

BARC Volunteer Spotlight – Gary Thomas: BARC Animal Shelter and Adoptions

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BARC volunteers spend countless hours at BARC and all around town making sure Houston's homeless animals get the second chance at life they so very much deserve. They do everything from walking dogs to running weekend offsite adoption events, to designing fliers for upcoming BARC events and more. They even write fantastic bios about our most valiant volunteers. Like the one below. Emily, the author of the bio below, is a truly dedicated volunteer that, like many other volunteers, offers her best talents (writing!) for the benefit of BARC.

Now for the main event... meet one of our most dedicated BARC volunteers, Gary Thomas! He spends an incredible amount of time at BARC and at offsite events, and we want to take the opportunity to recognize him for the amazing work he does. Thanks, Emily, for putting this piece on Gary together!

BARC is extremely proud of its mission and all the employees and volunteers that constantly strive each day to save hundreds of animals' lives in the Houston area. We are so grateful for the smiling and helpful people that come in and lend a helping hand. Among our wonderful helpers, however, are the few standouts that have devoted their time and energy selflessly and to no end. They set the example for a strong volunteer corps. And it is through them that we hope to attain and retain more standout volunteers that can follow in their footsteps as we work to become the best city animal shelter that exists.

Today, we would like to shine a spotlight on our friend and selfless volunteer, Gary Thomas. Gary is originally from the small town of Rockport, Texas. He joined the Navy after high school and retired from it 20 years later. He ended up moving to Houston, where his mom and stepfather had moved, and dabbled in bartending, worked as a trainer for Encyclopedia Britannica, and later became a delivery driver up until he officially retired nearly one year ago.

Gary knew from past experience that sitting around being a couch potato wasn't going to work for him. And so, in January 2012, he found BARC as a great place for his energy and talents, and has been volunteering ever since.

Since Gary is a cat person, he originally began helping in the Cat Castle. However, he soon realized he wanted to take all of them home and he knew he'd be better off with dogs, where the temptation wouldn't be so strong.

"I don't think I'm going to take a dog home...although I've come close a couple times," he said. "I was originally just thinking about walking dogs, but I didn't realize there were so many things that needed to be done."



Gary Thomas at an Offsite Adoption Event on March 2, 2013!

Gary's primary role at BARC is profiling and training on Mondays and Thursdays for the Meet Your Match program. Meet Your Match, developed by the ASPCA, is a new color-coding method for matching shelter dogs, ages six months and older, with adopters looking for specific behavior and personality types before deciding to make the dog part of their family.

Gary says the dog profiling is going well and he's excited about the next step – profiling adopters. They are currently working on implementing the second part of the Meet Your Match equation, where potential adopters can fill out what they are looking for in a pet when they enter BARC, narrowing down the search based off on the color profile assigned to each dog.

Gary volunteers at BARC at least four times per week. When he's not involved with Meet your Match, he's usually around on Saturdays and Sundays helping with adoption counseling at the shelter and at events in the Houston community.

Gary said the most fulfilling aspect of volunteering at BARC is helping to get the dogs adopted.

"I would love for them all to have a home," he said. "The thing that gets me is that dogs give unconditional love and most of them just want your attention when you go meet them in the kennel."

When asked what it takes to be a great volunteer at BARC, Gary said the volunteers need to realize that BARC needs a lot of people and the volunteers have to put in the time.

"What we're mostly looking for are some people that can come work during the daytime throughout the week," he said. "Right now, there are only four of us that do Meet Your Match on Mondays and Thursdays and we need more people during the week."

In the future, he would like to see more volunteers helping more often, especially at off-site adoption events, where it takes several people to make an event go smoothly and successfully.

"This is just one location and we have a large area to cover," he said.

Overall, Gary said he feels very fulfilled in his retired life with BARC being his primary cause. Of course, we at BARC feel honored to have such a devoted volunteer and cannot thank him enough for everything he does.

– By Emily Feinstein, BARC Volunteer

Want to help? You can give deserving animals a second chance at life by becoming a [BARC volunteer](#). Visit [our website](#) to learn more.

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