

American Cancer Society “Bark For Life” Mini Relay



What is the American Cancer Society “Bark For Life” Mini Relay?

The American Cancer Society “Bark For Life” (BFL) Mini-Relay is an ACS Relay fundraising event that will honor the care giving qualities of our canine “Best Friends”.

The ACS BFL honors the life-long contribution of our Canine Caregivers. It presents an opportunity for people to be empowered through their canine companion partnerships and to contribute to cancer cures through the mission of the American Cancer Society.

Canine Caregivers are Canine Companions, Guide Dogs, Service Dogs, Rescue Dogs, Therapy Dogs, Police Dogs, Cancer Survivor Dogs, and Diagnostic Dogs, who with their owners, are joining the American Cancer Society as Relay teams and participants to celebrate cancer survivorship, to honor people lost to cancer, to fundraise in support of cancer research, education, awareness, patient services, advocacy, and to help eliminate the suffering that cancer causes worldwide.

Canine companions represent unconditional love, joy, security, compassion, and no judgments of human abilities or appearances. The American Cancer Society Bark For Life is an irresistible way to “take a bite out of cancer”, smile, and make new friends – canine & human.

This event within an event can be organized as a pre-Relay fundraiser or a team fundraiser in which an entire community can participate.

The Bark For Life contribution to the American Cancer Society Relay For Life is the total of all funds raised by the canine teams, Bark For Life participants, canine on-line fundraising, RFL teams, and community contributions.

The Relay For Life of Pottstown, a suburb of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was the first Relay For Life to conduct a Bark For Life Mini-Relay and the results were amazing!

- Organized in 6 weeks (recommend more time for planning)
- 156 dogs walked for a cure
- 47 dogs were on a fundraising team
- A tent site (with no dogs at the site) offered a canine fundraising competition at the actual Relay For Life event
- \$13,000 was raised

The next ACS Bark For Life took place in Hazelton, Pennsylvania, and their results were also wonderful:

- 1 canine team walking for a cancer survivor team
- Raised \$6,000 in 4 weeks.

Why include a Canine event in an established Relay For Life?

A Bark For Life Mini Relay will fundraise and contribute to the total dollars raised in an established ACS Relay For Life. A “Bark For Life” will:

- Increase new ACS dollars
 - New fundraising opportunities will be available
 - Ex: Photos with Santa Paws
- Grow Relay events
 - Increase survivor participation
 - Increase caregiver participation
 - Increase participation with new people
 - Increase sponsor participation with new industries
 - Increase online donations
 - Increase luminaria donations
- New motivation/fun/energy for mature Relays
- Increase media coverage
- Pre-event media coverage
 - Reason to involve the community outside the Relay event
 - Cancer educational opportunity
 - Entertainment partnership opportunity
 - New sponsor opportunities
 - Vendor donation opportunity
 - Clubs, veterinarians, canine agencies have a new reason to support the Relay
 - New community partnerships politically and professionally will be created
- New teams
- New volunteers
- New caregiver/survivor stories to tell on behalf of the canine companions

What are the risks?

It is possible to have a mixed message. It is important to stay focused on the American Cancer Society mission, fundraising, and celebrating human survivorship. Dog owners will include their feelings for their canine companions and that is an important asset. The Relay For Life message needs to remain focused on human experiences that the dogs are supporting.

All pets will want to have teams. Dogs are the focus because they have reputations for being human companion animals and caregivers; for example, companion dogs, therapy dogs, police dogs, service dogs, rescue dogs, diagnostic dogs, etc

How to organize an Bark For Life Mini Relay

The following outlines how to join a canine team and how to start a team. A canine team registration form is included. This outline and form can be adapted to individual Relay For Life needs and distributed at the Relay Kick off and/or in Team Captain packets.

Bark For Life Mini Relay should be taken on by a team participating at the community Relay For Life. This should be an event that is delegated to that team, and the responsibilities of the event lie with the team captain and team participants.

“Bark For Life” Organizational Time-line:

1. A team is identified to lead the Bark For Life event.
 - a. The Bark For Life is a pre-Relay event for community awareness and fundraising that will contribute back to the total of the Relay For Life.
2. Organizing the Bark For Life will coincide with the planning of the Relay For Life
 - a. A location central to the community that welcomes a canine event is chosen
 - b. A date approximately 2 months prior to the Relay For Life will be scheduled for the Bark For Life
 - c. Media press releases and canine caregiver stories are submitted to newspapers, radio, TV, business websites, and RFL teams. Media photographers and reporters are invited to attend the Bark For Life.
3. Promoting the Bark For Life and fundraising coincides with organizing the RFL
 - a. A Save the Date card is developed and available for distribution at canine fundraising events, mailed to canine friendly businesses, and released to the media at the beginning of the Relay year
 - b. According to the season, fundraising events can include Photo with Santa Paws, media canine contests, canine costume parades, etc (See separate section on additional fundraising opportunities)
4. Canine Teams form at the same time as Relay For Life teams
 - a. One person who is identified as the canine Team Captain. The Team Captain is responsible for team communications with all the canine owners
 - b. Canine Bark For Life registration is \$10 and can include a special item for the canine if cost effective (bandana, doggy treat, etc).
5. Canine fundraising begins at the same time Relay For Life team fundraising begins
 - a. Canine teams form and fundraise in the community and on-line
 - b. Canine team participant minimum contribution to the team is \$100
 - c. Canine donations can be received and turned in to the American Cancer Society at Team Captain meetings and bank nights, or online
 - d. Canine fundraising continues past the Bark For Life event that is held 2 months prior to the Relay. Canine fundraising closes at the end of the main Relay For Life event
6. Sponsors are invited to donate to and promote the Bark For Life
 - a. Sponsor contributions are the same dollar values as the Relay sponsors and are promoted at all canine events and at the Relay
 - b. Sponsor contributions are focused on canine businesses and canine agency partnerships. This is generally a new category of contribution, prompting new dollars to the Relay.

7. Cancer survivors and caregivers with canine companions are invited to tell their stories. Canine/survivor and caregiver stories are shared with the Relay participants and the media for inspiration, new motivation, and celebration.
8. Elements of organizing of the Bark For Life:
 - a. Confirm the location & date
 - b. Designate a 1 mile walk
 - c. Water needs to be stationed along the walking path/track
 - d. Doggie clean up bags & bandanas are distributed to all registered canine owners
 - e. A veterinarian is at the site of the Bark For Life
 - f. All Bark For Life proceeds are included in the main Relay For Life total
 - g. Immediately following the Bark For Life walk offer an outdoor program that includes Relay and Bark For Life teams fundraising, community entertainment, and canine contests

Bark For Life Mini Relay Committee Members:

Bark For Life Chair/Co-Chair

Bark For Life Team Coordinator

Bark For Life Sponsorship Chair

Bark For Life Logistics Chair

Bark For Life Volunteer Coordinator Chair

Bark For Life Activities/Ceremonies Chair

Bark For Life Day Of Agenda:

8am – 9am Registration at the event

- Individual, non-team canine participant registration
 - \$25 ACS donation (Possible bandana included)
- Canine registered team participant
 - \$10 ACS donation at the time of team registration (Possible bandana included)
 - All canine registration checks are made payable to the American Cancer Society
- ACS educational materials, Relay registration forms, fundraising, and program information, survivor registration forms, and luminaria forms are available to the public
- Promotional entertainment or music during the registration hour promotes an atmosphere of celebration

9:00am Bark For Life begins

- Cancer survivors – people and canines lead the Bark For Life walk
- 1 mile walk begins with RFL advocacy & education signs posted along the walk
- All dogs on leashes

10am – 1pm Program following the Bark For Life walk

- Regular Relay & Bark For Life Teams are invited to set up fundraising tables. All donations are credited to the team that is fundraising
- Canine contests for entertainment: dress up, largest, smallest, etc. with prizes
- Music is optional
- Vendors that donate back to the Bark For Life are invited to offer food & products as fundraising sponsors
- Sponsor banners are displayed
- Water for people and canines needs to be available. Shade, grass, and space is essential for people and dogs

1pm Clean-up

- Being in a public or private community environment with animals requires a clean up committee.
- Environmentally friendly products are preferred.

Supplies Needed at the Bark For Life Mini Relay

Supplies to bring to the Bark For Life Mini Relay event include:

- All forms
- American Cancer Society educational signs for along the walk route
- Office Supplies for Registration Table (pens, tape, paper clips, etc.)
- Ribbons or pins for human cancer survivors
- Bandanas for the dogs (if cost effective)
- Microphone and Speakers to make announcements
- Trash cans for along the route
- Water for adults and dogs
- Plastic bags for dog owners to pick up after their dogs

American Cancer Society Bark For Life Mini Relay Team Guidelines:

The American Cancer Society Bark For Life has 2 canine registration forms:

The **Bark For Life Team Registration** form will include:

- A \$10 registration donation to join a Bark For Life Mini Relay team
- Canine Teams will have a person as the Team Captain responsible for up date information and team communications. The Team Captain will register with the canine team for a \$10 donation
- Bark For Life Mini Relay team participants are the canines. The owner registration information is the canine contact information
- Each canine team participant is expected to contribute a minimum of \$100 to their team
- Registration on the Bark For Life Mini Relay team could include a bandana for each canine, or other appropriate giveaway if cost effective. Since canines are different sizes, make sure there are small, medium, large sizes available. Canine size is indicated on the registration form.
- The Bark For Life Mini Relay online fundraising and team project fundraising deadline for Top Canine Fundraising acknowledgement will be at the main Relay For Life event.
- All Bark For Life Mini Relay donation checks are made payable to the **American Cancer Society**
- Bark For Life Mini Relay team donations will be accepted through August to contribute to the overall yearly main Relay For Life event fundraising total.

"Canine Family" registration will be included on the Bark For Life team registration form. This is for people that have multiple canines in their household. A Canine Family is defined as being all the dogs that belong to the same family and participate in the ACS Bark For Life together.

"Canine Family" registration:

- A \$10 registration donation will apply per canine participant on a Canine Family registration form. Canine Family members are registered as a group rather than individually; e.g., "Boots, Duchess, and Max Smith" with a \$30 registration fee. One record in the database will contain the donations for all canines in a canine family.
- Each Canine Family participant receives a registration gift (bandana or other if cost effective)
- Canine Family participants fundraise together to raise a minimum of \$100
- 1 photo will represent the Canine Family registration for online fundraising
- 1 fundraising donation total will be credited to canines participants registered as a Canine Family

To honor our cancer survivors, all Bark For Life Mini Relay registration forms request the cancer survivor status of the canine owner

The Bark For Life Mini Relay **Community Registration** form is for canines that are not on a canine Bark For Life team but come out on the day of the Bark For Life Mini Relay event and want to participate. Since they have not pre-registered and fundraised, a \$25 registration donation to participate on the day of the Bark For Life Mini Relay will apply to canine participants with no team affiliation.

Bark For Life Mini Relay Community Registration forms will be available at the Bark For Life Mini Relay event and includes:

- Day of Registration with no Bark For Life team affiliation will be a \$25 donation
- Registration on the day of the Bark For Life Mini Relay includes a bandana for the canine (if available).
- Canine registration forms include the cancer survivor status of the dog owner for survivor registration in the Relay For Life

Bark For Life Mini Relay Fundraising Opportunities:

As with a regular Relay For Life event, the Bark For Life Mini Relay allows for a wonderful new array of fundraising opportunities that involve our canine friends

Ideas include, but are not limited to:

- Dog washing and grooming along with free ice cream donated by a dairy or store – “Doggie Sundae”
- Dog washing at a local veterinarian office with a vaccination clinic included
- Dog washing, which is a dog, wash in a local store or school parking lot. Just bring baby pools, and hoses and lots of towels
- Dog sitting
- Pictures with Santa (i.e. – Santa Paws) during the holidays
- Onsite activities during the Bark For Life Mini Relay
 - Dog nail clipping service
 - Dog/family photos
 - Dog treat & products available
 - Holiday bandana assortments
 - Obedience challenges
- Contests on site (people donate a small amount to participate)
 - Fastest Dog
 - Best Dressed
 - Cutest Trick”
- “Bark Breakfast” or “Take Your Pet to Work Day”
- “Oscar Night” – allow pets to dress in costume, and walk the red carpet for a fun evening out for a small donation. Award “Dog of the Year”
- Have a contest with the local newspaper to “Name That Breed”
- Teams can exhibit at local dog shows and events

How to Wrap-Up the Bark For Life Mini Relay:

Thank you cards and an invitation to participate in the RFL are sent to the canine participant owners, sponsors, new volunteers, new survivors, caregivers, and vendors.

A Top Dog fundraising contest is initiated to promote the continuation of fundraising by the canine teams and Bark For Life participants through the date of the Relay For Life. EX: At the conclusion of the Relay For Life, the top fundraising dogs could be photographed as a group or individually to win a Top Dog Fundraising award or the opportunity to be the Dog-Of-The-Month on a Bark For Life canine calendar.