

DC Habitat for Humanity

Group Volunteer Information

BEFORE YOU VOLUNTEER

- **We want to do service-oriented teambuilding! Can my group of 100 people volunteer together?**

Working on a Habitat project is a great way to bring your group together to get to know one another, focus on teamwork, and serve the community while having a great time. We welcome groups of all kinds to join our work.

Our primary mission is building decent, affordable homes. In order to do this most effectively and safely, we must limit the number of volunteers on the construction site. We schedule groups of 5 – 25 volunteers, based on the number of people we can productively use for each particular stage in the building process. Larger numbers of people only get in each other's way, and don't generally enjoy their experience as much. If your group is very large, we suggest breaking it into smaller units to volunteer on different days.

- **Can our members work in shorter shifts, instead of all day?**

We ask that all volunteers arrive at 8:15am, and plan to stay until 4:00pm. This allows us to get as much done as possible, since it usually takes a while to train volunteers in the day's task. Plus, you will get a better feeling of accomplishment if you put in a full day's work!

- **What days of the week can we volunteer?**

Our construction site accepts volunteers Wednesday – Saturday, all year. We encourage groups to sign up during the week when possible, since this is when the need for volunteers is greater.

- **We can't wait to get started! Can my group volunteer in a few weeks?**

We are thankful to have so many enthusiastic volunteers. In general, our construction site is booked with volunteer groups about 2 months in advance. Please contact the volunteer coordinator to determine the next available volunteer days.

- **We're a family-oriented group. Can we bring our kids with us?**

No one under age 16 is allowed on the site, due to safety and liability laws.

- **Our members don't have any construction experience. Can we really be much help on a construction site?**

Yes, as long as you are willing to learn, we can use you! We have trained crew members who each instruct a small team of volunteers on how to do a particular task. You may leave with a new skill, such as installing drywall or hanging siding.

- **One of our members has back problems, but another has extensive experience with drywall. What type of work will our group be doing?**

We may need your help with anything, including demolition, framing, drywall, painting, landscaping, or cleaning. Some of these tasks are more exciting and glamorous than others, but all are important. We ask that you arrive with an open mind, and be prepared to do anything, regardless of your previous experience.

Volunteers should be aware that many of the jobs on site are physically demanding. If a volunteer has a minor medical condition that prevents him/her from doing a particular task (such as heavy lifting), he/she may decline if asked to do that.

- **It must cost a lot to buy all of those building supplies and tools. Do you require us to make a donation when we volunteer?**

We encourage all groups to make a financial contribution. Donations are required for Saturday builds. Without funds to buy building supplies, our volunteers can't do any work! Donations vary widely based on each group's means – some may ask each participant to contribute a few dollars, while others sponsor an entire home, a \$150,000 commitment.

For companies, the recommended donation for a Team Building opportunity is \$5,000-\$10,000. For churches, schools, etc, our recommended donation is \$1,000-\$5,000. Of course, every group is different and we are committed to working with you to determine the appropriate level for your group.

A great way to support Habitat is through a fundraiser such as a Build-a-thon. If you are interested, the volunteer coordinator would be happy to help you set up a Build-a-thon.

If you have specific questions about donations or sponsorships, please direct them to Mary Phelan, Development Director at 202-882-4600 x225 or mary.phelan@dchabitat.org. Thank you!

YOUR WORK DAY

- **Oh no! It's raining or snowing. Does that mean our work day is cancelled?**
Our crew works rain or shine. We're only closed when DC schools have a snow day.
- **Where do we go?**
Once you have scheduled a work day, the volunteer coordinator will give you directions to the appropriate site. All sites are in DC. All are accessible by public transportation, and there is usually plenty of free street parking available.
- **I know we're going to work up an appetite. Should we bring lunch?**
We encourage your group to bring lunch, although there are fast food places nearby. Some groups have each participant bring their own lunch, and others provide lunch for the entire group (you're also welcome to bring extras for our crew, if you'd like!).
- **I've never been to that part of town before. Will we feel safe?**
Our crew (of various genders and ethnicities) works here every day, and our homeowners will be living in this community. We would not put our crew, homeowners, or volunteers in a situation we felt was dangerous. We recommend that you do not bring valuables, as there is not a secure place on the site to leave them.
- **What should we wear?**
Wear comfortable clothes that can get dirty (you might even be painting), and dress appropriately for the weather (layers are a good idea). No open-toed shoes (sandals) are allowed on the site.
- **Most of us own a few tools. Should we bring them with us?**
DC Habitat provides all necessary tools, although you're welcome to bring your own.
- **What should we expect when we arrive at the site?**
When you arrive, look for the volunteer coordinator. You will sign in, get a safety briefing, and be assigned to a crew leader, who will instruct you in the day's tasks.
- **Will we get to meet the person who will live in the house we're building?**
Homeowner candidates are required to put in 300 hours of "sweat equity" on their homes and their neighbors', so they are often working on site. However, most work full-time, so they are most likely to be there on Saturdays.

WHAT'S NEXT?

- **We had a fantastic experience, and now our group wants to continue to support DC Habitat. What else can we do?**

We can use your help in many ways! Of course, we welcome groups to make donations or hold fundraisers. We are also looking for groups to provide meals for our Saturday construction volunteers. Upcoming special events/needs include:

- ❖ United Way/CFC Campaign Support - #8224!