



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to support and strengthen the community by building rapport with individuals who are homeless or at risk and advocating to end homelessness.

Welcome! Bienvenidos!

On behalf of Good Neighbor Settlement House, I extend our heartfelt thanks for your interest in serving as a volunteer.

Without the gift of time from talented and compassionate individuals like you, the programs and services we offer would not be possible. We consider the gift of your time to be an integral part of achieving our mission and sincerely thank you for committing to our organization.

By working together as a community who cares, we can continue to bring awareness about homelessness and help men, women, and children transition into permanent self-sustaining living.

It is a pleasure to welcome you, and we look forward to working with you!

Hugo Zurita
Executive Director

Our organization is generously funded by Valley Baptist Legacy Foundation, United Way of Southern Cameron County, major individual donors, other grantors, and individual donors.

Using the Handbook

This handbook will serve to answer many questions you may have about volunteering at Good Neighbor Settlement House. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the Assistant Director or the Executive Director.

In addition to these materials, you will receive a copy of your volunteer service description that outlines the details and responsibilities of that position.

Introduction

Volunteers are significant members of our team. We work together to provide the best service and experience possible to our visitors and want your participation to be beneficial and rewarding. Your loyalty and dedication to furthering the mission, reputation, and integrity of Good Neighbor Settlement House (GNSH) are of the utmost importance.

We also recognize that your reasons for volunteering with GNSH may extend beyond your interest in our mission. For some, volunteering may provide an opportunity to learn more about homelessness, food insecurity, or other subjects of interest. For others, volunteering may help you establish social justice industry connections that might help you professionally. For many, volunteering provides the chance to meet new people who enjoy the same things you do. All of these are legitimate possibilities, and it is our sincerest wish that the experience be mutually beneficial.

This Volunteer Handbook is provided to inform volunteers and potential volunteers of the policies and operating procedures of GNSH, and of the many service opportunities that are available. It is not a contract for employment or a guarantee of a continuing relationship. GNSH reserves the right to change policies and procedures or revise the contents of the Volunteer Handbook at its sole discretion, without prior notification to volunteers.

Equal Opportunity

It is the policy of GNSH to treat all volunteers and staff equally on the basis of job-related qualifications regardless of gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or any other classification proscribed under local, state, or federal law.

Volunteer Benefits

The many benefits of becoming a GNSH volunteer include:

- Inclusion on the GNSH volunteer email and Facebook groups for announcements about volunteer and job opportunities with GNSH
- Invitations to volunteer recognition events
- Invitations to staff and volunteer-only educational programs or activities
- Professional networking opportunities
- Opportunity to learn new skills
- Working with people with similar interests; making new friends

General Procedures

Becoming a volunteer

To become a volunteer with GNSH, please complete the following steps:

- Complete and submit the volunteer application and other requested forms
- Attend a general orientation meeting which will include an overview of GNSH and its history, a review of policies and procedures, and a discussion of volunteer positions and opportunities
- Request, be selected for, and then placed into a particular job or jobs
- Receive additional job orientation and training relative to your assigned volunteer job(s)

Background check

Although they are generally not required, at times certain volunteer positions may require that applicants complete a background check prior to placement. The results of these checks will remain confidential.

Job orientation and training

Before beginning your regular volunteer assignment(s), the assistant director will:

- Review your job duties, expectations, and evaluation procedures
- Confirm work dates, times, and anticipated duration of your participation
- Supply you with your name tag and review sign-in and sign-out procedures
- Provide job-specific training on all skills needed to perform assigned tasks
- Discuss procedures for obtaining, using, and caring for needed supplies
- Provide safety orientation
- Review locations of restrooms, first aid kits, and places for your personal items such as purses/coats, etc.
- Confirm lunch and break schedules

General Procedures, continued

Maintenance of personal data

You are responsible for updating personal data, such as change of address, contact telephone number, etc., with the GNSH executive director.

Reporting for duty | Keeping work hours

You should report to your assigned supervisor upon arrival. Supervisors will provide instructions for storing coats, bags, and other personal items; we recommend locking valuable items in the trunk of your vehicle.

Volunteer hours are recorded on a time sheet/chart located at your volunteer site. At the beginning of a work session, make sure you are signing in on the appropriate space under your name under the volunteer program you are working in. Signing-in consists of the aforementioned checks, in addition to recording time volunteered. If you forget to sign in or out, please contact your volunteer lead by e-mail or by phone. Volunteer hours information is useful for recognition purposes and when providing information to potential funders.

Absences

Your supervisor and co-workers value your contributions and they depend on you to be present at the scheduled time. If you know you will be absent, you should notify your supervisor or the GNSH office as soon as possible so a replacement can be found.

Evaluation

Your volunteer performance will be evaluated regularly. Depending on the extent and complexity of your job, the evaluations may be formal or informal, written or oral. It is important that you communicate clearly and frequently with your supervisor. Discuss any successes, difficulties, suggestions, or questions you have.

Emergency procedures | Accidents or injuries

If you or a visitor is injured, you should immediately contact any GNSH staff or supervisor. At volunteer orientation you will be given a GNSH Emergency Procedures pamphlet which addresses catastrophic or natural disaster emergencies.

Social media and blogging

Sometimes volunteers like to share their experiences with GNSH in conversations with family and friends, or to wider audiences online. GNSH neither promotes nor forbids blogging or posting to online forums. However, if you do, we ask that you respect the following guidelines:

- *Please write from your own point of view, not GNSH's.* If you've had a negative experience, let us know so we can help or improve. Refrain from personal attacks or being disrespectful of others.

- *Be clear about your position in the organization.* As a volunteer with GNSH, you represent us while you are performing your volunteer service, but you are not an official spokesperson. However, simply by your association you are perceived as an ambassador anytime you discuss the organization.
- *Ask a staff member and check your facts before posting.*
- *Be aware of your audience and the people your comments could impact.* Lots of people keep up with GNSH news including staff, other volunteers, board members, and the Brownsville community.
- *As a courtesy, we appreciate knowing about your posts about GNSH.* We always like to hear our volunteers' perspectives! You can email links to bbradford@goodneighborsettlement.org

Dress code

All GNSH volunteers are expected to dress in attire that is appropriate to the job and to the weather, including sturdy footwear. Volunteers for special programs or fundraising activities should dress in a manner appropriate to the event.

Equipment

GNSH generally provides all the necessary tools, safety equipment, and supplies to volunteers and staff when they are needed, so that they may accomplish assigned tasks.

Resources such as reference and reading materials are available from the GNSH office and may be borrowed for short lengths of time.

Identification

You should always conspicuously wear your volunteer ID when interacting with the public. It is important for visitors to be able to identify individuals who are able to help them with directions, concerns and information. Please report lost name tags immediately to your supervisor for replacement.

No solicitation | No distribution

The conduction of non-GNSH business on site, such as canvassing, collection of funds, pledges, circulation of petitions, solicitation of memberships, or any other similar types of activity is strictly prohibited.

Open door policy

Should you have or foresee a problem that may interfere with your commitment or ability to adequately perform your responsibilities, please immediately discuss the matter with your supervisor or the executive director; she is always available to discuss changes, problems, or concerns.

Parking

Parking is not provided for any volunteer or paid staff or board member.

Professional Standards

The manner in which we as volunteers and staff conduct ourselves should create a favorable and lasting impression of GNSH and its operations and activities. The continued success of the organization depends on the quality, integrity, expertise, and professionalism of all our volunteer and staff.

Our clients and program participants must receive prompt and courteous attention and a helpful and meaningful response. GNSH staff should be contacted to assist in any situation that is beyond volunteers' control. Visitors to our facilities must always be treated with deference, tact, and courtesy. Similarly, respect and thoughtfulness towards your fellow workers will always be expected.

Professional conduct

All GNSH volunteers are representatives of our organization. It is important to maintain professional behavior regardless of what program(s) you volunteer in. While it is impossible to list all forms of unacceptable behavior, the following are examples of activities that will not be tolerated in the GNSH volunteer programs and will result in disciplinary action, up to and including immediate dismissal from the program:

- Possession, sale, transfer, or consumption of alcohol or illegal substances while on duty or while on GNSH property
- Harassment (sexual or otherwise) of any person
- Fighting or threatening violence
- Negligence or improper conduct leading to property damage
- Theft
- Possession of weapons

Abusive language and behavior

Visitors exhibiting abusive language or behavior will not be tolerated. If this type of behavior is observed, contact available security or your supervisor and they will handle the situation. NEVER get into a confrontation with a visitor. Your input on an incident report may be necessary.

Sexual harassment

All volunteers, employees, supervisors, and members of management, both male and female, are strictly prohibited from sexually harassing or making improper advances towards other volunteers, guests, employees, supervisors, or members of management. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome or unsolicited verbal, physical, or sexual conduct that is made a term of condition of service or employment, is used as the basis of employment or advancement decision, or has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Volunteers will be provided with a copy of GNSH's sexual harassment policy and will be expected to comply with its provisions.

Resigning from the volunteer program

We'd hate to see you go, but if you would like to end a volunteer commitment, please notify your supervisor or the executive director of that decision and the effective date.

Safety and Security Procedures

You are expected to observe and follow all GNSH safety and security policies. You are also encouraged to report unsafe conditions to your supervisor or the executive director. If you observe any unsafe or inappropriate behavior by other volunteers, staff, or visitors & participants, contact your supervisor or the assistant director.

Hazardous waste

At our publicly accessible facilities, there is the potential for contact with human biological waste such as urine, feces, vomit, and blood. REMEMBER: Do not touch biological waste! Blood-borne pathogens, specifically hepatitis and HIV, are carried in most bodily fluids, and while HIV is relatively short-lived outside the body, hepatitis is not. In the event of a bodily fluid spill, keep visitors away from the area and contact GNSH staff immediately.

Preventative measures

If you observe a potentially hazardous situation, please do your best to correct the problem or notify GNSH staff.

Termination of volunteers

GNSH reserves the right to terminate any volunteer for violations of policies or procedures, or for failure to perform assigned duties.

Vehicles and equipment

You are generally not authorized to drive any vehicles on behalf of GNSH. You may use GNSH equipment only in connection with your duties and after receiving appropriate training.

If your volunteer position requires you to drive, please refer to the Driver Guidelines procedure.

Weather

GNSH staff make a strong effort to continue all operations and events under mildly inclement weather. In the event of major weather events or natural disasters, GNSH staff will give you notice if normal operations are canceled. If you do not receive notification of cancellation, you are expected to report as scheduled.