



## FAMILY HOUSE

### Group Volunteering FAQ

#### *How can I volunteer as a group?*

Family House organizes group volunteers to prepare dinners, bake treats, create snack bags, and complete other miscellaneous snack projects. For our guests who spend long hours at hospitals during the day, it is so meaningful for them to come back to a home cooked meal or be able to bring a snack bag with them for the day.

#### *How do I schedule a date to volunteer?*

If you are interested in a group volunteering activity, please contact the Volunteer Program Manager at [volunteer@familyhouse.org](mailto:volunteer@familyhouse.org) with the following information:

- Dates of interest
- House preference (Neville, Shadyside, or University Place)
- Type of event (dinner, baking, snack bags, etc.)

If you are planning a dinner, we ask you to provide your group's arrival time, serving time, and menu selection at least one week in advance.

#### *What time should I come to volunteer?*

We ask that dinners are served between 5pm and 7pm. You may arrive as early as 3pm to prepare the meal you are cooking for our guests. Dinners can be served any day of the week.

We do allow groups to cook breakfast and brunch, but these meals are only to be served on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Family House is generously provided with a breakfast grant that allows us to serve grab-and-go breakfast Monday through Thursday. If you are planning to prepare a breakfast, your group can

arrive as early as 7am on Friday mornings and as early as 8am on Saturday and Sunday. These times are when our office opens up, so there will be a manager on staff to let you into the building.

*What are the days when a dinner would be most impactful?*

Though days when there are the most guests tend to fluctuate, the most beneficial days to make a meal are Sunday evenings through Friday mornings. Our week days are the busiest.

*Can I volunteer on a weekend?*

Absolutely. Weekends don't always have the most people, but our guests are always appreciative of those volunteering their time.

*How many people can I bring to volunteer?*

We ask that no more than 5-8 people are volunteering (in the kitchens) at one time. We have a limited amount of space in our kitchens, and we also need to consider that our guests will be sitting down to enjoy dinner. We don't want to overcrowd them. If you have more than 8 people who are interested in volunteering at a time, we recommend setting up two separate volunteering dates or cooking for two different houses on the same date.

*How many people am I cooking for?*

This will depend on which house you cook for and what day of the week you choose. Our reservation numbers change frequently. If you are looking for an accurate number, contact the Volunteer Program Manager one week in advance. They will provide a count of guests. It is normally safe to assume to plan on serving 40-50 people.

*What facilities does Family House provide?*

Each Family House location is equipped with a double kitchen – two ovens, two stovetops, and two large refrigerators. Family House also has pots, pans, and kitchen utensils available, but you are welcome to bring your own. If you are

interested in grilling food, only the Neville and Shadyside House locations have grills.

We have limited food storage containers for your use. Please plan on bringing disposable aluminum pans for serving. Family House will provide individual takeout containers for leftovers to be stored.

Each house has a community refrigerator, which we use to store leftover food and is available for guest use. If you make too much food, that's okay! Leftovers are great for our guests who couldn't make it to the dinner or have reservations in the days following the dinner.

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

We ask that you be responsible for bringing all the ingredients necessary for your meal. We also ask you to provide enough paper products to use while eating your meal – our houses do not always have them, and dishes and silverware can be few and far between.

We also ask that you be responsible for preparing and serving the food to our guests.

A large part of the volunteer experience is taking the time to interact and engage with our guests. Please encourage your team to do so. Chatting with volunteers is a much appreciated change of pace outside of the typically high-stress situations our guests experience in the hospitals.

We also ask that your group take care of post-meal clean-up. Once the guests have enjoyed the meal, please return the kitchen to the clean state it was found in!

Additionally, please wear gloves when you prepare the meal for our guests to prevent the spread of germs to them. Many of our guests are hospital patients and may have compromised immune systems. You can either bring gloves, or our front office will have gloves available for you.

Each of these responsibilities are extremely important to the success of your volunteering and how it impacts our guests here at Family House. We want your group to enjoy serving our guests as much as they enjoy the food you provide for them!

*What are some recommended menus to prepare?*

Whatever you plan on making, it should be a well-balanced meal that is relatively easy to prepare for 40+ people.

Some successful meals in the past have been: breakfast for dinner, stir fry, chicken with veggies, pasta with veggies, chili, sloppy joes, and a taco bar.

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

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

*Should I bring beverages?*

Totally up to you! Family House has coffee machines, tea bags, and water available. We do have an ice machine, but it is designed for single servings. If you need to fill a cooler, please buy a bag of ice. There are also vending machines in each house.

**\*\*Please note that Family House does not allow alcoholic beverages in any of our houses.**

*What do I do about leftovers?*

Any leftovers you have can be distributed into individual servings in the provided takeout containers and stored in the community refrigerator. If you did not get as many guests as you expected, this is likely because guests are still in the hospital themselves or visiting family members. Any extra food you save for guests for later consumption is always appreciated!

*Do I have to be concerned about dietary restrictions?*

We do not require you to make gluten-free, vegetarian, or other restricted diet options. You are always welcome to make those options on your own if you would like. Many groups will provide one non-vegetarian option and one vegetarian option. We do ask you ensure your food is not too spicy.

*What are the addresses and phone numbers for each of the houses?*

University Place:  
116 Thackeray Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
412-578-3183

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

Neville:  
514 N. Neville Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213  
412-578-8650

*Where can I find parking for my group?*

Available parking varies depending at which house you will be volunteering. Parking tends to be limited at all of our houses.

#### University Place

Parking is the most limited at University Place. You may pull up to the house to unload your group and materials. The spaces in the lot are designated for managers and guests.

You are welcome to use the metered street parking nearby, which lasts until 6 p.m. and is then free. You can also park in the UPMC Presbyterian Hospital parking garage, for which Family House can provide a voucher that will bring the parking price down to \$5.

## Shadyside

Parking at Shadyside is on a first-come, first-served basis. Upon arrival, you may pull into our 15-minute loading zone (yellow curb at the end of our sidewalk) to unload anything from your car.

Typically, the spots in the Shadyside lot are filled by our guests. Please check with the house manager on duty before parking in the back of the building – these spots are permitted and may belong to a guest already.

Metered street parking is also available nearby. Also, the managers can provide \$5 vouchers for the Aiken and Cypress garages, which are affiliated with the Shadyside Hospital.

## Neville

Parking at Neville is on a first-come, first-served basis. Upon arrival, you may pull into our 15-minute loading zone (yellow curb at the end of our sidewalk) to unload anything from your car. Usually, these spots are filled by our guests, but check with the manager about available spots.

There is a one-hour-limit, permit only parking on Neville Street until 6 p.m. After 6 p.m., there is no time limit.

Alternatively, if Neville Street is full, there is street parking available one block away on both Centre and Fifth Avenues.

*I'm feeling a little sick the day I'm meant to volunteer. Should I stay home?*

If you or a member of your group are sick the day you are meant to volunteer, please do stay home. Some of our guests have compromised immune systems and are more at risk to catch symptoms from outside sources. The safety and health of our guests is our priority.

*Unanswered questions?*

You may contact our Volunteer Program Manager at [volunteer@familyhouse.org](mailto:volunteer@familyhouse.org) or by phone at 412-647-4917.

Thank you for all you do as a volunteer! Our volunteers provide our guests with comfort, laughter, and a true “home away from home” experience.