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## Volunteers make a difference

*By Pam Davis  
Submitted to the Coloradoan*

Snowflake is a 2-year-old German shepherd-Husky mix who is alive and adoptable because a volunteer is donating a life-changing hip surgery.

Without the surgery, it would difficult to find Snowflake a permanent home. And, her kennel is safe because of time and talent donated to improve sanitation in her temporary shelter.

Whether it's surgery for Snowflake or drainage to a building where 50 of Snowflake's furry friends temporarily reside, all volunteer efforts for nonprofits are equally important.

"We cannot exist without volunteers," said Sandra Risler, executive director of The Animal House, a rescue shelter located at 1104 W. Vine Drive in Fort Collins. "When someone comes to us to volunteer, it's such a gift to us."

During the 10th annual Make A Difference Day set for Oct. 19-24 in Larimer County, The Animal House will receive a new gift from some old friends: the team at Vaught-Frye, an architecture firm that's been serving the community for 30 years.

Vaught-Frye employees will help the shelter with its drainage system, a vital piece to maintaining a safe, sanitary environment for the dogs that live there until they are adopted. "This is a very expensive project. There is no way we could do it on our own," said Risler.

While volunteers are an integral part of nonprofits, volunteerism itself is an integral part of Vaught-Frye. This small business with a team of 15 has a volunteer program for its employees. Each month, employees are given two hours of company time to volunteer. If they contribute two additional volunteer hours on their own time, Vaught-Frye gives them two more paid hours each month.

"We've always felt a tie to community activities and feel it is part of our responsibility to be involved," said Robin Pelkey, business manager. "We set a goal that 1 percent of our hours are pro-bono work each year."

In addition to the individual volunteerism, the company works on group projects, like The Animal House drainage project. Pelkey said some of those group efforts include a remodeling project at The Food Bank for Larimer County, landscaping the High Plains Environmental Center in Loveland, and painting the Boys and Girls Club in Fort Collins, to name a few.

Vaught-Frye places value in volunteerism. "When it comes down to community, it's the right thing to do," Pelkey said. "It's fun giving people the opportunity to do so."

It's that opportunity to give time and talent matched with a project that makes it possible for places like Animal House to continue the work it does to save dogs and give them a safe place to live until they find permanent homes.

Because of volunteers, Snowflake is going home – to a permanent home.

"It takes all of these wonderful people and their generosity to continue the work we do. We have so many needs," said Risler. "Volunteers are the lifeblood of our shelter."

## Additional Facts

Want to help?

Sign up for the 10th Annual Make A Difference Day, a week-long volunteer event Oct. 19-24 in Larimer County. There are volunteer opportunities for groups, individuals, seniors, families and youth. Register today at [www.uwaylc.org](http://www.uwaylc.org). Have questions? Call Jami McMannes, volunteer specialist with United Way of Larimer County's Volunteer Center at (970) 407-7066.



Ali Eccleston, Animal House shelter manager, plays with Birky and 10- to 12-month-old spaniel mix. (Courtesy Animal House)