Volunteer Handbook
Welcome

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with Inspiration Corporation! A group of dedicated volunteers began our organization when we were just a little red wagon in 1989, and volunteers are what keep the Inspiration Cafe open 365 days a year. We hope that you will enjoy your time volunteering with us, and know that your contributions are appreciated by our staff and the people we serve.

In order to volunteer with Inspiration Corporation, you must complete an orientation. Please click the “volunteer now” button on the top of our homepage at www.inspirationcorp.org to begin the process.

Mission Statement

In an atmosphere of dignity and respect, Inspiration Corporation helps people who are affected by homelessness and poverty to improve their lives and increase self-sufficiency through the provision of social services, employment training and housing.

In keeping with our mission, please remember that we ask all volunteers, staff, and participants to behave and interact with one another in way that acknowledges our mission of creating an atmosphere of dignity and respect.

Contact Information

Inspiration Cafe
4554 N. Broadway Suite 207
Chicago, IL 60640
773-878-0981
volunteer@inspirationcorp.org
Our Services

Meals
People working to overcome histories of homelessness and poverty are welcome to meals prepared and served by volunteers in a restaurant-style setting at the Inspiration Cafe in Uptown. The Cafe also links participants to services available through other Inspiration Corporation programs and in the community.

Basic Street Outreach
Through regular case management meetings, individuals experiencing homelessness receive counseling and support in identifying, monitoring, and achieving personal goals, which include obtaining stable housing and an income source.

Housing Services
Inspiration provides rental subsidies and housing retention services to help formerly homeless individuals and families find and maintain permanent housing. Our program provides supportive housing to more than 300 people, including over 150 children. Staff social workers provide supportive services to help residents successfully transition to stable housing and self-sufficiency. Participants are housed across the City of Chicago.

Foodservice Training
Our Foodservice Training program is a comprehensive job-training program that helps low-income job-seekers obtain career-track employment in the hospitality industry. Students receive pre-employment instruction, restaurant training, sanitation certification, internship experience, and job-placement assistance at our Inspiration Kitchens training center and social enterprise restaurant in East Garfield Park.
Volunteer Opportunities

**Uptown**
*Meals Program*
For individuals or groups up to 8 people
- Cook (must be 16 years or older)
- Serve (must be 14 years or older w/adult)
- Donate a meal or non-perishable foods
- Sponsor a meal ($500)
- Kitchen assistance after meals

**Bagged Lunches**
For groups of all sizes
- Provide up to 200 bag lunches (see p. 8)
- Off-site, donation opportunity

**Miscellaneous**
For individuals
- Resource Room
- Helping with office assistance, filing, data entry and mailings
- Maintenance/Custodial Helper (occasional need for groups)

**Special Events**
For individuals
- Provide volunteer assistance at various special events and fundraisers

**East Garfield Park**
*Tutoring*
For individuals
- Tutoring potential students in math and reading at weekly orientations
- Tutoring current students in topics such as math and fractions as arranged

**Mock Interviews**
For groups of 3-10 people
- Help prepare students for the real world by practicing interview techniques
- Can be held at your office or at Inspiration Kitchens

**Garden**
For individuals or groups up to 10 people
- Help manage and cultivate our garden
- Seasonal
Shift Schedules

**Inspiration Cafe Cook (3 per meal)**
Breakfast
Monday – Friday
5:30 – 8:00 AM
Dinner
Mon, Thurs, Sat & Sun
4:00 – 7:00 PM

**Inspiration Cafe Server (5 per meal)**
Breakfast
Monday-Friday
6:30 - 8:00 AM
Dinner
Mon, Thurs, Sat & Sun
5:30 - 7:30 PM

**Kitchen Assistant (2 per meal)**
Breakfast
Monday – Friday
8:00 - 11:00 AM
Dinner
Mon, Thurs, Sat & Sun
6:30 – 8:30 PM

**Resource Room (1 per day)**
Monday - Friday
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM

**General Operations and Maintenance**
Monday - Friday
8:00 AM - 4:00 PM
(As arranged with the Volunteer Coordinator)

**Bagged Lunches**
Monday & Thursday (Preferred)
6:00 AM - 5:30 PM
Tues, Wed, & Fri (Preferred)
6:00 AM - 4:00 PM
Saturday & Sunday
4:00 - 8:00 PM
(Drop-off time must be arranged with the Volunteer Coordinator)

**Tutoring**
Foodservice Training Orientation
Every Tuesday
1:30 - 3:00 PM

**Other Tutoring**
Selected Tuesdays
3:00 - 4:00 PM
(As arranged with the Volunteer Coordinator)

**Mock Interviews**
Selected Tuesdays
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
(As arranged with the Volunteer Coordinator)
Volunteer Role Descriptions

Uptown

Volunteer Cook
Working in the kitchen under the direction of a trained staff member, prepare a meal for up to 50 guests at Inspiration Cafe. Menus are planned in advance, and volunteers will receive basic skills instruction and direction from staff. No previous professional cooking experience required; some familiarity with cooking suggested.

Before the meal, assist with setup and meal prep as directed. During the meal, servers write down names and orders for each guest and drop tickets at the counter. Cooks prepare meals on a first-come/first-serve basis, using the ticket holders hanging above the counters to keep tickets in order. Orders taken until 30 minutes after serving time begins. After the meal, assist staff with kitchen cleanup.

Volunteer Server
Act as a member of Inspiration Cafe’s wait staff and ensure our guests have a warm and welcoming experience. Each server is assigned a table number by staff, and servers should introduce themselves to guests as they arrive. Make sure to be a friendly face, and give our guests the same kind of experience you would enjoy at any other restaurant in the city.

Before the meal, assist with dining room setup as directed and receive your table assignments. Greet guests as they arrive and take drink orders. Familiarize yourself with the daily menu posted on the wall. When the kitchen is ready, use order tickets to take guests’ orders and deliver to the cooks at the counter. Bring orders out to the tables. Make sure to check on your guests to refill drinks, clear plates, etc. After the meal service ends, bus plates and assist with dining room cleanup as directed.

Kitchen Assistant
Help keep Inspiration Cafe tidy by washing dishes and cleaning the kitchen under the direction of staff after the meals service over.

Resource Room
Assist individuals using our computer lab with basic computer skills such as printing, attaching a document to an email, or searching the web.

General Operations and Maintenance
Individuals (and occasionally groups) will help our maintenance/facility staff with general cleaning or other projects.
Volunteer Role Descriptions

East Garfield Park

Foodservice Training Orientation Tutoring
Prospective students attending orientation for our Foodservice Training program are required to pass a basic math and reading test to enter the program. Questions test the ability to handle basic recipe manipulation, and are estimated to require 6th grade math and reading skills. Individuals may take the test as many times as they would like, and volunteers can assist as tutors at orientation to help test takers improve their skills.

Math Tutoring
Students enrolled in the Foodservice Training program often require additional assistance to improve their ability to handle recipe functions like doubling or halving. Tutoring sessions focus on multiplication and division of fractions.

Mock Interviews
Before graduating, Foodservice Training program students participate in mock interviews with volunteers to sharpen their interview skills and prepare for their job search. Volunteers are provided with interview questions by staff, and conduct brief assessments of student performance following the interview.
Bagged Lunches

Making bagged lunches is a great activity for groups that are too large to volunteer at Inspiration Cafe, or for groups with schedules that do not accommodate our regular services. Lunches are packed off-site, dropped off at the Inspiration Cafe, and distributed during meals service. Donated lunches help bridge times when we are not serving free meals at the Cafe, and provide individuals experiencing homelessness with ongoing nutritional support.

Bagged lunch donors are expected to provide all of the food and supplies for a minimum of 25 lunches and a maximum of 200. Donors that declare the dollar value of their contribution may request an official receipt from Inspiration Corporation for tax purposes.

Healthy ingredients like carrot sticks and celery, whole grain wheat bread, etc., are appreciated. Please include:

- Turkey or ham and cheese sandwiches (no condiments on the sandwiches)
- Carrot sticks, celery or chips
- Fruit
- Dessert (a chance for your group to showcase any great baked goods)
- Juice box or water
- Paper bags, sandwich bags, napkins
- Due to limited cooler space, please separate ingredients requiring refrigeration in two boxes (usually available free of charge at grocery or liquor stores):
  1. to hold the sandwiches and anything else that needs refrigeration
  2. to hold the assembled lunches minus the refrigerated items
- Extras might include: mayo/mustard packets, necessary utensils, decorations for the bags, etc.
- Some groups enjoy decorating the lunch bags with inspiring or cheerful messages

Groups should plan to assemble the lunches on their own, off-site, and then deliver them to the Inspiration Cafe in Uptown during the hours indicated on the Shift Schedule section. Please coordinate your drop-off time with our staff.
Volunteering as a Group

Our volunteer management system is designed to accommodate individual volunteers. Groups such as schools, religious congregations, corporate teams, or others that wish to volunteer together must coordinate their shift directly with the Volunteer Coordinator. Group opportunities include:

- Groups of up to 8-10 can sign up to cover an entire meal shift at Inspiration Cafe
- Packing bagged lunches off-site means there is no limit on the number that can participate
- Limited maintenance and facility projects for groups up to 15
- Mock interviews for groups of 3-10
- Occasionally larger groups can assist with specific facilities and site maintenance projects when the need arises

To coordinate a group opportunity, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator 6-8 weeks out from your desired date.

Court Ordered Community Service

In keeping with its mission to provide positive opportunities to all people, no matter their background, Inspiration Corporation does allow individuals to volunteer at the Inspiration Cafe in order to complete service hours for court ordered community service if they obey the following policies:

- Volunteers MUST disclose their intent to complete court ordered service hours and the number of hours required when they complete their orientation
- Community service volunteers are restricted to the Kitchen Assistant, Resource Room, and General Operations and Maintenance roles; Inspiration Corporation will not verify hours completed in other roles
- The volunteer is responsible for signing in and out with staff for their volunteer shifts—Inspiration Corporation will not verify hours that are not reflected on official sign-in sheets
- Inspiration Corporation is not responsible for the timely completion of court ordered community service hours; the volunteer retains all responsibility for completing and accurately reporting hours
- Inspiration Corporation will make its best effort to verify volunteer hours in a timely manner, within 2 business days of the request
Volunteer Policies

Inspiration Corporation follows established best practices in social work that protect our participants, staff, and volunteers:

- In compliance with our contract of confidentiality, photography of participants is not allowed; please restrict your photos of volunteer service to yourself, other volunteers, and food; make sure to be careful not to capture participants in the background.

- Please do not give out personal information like cell phone numbers to participants; please do not connect with participants on social media.

- Volunteers should not give gifts or grant personal favors to participants, such as lending money, cars, or other personal items.

Dress Code for Volunteers

Just as we have dress codes for our staff and participants, we expect that all volunteers will dress in a way that respects the professionalism and dignity of our agency and work.

- Shirts should meet the top of pants; please do not reveal bare midriffs or undergarments.

- We ask that cooks and servers not wear shorts in the Cafe.

- Clothes should be neat and clean, no rips or tears.

- We do not allow clothing with obscene language or advertisements of drugs or alcohol.

- Closed toe shoes are required for all volunteers at Inspiration Cafe, no sandals or flip-flop type shoes are allowed.

- Cooks will be provided with a hairnet, or may choose to bring a hat.
Volunteers should be able to serve in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment. Inspiration Corporation forbids sexual harassment, and this policy extends to each and every level of our organization. Accordingly, harassment, whether by a fellow volunteer, an employee, a customer, a visitor, or a member of management, will not be tolerated.

Acts considered to constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a nature when: (a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment; (b) an individual’s submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as a basis for an employment decision affecting that individual; or (c) the purpose or the effect of such conduct is to substantially interfere with the affected individual’s work performance or to create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Some examples of unwelcome behavior that can be construed as sexual harassment include, but are not limited to: sexual advances, propositions, off-color jokes, touching, physical assault, sexually explicit or suggestive objects or pictures, references to a person’s body parts, requests for sexual activity and/or sexually explicit conversation.

All such matters will be treated confidentially to the extent possible and with the utmost discretion. IC will actively investigate all sexual harassment complaints, and if it is determined that sexual harassment has occurred, will take appropriate disciplinary action or action to stop the harassment.

Retaliation against any person who has complained about sexual harassment, filed a charge of harassment, or who otherwise participated in an investigation of harassment will not be tolerated. Such activity is unlawful and will result in severe discipline, up to and including discharge.

Acts of sexual harassment will not be tolerated. A volunteer who believes that they are the victim of sexual harassment, should attempt to do the following:

- Clearly and directly communicate to the offending individual that his or her conduct is unwelcome, and request that the offensive behavior stop.

- Document each incident of alleged sexual harassment, including the date, time, place, what was said or done, and the surrounding circumstances.

- Immediately bring the matter to the attention of the cafe coordinator, a present staff member, or email volunteer@inspirationcorp.org
Scheduling

How to Self-Schedule

Using our web-based scheduling system, Volgistics, individuals can schedule themselves!

Please email volunteer@inspirationcorp.org if you have questions or concerns.

To access Volgistics:

- Go to www.inspirationcorp.org
- Select the “volunteers” menu at the top
- Click “current volunteer portal” on the left
- Log in with your email as your username

From there, go to “My Schedule,” and there will be a pull down tab where you can look at shift availability. Also, you can cancel any shift up to three days before the shift, if a problem arises.

Things to Remember

- When looking at the schedule for a specific date, clicking the “Schedule Me” button will bring you to a confirmation page - you must click “yes” or “no” on that page in order to be added to the schedule.

- There are also more details about each volunteering opportunity on the confirmation page.

- Cancellations: Volgistics will allow volunteers to cancel their own shift within 3 days of the shift time.

- If you do need to cancel within 3 days of your shift, email volunteer@inspirationcorp.org. If it is the day of your shift, please also call (773) 878-0981 x 210.