(NU) - It’s staggering to think that each year an estimated 5-7 million companion animals find their way into the care of animal shelters across the United States.

Despite the best efforts of thousands of shelter workers, keeping up with the care of abandoned animals is a daunting task for even the most well-funded rescue organizations. While you may not be able to donate tons of money or time, supporting animal shelters with small contributions can make a huge difference.

Here are some simple ways you can help.

1. Lend Your Expertise
   Shelters often have limited funds to hire individuals capable of setting up websites, writing articles for newsletters, taking pictures of available pets, landscaping the grounds or providing legal advice. Consider your skill set and how you could be a valuable resource for your local shelter.

2. Get Social
   Shelter animals come from diverse backgrounds, and socializing them can be key in making them more attractive candidates for adoption. Animal rescue organizations often need volunteers willing to dedicate a little time to playing with a cat or teaching a dog to sit.

3. Foster a Pet
   Since overcrowding in animal shelters is a constant challenge, many rescue organizations look for foster homes that may help socialize and prepare certain pets for adoption. Contact your local shelter and see if you qualify.

4. Turn Your Trash into Treasure
   Animal shelters go through lots of food bowls and towels each year. While your old blankets and dinnerware might seem ready for a trip to the dump, they could be put to good use. Think before you toss them, because your trash could be treasure to a pet in need.

5. Click Away
   Want to help shelters acquire the essentials without dipping into your wallet? Major pet brands are harnessing the power of the Internet to help pet lovers support animal shelters without spending a dime. A recent GiveLitter campaign saw more than 60,000 voters visiting www.givelitter.com to donate 100,000 pounds of World’s Best Cat Litter to shelters across the country.

Shelters everywhere are looking for help, so see which simple act can make you feel good while doing good.