



"In here there are no strangers..."

Sisters Of The Road

...just friends we've never met."

Frequently Asked Questions about Volunteering at Sisters

How do I start volunteering at Sisters?

If you are interested in volunteering, the first step is to attend a Volunteer Orientation. Volunteer orientations are held the **fourth Monday of every other month** ([click here](#) for our calendar to check specific dates) from 5:30 to 8:30 pm. Prospective volunteers can expect to:

- Experience Sisters' PhotoVoice Display
- Explore the spirit of volunteerism
- Learn about Sisters' history, philosophy and operations
- Discuss the many different volunteer opportunities at Sisters
- Learn about Cafe roles, scheduling and sign-up
- Have the opportunity to seek answers to questions

If you'd like to attend our next orientation, contact Lucilene Lira (our amazing Volunteer Coordinator) at (503) 222-5694, ext. 34 or [email her](#). She will mail you a volunteer Application/ Registration to complete and return as soon before the orientation as possible.

Who can volunteer at Sisters?

1. Volunteering at Sisters is open to anyone 16 years-old or older who is volunteering of their own accord, and not to fulfill an outside requirement.
2. Children 12 -15 years-old may volunteer with a parent or supervising adult. Sisters staff will work with both parent and child to make sure that it feels like the right opportunity and that it feels safe for everyone.
3. **Volunteer orientation is the point of entry for any volunteer work at Sisters.** We ask that all new volunteers participate in an orientation before volunteering (please see above for more information about how to attend a Volunteer Orientation).
4. We ask that all volunteers, as ambassadors of Sisters Of The Road, understand and subscribe to our philosophies of nonviolence, anti-oppression, gentle personalism and hospitality.
5. We ask that all volunteers become familiar with the standards of the cafe and be willing to abide by and implement those standards.

Who cannot volunteer in the cafe?

1. **Groups of volunteers.** This is true for school groups and scouting troops, as well as company staff service days and church groups. We are a small cafe with limited roles, and strive to build a community that is based in relationships. There are other ways for groups to get involved, or we can point you in the right direction to find other volunteer opportunities. We are more than happy to come and do a presentation for your group, school, church, or organization - just contact the [Volunteer Coordinator](#) to schedule it.
2. **One-time volunteers.** This doesn't mean that all volunteers have to make a commitment to volunteering for any specific period of time. But we hope that volunteers come with the intention of becoming a part of our community. If it turns out that volunteering at Sisters isn't the right fit, we honor and respect that decision too!
3. **Community Service requirements.** We're not able to accommodate individuals' needs for community service hours. Even folks who are current volunteers can't get "credit" for their time at Sisters to submit to the courts.
4. **School requirements.** Because Sisters is open Monday – Friday, 10-3, and is closed on most of the public school holidays, it really hasn't worked well for students to try to fit in school required service. So we just don't do it (see below for the exceptions.)

Exceptions to the rules:

1. **Sponsor-A-Day.** In this case, we allow a small group to come and volunteer for a day or part of a day. It is set up to allow a group to pay for a day's meals (or part of a day's meals,) and volunteer to serve on that day. Suggested sponsorship is \$250-\$1000. This amount offsets food and labor costs, and helps to support the extra time needed for volunteer training. You can refer to the [Sponsor-A-Day guidelines](#) for details. If you are interested in Sponsoring-A-Day, please contact the [Volunteer Coordinator](#) to set this up.

2. **Internships.** We have a limited number of internships throughout the year. Internships are a bigger commitment than simply "volunteering for credit." They are generally part of school/college/university programs that have very detailed internship programs. Due to the level of supervision required, we have a very limited number available, and the intern's work must support the current work and needs of the organization. Some summer internships are available for Jesuit High Volunteers and other students, but again, the number is limited due to supervision, scheduling, and shift limitations.

3. **Plunges.** We have specific relationships with several organizations who do educational "plunges" that are intended to immerse students in the experience of homelessness. Again, these partnerships are limited due to training and scheduling limitations.

If volunteering in the Cafe isn't the right fit, what else is available?

1. **Speakers' Bureau.** We have a volunteer group that goes out into the public to share about homelessness and Sisters' response to it. You must attend a training and orientation in order to be part of it. The [Volunteer Coordinator](#) can work with interested groups to bring a speaker to a church, school, or other group.

2. **PhotoVoice.** Speakers' Bureau volunteers can also bring this multi-media exhibit to interested groups. Based on the photographs and stories of our community, the exhibit shows Portland through the eyes of individuals experiencing homelessness. You can refer to the [PhotoVoice page](#) for details. Contact the [Volunteer Coordinator](#) to bring the exhibit to your group.

3. **Make a donation.** [Monetary donations](#) are vital to our organization and greatly appreciated - gifts of any size are helpful. [Become a supporting member](#) – your account will be automatically be debited monthly. Make a [stock donation](#). Or learn about . Or learn about . Or learn about

4. **In-kind Donations.** If you have a particular skill or resource that would benefit Sisters, sharing your skill is a great way to get involved. The [Development Manager](#) at extension 14 can help find the right fit for in-kind donations.

5. **Food Drives.** Food in large quantities are best – beans, rice, large chunks of cheese or meat are terrific. We can't take food that's past date, already open, homemade, or in single-size servings. The [Kitchen Team](#) at extension 24 or the [Cafe Operations Manager](#) at extension 18 can talk with you to determine whether we can use a particular food donation.

6. **Hygiene Drives.** *In order to dedicate more of our resources to our Systemic Change work, Sisters has discontinued the Hygiene Program as of July 1, 2009.* We will be continuing to distribute feminine hygiene supplies, infant diapers and wipes, adult diapers, and condoms; donations of all these items are gratefully accepted. Please [click here](#) to view local alternate hygiene supply donation sites.

7. **House Parties.** Throw a party for your friends to share information about homelessness and Sisters! We can provide packets of information (brochures, newsletters, and statistics on homelessness). It usually works best if hosts lets guests know ahead of time what support they hope guests can offer: monetary donations, purchasing meal coupons, writing letters to representatives, and so on!

8. **Other money-makers:** You can support Sisters' work by donating proceeds from garage sales, by donating proceeds from an event, showing a movie on human rights and charge admission – get creative!

9. **Volunteering at other organizations:** If really like to do volunteer work, but Sisters isn't

the right fit, contact handsonportland.org – they have an extensive list of organizations that might be the right fit. You also call **211** which is a social service information and referral line. They are happy to take calls from interested volunteers and are very helpful!

Other frequently asked questions about volunteering at Sisters:

Do I have to work in the cafe? What if I work a 9-5 job? What if I'm not able to do the physical work required in the cafe?

Although most people do start out volunteering in the cafe, it's not required. There are many opportunities for involvement, including event planning, helping out on the day-of events, joining our speakers' bureau, or even a committee. The website gives a list of up-to-date volunteer opportunities, and these opportunities are described in more detail when at our volunteer orientations.