About Pets for Patriots

Shelter/rescue partner program

Updated November 2026



PETS FOR PATRIOTS®

Pets for Patriots helps people save pets and pets save people through companion pet adoption for United States military veterans and spouses of the fallen



Our work

- **Partner with shelters/rescues** to place companion pets with veterans and spouses of the fallen facing PTSD, depression, loneliness, deployment, or loss
- **Provide access to affordable pet medical care** through community veterinary partners, savings through VIP Petcare, and discounts on Vetster for 24/7 pet telehealth
- **Ease stress of military transitions** on service members/families
- **Champion companion pet adoption**

Who and how we help

17 veterans commit suicide every day[1]

Depression and PTSD are major contributors; pets give veterans a renewed sense of purpose and a reason to live

17,800 dogs & cats enter shelters daily[2]

Many either fail to make it out alive or languish in long-term homelessness

Loss of a spouse is recognized as one of life's most stressful events[3]

These burdens may be particularly acute for Gold Star spouses having lost a spouse in military action

Our program helps solve three problems:

Provides healing to heroes/hero families, saves lives of vulnerable shelter animals, helps shelter/rescue partners make room for more animals in need



1 2023 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report, US Department of Veterans Affairs
2 New Animal Shelter Data Indicates 6.5 Million Dogs and Cats Entered Shelters in 2023, Shelter Animals Count
3 2023 National Council on Aging

What makes us different



We are the only nationally operating 501(c)(3) charity that is:

01 Open to **veterans from WWII to active** duty and from all armed forces

02 Open to **Gold Star spouses**, the husbands and wives of service members killed or declared missing in action

03 Focused on **overlooked shelter animals:** adult, special needs, long-term homeless dogs/cats, and large breed dogs

04 Committed to **surrender prevention**

Our adopter benefits:

- **$200 pet retailer gift card** upon eligible adoption; defrays cost of ‘welcome home’ pet food and other essentials
- **Quality, affordable veterinary care** through local partner veterinarians, savings at VIP Petcare clinics, and discount on 24/7 pet telehealth from Vetster
- **Savings** on pet food, treats, medication, and supplies
- **Post-adoption follow up** for one full year—for every single adoption



How you help:

Every shelter/rescue partner offers a ‘member patriot special’—a ‘thank you for your service and sacrifice’ adoption benefit



Some examples:

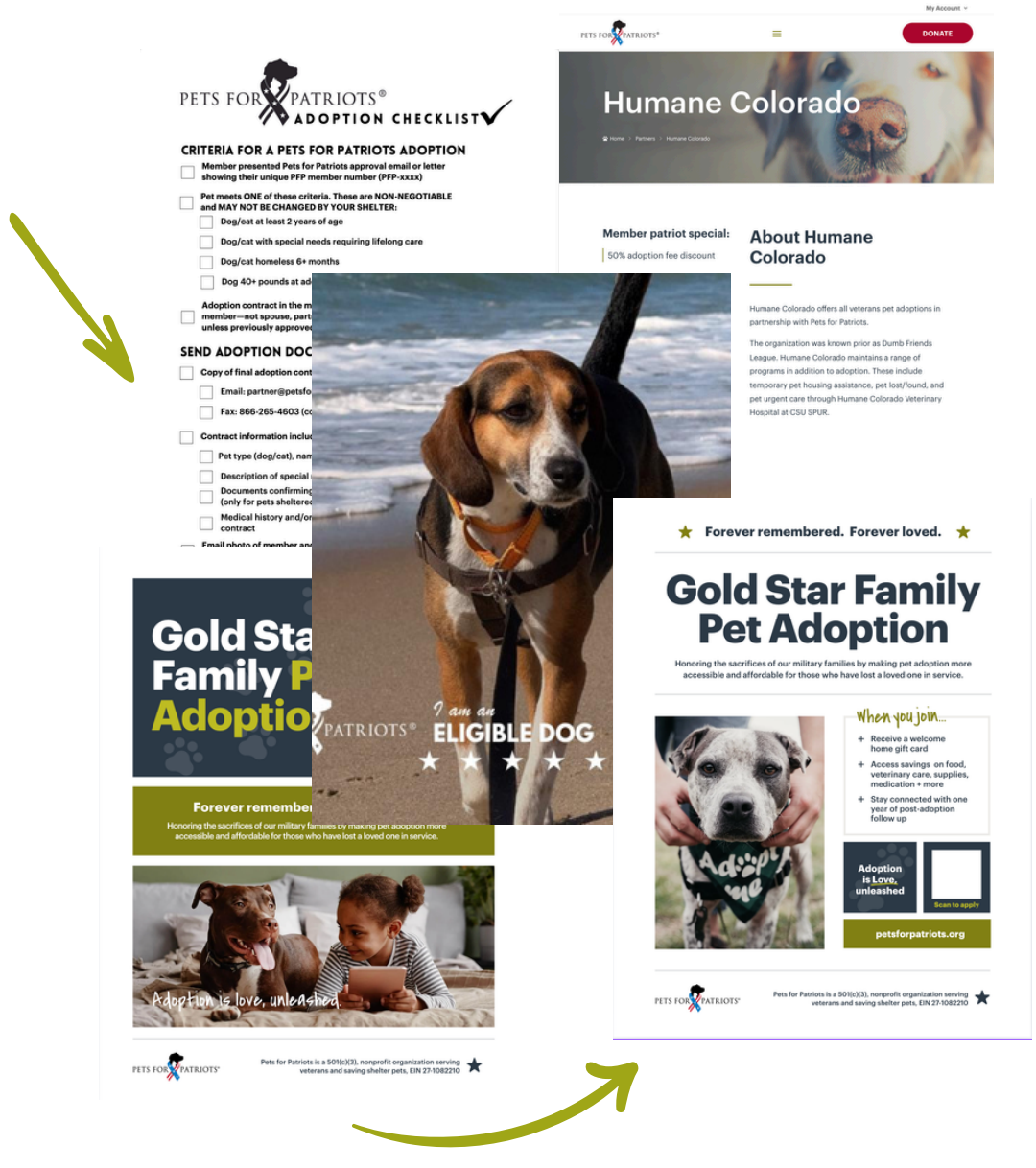
- Adoption fee discount or waiver (most popular!)
- ‘Day one’ essentials (food, leash, carrier, etc.)
- Low- or no-cost pet training (can limit to ‘x’ number of sessions or ‘y’ off standard fees)
- Coupons for local pet-care businesses

Easy to administer

One-page adoption checklist to make it easy for your team to complete an adoption with options to send documents by email, fax, or online

Free promotional assets—both printer-friendly and digital—to promote our partnership in your shelter, website, social media, and community

Free Search Engine Optimized page on our website



Turnkey and free

Pets for Patriots provides an additional channel for your shelter/rescue to promote the most overlooked dogs and cats in your care—and is **100% free**



Focus on most adoption-challenged: dogs/cats who are adult, special needs, or chronically homeless, and large breed dogs



Open to range of animal welfare organizations: shelters, rescues, SPCAs, humane societies, and municipal animal controls



Forget Me Not campaign available only to our partners to shine a light on your long-time pets

more...

Spotlight on long timers

Our **Forget Me Not** campaign highlights program-eligible, long-timer dogs and cats in your care who are still searching for their heroes—and is **an exclusive shelter/rescue partner benefit**



Eligible pets

A pet must meet just **ONE** of the following criteria:

- **Dog or cat at least 2 years of age**
- **Dog 40+ pounds at time of adoption**
- **Dog or cat homeless for 6 months+**
  (total continuous homelessness at your shelter and/or any shelter from which pet was transferred; time as a 'stray' does not count)
- **Dog or cat with special needs**
  (birth defect, disability, or chronic medical condition that requires lifelong care)





Pets for love, not work

Dogs and cats adopted through Pets for Patriots are for **companionship and emotional support** only

We do not permit pets in our program to be trained as service animals—without exception

Double the love

Adopters can have up to two program-eligible pets (dogs or cats) at once, adopted simultaneously or over time



A great way to help bonded pairs and other compatible animals find loving homes!

Eligible applicants

Active, reserve, or separated members of the U.S. military from all armed forces; we welcome veterans from WWII to those currently in service

Husband or wife of service member killed or declared missing in military action, known as a Gold Star spouse

Adopting pet for himself/herself; cannot adopt on behalf of another person and **must** be legal owner/signatory for the adoption; we'll reach out to you if another party may be the initial signatory due to a veteran's military obligations or a Gold Star member's personal circumstances

Approved by Pets for Patriots prior to adoption: all members **must** present their Pets for Patriots approval email/letter to shelter staff, not just tell you their unique Pets for Patriots number



Application + Adoption process:

1. Individual applies to Pets for Patriots online or by phone, provides required documentation

Approval typically within 2 business days if applicant has his/her documents

2. Once approved, member visits local shelter/rescue partner to adopt a pet

You help match our member with a program-eligible dog or cat—or two!

3. Shelter/rescue promptly sends Pets for Patriots signed adoption contract, photo of adopter and pet

We provide a one-page adoption checklist...our partner 'cheat sheet!'

4. Member visits our local veterinary partner for affordable, quality care (if available)—and has access to savings from VIP Petcare nationwide and 24/7 pet telehealth from Vetster

Stay Connected

Pets for Patriots conducts post-adoption follow up for a minimum of one year to nurture the person-pet bond and reduce pet surrender

Questions?

We've got answers!

Read some of our most-asked questions...

Q: Does Pets for Patriots pay the adoption fee?

No. The adoption fee is the adopter's responsibility. However, we encourage our shelter/rescue partners to offer adoption fee discounts or waivers as their member patriot special, though it is not required.

Partners that discount or waive adoption fees can often recoup the difference through donor appeals. Supporters love helping heroes, hero families, and pets in their communities, and often respond well to specific donation requests.

Q: How do we handle adopters who haven't yet applied to Pets for Patriots?

You can put the pet on a three-day hold, or offer a short (e.g., 7- day) foster-to-adopt to allow the individual time to apply to Pets for Patriots. Our usual turnaround is no more than two business days from the time we receive both an individual's online application and eligibility documents.

Adopters will forfeit all benefits of our program if they adopt a pet prior to being approved by us unless they adopt on a weekend or federal holiday*, or we have made arrangements with you beforehand, such as for an adoption event or extenuating circumstance. *See our 'weekend-holiday adoptions' guide!

Q/A continued...

Q: Can we ask for military ID, discharge papers, or a Gold Star's proof of casualty document?

No. We are experienced at reviewing a wide range of documentation relating to a veteran's eligibility or a Gold Star applicant's proof of casualty for their fallen hero.

Further, those documents contain confidential and highly sensitive information. You may ask for other ID that is part of your customary application process, e.g., driver's license, rental agreement, utility bill, etc.

Q: Can a Pets for Patriots member adopt more than one pet?

A: Yes! Pets for Patriots members may have up to two program-eligible pets at any time. For both pets to receive full benefits, both must fit one of our adoption criteria.

The member may adopt both pets at the same time (bonded pairs or other similarly compatible animals) or over time.

Fetch!

Let's get started!

