



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 100,000 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

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.



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. <https://volunteer.refb.org/>
- **DO** arrive on time and plan to stay for the entirety of the shift (unless prior arrangements have been made).
- **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 school, **DO** have the form filled out before handing it to a staff member.
- **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 visit our Food Connections Resource Center.
- **DON'T** come to a volunteer shift if you are ill or have been around someone who is ill.
- When at distribution sites, **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.
- **DO** cancel your shift ahead of time if you are unable to attend.
- **DO** bring children, as long as they are accompanied by an adult at all times. Children 14 years of age and older can volunteer independently.
- **DO** watch this video on what to expect when you come to volunteer.
- **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 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.
- 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

- Always wash hands at the start and end of every shift.
- 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. No exceptions.

- 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.

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 the training and supervision for your assigned task.
- Sign any paperwork verifying hours for school or work.
- Answer any questions or concerns.
- Provide breaks during your shift (just let a staff member know if you need one).
- Provide a productive, enjoyable and safe environment.
- Accommodate your needs as best as we can. If you are more comfortable doing a seated task, please let us know.
- Not tolerate any form of harassment (please report to a staff member if you feel uncomfortable in any situation).

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.

We could not accomplish this without strategic resources. Over 10,000 dedicated volunteers work at our distribution sites and warehouse to serve or prepare food for our community. Our donors, corporate sponsors, and foundations provide the financial fuel our organization requires. But none of this would be possible without our employees—the heart and soul of our organization. Everyone who contributes to our efforts is a vital Hunger Relief Worker our community relies upon every day.



VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

WAREHOUSE

Come help us glean and package fresh produce, assemble grocery boxes for seniors in need, and sort donated staple pantry items for distribution. This can be a quiet activity or a fun one with music! 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, 14 and up can volunteer independently. The warehouse can accommodate up to 100 guests per shift. This is a great family/friend/group/ co-worker opportunity! Please email volunteers@refb.org to schedule a group of 10 or more.

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. Though you may only come once, we do love a commitment at our distribution sites, so please feel free to keep coming back!

COMMUNITY MARKETPLACE

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 would be available in the morning for a few hours. Please email volunteers@refb.org if you are interested.

WHO WE SERVE

Every Child, Every Day

Three robust programs address the nutritional needs of children, through school distributions, food pantries, and seasonal school breaks.

Senior Security

Through our senior program, we ensure that a monthly average of 5,000 low-income seniors have access to a consistent source of healthy, fresh food.

Neighborhood Hunger Network

We support anyone in need of food through a variety of programs that support nutrition education, food distribution, and resource assistance.



KITCHEN COLLECTIVE

The Kitchen Collective allows the Redwood Empire Food Bank to transform donated ingredients into complex, nutritious, seasonal entrées for low-income seniors and families throughout Sonoma County. Under the leadership of the Redwood Empire Food Bank staff, several small groups of dedicated volunteers gather Monday through Friday to combine fresh produce, staple foods, proteins, and whole grains, to create wholesome and delicious heat-and-serve meals for our neighbors in need. Kitchen Collective volunteers must be at least 15 years old.

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.” These volunteers generally help with leading a shift and provide support to our Volunteer Production Coordinator. Please email volunteers@refb.org if you are interested.

**** If you have a special talent, please let us know! We often have additional volunteer opportunities and would love your help! ****

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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.



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**

Policy Against Discrimination and Harassment

We are in this together and strictly forbid discrimination or harassment of any kind. The Redwood Empire Food Bank is committed to providing a work 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, physically or mentally challenged, ethnicity, sexual orientation, 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.



Any volunteer or employee, who believes he or she has been harassed or abused by a coworker, supervisor, agent, supplier of the Redwood Empire Food Bank, or any other person associated with the Redwood Empire Food Bank, should promptly report the facts of the incident or incidents. The names of the individuals involved should be reported to their supervisor or the Volunteer Coordinator or, if necessitated by circumstance, to the Director of Development. Supervisors (volunteer or paid) are required to report any incidents of harassment to the Director of Development, who then will investigate the charges and take appropriate corrective action. If the Director of Development is the subject of the complaint, said offense should be reported to the CEO. Those lodging complaints may be asked to put the complaint in writing.

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 Development for review and subsequent action. If further investigation is required, it will be escalated to the CEO for final resolution.

Retaliation against any employee/volunteer who brings a complaint is prohibited and will subject the retaliator to discipline up to and including discharge.

VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

We value and respect our volunteers and their feedback. If there is an aspect of your volunteer experience that you think could be improved and benefit the Redwood Empire Food Bank, please share with our Volunteer Coordinators at volunteers@refb.org. Feedback is essential to ensure that all our volunteers feel welcomed and respected. We could not do this without the assistance of our 10,000 volunteers, please share how you think we could improve.



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REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK RESOURCES

Volunteer Coordinator - Warehouse

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

Volunteer Coordinator - Distributions

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

3990 Brickway Blvd.
Santa Rosa, CA 95403

refb.org

Social Media

Please use our hashtags
#RedwoodEmpireFoodBank and
#hungerreliefworker when posting
about us!

Facebook

@redwoodempirefoodbank
Like and follow us on Facebook,
check in and tag us when
volunteering! Email photos
from your volunteer shifts to
marketing@refb.org

Twitter @refb

Use our hashtags and tag us so we
can retweet your efforts!

Instagram

@redwoodempirefoodbank

YOU'RE A VERY SPECIAL PERSON
THANKS FOR VOLUNTEERING
WE APPRECIATE YOU MORE THAN WORDS CAN SAY