Cocktails for Critters 2026 – Volunteer & Staff Orientation

Welcome

Welcome to Cocktails for Critters 2026! We truly could not host an event of this size without the incredible support of our staff and volunteers, so we really appreciate you giving your time to be here.

Is this anyone's first time at Cocktails for Critters? If so, welcome!

Thank you again for being part of the team. Let's make it a great night!

Guest arrival

Our guests will begin arriving around 4:45 p.m., with cocktail hour officially starting at 5:00 p.m. Some guests are always excited to get here early, so we want to make sure everyone is ready to go before the doors open. We aim to be ready 15 minutes ahead of schedule, so please be at your assigned position and prepared to welcome guests.

The ballroom opens at 6:00 p.m., and the formal program begins at 6:15 p.m.

Personal belongings and the volunteer room

The volunteer room is reserved for staff and volunteers throughout the evening. It will be our space to store personal belongings, take breaks and enjoy dinner.

Although the room will be supervised at all times, it is not a secure storage area. You are welcome to leave personal belongings at your own risk.

Please make sure you sign in and sign out for your shift. If you have not signed in yet, please do so following orientation. At the end of your shift, check in with your team lead before signing out and leaving for the evening.

Emergency information

In the unlikely event that we need to evacuate the building, we will gather at the designated muster point.

- **Muster point:** Marriott Hotel across the street
- **First aid kits:** Volunteer Room

Please take a moment to familiarize yourself with this information. If an emergency occurs, follow directions from event staff and venue personnel and make sure you know where to direct guests if needed.

Communications

This year, we will not have radios available. If you need to contact another staff member or volunteer during the evening, please use your cell phone to call or text them.

Please make sure you know how to reach your team lead and any key contacts you may need during your shift. If you have a question, need assistance or are unsure what to do in a situation, reach out to your team lead.

Dinner and breaks

Dinner will be served in the volunteer room between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. We will have regular lasagna, vegetarian lasagna, and gluten-free vegan pasta, along with salad.

Food for 50 at 6:30, then a full refresh with food for the second 50 at 7:30pm

Your team leads will help coordinate breaks to ensure everyone has an opportunity to eat. Please let your team lead know when you need a break so they can make sure your position is covered.

You are welcome to use the volunteer room throughout the evening if you need a quiet moment or a chance to rest your feet. We just ask that you communicate with your team lead before stepping away so they know where you are and can ensure everything continues to run smoothly.

Please keep all food and meals inside the volunteer room.

Expectations

I want to quickly go over a few expectations for the evening. Cocktails for Critters is a formal gala, and we want to make sure we maintain that atmosphere while providing guests with a welcoming and engaging experience.

Be present and welcoming

Guests are here to support Calgary Humane Society, and tonight is an opportunity to help them feel connected to our work. When you are outside the volunteer room, please do your best to be presentable, approachable and engaged.

Where possible, please stand rather than sit, smile, make eye contact and be ready to help guests who may have questions. You never know which conversation might inspire someone to learn more about CHS or deepen their support for the animals in our care.

We know it is a long evening, and we want everyone to be comfortable. If you need to sit down or take a break, please coordinate with your team lead and use the volunteer room when appropriate.

Ways to Donate

Guests can donate through supporting the silent auction, live auction, heads and tails game, raffle tickets or by making a general donation either at the raffle table, or by using the envelopes placed on guest dining tables.

Be flexible and support one another

Events of this size involve a lot of moving parts, and sometimes things change at the last minute. Your team leads may ask you to adjust your duties, help cover another position or assist with something unexpected. We really appreciate your flexibility and willingness to pitch in wherever you are needed.

Please ask questions if you are unsure about something. It is always better to check in than to feel uncertain about what you should be doing.

Be mindful during the program

The formal program is an important part of the evening, and we want to ensure guests can hear and enjoy everything taking place in the ballroom.

If you are watching the program from the hallways, please be mindful of your conversations and noise levels. Sound carries into the ballroom more easily than you might expect.

If you are watching from inside the ballroom, please stand along the walls and avoid leaning against lighting controls or other event equipment. Always be mindful of guests and keep walkways clear.

Participating in the event

Staff and volunteers are welcome to participate in the fundraising activities throughout the evening, including purchasing raffle tickets, bidding in the silent auction, making donations and participating in Ears and Tails.

If you plan to participate in Ears and Tails, please let your team lead know in advance, as you will need to be in the ballroom at a specific time. Please make sure your assigned responsibilities are covered before stepping away.

Take down and cleanup

At the end of the evening, we will need everyone's help to pack up and clean the event space. The event officially ends at 10:30 p.m., when take down begins.

If you are able to stay and help, we would really appreciate it. Please check with your team lead to see where you are needed, help clean up your assigned area and make sure you check out before leaving. When everyone pitches in, take down goes much faster!

Tonight's Program

Here is a quick overview of the schedule so everyone knows what to expect:

- **3:00 p.m.** – Dress rehearsal
- **4:00 p.m.** – Volunteer arrival and Critter Room setup
- **4:30 p.m.** – Animal guests arrive
- **4:45 p.m.** – Volunteers ready for early guest arrivals
- **5:00 p.m.** – Cocktail hour begins
- **6:00 p.m.** – Ballroom opens
- **6:15 p.m.** – Opening remarks
- **6:30 p.m.** – Guest dinner begins
- **7:15 p.m.** – Runway show

- **9:15 p.m.** – Raffle draw
- **9:30 p.m.** – Ears and Tails
- **10:00 p.m.** – Silent auction and bar close
- **10:30 p.m.** – Event ends and take down begins

Please keep in mind that timings can shift slightly throughout the evening. Listen for direction from your team leads and event coordinators so we can keep everything running as smoothly as possible.