



REDWOOD EMPIRE
FOOD BANK

**VOLUNTEER
HANDBOOK**



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The Redwood Empire Food Bank is an equal opportunity provider.



WELCOME

You have made a fantastic decision to volunteer with the Redwood Empire Food Bank! You are about to embark on a journey that will help feed more than 142,000 hungry children, seniors, and adults across Sonoma County and beyond. Your generous gift of time and energy is deeply appreciated, and you should give yourself a huge pat on the back—as you’re fighting for those facing food insecurity in our community (which is no easy feat).

Hunger can happen to anyone. In fact, some of the very same people who give during good times also have times of need themselves. By volunteering, you’ve joined our exclusive group of hunger relief workers, making you an integral part of our community’s safety net. This safety net allows the Redwood Empire Food Bank to function at its best and provide food to those in need throughout the entire year.

You are making a difference... doesn’t it feel amazing?!

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“Isn’t this what we’re supposed to do as human beings? Giving back is so simple... it really is so simple... and yet, it does so much.”

—Kathy, Redwood Empire Food Bank Volunteer

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WHO WE SERVE

<p>Every Child, Every Day Three robust programs address the nutritional needs of children, through school distributions, food pantries, and seasonal school breaks.</p>	<p>Senior Security Through our senior program, we ensure that more than 14,000 low-income seniors have access to a consistent source of healthy, fresh food.</p>	<p>Neighborhood Hunger Network We support anyone in need of food through a variety of programs that support nutrition education, food distribution, and resource assistance.</p>
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RULES & REGULATIONS

We know rules and regulations aren't exactly the most thrilling to read—but they're put in place to keep you safe, happy, and healthy. Plus, they'll help you understand what to expect at your volunteer shift!

General DOs and DON'Ts

- **DO** register online for your shift prior to attending. volunteer.refb.org/
- **DO** arrive on time and plan to stay for the entirety of the shift (unless prior arrangements have been made). If late, you may be asked to return another time.
- **DO** cancel your shift ahead of time if you are unable to attend.
- **DO** check in upon arrival and wait for instructions (even if you are a regular volunteer and know the routine).
- **DO** come prepared to work completely independently and focused without staff supervision.
- If you need something signed for work or school, **DO** have the form filled out before handing it to a staff member at the end of the shift. We do not accept court-ordered volunteers.
- **DO** act with respect and courtesy toward fellow volunteers, staff, and clients.
- **DO** abide by the safety protocol of the department in which you are volunteering in order to maintain the safety of yourself, the food, and those around you.
- **DON'T** disrupt normal operations. Any volunteer that disrupts normal operation will be asked to leave.
- **DO** respect the donation. Handle the items with the same care as if they are coming to your home. **DON'T** throw the food.
- **DON'T** eat the donations. If you are in need of food please let a staff member know.
- **DON'T** come to a volunteer shift if you

are ill or have been around someone who is ill.

- **DON'T** open or remove plastic wrapping on food until directed to do so by the Redwood Empire Food Bank staff.
- **DO** report any problems, or safety issues to a staff member immediately.
- **DO** bring children, as long as they are registered and accompanied by an adult at all times. Children 14 years of age and older can volunteer independently.
- **DO HAVE FUN!** We want you to have a good time and encourage you to take pictures—so, **DON'T** forget to tag us! (@redwoodempirefoodbank)

Dress Code

- Sturdy, comfortable, and closed toed shoes are required. No sandals or open-toe shoes of any kind will be allowed due to safety regulations.
- Dress comfortably and in layers—the warehouse can be chilly but you may warm up once you start moving!
- For Kitchen Collective volunteers, you must wear your hair back.
- For Distribution volunteers, hats, water, and sunscreen are recommended.

Parking

- Parking is limited, so if able, please plan to carpool.
- Parking for Warehouse shifts is permitted in our parking lot directly in front of the Redwood Empire Food Bank in the Thermal Sun parking lot across from our entrance.



- Distribution shift parking can vary, please plan to arrive on site a few minutes early to check with the Redwood Empire Food Bank staff about where to park.

Health & Safety

- Food Safety 101 – Volunteers must be hygienic and dressed appropriately to handle food. Always wash hands at the start and end of every shift and after visits to the restroom.
- Stay hydrated! Bring your own water bottle.
- Please leave personal items at home or in the car. The Redwood Empire Food Bank is not responsible for lost or stolen items.
- Always remain in your designated work area.
- Volunteers must not report to their shift under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Electrical equipment and vehicles are to be used by staff only.
- Any injuries must be reported immediately to a Redwood Empire Food Bank employee. It is our policy that we refer all accidents and injuries to a medical professional.
- Use proper lifting techniques when lifting heavy objects. Use your legs to push upwards, keep your back straight and your body balanced. Ask for help from another volunteer or staff member for lifting heavy items.

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See, those rules and regulations weren't so bad, were they? You're feeling a little more prepared for your shift, right? Now, we'd like to share our promise to you for an enjoyable experience.

We promise to...

- Assign you a job that is worthwhile and fulfilling.
- Provide you with instructions for your assigned task.
- Provide breaks during your shift (let a staff member know if you need one).
- Accommodate your needs as best as we can. If you are more comfortable doing a seated task, we can accommodate you in the warehouse.
- Not tolerate any form of harassment (please report to a staff member if you feel uncomfortable in any situation).
- Provide a productive, enjoyable, and safe environment.
- Answer any questions or concerns.

**REDWOOD
EMPIRE FOOD
BANK HISTORY**

Since 1987, the Redwood Empire Food Bank has been feeding our neighbors in need and leading the community to end hunger. We distribute food through our own programs and our partner organizations in Sonoma, Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt, and Del Norte counties. As the largest hunger-relief organization in our area, we work on the front lines of emergency food assistance in our region, playing a crucial role in helping individuals, families, seniors, and children.



POLICIES & PROCEDURES

We consider our volunteers to be among the most important and wonderful people we know, but unfortunately, that doesn't get them out of paperwork. In order to become a member of our volunteer workforce, you will have to do the following:

- **Read this Volunteer Handbook in its entirety**
- **Register and sign up for a volunteer shift through our online Volunteer Portal: volunteer.refb.org**
- **Electronically sign and submit the volunteer waiver**
- **Complete the Civil Rights training, which is required for distribution site volunteers**

Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment

The Redwood Empire Food Bank is committed to providing a volunteer environment that is free of discrimination and harassment. In keeping with this commitment, the Redwood Empire Food Bank maintains a strict policy prohibiting unlawful discrimination based on sex, race, physical or intellectual disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, national origin or religious preference. This policy prohibits harassment in any form, including verbal, physical, and visual harassment (e.g. cartoons, photographs).

California and federal laws define sexual harassment as unwanted sexual advances, or unwanted visual, verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature. Such offensive behavior includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Unwanted sexual advances, including propositioning, repeatedly asking someone out for a date after it is clear that the person is not interested.
- Explicitly or implicitly offering employment benefits in exchange for sexual favors.
- Making or threatening reprisals after negative response to sexual advances.
- Visual conduct: leering, making sexual gestures; displaying derogatory and/or sexually-oriented posters, photography, cartoons, drawings or gestures.
- Verbal conduct: such as epithets, derogatory jokes or comments, slurs or unwanted sexual advances, invitations or comments.
- Physical conduct: assault, unwanted touching, intentionally blocking normal movement or interfering with work because of sex, race or any other protected basis.
- Retaliation for reporting or threatening to report harassment.
- Intolerance or abusive remarks regarding sexual orientation, religious affiliations or gender harassment of any sort is strictly forbidden. Bullying, dishonoring, yelling, belittling and other rude language and behavior will not be tolerated by or against any volunteer or staff member.



Knife Safety Policy

At the Redwood Empire Food Bank, volunteers can borrow a safety cutter at the discretion of staff for use during volunteer activities. Please note that the use of personal pocket knives is discouraged, and knives exceeding four inches in length are prohibited. If you prefer to use your own cutter, it must have a retractable or folding blade designed to safely store the blade when not in use, minimizing the risk of cuts and injuries during use. Always use caution, and cut away from your body.

Volunteer Complaint Procedure

Although rare, there may be an occasion when conflict arises. In that case, a volunteer should follow the volunteer complaint procedure by submitting a written dispute or concern to the Redwood Empire Food Bank Volunteer Coordinator in a timely fashion. Volunteer Coordinator contact information can be found on page 10 of this document.

If the Volunteer Coordinator is unable to resolve the issue, it will be elevated to the Director of Marketing & Communications for review and subsequent action. If further investigation is required, it will be escalated to the CEO for final resolution.

Retaliation against any volunteer or recipient who brings a complaint is prohibited. Subsequently, the retaliator could be dismissed as a volunteer.

PHOTO CONSENT

Periodically, the Redwood Empire Food Bank will take photos or videos of our volunteers in action. These images help us promote volunteerism and encourage donations. We love sharing stories about the amazing work our volunteers do for our community.

When you agree to volunteer with us, you are allowing us to use these photos or videos in our communications; however, if you would prefer we not take a photo of you during your shift, please let us know immediately when we are in the capturing process.



FOOD BANK VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

WAREHOUSE

Come help us glean fresh produce, assemble grocery boxes for seniors in need, and sort donated staple pantry items for distribution. Warehouse shifts are typically 2-3 hours long and can be a great way to make new friends, bond with coworkers, and feel great about helping the community! Children can volunteer with an adult. Children over 14 can volunteer independently. The warehouse can accommodate up to 50 guests on weekdays and up to 150 guests on Saturdays. Please email volunteers@refb.org to schedule a group of 10 or more.

SUPER VOLUNTEER

If you enjoy volunteering on a regular basis, and would be interested in taking on a leadership role, consider becoming one of our “Super Volunteers.” Super volunteers can help in the warehouse, kitchen, or market, leading a shift, assisting with check-in, and providing support to our Volunteer Production Coordinator. Please email volunteers@refb.org if you are interested.

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KITCHEN COLLECTIVE

The Kitchen Collective allows the Redwood Empire Food Bank to transform donated ingredients into healthy snacks. By the time people come to us for help, many have been enduring persistent hunger over an extended period of time. To address their acute food needs, we launched the On the Spot Nutrition program. Assembled by volunteers under the leadership of the Redwood Empire Food Bank’s Chef Don, these snacks allow us to feed the line at our food distributions with healthy snacks, providing immediate hunger relief for participants. Kitchen Collective volunteers require a food handlers certificate and must be at least 15 years old.

FOOD CONNECTIONS MARKET

Have a knack for organizing? Consider a volunteer shift in our Community Marketplace! These volunteers assist with sorting bread, organizing and restocking shelves, and gleaning produce. The schedule can be a bit flexible, but the ideal volunteer must be at least 16 years old and available in the morning for a few hours. Please email volunteers@refb.org if you are interested.



DISTRIBUTION VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

DISTRIBUTION SITES

Get out in the community and help distribute fresh produce, healthy groceries, and staple pantry items at one of the Redwood Empire Food Bank’s distribution sites. You may be packing boxes on site, helping seniors lift boxes into their cars, directing traffic, or assisting with sign-in. Eligible volunteers are allowed to pick up their food provision 15 minutes before the distribution starts. Volunteers must be able to lift 15-35 lbs. Children can volunteer with an adult, 14 and up can volunteer independently.

W5 VOLUNTEER

If you are comfortable using a computer, please consider becoming a W5 Volunteer, supporting our distribution sites by registering participants for our food programs. Preferred qualifications for this position are listed below:

- Bilingual in Spanish and English
- Team Player
- Kind and Respectful
- Good customer service skills
- Comfortable with Technology
- Able to work in varying environments (rain or shine!)
- Able to commit regularly at Distribution Site(s)

SPECIAL EVENTS

We occasionally need volunteers to help at off-site events. Keep an eye on the “Special Event Volunteer” page for opportunities.

5 BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Our mission is simple—to End Hunger in Our Community—how we accomplish it is not. As a volunteer, you are a vital part of our operation. Every month we rely on your generous support, which would otherwise require the work of 45 full-time employees. Here are a few reasons we think volunteering is important and worthwhile:

1. Doing good is good for your health! Volunteering is a remedy for stress, anger, and anxiety.
2. Volunteering expands your social circle. You meet people who share a common interest—the desire to make the world a better place—so making new friends is easy!
3. Volunteering can advance your career. You practice important skills used in the workplace such as teamwork, communication and problem-solving! Plus it connects you with your community.
4. Volunteering boosts your self-esteem. Volunteering provides you with a sense of purpose and pride. The more you give back to others, the more pleased you become with yourself.
5. Volunteering allows you to make a real difference in your community. Every piece of produce you glean, every can of food you pack, and every grocery box you distribute helps feed those facing hunger.



REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK RESOURCES

Volunteer Supervisor - Food Bank/Warehouse

Liz Berry, 707-523-7900, ext. 158,
lberry@refb.org

Volunteer Coordinator - Distributions

Katie Karns, 707-523-7900, ext. 123,
kkarns@refb.org

refb.org

3990 Brickway Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403
volunteers@refb.org

Social Media

Be sure to stay connected with us across all our social channels. Remember to incorporate our hashtags #RedwoodEmpireFoodBank and #hungerreliefvolunteer when posting about us!

Facebook

@redwoodempirefoodbank
and join the Redwood Empire Food Bank Volunteers group.

X

@refb

Instagram

@redwoodempirefoodbank

THANKS FOR HELPING END
HUNGER IN OUR COMMUNITY