



VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

RIFA Volunteer Opportunities

Each and every day, volunteers make a significant impact on our community through their work at RIFA. On average, volunteers log approximately 15,000 hours of volunteer service at RIFA each year! Without their efforts, the work done by RIFA would not be possible!

The following is a list of ways that volunteers can be involved at RIFA:

Food Bank Volunteer

Volunteers in the Food Bank sort food items, stock the shelves of the Food Bank, and make sure the Food Bank is organized. On Wednesdays, agencies come to pick up their food and volunteers can assist with weighing the food and loading it into vehicles.

Garden Maintenance Volunteer

Volunteers can help maintain the RIFA garden by mowing, weed eating, and planting seeds. Volunteers can also assist with harvesting from the garden for the Soup Kitchen.

Snack Backpack Volunteer

Snack Backpacks are packed each week during the school year (August-May) on Tuesdays at 10:00 am. Volunteers work to pack over 1,000 Snack Backpacks until the bags are all packed, which typically takes an hour and a half. Volunteers are also needed to help prepare the items to be packed (sorting food, removing food from boxes, etc.) on Wednesday mornings. RIFA also uses volunteers to deliver the Snack Backpacks to some of the schools on Wednesdays and Thursdays, depending upon the needs of the school.

Soup Kitchen Volunteer

This is a perfect opportunity for individuals and groups. Volunteers in the Soup Kitchen help with preparing food, serving the meals to patrons, and cleaning the Soup Kitchen after the meals are served. Volunteers also have the opportunity to minister to patrons by participating in the chapel service that is held each day by providing music. Finally, we are always in need of people that are willing to stand up and share God's Word through a devotion, a message, or a testimony during the chapel service.

Volunteers have the opportunity to participate in our "Just Desserts" program, where groups choose one day per month and provide 6-8 desserts (cakes, etc.) that will be served with the lunch meal.

Special Events

RIFA has many special events throughout the year including Pack the Bus and Canstruction that require volunteers. Opportunities to volunteer with special events are promoted through RIFA's social media. Special events volunteers should contact Lindsay Dawkins at 731.427.7963 or ldawkins@rifajackson.org.

Special Projects

Throughout the year, RIFA has special projects such as packing Senior Staples food boxes and filling Thanksgiving and Christmas food boxes. These special projects are promoted through RIFA's social media.

Thrift Store Volunteer

Volunteers in the Thrift Store help by hanging clothes, sorting items, and putting clothing out on the Thrift Store floor. This is a need throughout the year at RIFA!

Warehouse Volunteer

This is another great opportunity for individuals and groups. Some tasks you will be assigned in the warehouse include sorting food, making food bags, and helping take inventory of donations.

How to Sign Up to Volunteer

Individuals

RIFA believes that every person volunteering makes a difference in the work we do!

- Individuals who want to volunteer can come in to fill out the application to volunteer in our administrative offices and be placed to work that day in most circumstances.
- It is preferred, however, that individuals schedule their time to volunteer in advance.
- To schedule a time to volunteer, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Dan Ward, at dward@rifajackson.org or 731.427.7963.

Groups

RIFA welcomes volunteer groups from corporate teams, office groups, schools, service organizations, alumni groups, associations, families, fraternities and sororities, and religious organizations. The group leader must schedule the group's visit and will be the main contact for that group.

To bring a group to volunteer at RIFA, please follow these guidelines:

- To schedule your group, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Dan Ward at dward@rifajackson.org or 731.427.7963.
- When you contact Dan, know the size of your group, the age range, and what area you are seeking to volunteer in. If you are unsure of the specific area, the Volunteer Coordinator will point you in the right direction.
- If you know the date your group would like to volunteer, we recommend letting the Volunteer Coordinator know at least one month in advance as our schedule fills up fast, (often months in advance!) and we do not want your group to miss out on the opportunity to volunteer.
- Every participant who is under age 18 will have to have a Youth Volunteer Waiver signed by a parent or legal guardian.
- For groups with children 12 and under, RIFA requests that the group have one adult per 5 children.

Community Service (Court-Related)

RIFA welcomes select volunteers needing to complete court-related community service. The following guidelines need to be followed:

- RIFA will not permit individuals who have been convicted of any sexual-related offense, crime against children, cruelty towards animals, or physical assault to volunteer.
- If you need to do court related community service, contact the Volunteer Coordinator, Dan Ward, at 731.427.7963 or dward@rifajackson.org.
- Community Services Workers (CSW) will need come in to do the required paperwork, and then you will be put on the schedule. In most cases, unless arranged in advance, you will not be able to work on the day you submit your paperwork.
- Most Community Service Work will be done during the regular work day Monday-Friday between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm. In certain circumstances, CSWs can come on the weekends, but it must be approved in advance by the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteer Rules and Guidelines

RIFA aims to create a fun and safe environment for our volunteers. Please familiarize yourself with the rules and recommendations for working with us.

Age Guidelines

- Volunteers who are 18 and over can volunteer during any of our regular volunteer hours as long as they they have completed the Volunteer Application and have met with the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Volunteers who are 17 can volunteer during any of our regular volunteer hours assuming they have completed the Volunteer Application **and** the Youth Volunteer Waiver has been signed by a parent or legal guardian. In addition, they must have met with the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Volunteers who are 16 and under must have a parent or legal guardian with them to volunteer unless they are part of an organized, chaperoned group arranged ahead of time. The only exception to this will be participants in Leadership University through the Jackson Chamber.
- Volunteers who are 16 and under are required to have the Youth Volunteer Waiver signed by their parent or legal guardian prior to volunteering at RIFA.
- There is no minimum age for volunteering at RIFA. However, while volunteering is a great way to teach children about service, it is important to assess a child's maturity levels and their ability to listen and follow directions before signing up to volunteer.

Assigned Area

- At no time should a volunteer be in an area at RIFA, either after hours or when there is no RIFA staff person present in that area.

Harassment

- As an equal opportunity employer, RIFA has a strict policy against employee or volunteer harassment, whether sexual, racial, religious, or national origin. Harassment in any form (verbal, physical, or visual) is strictly against RIFA's policy and will result in dismissal. Simply put, harassment will not be tolerated from employees or volunteers.

Health Notification Responsibilities

- Volunteers who are sick on the day of a scheduled shift should reschedule for another day. Due to food safety concerns, volunteers should report symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, jaundice, sore throat with fever, and/or exposed cuts, boils, sores, or infected wounds to a RIFA staff member. Volunteers will not be allowed to volunteer if they are: currently suffering from vomiting, diarrhea, or jaundice, or are currently being treated for, or recently exposed to norovirus, salmonella typhi, shigella spp., enterohemorrhagic or shiga-toxin producing escherichia coli, or hepatitis A.

Smoking

- Smoking/chewing tobacco is only permitted in a designated area located outside of the Food Bank area.

Volunteer Conduct

- Eating is not permitted in the warehouse.
- Volunteers are not allowed to throw cans or other food items, and running and horseplay is prohibited.
- Volunteers are expected to remain in the project work area throughout their shift.
- Volunteers are not allowed to drive forklifts or to stand/ride on the pallet jacks or shopping carts.
- Volunteers are never allowed to take products from the warehouse, even food or items that have to be discarded.

Warehouse Guidelines

- Closed-toed shoes are required. No sandals or flip-flops will be permitted. Volunteers (including chaperones) who do not wear closed-toed shoes will not be permitted to volunteer in the warehouse or soup kitchen.
- Volunteers may not use any motorized equipment (forklift, etc.) and may only use manual equipment (pallet jacks, etc.) with proper training by a RIFA staff person.
- Food or drinks other than water are not allowed on the warehouse floor.
- Please do not use headphones or phones (even for texting) while volunteering at RIFA.

Frequently Asked Questions

Where is RIFA located?

All of RIFA's programs are located at 133 Airways Blvd., Jackson, TN, 38301.

Can I bring a group to volunteer?

Yes, we welcome corporate teams, office groups, schools, service organizations, alumni groups, associations, families, fraternities and sororities, and religious organizations. The group leader must schedule the group's visit and will be the main contact for that group.

To bring a group to volunteer at RIFA, contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Dan Ward at dward@rifajackson.org or 731.427.7963. When you contact him, know the size of your group, the age range, and what area you are seeking to volunteer in. If you are unsure of the specific area, the Volunteer Coordinator will point you in the right direction.

We recommend letting the Volunteer Coordinator know at least one month in advance as our schedule fills up fast, (often months in advance!) and we do not want your group to miss out on the opportunity to volunteer.

For groups with children 12 and under, RIFA requests that the group have one adult per 5 children.

How can I get on the schedule to volunteer?

Individuals can come in to fill out the application to volunteer in our administrative offices and be placed to work that day in most circumstances. However, it is preferred that individuals schedule their time to volunteer in advance with the Volunteer Coordinator.

When completing court-ordered community service, it must be scheduled in advance.

Groups must be scheduled well in advance. If for some reason you have to cancel, we would like to know that within 48 hours so the appropriate arrangements can be made.

Does RIFA allow Court-Related Community Service?

Yes. If you need to do community service, contact the Volunteer Coordinator, come in to complete the required paperwork, and then you will be put on the schedule. In most cases, unless arranged in advance, you will not be able to work on the day you submit your paperwork.

Most community service work will be done during the regular work day Monday-Friday between 8 am and 4 pm. In certain circumstances, CSWs can come on the weekends, but it must be approved in advance by the Volunteer Coordinator.

RIFA will not permit individuals who have been convicted of any sexual related offense, crime against children, cruelty to animals, or physical assault to volunteer.

Is there a minimum age for children to volunteer?

There is no minimum age for volunteering at RIFA. However, while volunteering is a great way to teach children about service, it is important to assess a child's maturity levels and their ability to listen and follow directions before signing up to volunteer. Our projects take place in an industrial warehouse and soup kitchen with dangerous equipment, and RIFA wants to ensure that the volunteers, especially children, are safe.

All children ages 16 and under must have a parent or legal guardian come with them to volunteer unless they are with an organized, chaperoned group that has been scheduled in advance.

If you have questions about your children coming to volunteer, please contact Dan Ward, and he will give you more specific details.

Can RIFA accommodate a volunteer with special needs or a physical disability?

Yes. In most areas, we will be able to make the accommodations necessary for a person who has special needs or a physical disability to volunteer. The Volunteer Coordinator will steer you to a ministry that will suit your skill set. Please contact Dan Ward for specific information.

Where should I go when I arrive?

When you arrive, please come to the administrative offices if you have not completed paperwork (available on the website). All required paperwork must be completed prior to starting the volunteer experience.

If your paperwork is complete and you have been scheduled by the Volunteer Coordinator, come through the administrative office to sign in and to be placed in your volunteer spot.

Where should I park?

Volunteers can park in any parking space at RIFA.

Where should I sign in?

When you arrive at RIFA, you will sign in at the administrative offices. Upon signing in, you will be given a badge to wear while you are in the building, which lets the RIFA staff know that you have completed the necessary paperwork and have signed in at the office.

It is important to make sure you sign in and sign out. This allows RIFA to keep track of the hours you have worked both for you as an individual and for RIFA as an organization. If you do not sign in and out, there is no guarantee that RIFA can report those hours worked to the appropriate organizations.

Can I bring my personal items inside with me while I volunteer?

We recommend not bringing personal items (purses, cell phones, etc.) as we do not have a place to store them securely. If it is a must have item, it can be put in an office, but there is no way to lock the item up or supervise it.

Can I use my electronic devices (cell phones, iPods, etc.) while I am volunteering?

No. Electronic devices can be a distraction from the work you are at RIFA to do and present a safety issue as our warehouse is equipped with a fork lift and pallet jacks that can injure you if you are not aware of your surroundings.

Will I receive any training before I start?

Yes. Volunteers will be given instructions by the Volunteer Coordinator and/or the head of the department that you are volunteering in.

What is the dress code?

RIFA requires volunteers to have modest, appropriate dress. It is recommended that you wear clothing that is comfortable and casual. Clothing cannot have profanity or other things that may be offensive. Pants must be worn at the waist with a belt.

Closed-toed shoes are required for everyone volunteering in any program at RIFA. No sandals or flip-flops are permitted.

If you are not following the dress code, you may be asked to leave and return with appropriate clothing.

What should I do if I am approached by someone who is panhandling?

Panhandling is not permitted on RIFA's property. If you are approached by a person asking for something, please report this to a RIFA staff member immediately. All requests for assistance should be filtered through the front office and the need will be assessed and met as deemed appropriate by staff. It is not the responsibility of the volunteer to determine if the need is valid- simply refer this person to the front office.