how to get a hold of you (your friends have your phone number or can contact you on Facebook, but strangers might want to get in touch later, so those business cards and your foster email will come in handy). You can create a team of adoption advocates this way!

Step 5: Try ALL the things!

There are infinite ways to market your foster pet; more great ways are being discovered every day. Got a great new idea you want to try out? As long as it's safe for you and your pet, and could lead them to their forever home, try it! Take a look at some of the innovative ways fosters and volunteers have found to market pets for ideas:



Will you be my Valentine

LANGSTON
Kennel 70
AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION AT
THE CAMARILLO ANIMAL SHELTER

I foster for Ventura County
Animal Services and my
foster dog is looking for a
forever home!

♥ Couper



One family thought of an adorable way to promote their foster, Langston: Put him on Valentines that can be given out at school and in the community!