



# **VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

## **Welcome Packet**

Thank you so much for your interest in volunteering at MANNA FoodBank. Our volunteer program is a wonderful way to engage with others from our community while making a tangible difference in the lives of all those we serve.

We welcome you to read on to learn more about MANNA FoodBank, our mission, and our volunteerism opportunities. Our volunteer program is central to our mission and stewardship efforts, and without the generous help of our volunteers, MANNA would not be able to do what we do in serving our neighbors in need across our 16-county service area, including the Qualla Boundary.

In a typical year, we have over 3,000 volunteers who give their time and talent to help us get food to those who need it most. A uniqueness of our volunteer program is that individuals or groups can choose how frequently they want to volunteer; ranging from committing to a weekly food sorting shift to delivering food in our MANNA Express several times a year.

We are so grateful for your interest in becoming involved in the fight to end food insecurity in WNC, and look forward to providing you with the tools necessary for you to make a positive impact upon your community.

# ABOUT MANNA FOODBANK



## MANNA'S MISSION

Our mission is to involve, educate, and unite people in the work of ending hunger in Western North Carolina.

## MANNA'S VISION

A hunger-free WNC.

## ABOUT MANNA

MANNA FoodBank is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization serving Western North Carolina. Since 1983, MANNA has and continues to serve communities across 16 counties of WNC, including the Qualla Boundary, through a partner network of 220+ community-based agencies, stretching every resource to meet the growing need for food and providing relief to thousands of families. MANNA is an acronym that stands for Mountain Area Nutritional Needs Alliance.

MANNA FoodBank collects, stores, warehouses, and distributes food to its partner agencies who then provide direct services and local food distribution to families facing food insecurity. MANNA provides direct services on a limited basis through the Feeding Kids Year Round Program as well as through the Food Access and Support Team (FAST).

MANNA relies greatly on the food industry, the state and federal government, local farmers, food drives, as well as corporate and individual donors, for sourcing the food that is then passed into the hands of our WNC neighbors. A majority of the food MANNA receives is donated. This food is sorted and culled by thousands of volunteers, and then delivered to hundreds of partners across the region. These agencies include pantries, soup kitchens, emergency food suppliers, faith-based organizations, and other nonprofits who provide this food directly to members of their community. As the need in our region continues to grow, so has the amount of food that goes through our warehouse and to the tables of the people who need it most.

## FEEDING AMERICA

MANNA is one of the 200 food banks in the Feeding America network, which is the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization. Feeding America is leading the fight against hunger in our nation and their mission is to advance change in the U.S. by ensuring equitable access to nutritious food for all, in partnership with food banks, policymakers, supporters, and the communities we collectively serve.

## THE NEED

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, 1 in 6 people and 1 in 4 children here in WNC did not have access to 3 square meals a day. This is significantly higher than the national average. Nationwide, 1 in 9 people and 1 in 6 children struggle with hunger. In the wake of the pandemic, MANNA has been serving well over 100,000 people each month which represents a 60-70% increase in the number of people finding themselves in need of our assistance over pre-pandemic numbers.

Hunger can affect people from all walks of life. Lay-offs at work, unexpected car maintenance or an accident on the job can suddenly force a family to choose between buying food and other basic necessities such as housing or healthcare. One bad month can be enough to plunge a household into food insecurity - but some people, including children and seniors, may be at a greater risk of hunger than others.

The USDA defines food insecurity as limited or uncertain access to enough food for all members of a household to live an active, healthy lifestyle. WNC has higher rates of food insecurity than the national average due to 4 main factors that contribute to local and regional poverty: low wages, lack of affordable housing, poor public transportation, as well as the high cost of childcare.

Hunger and health are deeply connected and can be life-altering. When people don't have enough food or have to choose inexpensive foods with low-nutritional value, it can seriously impact their health. And once the cycle of poor diet and poor health begins, it can be a hard cycle to break. Healthy bodies and minds require nutritious meals at every age, which is why MANNA is taking great strides to provide more nutritiously dense foods and fresh produce.

# PROGRAMS AT MANNA



## Increasing Food Access Across Western North Carolina

Food access is at the heart of MANNA's mission to end hunger in WNC, and we focus on several high-need areas in order to support access to healthy, balanced food that gives families a chance to thrive.

### Food Distribution

The Food Distribution program is the central focus of MANNA's day-to-day operations.

1. Onsite Distribution - Members of MANNA's Warehouse and Distribution Teams support onsite distribution, with partner agencies coming directly to MANNA's campus to collect food for public distribution.
2. Mobile Deliveries - Driven by MANNA's professional Driving Team, these deliveries are made directly to partner agencies across 16 counties, including the Qualla Boundary, utilizing the commercial truck fleet.
3. Express Deliveries - Driven by the Volunteer Driving Team, these mostly perishable food deliveries go to partner agencies on the day of their public distributions.
4. MANNA Community Markets (MCMs) - MCMs are mobile pantry distributions designed to reach residents living in rural and underserved areas. MCMs are organized in partnership with local individuals or organizations who know the area's food needs, and have connections to the community. In this farmers market-style distribution, we directly distribute shelf-stable foods, perishables, fresh produce, assorted grocery, and household items.

### Feeding Kids Year Round Program: MANNA Packs and Summer Packs

Many kids in our service area rely on free school meals during the academic year, and face being hungry on weekends and while school is out of session. Our MANNA Packs program is committed to ensure that our community's children facing hunger not only have enough to eat, but also have the opportunity to thrive.

### Food Access and Support Team (FAST)

North Carolina administers the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) under the name Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). This federal program commonly called food stamps, is the nation's top anti-poverty program. Our FAST supports and empowers community members across our region to find food nearby and to educate them about the resources available, and offers support to families as they navigate through the complex food assistance application process.

### Nutrition Works

Food security is as much about access to healthy food as it is about general food access. Individuals facing food insecurity must commonly make trade-offs to stretch their food budget: cheaper foods are often lacking in the nutrients needed to sustain healthy lives. The Nutrition Works program supports healthy food access for residents across WNC through healthy pantry trainings, cooking demos utilizing fresh produce available through MANNA, and partnering with health professionals to connect food insecure neighbors to healthy food resources. MANNA maintains an average of 30% fresh produce in the total inventory and over 60% of our inventory is categorized as "healthy staples," which includes canned and frozen fruits and vegetables, whole grains, proteins, and dairy items. Our goal through this program is to reduce food insecurity while improving community health.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER FAQs**

### **How do I become a volunteer?**

Visit <https://www.mannafoodbank.org/volunteer-individual-opportunities/> to get started: Create your volunteer profile, watch a few videos online, read through the handbook, and join the 30-minute video conference call to meet the Volunteer Manager, learn more about MANNA, and have the opportunity to ask questions. From there, you'll be able to sign-up for upcoming volunteer opportunities at the food bank.

### **How do I login to my volunteer account?**

To login to your volunteer profile, visit our website at <https://www.mannafoodbank.org/> and select the 'Volunteer Login' tab located in the upper right hand corner.

### **Is the volunteer orientation required?**

Yes, all individuals must complete the two-step volunteer orientation prior to volunteering at MANNA FoodBank's facility. Login to your volunteer account and register for an upcoming volunteer orientation (currently being offered on a bi-weekly basis) and be sure to read through the handbook and watch the online videos. Children under the ages of 16 are strongly encouraged to watch the videos online, however, it is not required.

### **Do I need to register in advance or can I just show up for a volunteer shift?**

Please register in advance! You can see what shifts are available and get yourself signed up through our website. Unfortunately, we cannot accommodate walk-in volunteers, as our shifts have a maximum capacity due to space limitations.

### **How do I sign up for a volunteer shift?**

Login to your volunteer profile and select the 'Register for an Upcoming Event' link. From there, you will be able to select the volunteer shift that works best for you. We offer volunteer warehouse shifts Monday-Friday, 9AM-12PM and 1-3PM.

### **What if I need to cancel my volunteer shift?**

If you know in advance that you will be unable to volunteer for an upcoming shift you are signed up for, please login to your volunteer account, select 'View or Cancel Registration for an Upcoming Event,' and follow the remaining prompts. Another option is to click the 'Cancel Registration' link embedded in the reminder email you receive the week prior to your shift. Often times there is a waitlist - so cancelling your shift will allow other folks to volunteer during that time.

### **I am currently on the waitlist. When will I be notified if there is a change to my registration?**

As soon as there is an online cancellation, you will receive an email notification. The latest possible time you will be notified is the day prior.

### **What should I wear to volunteer?**

All volunteers must wear closed-toe shoes to participate in warehouse projects - no sandals, flip-flops or open-toe shoes are permitted. We ask that you dress comfortably and respectfully. A sweatshirt or an extra layer is recommended, especially during the winter months, as the temperature in the warehouse can be quite cool.

### **Can my children volunteer with me?**

Children between the ages of 5-15 years old are welcome to volunteer with a parent or adult chaperone and must be registered for the event that they plan to attend. Volunteers between the ages of 16-17 years old are able to volunteer without adult supervision, but will need to submit a signed liability waiver.

### **How do I sign my child / family member up to volunteer with me?**

Login to your account and select "Add Additional Volunteer to my Profile" from the Volunteer Portal Home. You will be redirected to a volunteer application in which you will need to complete on behalf of your child or family member. Then, be sure to sign-up everyone for a volunteer shift online.

**\*\*NOTE:** Our volunteer system connects profiles through a shared phone number. If you would like family members to all be accessed from the same profile, keep the primary phone number the same for each family member.

**FAQs Continued . . .**

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## **Do you accommodate differently-abled volunteers?**

We try to accommodate volunteers of all skill and ability levels the best we can. In order to maintain a safe and productive warehouse environment, we maintain limits on the number of community networking client-worker teams per shift. If you would like to learn more and see if there are openings available, please email our Volunteer Manager.

## **Inclement weather?**

Anytime MANNA has a delay or is closed due to inclement weather, we will send an email to everyone that is signed up for the shift that is affected. We will also receive a text message, if you have enabled that feature in your volunteer profile. If you do not receive an email and are unsure whether or not we will be open, you can call MANNA's front desk phone number (828-299-3663), which will provide up-to-date information. If we are still open and you are uncomfortable driving the roads given the current condition, we encourage you to stay home and cancel your shift. Your safety is of the utmost importance and we want to make sure you are making the decision you have the most confidence in.

## **GROUP VOLUNTEER FAQs**

### **How do I sign my group up for volunteer opportunities?**

If you would like to bring a group, please submit a [Group Volunteer Request Form](#). We will receive a notification once you submit your request and one of our team members will get back to you with available dates and additional details. Please know that reservations are not guaranteed until you receive a confirmation email from us.

### **Who should fill out a Group Request Form?**

Families, clubs, school groups, business groups, or other organizations of 5 or more volunteers can fill out a Group Request Form. If you are a non-business group of 5 or fewer, you can have each person sign up as an individual on available dates.

### **How early do I need to make a reservation for my group?**

When possible, please try to schedule your group opportunities with 2-3 months' notice. This is particularly true during the holidays, when the demand for volunteer opportunities exceeds our capacity.

### **What is the maximum group size you can accommodate?**

At this time, the largest group size we are able to accommodate is a group of 10 individuals, unless a 2-3 months' notice is given.

### **Does everyone in my group need to register in advance?**

Yes, every person in your group must register prior to volunteering at MANNA. Once the group leader has submitted a Group Request Form, and someone from our team has reached out to confirm your date, you will receive a unique registration link and reservation code for your team members to register. It will be up to the group leader to then forward that email to those who are interested in volunteering so that all members can sign-up.

**\*\*NOTE:** If you are a health facility bringing clients or a school group and need to maintain the anonymity of your group members, we can sign your group up as a whole using just the group leaders contact information.

### **Have additional questions?**

Contact the Volunteer Manager! Alyssa Shuman, [AShuman@MANNAFoodBank.org](mailto:AShuman@MANNAFoodBank.org), (828-774-5911)

# MANNA VOLUNTEER ROLES



## **Warehouse Projects in the Volunteer Center**

Our projects change daily in the warehouse based on priority and need and could include things such as sorting and packing food donations, packing housewares and hygiene products, culling and bagging produce, or assembling MANNA Packs. We offer warehouse shifts Monday-Friday, 9AM-12PM and 1-3PM.

## **Nutrition Works**

Assist with outreach nutrition activities at partner agencies and MANNA Community Markets. Help to provide basic nutrition education and support to pantries and their clients to improve food choices. Performs food demonstrations and training seminars.

## **MANNA Express Drivers**

MANNA Volunteer Drivers will work in pairs driving small box trucks (no CDL necessary) to pick-up and deliver food items to predetermined locations throughout our 16 county region, including the Qualla Boundary. Driving opportunities often include delivering produce and other perishables to partner agencies, then offering support to the agency with the distribution of food.

## **Food Access and Support Team (FAST)**

Field incoming calls, make referrals to food resources throughout WNC, and provide potentially eligible clients FNS application assistance (formerly referred to as food stamps). A major bonus if you speak Spanish!

## **Ambassadors**

Represent MANNA FoodBank at organized tabling opportunities and other community events. Communicate details about MANNA's programs and services as well as share information concerning food insecurity in Western North Carolina. Ambassadors will advocate for our neighbors in need in WNC and encourage others to support MANNA's mission by donating their time and/or financial resources.

## **Special Events**

Blue Jean Ball and Empty Bowls would not be possible without the support of our volunteers. Volunteers help in a variety of ways including: set-up before events, picking up donated items, greeting guests and helping with the check-in process, support with parking, coordinating with and offering hands-on support for Culinary Partners, and tear-down after events.

## **Ingles Reclaim Food Sorters**

Sorting reclaimed food from Ingles Markets into categories while ensuring quality standards are being met. This role operates in the Volunteer Center during the same times as warehouse projects.

## **Egg Candling (as needed)**

Before eggs can be sent to our partner agencies, volunteers must individually inspect all donated eggs to ensure they are safe to consume, and are not broken or cracked.

## **Specialty Roles (as needed)**

Office assistant, data input support, development committee, events committee, etc.

# WAREHOUSE SAFETY PROCEDURES & EXPECTATIONS



## Attire and Cleanliness

- Closed-toe shoes are required - absolutely no exceptions
- Dress is expected to be comfortable, functional, and appropriate
- No headphones, earbuds, or Bluetooth devices while in the warehouse
- Volunteers must wash their hands before their shift, after any trips to the restroom, and after their breaks to ensure good sanitation practices

## Eating and Drinking

- No tobacco use or chewing gum allowed in the warehouse
- Eating and drinking should only take place in designated areas: Volunteer Café, Laurel's Kitchen, office areas, or staff break rooms

## Be Aware of Your Surroundings

- Check for warehouse equipment in motion (beeping, flashing lights, horns, etc.)
- Do not text and walk
- Volunteers should stay off of the warehouse floor while staff members are setting up or resetting projects, particularly while forklift equipment is in use
- No running in the warehouse
- Floors are extremely slick when wet

## Pallets / Pallet Jack's

- Only authorized, trained volunteers may operate manual pallet jackets
- Pallets are to be laid flat - never to be leaned against wall on their sides
- Immediately store unused pallets on designated stacks
- Do not walk on top of pallets

## Tripping Hazards

- Keep floor clear of debris - please pickup bits of wood, plastic wrap, cardboard, etc. to minimize tripping hazards
- Store unused pallets on designated stacks

## Lifting Techniques

- Face your load and keep objects close to your body
- Use your legs, not your back
- Ask for help from a fellow volunteer if you are unable to lift something

## Boxcutter Safety

- Cut away from your body
- Retract blade when not in use
- Change out dull blades
- Put spent blades in the yellow blade container - DO NOT put them in the trash cans

## Glass Breakage

- Notify a MANNA employee right away, as we utilize techniques to prevent cross-contamination of glass particles

## Accidents

- Any person who received an injury, or was involved in any type of accident or property damage must report it to the appropriate MANNA staff or supervisor immediately. An incident reporting form will need to be filled out.