

Samaritan Group of Kent County Volunteer Handbook

**Samaritan Group of Kent County
PO Box 934
Chestertown, MD 21620**

**www.samaritangroupofkentcounty.org
info@samaritangroupofkentcounty.org**

**Director: James Diggs
james@chestertownnazarene.org
Shelter Cell Phone with Director: 443-480-3564**

**Volunteer Coordinator: Melanie C. Keller
volunteer@samaritangroupofkentcounty.org**

Shelter Location Addresses:

January

Chestertown Church of the Nazarene
6943 Church Hill Road
Chestertown, MD 21620

February

First United Methodist
105 S. Mill St
Chestertown, MD 21620

March

Chestertown Presbyterian Church
905 Gateway Drive
Chestertown, MD 21620

WHAT IS THE EMERGENCY WINTER SHELTER?

Samaritan Group of Kent County's Emergency Winter Shelter provides those without overnight shelter a place to sleep from January through March each winter. The Shelter is hosted at three local churches: Chestertown Church of the Nazarene (January), First United Methodist (February), and Chestertown Presbyterian Church (March). In addition to providing meals and a warm place to sleep, efforts are made so that our guests can attend school, get to work, and have access to resources for other services.

Volunteers are integral to the success of the Shelter. Each day the Shelter is open, meal teams, evening volunteers, and an overnight volunteer work with Shelter staff to ensure that all guests are welcomed, fed, and provided with a safe and warm place to sleep.

THE THREE PRIMARY WAYS TO VOLUNTEER

Evening Host volunteers

Evening Hosts monitor the shelter from 5:30pm-10pm. There are two Hosts per night working together. They are responsible for hosting and supervising guest activities in the evening making sure the shelter provides a welcoming and safe environment for all our unhoused guests. These volunteers also pack lunches for the guests to take with them the next day.

At the beginning of each shift the evening Hosts will meet with the Shelter Director, who opens the shelter each night. It is helpful to come five minutes before the beginning of the shift to have more time to meet with the Director. The Director will go over with the volunteers the evening schedule, expectations, and unusual circumstances. The Director is always on call to answer questions by phone or return to the shelter when needed.

Dinner volunteers

Dinner volunteers will prepare a meal and serve the meal at 6pm. The number of guests will be confirmed by the Director earlier in the day. Please prepare enough servings for shelter guests plus two evening volunteers and yourself (and any others you may bring to help).

The dinner volunteer group should be no larger than 4 people; exceptions can be made for larger groups within the same household. All meals must be completely cooked at home, church ovens are not available for us to use. The shelter provides paper plates and bowls, along with plastic utensils to eat with, but dinner volunteers must bring any necessary serving utensils.

Overnight volunteers

Overnight volunteers support the paid overnight staff in case of emergency only. Overnight volunteers sleep in separate quarters from 10pm to 8am. A twin bed is provided, please bring your own bedding and pillow. If you need to leave earlier in the morning before 8am you can still volunteer but please make arrangements with the Director so they can assess if they should be present at the shelter after you leave in the morning.

BECOMING A SHELTER VOLUNTEER

The first step to becoming a volunteer at the Shelter is to complete a volunteer application.

All applications are reviewed by the volunteer coordinator, shelter director, and/or members of the Board of Directors. The review process includes a background clearance, which is done using public records that are available through the Maryland Judiciary Case Search database and the Maryland Sex Offender Registry.

Once an application is approved, the Volunteer Coordinator will send you a link to the website where you can review which shifts need coverage and sign up for the dates/times you'd like to cover. You should get an email confirmation after you have signed up.

Knowing that we have volunteer coverage allows the shelter to operate smoothly, so volunteers are encouraged to sign up as much in advance as possible and to keep the shifts you originally sign-up for. However, if you need to cancel or change your shift, please do so as soon as possible to allow time for the Volunteer Coordinator to find alternative coverage. Shifts may be canceled or changed via the online sign-up platform. If you need to make a change within a week of your committed shift, please also contact the Volunteer Coordinator directly.

During the months the Shelter is open, the Volunteer Coordinator will also send emails out to encourage sign-up on any open dates needed to be covered as they draw closer.

Email the Volunteer Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns.

Food Volunteers will now also use the same process and sign up online. Groups of up to four people can volunteer to bring and serve dinner together, but one person must be the contact person to sign up. If someone would like to sign up for multiple dinner nights on behalf of a group (such as a church) the person signing up will become the contact person for all nights signed up for and must be available to coordinate by phone, if necessary, with the Shelter Director or Volunteer Coordinator each night the group is signed up.

Please Contact the Volunteer Coordinator or the Shelter Director if you encounter obstacles to signing up online so that we can assist you.

EXPECTATIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS

- Samaritan Group does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, creed, age, national origin, ancestry, pregnancy, marital status or parental status, sexual orientation, or disability. As representatives of Samaritan Group, volunteers must not discriminate against any guests.
- Volunteers must be respectful and welcoming to all shelter guests.
- Volunteers must maintain confidentiality of all personal information about shelter guests.
- Volunteers may not lend money or give gifts to guests. Report all requests for assistance to shelter staff so they can coordinate available services and resources to support guests' needs.
- For liability reasons, volunteers may not transport guests in their personal vehicles.

SHELTER SCHEDULE

5:25pm	Evening Host volunteers arrive
5:30- 5:45pm	Dinner volunteers arrive
5:30-6pm	Guests arrive
6pm	Dinner shared by guests, staff, and volunteers
7pm	1st smoke break* Dinner volunteers clean up and depart
7-10pm	Free time, socializing, other activities
7:30pm	Intake staff departs (or beforehand when things are quiet)
10pm	2nd smoke break Quiet time begins Night staff & volunteer arrive Host volunteers depart
11pm	Lights out
6:30am	Wake-up
7:00am	Breakfast
8:00am	Guests depart
*It is okay for there to be flexibility on the timing of the 1st smoke break depending on how long dinner takes. What is most important is that it happens after all smokers are finished dinner and ready to go out as a group.	

COMMUNICATION

Clear communication is key to smooth shelter operations.

The director (or assigned person opening shelter) will communicate key information to Host volunteers before leaving, including:

- Guests who will be arriving late
- Names of the overnight staff and volunteer
- Information about guest medication or special needs

Host volunteer responsibility: The director will share relevant information about guests, special circumstances, etc., with the evening hosts when they arrive. Hosts are responsible for communicating issues, concerns, or questions that come up during their shift to the director. If an emergency arises or there is a need for immediate guidance from the director, volunteers should call the director at 443-480-3564. Less time sensitive observations or questions should be communicated the following day by email, phone or text to james@chestertownnazarene.org or 443-480-3564.

GUEST ARRIVALS

Guests arrive between 5:30 - 6pm. Exceptions are granted to accommodate work schedules and other special circumstances. The Director will be aware of any expected late arrivals and will communicate this to Host volunteers. Guests that come in later than expected are still to be admitted to the shelter, but please make sure they sign in and their arrival time is indicated so that the Shelter Director is made aware.

Individuals who are not on the night's roster, including prior guests, may not enter the shelter.

Host volunteer responsibility: Ensure that all guests sign in. If an individual not on the roster comes to the shelter, do not permit entry to the shelter and immediately notify the Shelter Director.

DINNER

Dinner is provided each evening at 6pm by dinner volunteers who signed up online. Volunteers can arrive as early as 5:30 to begin to set up.

Dinner volunteer responsibility: Dinner volunteers are to bring prepared meals from home, serve, and clean-up for dinner. Food volunteers may not cook items in the church kitchens.

Paper plates, cups, plastic utensils, and napkins or paper towels are provided. Please bring any serving utensils required to dish up the meal; i.e. serving spoon, spatula, ladle, etc. You may also bring drinks, but water and coffee are always provided, and sometimes other drinks may be on hand.

If any guests are expected after normal dinner time, volunteers should prepare and save plates of food for each guest whose late arrival time is expected and approved of by staff. Dinner Volunteers are welcome to assist the Host volunteers to prepare bag lunches for the guests to take with them the next day.

Host volunteer responsibility: Evening Hosts should assist, as needed, Dinner volunteers with the setting up for the meal, serving, and cleaning up.

All volunteers are encouraged to eat with and share conversation with guests.

KITCHEN

Meals set aside for guests coming in later, snacks, drinks, and lunch supplies are stored in the kitchen. Leftovers from the Dinner volunteers (besides what is set aside for specific expected guest that evening) should not be stored at the shelter and should be taken home by the Dinner volunteers.

Items in the kitchen should be labeled "Samaritan Group." Please do not use food items that belong to the church unless you have been given permission to do so.

Guests are not permitted in the kitchen.

Volunteer responsibility: Bring food in and out of the kitchen as needed. Making sure the space is clean (dishes washed, food put away, leftovers disposed of, etc.) before the end of a shift. Hosts should inform the Shelter Director about any supplies running low.

LUNCHES.

Packed bagged lunches are prepared each night by the Host volunteers.

Host volunteer responsibility: Sandwich supplies are provided by the shelter. Each lunch should include a sandwich, a bag of chips, and a snack when available.

A recommended method is to take a quick inventory of what is available, then to ask guests if they would like a lunch and if so what they would like based on what is available. Write their name and order on an empty paper lunch bag provided by the shelter, then make lunches based on what was written on the bag.

Peanut butter and jelly will be available as well as a variety of luncheon meat in an effort to both provide variety while also keeping the particular preferences of guests into account as we get to know them. **Because luncheon meat can expire and we want to limit how much is wasted, we will at times allow the more preferred options not to be replenished before finishing what is left before it goes bad.** It is okay if we run out of guest's favorite or preferred lunch meat while trying to use up other lunch meat.

Inform the Director of the status of grocery supplies when needed. If a particular lunch supply is low, or runs out in the process of making lunches, please email or text the director so they can make the determination about when it may need to be replaced.

SMOKE BREAKS

There are two smoke breaks during evening hours.

1st smoke break - immediately after dinner when all smokers are done eating.

2nd smoke break - 10pm

Smokers must take smoke breaks as a group and must use the designated smoking area.

Host volunteer responsibility: One Host should periodically monitor the group of smokers to ensure rules are followed during the breaks. The volunteer does not have to go outside with the guests but must be in position to see them from the door.

SHOWERS

At Church of the Nazarene and 1st Methodist, showers are available. Guests may use the shower between 7pm and 10pm.

Host volunteer responsibility: Hosts are to ensure guests who wish to shower have a towel, wash cloth, shampoo, and soap from the Shelter's supplies along with an empty zip lock to keep items in when done. One of the Hosts is to accompany each guest to the shower area. Check to make sure the shower area is picked up before the guest enters. Wait outside the bathroom while the guest is using the shower. Check that the guest has properly cleaned up the bathroom after the shower and then escort them back and see if another guest wants to shower next.

LAUNDRY

Shelter linens (sheets, blankets, and towels) are laundered on a regular basis by laundry volunteers. Samaritan Group provides detergent, as well as quarters for the laundromat. Anyone interested in becoming a laundry volunteer should contact the director or volunteer coordinator for more information.

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

All guests possessing prescription medication must give their meds to shelter staff who will place meds in a locked box for safekeeping. Guests will inform staff and/or Hosts when their meds are needed.

Host volunteer responsibility: Dispense medication when it is requested by guest. Staff will provide instructions for unlocking the box - do not share this information with guests or speak combination out loud for guests to hear. The combination can be texted to you.

EXPECTATIONS FOR GUESTS

Guests entering the shelter have agreed to follow these rules:

- Shelter Guests must arrive at the shelter between 5:30PM and 6:00PM, unless prior arrangements have been made with shelter coordinator. (Eg: work schedule)
- Shelter Guests must follow ALL Covid-19 procedures when determined necessary by the Shelter. While procedures have relaxed during post pandemic conditions, we may require strict following of Covid rules if symptoms at the shelter or surrounding area intensify. This includes possibly requiring guests to have their temperature taken with a forehead thermometer before being allowed to enter the shelter, and requiring masks and/or social distancing. You will be notified if Covid procedures become necessary and these rules are in place for your safety. If someone has cold like, respiratory or flu type symptoms we will require a Covid test.
- Guests must remain in the designated shelter area and will not enter any other areas without the permission and supervision of shelter staff. Guests are not allowed in the kitchen.
- Dinner is served at 6PM. Guests may not bring food into the shelter or eat in the bed area.
- Quiet time begins at 10pm (no noise permitted) and lights are out at 11PM. Guests must remain in their street clothes until it is time to retire for the evening. Sleep clothes must be appropriate, and guests should change in the bathroom.
- All guests must be up by 6:30AM. (If you are up before this time, please be quiet and respect those who are still sleeping.) Guest are required to leave by 8:00am
- Guests are allowed to bring one or two bags (i.e. duffle bag or suitcase) to the shelter provided all items fit neatly and completely under the guest's assigned bed.
- Guests must not possess weapons or bring any dangerous objects on the shelter premises.
- Guests must not possess alcohol or illegal drugs at any time, day or night while staying at the shelter. (This also includes the daytime while away from the shelter.)
- Guests will permit shelter staff to search their belongings anytime they are asked.
- Guests may not have visitors at the shelter.

- Guests must not use profanity, yell or use abusive language, nor display violent or angry outbursts. Guests must be respectful and courteous to other guests and shelter staff, and respect the property of the host church. Any conflict must be reported to shelter staff immediately.
- Guests are responsible for keeping bathrooms, toilets and public areas clean of debris and clothing, will keep their sleeping area clean, and will make their bed each morning and remove any hanging towels they left drying overnight.
- Guests may possess cell phones, but all cell phones must silence their ringer and/or be placed on vibrate upon entering the shelter, and must not talk on their phones after 10pm unless there is an emergency. Use of the church telephones are not permitted.
- Smoking is prohibited inside the shelter. Guests may smoke only in the designated smoking area at designated smoking times with permission and supervision of shelter staff or volunteers.
- Guests possessing prescription medications will place their meds in a locked box with shelter staff for safekeeping. Guests are responsible for informing shelter staff when their meds are needed.
- Guests must not solicit, steal or borrow money from other guests, shelter staff, volunteers or church members, nor borrow possessions from other shelter guests without their permission. Guests are also not to solicit volunteers or staff for rides or favors.
- Guests must not engage in any sexual activity of any kind on shelter premises. No one is allowed in anyone else's bed area arranged between dividers. Only one person allowed in a bathroom at a time.
- Guests with vehicles may not return to their car after entering the shelter without permission from shelter staff and will allow staff to search their belongings when they return if asked.
- Shelter staff are not responsible for personal items left at the shelter. Guests must keep personal items of value with them at all times. Items left at the shelter after a guest departs will be held for no longer than 48 hours.
- Guests with children MUST supervise their own children at all times. These guests may not ask volunteers, staff or other guests to supervise the children.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If, at any time, a situation might require police, fire, or medical attention, call 911. Err on the side of caution. If there is a fire evacuate all guests and staff to the nearest parking lot and move as far away from the building as possible. Make sure everyone is accounted for and if possible take the sign in sheet with you to help aid in this process.

When calling 911 describe the situation and provide the physical address to the emergency dispatcher. Addresses for each location is on the cover of this handbook.

As soon as possible, contact Samaritan Group Director James Diggs so he is aware of the emergency situation.

Emergency Number: 911

Samaritan Group Director: 443-480-3564