



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

# WELCOME TO MANNA!



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 4,000 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 with Community Markets 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 that has served Western North Carolina since 1983. As an accredited partner food bank of Feeding America, MANNA serves 16 counties across WNC, including the Qualla Boundary, through a strong network of community-based food partners. These partners include food pantries, meal sites, faith-based organizations, schools, community organizations, and other nonprofits working directly with neighbors facing hunger.

MANNA collects, purchases, stores, sorts, and distributes food so that local partners can provide free food access in the communities they know best. Food reaches MANNA through many sources, including food industry partners, grocery retailers, local farmers, state and federal programs, food drives, and generous corporate and individual donors. Much of this food is donated, and volunteers play a critical role in sorting, packing, and preparing it for distribution.

In addition to supporting partner agencies, MANNA provides direct food access and support through programs such as Community Markets, Youth Programs, and Benefits Outreach. Together, these programs help connect neighbors with food today while also supporting longer-term stability through resources such as SNAP/FNS assistance, referrals, and community-based food access.

MANNA's work is made possible by a broad community of partners, volunteers, donors, farmers, food businesses, advocates, and neighbors helping neighbors. Together, this network helps ensure that food continues moving across Western North Carolina, especially during times of crisis, recovery, and rising need.

## THE NEED

Hunger in Western North Carolina has never been caused by a single event. It is the result of long-standing economic pressures, including high housing costs, limited transportation, healthcare expenses, rising food costs, and the challenges of living in a largely rural and mountainous region. For many households, one unexpected bill, job loss, medical expense, or car repair can force a choice between buying food and paying for rent, utilities, medication, or childcare.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, MANNA's partner network averaged more than 65,000+ monthly visits to pantries and meal sites. During the pandemic era, that need more than doubled as layoffs, school closures, supply disruptions, and rising costs pushed more families into crisis. Many households never fully recovered. By the years just before Hurricane Helene, monthly visits across MANNA's network had climbed to approximately 158,000+.

Hurricane Helene added another layer of hardship to a region already experiencing historic levels of food insecurity. Homes, businesses, farms, roads, and community infrastructure were damaged or destroyed, and many families who had once been stable found themselves needing food assistance for the first time. Today, monthly visits across MANNA's food distribution network have climbed above 220,000+ on average, the highest level of need in MANNA's history.

Food insecurity affects people from all walks of life, including working families, children, seniors on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, and rural households with limited access to nearby grocery stores or transportation. Across WNC, 1 in 6 residents and 1 in 5 children face food insecurity. Fresh and nutritious foods such as produce, eggs, dairy, and meat are often among the first items families cut when budgets tighten, even though these foods are essential for health and well-being.

MANNA works every day to meet this need through a regional network of food partners, Community Markets, youth programs, nutrition-focused food sourcing, SNAP/FNS outreach, and disaster response. While the need remains high, MANNA's work is rooted in hope: when neighbors, volunteers, partners, and donors come together, food moves, families are supported, and Western North Carolina becomes more resilient.

# 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

Food distribution 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. Community Markets - Mobile pantry distributions designed to reach residents living in rural and underserved areas. Markets 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.

### Youth Programs: 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 and Summer Packs programs ensure that our community's children facing hunger not only have enough to eat, but also have the opportunity to thrive.

### Benefits Outreach

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 Benefits Outreach team supports and empowers community members across our region to find food nearby and to educate them about the resources available. They also offer support to families as they navigate through the complex food assistance application process.

# 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. Warehouse shifts are Monday-Friday, 9AM-12PM and 1-3PM.

## Special Events

Annual events like Empty Bowls and the Mountain State Fair 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.

## MANNA Community Markets

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. This role requires extra training.

## Helpline Fielder

Field incoming calls, make referrals to food resources throughout WNC, and sign up potentially eligible clients for FNS application assistance (formerly referred to as food stamps). A major bonus if you speak Spanish! This role requires a screening and extra training.

## 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. This role requires extra training.

## 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. This role requires a screening and extra training.

## SNAP PEAs

MANNA's SNAP PEA (Providing Education and Access) Program is a volunteer group aiding in MANNA's Benefits Outreach work. This program aims to bridge gaps between WNC neighbors that are potentially eligible for SNAP (the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and accessing those benefits. SNAP PEA volunteers assist MANNA staff with outreach activities at food distribution sites and community outreach events in WNC. They build awareness of SNAP and assist neighbors in getting directly connected with the MANNA Food Helpline for application assistance. This role requires a screening and extra training.

# RECOGNITION TIERS



## **We love to celebrate our volunteers!**

MANNA celebrates landmarks for hours donated from each of our volunteers. See below for an overview of what perks await at each level!

### **50 Hours**

Receive an official MANNA nametag! Volunteers at this level and above also earn access to the Volunteer Center's Pre-Registration Program.

### **100 Hours**

Receive an exclusive 100+ Hours MANNA t-shirt! Volunteers at this level and above will receive an invitation to our Volunteer Appreciation Event held annually.

### **150 Hours (Community Markets only)**

Receive a MANNA-branded sun hat!

### **250 Hours**

Receive a 250+ Hours MANNA t-shirt!

### **500 Hours**

Your name will be added to the wooden Volunteer Recognition Wall of Fame. You will also receive a matching wooden 500+ Hour Pin with card signed by staff.

### **1000 Hours**

Congratulations! You will receive the coveted Full Plate Award with recognition across our organization.

### **2000 Hours**

Receive a MANNA-branded jacket of your choosing!

# WAREHOUSE SAFETY PROCEDURES & EXPECTATIONS



## Attire and Cleanliness

- Closed-toe, closed-heel 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, Drinking, and Substances

- No nicotine products are allowed on site. Please leave cigarettes, vapes, and similar items at home or in a locked vehicle.
- We are a substance-free workplace. We ask that volunteers do not use or bring alcohol, illegal drugs, or impairing substances (like Kratom or THC products) while volunteering—even if they're legal elsewhere.
- No chewing gum allowed in the warehouse
- Eating and drinking should only take place in the Volunteer Café.

## 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 Jacks

- 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.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## INDIVIDUAL VOLUNTEER FAQs

### How do I become a volunteer?

Visit <https://www.mannafoodbank.org/volunteer/> to get started: Create your volunteer profile, watch a few videos online, read through the handbook, and join a 30-minute video conference call to meet the Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, 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 bottom right corner of our footer of every page.

### 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. 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, closed-heel shoes to participate in warehouse projects - no sandals, flip-flops or slides are permitted. We ask that you dress comfortably and respectfully. The temperature in the warehouse can fluctuate, so we recommend dressing in layers.

### Can my children volunteer with me?

Children between the ages of 10-15 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 the Volunteer Engagement Coordinator.

## **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. 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, please 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 Engagement Coordinator! Rose Jinkins at [rjinkins@mannafoodbank.org](mailto:rjinkins@mannafoodbank.org) or 828-774-5742