



Volunteer Handbook

Updated April 2014

Table of Contents

I. Introduction: Welcome to the Volunteer Center!	
II. Who We Are.....	4
Mission Statement	
Organization History	
Program Description	
Who We Serve	
We Value Volunteers	
III. Your Role as a Volunteer.....	7
Job Description	
Training Offered	
Orientation	
Policies and Procedures	
Code of Conduct	
Rights and Responsibilities	
Confidentiality	
IV. What You Can Expect from the Volunteer Center.....	10
Equal Opportunity	
Paid Staff and Volunteers	
Expectations of Staff	
Organization Support and Responsibilities	
Commitment to Volunteers	
Recognition and Appreciation	
Confidentiality	
Communication System	
V. Appendix.....	12
Volunteer Opportunities with the Volunteer Center	
Facility Map	
Calendar of the Organization	
Emergency Contacts and Site Locations	
Complaint Form	

Introduction

The Volunteer Center of Sonoma County has served our community for over **40 years**, and this would not have been possible without the help of volunteers. From our Volunteer Referral Services to the Nonprofit Resource Center, volunteers have been a part of the foundation that ensured the programs continue in addressing community needs. By becoming a part of this movement, you have embarked on an adventure that will be supported by staff and other volunteers. We welcome you to the organization and **thank you** for seeing the value of this organization and contributing your valuable time and energy in helping us continue for another 40+ years as a relevant, sustainable and impactful organization of Sonoma County.

Sincerely,
The Volunteer Center of Sonoma County

Who We Are

The Volunteer Center of Sonoma County's **mission** is *connecting volunteers for a vibrant community*.

Organization History

The Volunteer Center of Sonoma County began in 1972, during times of national and local change. Sonoma County was growing economically and socially, which meant a growth in community needs. A small group of community minded individuals sought to address those needs by creating a Volunteer Center where people could learn about how to get involved right in their community. Since its conception, the Volunteer Center has been overseen by a board of directors made up of similarly community minded individuals representing local businesses, nonprofits and social groups crucial in program development. The Volunteer Center is funded by federal and county grants, foundation grants and private donors.

The culture of the organization has always been built on the collaboration with partners to ensure needs are being addressed in the community. Our focus is to increase the capacity of nonprofits in Sonoma County by connecting volunteers and providing additional resources such as workshops and conferences. Many of our programs were developed because a need was being recognized as unmet. Those three tiers have been the foundation of the organization with the overlapping message of noticing potential in ourselves and others and using creativity, friendly care, and knowledge of best practices.

Program Description

Listed below are the programs of the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County, organized by the type of need the programs address.

Potential Volunteers:

Volunteer Referral Services: helps individuals of all ages and businesses connect with volunteer opportunities in more than 600 local community organizations.

RSVP: connects those age 55+ with volunteer opportunities that match their personal interests, maximizing their skills, wisdom and life experiences.

Business Environmental Challenge... Sparked by Agile Technologies: engages local businesses to get involved in quarterly, half-day work projects that benefit local nonprofits and the environment.

Nonprofit Needs:

Nonprofit Resource Center: provides support to hundreds of local community organizations and volunteers in the areas of management, fundraising and board governance through workshops, a nonprofit conference and other resources. A complete list of Volunteer Center member organizations can be found on our website.

Volunteer Easy: is an online tool for people of Sonoma County to search online for volunteer opportunities. Agencies are invited to create accounts and input opportunities for the public to review and consider as volunteer opportunities.

Human Race of Sonoma County: is the #1 collaborative fund-raising event in Sonoma County and the largest Human Race in the nation! Over 9500 walkers and runners raise nearly a million dollars for 250+ local service agencies.

Meeting Community Needs:

Secret Santa: provides nearly 20,000 holiday gifts anonymously to people of all ages in our community, ensuring happier holidays to those in need. Made possible through a partnership of the Volunteer Center, KZST Radio and Friedman's Home Improvement in conjunction with over 80 business sponsors.

Literacy Program: matches volunteer academic mentors with elementary and high schools to improve reading and math skills to lower the drop-out rate.

Volunteer Wheels: enables older citizens and disabled residents to live more independently by providing rides seven days a week to important appointments such as medical, senior centers, shopping and visits to loved ones.

Court Referral: provides placement, follow-up, and monitoring of adult and juvenile court appointed clients who are required to perform community service work.

2-1-1: is the free, easy-to-remember phone number that connects people with health and human service needs to resources that can help.

Who We Serve

The Volunteer Center serves all of Sonoma County, and does not discriminate based on race, gender, beliefs, disability or sexual orientation. Each of our programs is developed to address a specific need of

the community. Beyond the need we are open and celebrate any partnership that will ensure a positive impact for the community.

We Value Volunteers

Although it may be implied in our organization's name, we continue to reinforce the fact that the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County appreciates all volunteers in all forms. Whether they are episodic volunteers or ongoing, we understand the power of community involvement and therefore believe in supporting our volunteers to ensure a positive, productive experience for both parties.

Thank you volunteers, for you and staff can continue the efforts of the Volunteer Center in connecting volunteers for a vibrant community!

Your Role as a Volunteer

Job Descriptions

As each program is different, and therefore your role and responsibilities will be dependent on where you choose to volunteer. You will receive a job description, or some form listing your responsibilities and expectations, upon signing up to volunteer. Please see your direct Volunteer Coordinator to review a copy of your job description.

Training Offered

The Volunteer Center encourages volunteers to grow in their position within the organization. Learning opportunities will depend on your role and the program you are a part of; please check with your direct Volunteer Coordinator to hear about training opportunities within their program.

Orientation

In order to fully include you in the organization, each Program Volunteer Coordinator will share with you an overview of the Volunteer Center. Orientations will also include the location of any equipment, sign in/out forms, staff and safety tools that are required for your position. If you would like a formal tour of the organization, please tell your direct Volunteer Coordinator.

Policies and Procedures

Application and Liability

All volunteers are required to fill out an application, sign a waiver releasing liability of the Volunteer Center, as well releasing photo and video use. If you have not completed either form, please notify your direct Volunteer Coordinator. In addition, if you're volunteering in the schools, you'll be required to undergo a Department of Justice background check.

Sign In/Out

Volunteers are required to sign in and sign out at the front desk so your time is captured. Please be sure to pick up a nametag so you can be identified as a volunteer. The location of these items will be explained in your orientation by your direct Volunteer Coordinator.

Safety

Volunteers are required to report personal injury obtained while volunteering at the Volunteer Center to your supervisor promptly. In the appendix is a list of emergency procedures as well as a map of the Volunteer Center site with emergency exits. Please review these documents so you are familiar with safety procedures as practiced by the organization.

Contact Information

Please notify your direct Volunteer Coordinator of any changes for your contact information.

Dismissal of Volunteers

The Volunteer Center has the right to dismiss a volunteer based on any misconduct or inappropriateness as decided by the Volunteer Center staff. Any concerns or disagreement with those choices can be submitted in written form and given to the Human Resources Department.

Code of Conduct

Your conduct and appearance as a volunteer reflects the image of the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County. It is everyone's responsibility to wear appropriate attire, maintain good grooming and personal cleanliness, and behave appropriately when associating them with this organization.

Dress Code

All volunteers are required to dress appropriately when working onsite or representing the Volunteer Center in the public. If there are any problems with dress that is deemed inappropriate, you may be asked to change clothing or be dismissed from your volunteer duties. In addition, we ask that strong cologne or perfumes be avoided for the comfort of those around you.

Appropriate Behavior

Appropriate language is expected at all times when working with the Volunteer Center either onsite or out in the community, therefore no expletives or use of slang. Sexual Harassment is not tolerated at the Volunteer Center. Legal actions may be taken if inappropriate behavior or conversation occurs with a volunteer and any other person within the organization or from the community. To learn more about what Sexual Harassment entails, please see our Human Resources Department Manager.

Drug, Alcohol and Smoking Policies

Volunteers cannot be under the influence of, or using any drugs or alcohol while volunteering. Smoking breaks are allowed during times arranged by the volunteer and direct Volunteer Coordinator. Smoking is permitted at least 20 feet away from each entrance of the Volunteer Center or from any event occurring in the public.

Attendance and Absenteeism

Volunteers are expected to arrive on time for every scheduled appointment or volunteer work hours as arranged by volunteer and direct Volunteer Coordinator. If a volunteer is unable to arrive on time or needs to be absent for the entire duration, that volunteer is required to notify their direct Volunteer Coordinator at least 24 hours in advance so staff have enough time to make accommodations. If a volunteer continues to be late or absent for scheduled work times, staff have the right to dismiss the volunteer.

Rights and Responsibilities

You have the right to choose a volunteer position as long as your availability, skill set and countenance match the need of the program. You have the right to withdraw from service at anytime, although we ask that you notify your direct Volunteer Coordinator and provide notice so they can prepare with an alternative.

You have the right to make an official complaint of your experience as a volunteer. To submit your complaint, please provide written document to the Human Resources Department. Each complaint will be dealt with as deemed appropriate by our procedures for such cases and will be kept on file for future review in case a pattern arises.

You have the right to give constructive, nonaggressive feedback to your direct Volunteer Coordinator based on your experience as a volunteer. These suggestions will be used for future assessment of potential changes made to the program you are working with.

You are responsible for notifying the Volunteer Center staff about any injury incurred while volunteering with this organization. The Volunteer Center has supplemental Insurance liability coverage for its volunteers, but this will not be your primary coverage. If you have any questions, please speak with your direct Volunteer Coordinator, as this may be different based on the program.

There are many benefits to volunteering...

- Explore a career, sharpen skills, gain leadership experience, add to a resume, or try something that is different from current/past job
- Help people, show commitment to a cause, perform civic duty, demonstrate adherence to their religious beliefs, be an agent of change
- Share professional skills, stay busy, gain knowledge about a community, participate in a team effort, find new friends, or pass a personal test
- A sense of accomplishment, a challenge, a feeling of pride, therapeutic endeavors, fun, academic credit, an escape, fantasy fulfillment, status, a chance to do what you love the most, or a position inside of an agency

Confidentiality

Some assignments require a moderate to high degree of confidentiality. Therefore, we ask that you observe the rules set forth by your direct Volunteer Coordinator and adhere to their code of conduct relating to confidentiality. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this requirement, please talk with our Human Resources Department Director.

What You Can Expect from the Volunteer Center

Equal Opportunity

The Volunteer Center serves all of Sonoma County, and does not discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, marital status, social/economical status, or any other protected criteria. We will attempt to accommodate volunteer needs but there may be cases where our capacity cannot fully meet the needs of the volunteer. If this is the case, we will investigate other opportunities that would be a better fit for the volunteer.

Paid Staff and Volunteers

The Volunteer Center does not replace a paid worker with a volunteer. California law protects employees by stating that organizations cannot replace a paid position with a volunteer. We practice this policy out of respect of both employees and volunteers.

Expectations of Staff

Staff are expected to be respectful to all volunteers and acknowledge their vital contribution to the organization. If a staff person does not treat a volunteer fairly, we ask the volunteer to notify their direct Volunteer Coordinator, unless that is the person in question. Please review “Communication Systems” to find the appropriate person to contact if that is the case.

Organization Support and Responsibilities

The Volunteer Center supports volunteers by providing clear expectations, direct supervision and continual awareness of the volunteer’s experience. Direct Volunteer Coordinators are trained to check in with volunteers to receive updates, feedback and questions to ensure open communication. The Volunteer Center is responsible for providing training, supplies, supervision and liability coverage for volunteers when acting on behalf of the agency.

Commitment to Volunteers

The Volunteer Center is committed to creating a positive experience for its volunteers. If you, as a volunteer, are not having a positive experience for whatever reason, please notify your direct Volunteer Coordinator.

Recognition and Appreciation

Through the many programs, the Volunteer Center has rituals of recognizing volunteers. To learn more, please ask your direct Volunteer Coordinator.

Confidentiality

The Volunteer Center respects the confidentiality of every volunteer. The information you provide on forms including the application, liability coverage and other documents are secured onsite at the agency. Personal information you share with staff will be kept confidential if asked unless there is a concern of your safety or safety of others. The Volunteer Center is not responsible for the actions of other volunteers when you disclose personal information with your peers.

Communication Systems

Please see below the contact information of staff and their position in the Volunteer Center:

For any questions or concerns related to other volunteers, please contact your direct Volunteer Coordinator.

For any questions or concerns related to staff including your direct Volunteer Coordinator, please contact the Resources & Operations Manager, Rachael McDavid, rmcdavid@volunteernow.org or extension 116.

For any questions or concerns about inappropriate behavior from staff or volunteers, please contact the Human Resources Department: hr@volunteernow.org extension 112.

For any questions or concerns about liability insurance coverage, please contact the Finance Department, Keith Samse, ksamse@volunteernow.org extension 111.

If your concerns are not resolved by the aforementioned staff, please provide a written statement and send to our Executive Director, Cami Weaver, cweaver@volunteernow.org or call extension 101.

Appendix:

Volunteer Opportunities with the Volunteer Center:

Interviewer: be a part of the Volunteer Referral Service by conducting interviews with potential volunteers and helping them review options with different nonprofit agencies. Training provided.

Data entry: many programs need the support of volunteers to help with data entry and other office support tasks. If interested, notify the front desk.

Literacy Program: become a tutor to help high school or elementary students in Sonoma County. Orientation provided and background check required.

Consultant: help nonprofit organizations by providing pro-bono consultation to a community-based organization. Consultations may include board development and change management. Workshops are also another way to translate your expertise into a service for nonprofit organizations. For more information, contact Jean at jbertelsen@volunteernow.org or extension 116.

Special Events: Our Human Race and Have a Heart Benefit and Gala always need volunteers. Human Race accepts volunteers 13 years and older, Have a Heart requires 21+ age volunteers. To learn more, contact Alicia, our Special Events Coordinator, at aalexander@volunteernow.org or extension 104.

Volunteer Wheels Driver: be a part of this amazing service that provides transportation for people who cannot use public transportation. Training and monthly meetings are provided. For more information, contact Wendy at wskoffgamsby@volunteernow.org or call 573-3375.

Emergency Contacts and Site Locations

Main Office Site: 153 Stony Circle Suite 100, Santa Rosa, CA 95401

Emergency Contact: (707) 573-3399

Report an Injury: Human Races extension 112

Executive Director extension 101

2-1-1 Site: 2550 Paulin Drive, Santa Rosa, CA 95403

Emergency Contact: (707) 565-2280

Director of 2-1-1 phone number: (707) 573-3399 x109