

## FAQ's About the Workcamp (Frequently Asked Questions)

Updated 2009

**What will we be working on?** Every group will work on one or more of three types of projects: Habitat houses, Affiliate Development Projects, and Community Projects. We concentrate in these three areas because we realize it takes more than just houses to build a true community. Examples of the second and third types of projects would be helping the staff prepare a newsletter for mailing, repairing the affiliate storage buildings, painting park playground equipment, or helping other local non-profits with projects. If you call the week before you come, we will be able to give you a fairly accurate picture of your projects. Keep in mind, *there are no unimportant jobs!* Whatever the project, it is important that it be done to keep our houses affordable to our families and to create a thriving community for them to live in.

### **We've been on spiritual retreats before...is this the same thing?**

Absolutely *not!* Habitat is entirely about community. Groups who come expecting to keep to themselves and not integrate with the community or other groups always leave feeling frustrated. This *can* and *should* be a spiritual experience for all the volunteers, but not in the quiet, meditative, introspective way that a "retreat" would. Plan for *some* time alone with your group to process feelings and talk about what they're seeing and experiencing during the week, but also take advantage of the one-time opportunities available to you to get to know the other groups and members of our community who will undoubtedly want to get to know you! These relationships are often the most memorable and important part of your Workcamp experience.

**Devotions?** We begin each day with a moment together to focus our efforts. You and any other groups present are asked to share the responsibility for the week. Devotions may be scripture readings, poetry, singing, stories, etc., anything that is appropriate to helping the entire group focus their attention and energy on the greater task before them. Habitat does not discriminate against any person based on beliefs or religion; all our volunteers should feel welcome to participate in these morning reflections in their own ways. Sample devotions are available in a folder at the Volunteer Center.

**Do we work all week long?** We take one-half day off on Wednesday (Thursday during Lent) so that our staff can plan for the rest of the week, your group can take some time to enjoy the beauty of the country (and maybe get some rest!) and have some *different* kinds of fun, and to give everyone a little boost to make it to the end of the week.

**What is the Volunteer Center like?** The Center is located in Lambert Hilltop Park, a beautiful 4 acre community park with a spot for a bonfire, volleyball, and horseshoes. It is a central site for community activities such as auctions, cakewalks, and horseshoe tournaments. There is a covered pavilion available and a large charcoal grill for your use. The kitchen is fully equipped with cooking utensils, pots and pans, plates, cups and mugs, silverware and the major appliances. The eating area doubles as an indoor 1/2 basketball court and the second floor loft is ideal for evening activities. Food and beverages are not to be kept or enjoyed in sleeping areas and loft in order to help keep these areas clean and to avoid attracting pests.

Because the Volunteer Center is a place for the community to use as well as our groups, and because homeowners may be at the Center at anytime, we ask that you keep it clean, even though this will mean daily cleaning efforts. We want to set a positive example for the Homeowners and potential Partner Families who will soon have the responsibility of keeping their homes clean and in good repair.

**What are the sleeping and bathing arrangements?** The center has two large bunk rooms with room for 68. Adjacent to the dorm areas are 2 bathroom/shower rooms. There is to be no coed use of the lower bunk rooms and shower/bathrooms. Due to a limited hot water supply, each volunteer is allowed one five (5) minute shower a day.

There is an upstairs Staff Apartment that has 4 bedrooms with an additional 12 beds, and one  $\frac{3}{4}$  bath. The apartment is reserved for gender overflow from the dorms, short term staff or long term volunteers. The use of the upstairs apartment will be determined on a case by case basis. There are twin mattresses on each bunk, but you must bring your own sleeping bag or bed linens and pillow.

As per the West Virginia Fire Marshall no more than a total of 68 people can be housed in the Volunteer Center overnight. This limit includes infants and other non-working individuals such as members of the kitchen crew, drivers, babysitters, etc.

**Do we have a curfew?** QUIET hours are between 10 PM and 6 AM. We request that all Volunteers be inside the Center at this time. No loud talking, music etc. Exceptions can be made with the agreement of the Volunteer Center Host and all Group Leaders. Tired volunteers are accidents waiting to happen, so please encourage your volunteers to honor the Quiet Hours.

**Do we do our own cooking?** Yes. If you are sharing the facility with another group, plan to coordinate your meals with them, either cooking and eating together or scheduling separate kitchen times in advance. Many groups bring most of their food supplies with them. There is a grocery store 30 minutes over the mountain from the Volunteer Center. It is the Great Valu in Franklin and they will donate 5% of the total spent by Workcamp groups to us (please provide us with a copy of your receipts so we can turn them in). There are several little “mom & pop” stores closer to the Volunteer Center if you need things like more milk, toilet paper, etc.

**Will we be the only group there?** Our Volunteer Center can house up to 68 people; Since our housing ministry is dependant upon Workcamp fees for materials we try to book as close to capacity as possible. You will be given the contact information for any other groups that are staying with us during your week so that you can coordinate meal and cleaning efforts.

### **Can we reserve the entire Volunteer Center for our Group?**

Yes, if you would like to reserve the entire Volunteer Center for your group you will need to make a reservation for a minimum of 60 people. It is understood that you may actually bring fewer than 60 people, but you will be expected to pay for 60 participants. If you bring more than 60 participants you will be expected to pay for the actual number that you bring. If your group is larger than 68, please call us to discuss your options.

### **Can we increase our numbers after we send in our reservation deposit?**

Your reservation deposit should reflect the number of participants you anticipate bringing. We realize estimating your number of participants several months in advance is difficult, but it is necessary for our reservation process. *If* you should happen to have an increase in interest after you've booked a reservation for "x" number of people, **call us immediately** to get permission to increase your number of participants. You will be asked to execute a new reservation contract and pay an additional deposit for the additional participants. Because other groups are booked for the same week as yours, you must check with us to see if we will be able to host an additional number of persons from your group. Please do not bring more participants than you have made a reservation for as there may not be housing or work available for them.

**Can we bring young children?** Yes, with adequate supervision. We encourage families to bring their children, no matter what the age. It is vitally important for children, even the youngest ones, to feel they are contributing to the mission of creating better housing for kids like themselves who may not have a decent place to live. We encourage couples to share the responsibility of child care for the little ones so everyone in the family can be involved.

For participants under the age of 18, you are required to provide at least one adult (21 or over) for every five (5) youth (1:5 adult to child ratio). Children age ten (10) and younger must be accompanied by their parent or guardian and must remain under the direct and constant supervision of a parent or legal guardian during their entire stay at Almost Heaven. Experience has taught us that parents who have children who are ten (10) and younger are not able to serve as a supervisor for other children.

**What about transportation?** Because we want to be responsible stewards of your fees, the Homeowners' payments, and the donations we receive, we try to put as much of these monies, as we can, directly into building houses. We have chosen not to invest in costly transportation for our volunteers. We believe this is another way you can serve our ministry - by providing your own transportation to the affiliate and to and from the work site each day. It is very unlikely that your entire group will be located at the same work site each day, and some of our work sites are way up washed out 'hollers' that sometimes are inaccessible even to regular vehicles. It is for these reasons we ask that you bring as many vehicles as necessary to transport your volunteers to and from the work sites each day. Charter buses, school buses and the like are simply not practical for a Workcamp week in the mountains. If transportation is going to be a significant cost to your group, you may want to start fundraising efforts early (try getting a local vehicle rental agency to support Habitat by donating a vehicle or two for your group's use!).

**What are our Workcamp Fees used for?** Workcamp fees are the foundation of our housing ministry. We use them to purchase building materials for your group to build with while you are here. The reason that we request that you send in your Workcamp fees 30 days prior to your arrival is so we can purchase the needed materials and have them ready for your group when you arrive. There is no charge for use of the Volunteer Center for Workcamp groups.

**What about the stereotypes?** Stereotypes exist about every aspect of every culture. Words like "hillbilly", "hick", and "redneck" are intended to denigrate an entire population without a commitment to truly know and understand it. In the same way, by coming to our community, you give residents the opportunity to experience "outsiders" in a positive way. Whatever our expectations, we must remember that we were all created in God's image.

**Will we get to work with the homeowners?** Because most of our families have one or more individuals employed during the day, it may be difficult for them to be at the work site during the day. We recognize that this interaction enhances your overall experience and it is mutually beneficial. However, they do enjoy sharing meals with the groups and spending evening time with them. Why not invite them for supper and games one evening? How about hosting a cookout one evening at the construction site (which is generally closer to where the families are currently living)? We welcome your ideas and suggestions on how to better facilitate this interaction!

**Does Habitat have accident insurance?** Habitat has accident insurance for every volunteer. **This acts as secondary insurance for those with their own insurance.** For those volunteers uninsured, this acts as primary insurance. If an injury occurs at the work site, the injured person, if at all possible, should take his or her own insurance information with them to the doctor's office or hospital. Our auto insurance policies forbid the use of affiliate vehicles by drivers under the age of 25. Additionally, though it may be tempting for a short distance, we recommend for persons *not* to ride in the back of pick-up trucks.

**Our group is ambitious and wants to build a whole house...how much would that cost? YES!!** We welcome groups who would like to participate in partial and whole house sponsorships, as well. For a minimum financial contribution of \$20,000, your group can participate in a "Framing Blitz" during your stay. For \$40,000, we can accommodate a whole house sponsorship "Blitz Build" with your group. For details of these sponsorship opportunities and what these events entail, please contact our Director of Development at (304) 358-7642. Our Development Office works closely with your group to assist with fundraising when you commit to any level of a house sponsorship. Naturally, if you do not want to physically work on the house, but rather wish to serve only as a financial sponsor, we welcome that support as well.

**Can we rent the Volunteer Center for other functions?** During our 'off-season' (September – January) the Volunteer Center is available for overnight use. The rate is \$15 per person per night. The landscape is at its finest in the fall (September – November) and the view from the front porch of the Volunteer Center is breathtaking. The Volunteer Center makes an ideal location for Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops (indoor or outdoor camping), ski trips, training events, family reunions, and any other recreational opportunity that you can think of.

During "on-season" (February – August) individuals may stay at the Volunteer Center, and join in the mission trip for that week, providing the center is not at full capacity. The cost is \$30 per person per night, plus a one time deposit of \$15 per person.