

Family House Group Volunteering FAQ

- How can I volunteer in a group?

Family House organizes group volunteers to help with dinners and group activities for our guests. It is truly meaningful to have volunteers make hot meals for and offer their time and support to our guests who spend long days in the hospital.

- How do I schedule a date to volunteer?

If you are interested in a group volunteering opportunity, feel free to contact our Manager of Volunteer Programs Julia Homa (jhoma@familyhouse.org) with the following information:

Interested date/s

House preference, if you have one

Type of event (dinner, baking, etc.)

What time you would arrive

What time you will serve

Menu selections

If you do not have all this information right away, when you do have it all ready, please let us know at least 1 week in advance of the scheduled date.

If you have further questions, you may contact our Manager of Volunteer Programs Julia Homa (jhoma@familyhouse.org).

- What time should I come to volunteer?

We ask that a dinner that you cook be ready to serve between 5:30 pm and 7:00 pm. You may arrive as early as 3 pm (when our staff is done cleaning the kitchens) in order to prepare the meal you are cooking for our guests. We have days all throughout the week for which you can volunteer to cook.

If you would like to make a breakfast, you may come in as early as 7:00 am. We do only look for breakfasts on the weekends because we are fortunately able to provide a light continental breakfast for our guests during the week, Monday through Thursday.

- What are the days of highest occupancy (i.e. when is there the most amount of people staying at Family House) so that my volunteering is most impactful?

We have our times of highest occupancy from Monday through Thursday. These tend to be the most impactful days of the week for groups to volunteer.

- **Can I volunteer on a weekend?**

Absolutely! We encourage volunteers to make one of the following meals if they would like to serve on a weekend: Friday breakfast, Saturday breakfast, Sunday dinner. We tend to have less guests over the weekends so this may mean less engagement with guests.

- **How many people can I bring to volunteer?**

We prefer to have a maximum of 8-10 volunteers at one time. This is because it can get crowded in our kitchens when a lot of people are cooking at once.

- **How many people am I cooking for?**

This will depend on which house you wind up cooking for, but for an estimate, you should prepare to serve 50 guests for a meal.

- **What facilities does Family House provide?**

Each of Family House's houses is equipped with a double kitchen – two ovens, two available stovetops, two large refrigerators. Family House has pots, pans, and kitchen utensils available for your use, but you are welcome to bring your own. We have some limited food storage containers available for your use, but if you are cooking hot food, we recommend that you bring disposable aluminum pans which allow for easy storage and clean-up. If you are interested in grilling food, the Neville House and the Shadyside House both have grills, but the University Place House does not. If you are interested in touring some of Family House's facilities before you volunteer, you may contact our Manager of Volunteer Programs Julia Homa (jhoma@familyhouse.org) for more information.

- **What are my responsibilities as a volunteer?**

We ask that you be responsible for bringing all the ingredients you are planning on using to prepare your meal, as well as enough paper products for the guests to use while eating your meal. We ask that you be responsible for preparing the food and helping serve the food to the guests. We also ask that you be responsible for cleaning up the kitchen after you are done (leaving it cleaner than you found it is even better!). In addition, we ask that you wear gloves when you prepare the meal for our guests in order to prevent spreading germs. You can either bring gloves on your own or ask for some from the front office in the house. Each of these responsibilities is extremely important so that our guests can enjoy your delicious food and there is a smooth experience for all involved!

- **What are some recommended food or menu items to prepare?**

Whatever you plan on making should be a part of a well-balanced meal that you can relatively easily make for 50 people. Please note that simply pasta is not a well-balanced meal – throw some fruits or vegetables in the mix, too! Some successful meals in the past have been: breakfast for dinner, stir fry, chicken with veggies, baked potato bar, chili and salad, and soup and salad bar.

- **Can I make food at home to serve the guests?**

Only if it is prepackaged or prepared by a professional facility. You could bring Chips Ahoy chocolate chip cookies or a rotisserie chicken from Giant Eagle, but not a lasagna from home, unfortunately. However, you are welcome to make your special homemade dishes using our house facilities!

- **Should I bring beverages?**

You are welcome to bring beverages if you like. Family House has coffee machines, tea bags, and water machines available. We do have an ice machine available, but it is designed for single servings – if you need to fill a cooler, please buy a bag of ice. Family House does not allow alcoholic beverages in our houses.

- **What do I do about leftovers?**

Any leftovers that you have can be properly preserved in the community refrigerator. If you did not get as many guests as you expected for the meal that you prepared, this is likely because guests are still in the hospital visiting their family members. Any food that you are able to preserve for them for later they will greatly appreciate!

- **Do I have to be concerned about dietary restrictions for the guests?**

We do not require that you have to make gluten-free, vegetarian, or other restricted diet options, but you are welcome to make those options on your own if you like.

- **What are the addresses and phone numbers for the houses?**

University Place House:

116 Thackeray Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213
412-578-3183

Shadyside House:

5245 Centre Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15232
412-802-8210

Neville House:

514 N. Neville Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

412-578-8650

- [Where can I find parking for my group?](#)

Available parking varies with which house you are choosing to volunteer. Parking tends to be limited at all of our houses.

University Place House:

Parking is the most limited at University Place. You may pull up to the house to unload your group and materials, but we ask that you find nearby parking that is not in our parking lot. You are welcome to use metered parking nearby which lasts until 6 PM or park in the University Hospital parking garage for which Family House can provide a \$5 voucher, meaning parking in this lot will cost you \$5.

Shadyside House:

Parking at Shadyside is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Usually, these spots are filled by our guests, but if there is room you are welcome to use those spots. You are welcome find metered street parking nearby, or to park in the Shadyside Hospital parking garage for which Family House can provide a \$5 voucher, meaning parking in this lot will cost you \$5.

Neville House:

Parking at Neville is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Usually these spots are filled by our guests, but if there is room you are welcome to use those spots. There is one-hour permit only street parking on Neville until 6 PM which means that if you park at 5 PM or later, your car will be safe until the end of your volunteering time. Alternatively, if Neville is full, there is street parking available one block away on Centre Avenue and Fifth Avenue.

- [I'm feeling a little sick the day that I'm supposed to volunteer. Should I still go help out or stay home?](#)

If you or a member in your group is sick the day on which you are supposed to volunteer, please do stay home. Some of our guests have compromised immune systems and could very well get sick from someone else.

- [Is there anything else I should know?](#)

We couldn't do this without you. The lifeblood of Family House is the volunteers who bring our guests comfort and laughter and a true "home away from home". Thank you for all you do as a volunteer!

- Who can I contact if I have more questions?

You may contact our Manager of Volunteer Programs Julia Homa via email (jhoma@familyhouse.org) or by phone (412-647-4917).