

TO: Prospective Grey Muzzle Board Members

FROM: Julie Nowicki, President and Founder

RE: Requirements and Rewards of Board Membership

Thank you for your interest in The Grey Muzzle Organization. This memo will give you an understanding of the requirements of a Grey Muzzle board member including skills and experience, time commitment, and the rewards I believe you'll experience as a member of the board!

Organization Overview

The Grey Muzzle Organization incorporated in Washington state in February 2008, and we received our 501(c)(3) status in July 2008. We currently have three board members; you can view our profiles at www.greymuzzle.org/board. Our ideal board size is five.

We partner with other non-profit organizations nationwide. Our current board members reside in Washington state and North Carolina, and we are looking to add board members who represent other areas of the country.

I perform many of the functions of an Executive Director and staff for the organization, and I am also a member of the board. I am available a significant amount of time to do the “heavy-lifting” operational work – prepare finances, create materials for fundraising, implement marketing programs, track donations, etc. The board as a whole provides “governance” to Grey Muzzle, making decisions about and overseeing our direction.

Because we are a relatively new organization and still working on establishing our “best practices,” board members are expected to lead a minimum of one project and participate in weekly discussions and decision-making (more about this below). Rather than being part of a committee, we ask that you choose an area that interests you and lead the development of that area, for example, corporate fundraising. Because the Grey Muzzle Board is actively involved in leading and implementing projects, you may find that being a Grey Muzzle board member is a bit different than sitting on the board of a large non-profit, a shelter, or a for-profit board.

Important Note:

If you join our board, we will not be able to make grants to your organization (conflict of interest).

Our Vision and Board Membership

First and foremost, board members must be passionate about our purpose, mission and vision. In our Articles of Incorporation, our purpose is stated as:

- A. Improve the lives of *senior homeless dogs*.
- B. Support the development of programs at animal welfare organizations that specifically assist senior dogs.

At our annual meeting in 2008 the board updated our Mission, Vision and Values as follows:

Mission

The Grey Muzzle Organization improves the lives of at-risk senior dogs by providing funding and resources to animal shelters, rescue organizations, sanctuaries, and other non-profit groups nationwide.

Vision

We envision a world where no old dog dies alone and afraid.

Values

We believe that old dogs contribute positively to our quality of life and have much to teach us about patience, respect, responsibility, loyalty and unconditional love

We believe that every senior dog deserves to live out their golden years, months, weeks or even days in a place of love, security and peace

We believe that dogs are not a disposable commodity; rather, they depend on us to care for them through all stages of their lives

We believe that at times it is appropriate to make an end of life decision based on a deteriorating quality of life or if the dog is harmful to itself or others

We believe in working with diverse organizations from across the county that share our fundamental values

We believe in honest and open decision making that allows us to be accountable to our donors and the organizations we support

We believe in providing educational support, advocacy, and sharing of best practices for those who support senior dogs

All board members must support, and be passionate about, our purpose, mission and values.

Desirable Characteristics for New Board Members

Grey Muzzle is looking to add board members who bring one or more of the following areas of expertise.

- Managing an animal shelter
- Grant writing
- PR and public relations, including press releases
- Corporate relationships and fundraising
- Organizational development and group dynamics, facilitation
- Volunteer management
- Non-profit management
- Dog behaviorist, with emphasis on the human-dog relationship
- Canine geriatric veterinary medicine
- Management of a grant-making organization
- Fundraising or marketing
- Non-profit legal or accounting

Requirements of Board Membership

Please consider these requirements carefully. We move quite rapidly, often making decisions on a weekly basis. You need to be comfortable with the time contribution required.

- **Time**

- We make decisions and share information on a weekly basis using an online team management tool. At a minimum (unless you have notified the board that you will be unavailable for a specific period of time) board members should expect to check the team site at least once a week and spend several hours giving input on decisions and reviewing discussions. Typical items to review include approval of organizations requesting funding, funding for specific dogs, and input/approval of public documents such as our grant application.
- We currently hold monthly meetings of approximately 90 minutes in length. You will need a broadband (high-speed) Internet connection because most meetings are conducted via an Internet meeting service. We often make key strategic decisions at the meetings, so it is very important that you attend as many board meetings as possible.
- During semi-yearly grant making periods, you will need to allow additional time to review and comment on grant applications. These are currently scheduled for March-May (grants awarded in June) and September-November (grants awarded in December).
- Attendance at an annual board meeting for two days.
- As mentioned above, instead of serving on a committee, each board member takes an area of interest and expertise and leads that program. For example, one of our board members is working on major gifts, another on shelter partnerships. I am available to help with associated administrative work, but as the lead, you have the opportunity to develop the strategy and plan for the program, define the detailed tasks and action items needed to get the work done (although you may not do all of those yourself), and provide status updates at board meetings. While this is a big commitment from each board member, it's also a chance to make a significant and rewarding contribution towards our mission.

- **Money**

- **Contribution:** As with most non-profit organizations, board members are required to make a donation to the organization. The amount is your choice. This does not mean that Grey Muzzle is funded by board members – we are a publicly funded charity. However, we cannot ask the public to donate to our cause if our own board members do not do so.
- **Expenses:** You will need to pay for your travel and food/lodging expenses for the annual board meeting in October. The board will decide where and when the meeting is held each year. In October 2008 we held our annual meeting in Las Vegas in conjunction with the Best Friends No More Homeless Pets conference.

- **Activities**

- **Fundraising** for Grey Muzzle starts with awareness-raising. Our donation level is directly tied to mailing list signups in each state. Board members should be willing to participate in awareness-raising, but this doesn't mean that we want you to make phone calls (unless, of course, that is part of the special project you take on). Rather, we ask that you use your normal contacts and connections to help raise awareness.
- Because the board has **fiduciary responsibilities**, board members will review the organization's annual financial statements and participate in budget reviews. You don't need to be an accounting expert, but you do need to be accountable to donors for how money is spent.

- **Terms of membership**

Board members serve for two years. Board members may be re-elected if they choose to serve for another term.

BENEFITS

As a board member, you will have the opportunity to participate in laying the groundwork for the programs that Grey Muzzle supports. You will determine how we can best allocate our resources to help homeless senior dogs. In the coming months and years, we'll be tasked with making a lot of interesting and important decisions. Here are a few of the large issues that we have continued discussion about:

- Should we provide financial assistance to individuals who need help caring for their senior dog, or should funding be limited to 501(c)(3) organizations?
- How can we help keep old dogs out of shelters in the first place? In the current economic climate, this is an area where we'd like to have more impact.
- Do we want to negotiate special rates with veterinarians, laboratories, dog product manufacturers/supplies etc., on behalf of our partner shelter and rescue organizations?

You will have the opportunity to work with others from diverse backgrounds who share our vision and passion for senior dogs. We all learn and grow from the collective decision making process.

The most important benefit, of course, is the opportunity to make a life-changing difference for many old dogs that need us, and for the people that care about them. Thank you for considering volunteering for a position on The Grey Muzzle Organization board.

If you would like to explore the possibility of a Grey Muzzle board position, please contact Julie Nowicki at julien@greymuzzle.org, or (919) 529-0309.