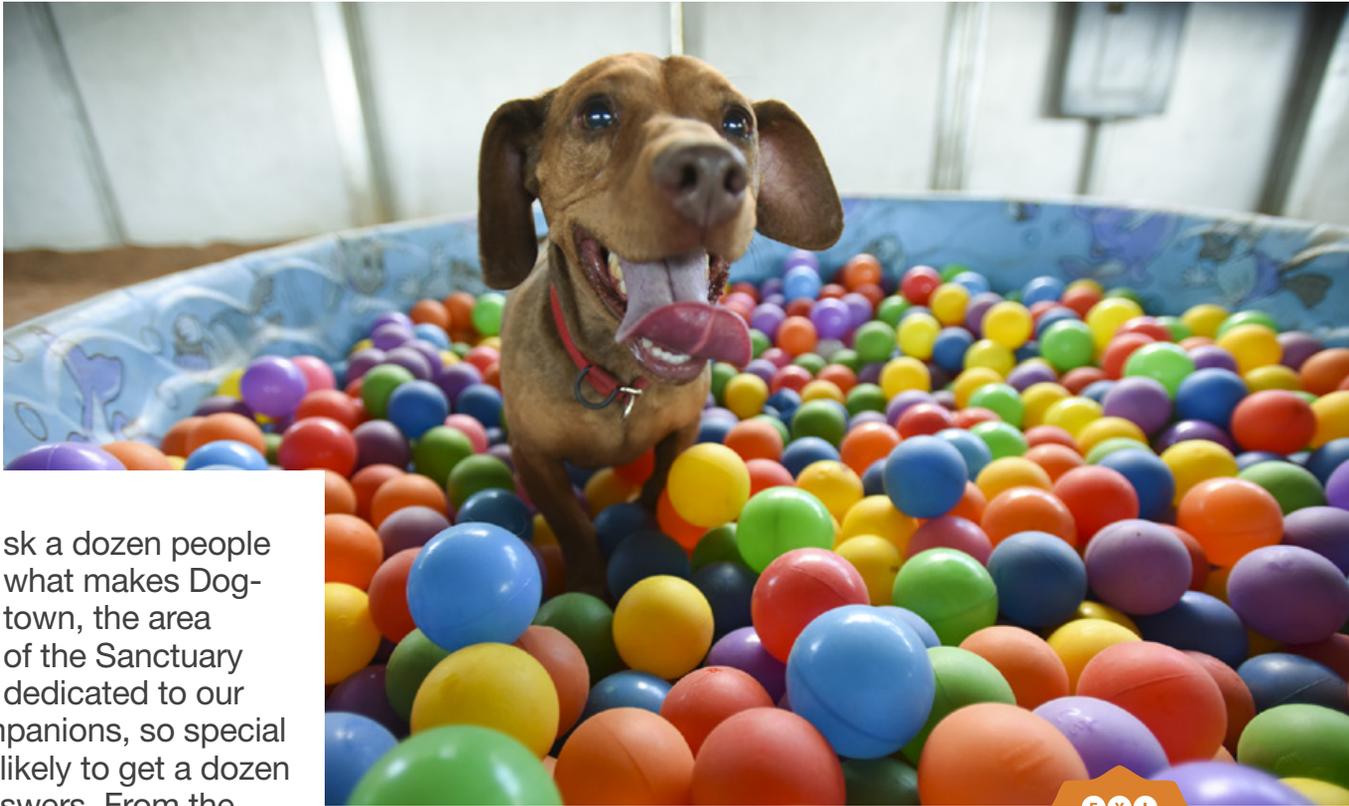


Welcome to Dogtown



The closest
thing to
doggie
heaven on
earth

BY HEIDI LOSLEBEN



A

sk a dozen people what makes Dogtown, the area of the Sanctuary dedicated to our

canine companions, so special and you're likely to get a dozen different answers. From the dogs who leave a lasting mark on volunteers' hearts to the enduring love caregivers show each resident, it's no wonder that Dogtown is such a popular place to visit. Here's a peek at what makes the Sanctuary different from any other safe haven for dogs.

Welcome to Dogtown

Dogtown Headquarters buzzes with activity and anticipation every day, as volunteers from around the country and beyond show up to get their assignments. Play with puppies? Walk senior dogs? Help socialize a shy pup? Even scooping poop is fun when you're surrounded by gorgeous scenery, happy dogs and people who love them.

Ask Dogtown manager Carley Faughn what's most special about Dogtown and she says, "We treat each dog individually and cater to each one's needs. The Dogtown team is very knowledgeable about how to help dogs overcome any challenges they might have, while at the same time providing them with a full, enriching life."

On any given day, more than 400 dogs call Dogtown home. Dogs live here, are loved here, and are welcome to stay as


F Y I

Around 50 people are employed at Dogtown

long as necessary until adopted. Some are healing from abuse or neglect. Others are shy or undersocialized. Some have special medical problems. Dogtown is designed to meet each dog's particular needs.

In most of Dogtown, the dogs live in thoughtfully chosen pairs or groups. They have access to indoor and outdoor space with room to run, and every resident has toys and a cozy bed. You can inhale the sweet smell of puppy breath until you're

dizzy at the puppy preschool and cuddle up to small dogs in the laundry room. Across the road are the Lodges, where dogs who don't want to live with others have a room and a yard all to themselves.

Feeling, and looking, good

There are several veterinary technicians dedicated to Dogtown residents. These vet techs take care of minor medical needs and treatments. (When dogs require surgery or



VOLUNTEER LOVE

► **Mary Ann O'Donnell**
MARYLAND

In Dogtown, we scooped poop and cleaned the puppy rooms, took puppies outside for walks and did a little clicker training with them. I also fell in love with an older pit bull terrier named Edmond. He took a nap while we were cleaning his room, and I tucked him in. This is a feel-good place; it's like therapy.

► **Don Cameron**
KANSAS

I lived the best week of my life at Best Friends. Since I have a soft place in my heart for physically impaired and more senior dogs, I worked mostly at Old Friends in Dogtown.

What I enjoyed most was just sitting on the floor petting, rubbing, scratching and sweet-talking the dogs.

► **Deborah Pingrey**
MONTANA

I spent an amazing, heartwarming, life- and love-affirming week at Best Friends, helping to feed the dogs twice a day. Everyone there — the dogs, the staff and the volunteers — radiated unconditional love.

► **Edmond Wells**
VERMONT

What a magical place. The caregivers are so great, and the dogs are so appreciative of any little thing you do for them. It was hard to leave without

FYI

7,260 people
volunteered
in Dogtown in
2016 alone

adopting one. It is the most beautiful place you'll ever see — definitely one for your bucket list.

► **Casey O'Connell**
IDAHO

We got to work filling in holes that the busy dogs had made, then enjoyed shy dog class, where we sat in a circle with other volunteers and quietly held treats for undersocialized dogs to come and take from our hands. This helped teach them that people are good. It was wonderfully rewarding. We cannot wait to come back again.



FYI
 Dogtown staff and volunteers prepare about 300 pounds of dog food daily

more intensive care, they go to the main facility, the Best Friends Animal Clinic.) If dogs are recovering from surgery, are overweight, or need some general fitness assistance, they spend time at the fitness center. There, a hydrotherapy tank with an underwater treadmill rehabilitates pups who need help getting back on their feet.

Two full-time groomers keep the dogs looking and feeling their best with baths, nail trims and haircuts. Dogs get the full spa treatment when they arrive at Best Friends and right before they are adopted, and whenever they need those services during their stay at the Sanctuary.

Shake a leg

Both mental and physical stimulation are vital to a dog's well-being, and the residents of Dogtown get their fill of both. Daily walks led by caregivers and volunteers are just the beginning. The large fenced-in dog park, a perfect place for off-leash romping, allows energetic dogs to do "zoomies" and play fetch. In the summer, kiddie pools provide relief from the desert heat.

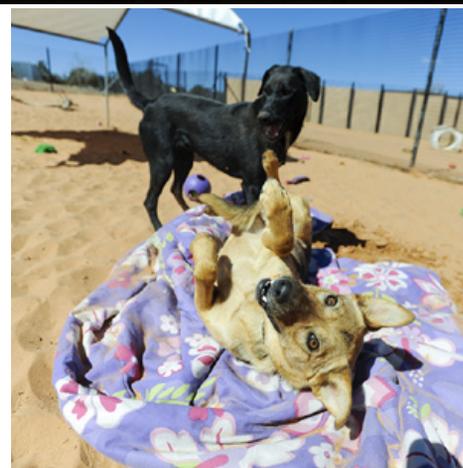
For more structured fun, a covered training arena called Tara's Run boasts agility equipment and different types of stairs and flooring, which helps dogs who may have never lived in homes to transition successfully once they're adopted.

A special kind of love

"There is so much teamwork that goes into the daily lives of each dog in Dogtown," says Carley. "Everyone — from the caregivers to the behavior consultants to the adoption specialists — plays a role and works together to save more lives."

When you visit Dogtown, you can't help but notice the tenderness and affection that caregivers lavish on their charges. They treat the dogs as if they were their own, seeing to their individual wants and needs, making sure they are comfortable no matter how short or long their stay.

Dogtown is not simply a holding area until dogs find their forever homes. It's their home away from home until adoption day comes. And if that day doesn't come? Dogs are welcome to stay right here, at their own heaven on earth. ■



➔ Interested in seeing Dogtown firsthand? Start here: bestfriends.org/visit

