



Neighbors Helping Neighbors

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

October 2020



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SALUDA LIVING IN PLACE (SLIP) HANDBOOK

Welcome to the SLIP volunteer community! Thank you for your interest in becoming a SLIP volunteer. Your compassion and commitment will help to improve the quality of life for older residents living in the Greater Saluda community. With your help they will be better able to stay safely in their own homes as long as possible.

This handbook is for you to keep, reread, think about and refer to as you go about your volunteer activities. It has a wealth of information about our values, principles and expectations. This manual includes important information about what is expected of SLIP volunteers and what, in turn, you can expect from SLIP to support, augment and guide your efforts.

If you have additional questions or encounter unexpected challenges, please contact your Team Leader or the Board Chair for additional help. Never feel that you are alone. Support and guidance are always available.

SLIP depends on its volunteers to adequately support the needs of Saluda seniors. Your willingness to share your time, talent, strength and compassion are greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lynn Cass
Board Chair

VOLUNTEER'S ROLE

Volunteers are truly SLIP's heart and soul, as SLIP depends exclusively on volunteer staff to provide all of its services. Our skilled volunteers help equip older adults to live independent, vibrant and healthy lives.

There are many rewards to being a SLIP volunteer, including strengthening our community, the satisfaction of helping and connecting to others, and helping to create a resource that you too can benefit from some day.

Each SLIP volunteer must complete and sign an application form and will be vetted and trained before performing tasks. All volunteers pass a criminal background check and provide personal references. Auto insurance information is confirmed and a DMV check completed for those performing driving tasks. The cost of all background checks is covered by SLIP.

GOALS OF THE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

- To provide opportunities for new connections and friendships to develop as volunteers participate in social activities, share experiences and discover mutual interests.
- To provide opportunities for civic engagement that encourages volunteers to feel needed and appreciated.
- To ensure that volunteers have a meaningful and rewarding experience.
- To support SLIP's mission by providing quality services.

VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

SLIP'S program participants—the recipients of our services—are referred to as Neighbors. All volunteer activities are based on teams: Neighbor to Neighbor, Transportation, Home Safety and Accessibility, Social Events and Educational Programs, and Communications. There are also a few 'ad hoc' activities that do not fit into these categories.

VOLUNTEER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

You have the right to:

- Find opportunities for meaningful volunteer work that is a good match for your skills and interests.

- Receive orientation, training and supervision necessary to do the work.
- Feel valued.
- Be safe.
- Be informed about relevant information that may impact your work.
- Decline an assignment that you're not comfortable performing.
- Provide permission for SLIP authorized checks of your background and driving record.
- Resign from your volunteer position, if you find SLIP is not a good fit or your situation changes.

You have the responsibility to:

- Volunteer at least one time in your first month.
- Treat all Neighbors with respect.
- Meet your volunteer commitments, or provide advance notice so alternative arrangements can be made.
- Maintain confidentiality in accordance with the SLIP Confidentiality Agreement.
- Perform the work assigned to the best of your ability.
- Contact your Team Leader immediately if you are concerned or uncomfortable about a Neighbor's health or behavior.
- Attend initial and ongoing volunteer training.
- Enter your time and complete a Volunteer Service Report after each volunteer experience by calling or emailing your Team Leader.
- Accept guidance from and share information with your Team Leader. Have a dialogue about the best way to proceed if you encounter a difficult situation.
- Notify SLIP if you choose to terminate your volunteer work or take a break from it.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

We believe that volunteers will stay with us when they are fully engaged, feel appreciated and are doing things that are interesting and/or fun. Therefore, we like to give you a choice of the types of tasks you'd like to assume. If you don't see your area of interest on the list, please speak to the Board Chair to determine if your expertise can be incorporated into our offerings. This can also help to assure that SLIP continues to grow and thrive.

- **Article Writing, Photography:** Help out by writing occasional articles or taking pictures at events. This is an 'ad hoc' type of assignment very much appreciated by the Communications Team.
- **Educational Programs and Social Events:** This runs the gamut, from developing programs, welcoming guests and preparing food, to setting up and taking down tables and chairs.
- **In Home Assistance:** Assist the Home Safety Team Leader with in-home tasks at a Neighbor's house. Tasks could include assistance with occasional light gardening chores and help with household chores like replacing hard to reach light bulbs, help moving heavy items, putting up/taking down screens, hanging pictures and mattress turning. In-home volunteer assistance is NOT meant to substitute for a regularly scheduled housekeeper or gardener.
- **MedPal:** This assignment does not require medical expertise. It is simply accompanying a member to a doctor's appointment to serve as an extra person who can listen and take notes.
- **Neighbor to Neighbor:** Visit neighbors in their own home to provide companionship to those feeling a bit lonely and isolated. This could include a chat, a cup of tea/coffee, reading aloud, playing cards, assisting the neighbor with organizing activities, making a referral to the SLIP Transportation or Senior Home Safety and Accessibility teams.
- **Senior Home Safety and Accessibility:** Assist SLIP's Volunteer Senior Home Safety Inspector in assessing needs, accessing materials and organizing volunteers to increase the Neighbor's ability to safely remain in his/her own home. SLIP does not vet private contractors. The Neighbor will be referred to The Aging Projects Inc. in Hendersonville, NC which maintains a list of private, vetted contractors. <https://theagingprojectsinc.org/HendersonNC/index.php>
- **Transportation:** Many of our requests are for driving and many of our volunteers find this activity very rewarding. Volunteers provide door-to-door transportation. A typical destination can be one time only or regularly scheduled and might include: grocery store, pharmacy, bank, post office, doctor or other professional appointments, meetings, hair appointments, social and educational events, church services and visits to friends. Volunteers must use their own vehicle to transport Neighbors. All Neighbors requesting transportation must be ambulatory and able to enter and exit a vehicle on their own.

Volunteers cannot:

- Administer medications, treatments or provide any type of medical care or advice.
- Bathe or dress a Neighbor.

- Attempt to lift someone who has fallen.
- Accept gifts of value; however, tea, coffee and small food items are acceptable.
- Accept anything from volunteers that confers financial gain, including payment for service or allowing the Neighbor to pay for a volunteer's meal.
- Transport Neighbors who have dementia, nor those who are not ambulatory.
- Drive or use the Neighbor's vehicle for transportation.
- Consume any alcoholic beverage before driving a Neighbor.
- Make judgements about a Neighbor's worthiness for a particular service.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM PROCESS

The volunteer application is reviewed by the appropriate Team Leader who will contact references. The Team Leader meets with a prospective volunteer and provides basic information about SLIP, our services and the program(s) of interest. The Team Leader answers any questions the prospective volunteer might have, discusses expectations and reviews reporting forms to make certain this is a good fit for the volunteer.

A Neighbor initially requests a service through the SLIP office (828-490-1040) or Team Leader. For transportation services they may call (828)749-0049. The Team Leader arranges to visit their home, gathers information about what services are needed and makes certain SLIP can assist in meeting these needs.

A volunteer is then contacted and briefed on the Neighbor's request for a SLIP volunteer. For the first visit, the Team Leader accompanies the volunteer to the Neighbor's home and makes introductions.

For ongoing services, Neighbors are asked to make their request a week in advance of the date on which the service is needed. SLIP will always make an effort to schedule a volunteer to fulfill the request, but cannot guarantee that the request can be met within the specified timeframe. Neighbors will be notified when they have been matched with a volunteer.

If a Neighbor no longer needs the service, cancellations should be made as soon as possible through the Team Leader. If a cancellation is necessary on the day of service, and the Team Leader cannot be reached, the Neighbor should attempt to call the assigned volunteer to advise them of the cancellation.

Volunteers call the Neighbor the night before (and sometimes also the morning of) the service to remind the Neighbor and confirm the details of their time together.

After a Neighbor receives volunteer assistance, the volunteer provides the Team Leader with a follow-up report. SLIP relies on active feedback by Neighbors and volunteers in order to provide the best service to Neighbors, to successfully support our volunteers and to document services provided to substantiate need and be included in grant applications.

KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL VISIT

The Team Leader will provide all the essential information concerning the Neighbor's needs prior to your visit.

When you visit:

- Confirm your visit the day before and set a convenient time for both of you. Be sure to take the Neighbor's address and phone number with you.
- Be on time and dress appropriately. Don't wear perfume, aftershave, or scented lotion. Do not smoke immediately before or during a visit. A scent may trigger an allergic reaction or unpleasant response.
- Keep in mind that asking for "help" can be very challenging for many individuals. Be respectful and sensitive to this.
- Plan to be a very good listener. Present yourself and explain who you are. Unless you are asked, don't start talking about yourself and please never share personal frustrations or problems. Do your best to keep interactions positive and change the subject if conversation becomes challenging.
- Listen respectfully if the Neighbor talks about their spiritual or political beliefs. Don't voice any disagreement or other opinion. Change the subject if it is uncomfortable for you. Keep in mind that any conversation should end as positively as possible.
- Let Neighbors talk about problems, but do not feel you have to come up with a solution. You can empathize by saying something like "that sounds like it is hard for you."

- It's always a good idea to carry a phone with you. However, the volume should be turned down and please do not make or respond to personal calls or texts while directly providing service.
- After your assignment call or email your Team Leader at your earliest convenience to let them know you have completed your volunteer assignment, how things went and to provide mileage and hours of service. SLIP uses this data for grant applications.
- **Respect privacy. What you see and learn when you visit must stay confidential.** Your Team Leader must be kept aware of any changes in the Neighbor's condition, but do not share such information with friends or other volunteers, as per the SLIP Confidentiality Agreement.
- If recurring visits are needed, schedule them through your Team Leader.

HOW TO ASSIST WITH TRANSPORTATION

General:

- Safety is the primary concern. We are all experienced, careful drivers, but acting as a volunteer driver puts an extra responsibility on our shoulders. Consider yourself a professional driver when providing transportation services and do nothing else while driving. Constant awareness is vital.
- The comfort of the passenger is also a serious concern. This includes an awareness of any weaknesses or disability that the passenger might have. And "nervous" passengers may require extra care.
- Smoothness is a critical characteristic of professional drivers. No abrupt starts or stops, no abrupt lane changes and take corners slowly and smoothly. Show no signs of irritation with other drivers.
- Look at your driving through your passenger's eyes. Remember, you are providing a professional service.
- In the unlikely event of an accident or incident, the well-being of your passenger—emotional as well as physical—is your primary concern. Follow the standard procedures for reporting an accident. Then call the Transportation Team Leader as soon as possible.
- Seat belt use is mandatory in North Carolina and required by SLIP. No exceptions should be allowed, front or back. Offer to help with seatbelts if your passenger has difficulty fastening or unfastening them.

SLIP's Volunteer Driver Policy:

Any volunteer who, in the course of their volunteer activities, drives a motor vehicle, must qualify as an authorized driver for SLIP. An authorized driver must:

1. Be at least 18 years of age,
2. Possess a valid driver's license from their state of residence,
3. Maintain an acceptable driving record, and
4. Provide proof of personal auto liability insurance.

NOTICING "RED FLAGS"

Signs of Potential Problems

A volunteer may be the first to notice a Neighbor's uncharacteristic behavior, unkempt appearance or unusual expressions. Marked personality changes are not a normal part of aging and could be an indication of a simple or serious problem. Always call the SLIP Team Leader, as soon as you have any concerns. The following are some examples to watch out for:

- Concerns about mobility and stability
- Changes in mood over time
- Confusion or disorientation
- Changes in physical health
- Neglect of personal hygiene
- Unsanitary living conditions
- No food or spoiled food in the refrigerator
- Safety issues in the home
- Not dressing appropriately for the weather
- Signs of bruising or injuries
- Comments about people asking for money

If you see any of these "red flags," please notify your Team Leader as soon as possible.

Emergency Guidelines

If an emergency occurs when you are providing a service for a Neighbor, it is important that you remain calm. Focus on helping the Neighbor and on notifying the proper authorities that can provide appropriate assistance. When in doubt, always call 911.

If a Neighbor Does Not Answer the Door

- Look around the premises and in the windows, then call the Neighbor on the phone.

- If you are comfortable doing so, check to see if the door is unlocked and call the Neighbor's name from the door; do NOT go inside.
- If you get no response, call your Team Leader to report the situation.
- Follow your instincts in regard to whether it is appropriate to call 911.

In the Case of an Accident

- If a member falls while with you or you find them on the floor when you arrive, resist helping them to get up. If appropriate pull a chair over for them to use to get up on their own, but if they cannot get up on their own, call 911 for assistance.
- If a member is unconscious, do not try to move him/or her, except in a hazardous situation such as a fire. Call 911 immediately for emergency assistance.
- Always call the SLIP Team Leader as soon as possible to report the situation.

MAINTAINING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Volunteers are different from best friends or family, in that it is essential to maintain healthy boundaries. Because we live in a small, rural community, volunteers may know and even be friends with some of the Neighbors they are assisting.

SLIP protects our volunteers as it relates to liability and risk when performing SLIP services through liability and extended auto insurance. Every trip and visit must be scheduled through SLIP to be covered by our insurance. Knowing the boundaries means that you are aware of which activities carry the extra layer of protection and which do not.

It may sometimes be difficult to differentiate when a volunteer is acting as a friend or as a SLIP representative. The following examples may be helpful in recognizing potential signs of crossing a boundary as a SLIP volunteer:

- Losing objectivity, becoming resentful or easily hurt by a Neighbor's comment, or feeling awkward because one person is becoming more attached and the attachment is not reciprocated.
- Agreeing to a request that is beyond the services provided by SLIP.
- Offering counseling or advice while acting in the role of SLIP volunteer.

IN CONCLUSION

We hope your volunteer experience at SLIP will be meaningful and rewarding. Many volunteers say that they get back so much more than they give. Please feel free to offer suggestions to enhance your experience and that of our Neighbors.