

HOSPITALITY VOLUNTEER

Hospitality volunteers welcome, meet, and greet residents. Homeless people often feel ignored, rejected, and marginalized by society. The underlying cause of homelessness is complex; often a combination of poor personal decisions, things beyond their control, and poor response patterns. Being homeless is not their identity. They are people of worth and value, created in the image of God. Interact with and try to get to know residents on a personal level. Meander through the dining area, talk to them, and listen to their stories; you will be amazed at what you learn from those we serve. Below are guidelines to help you.

- Look residents in the eye to communicate an openness and willingness to talk.
- Shake hands to show that you respect them.
- Introduce yourself by your first name and ask their name.
- Call them by their real name, not street name, to help shift their identity from a street person to someone of value.
- Ask open-ended questions to elicit a response. "Tell me..." "Help me understand..." "What did you do today?"
- To make conversation, share non-personal information about yourself. This is not a Q & A session.
- Indicate warmth and acceptance with your body language. Make eye contact, smile, nod. Do not cross your arms or frown.
- Be prepared for what you hear. People have different values or habits than you. It is important not to appear judgmental, nor to offer advice.
- Homeless persons are not your project. Offer kindness and friendship and recognize that they are people of worth who have something to offer you, too.
- Offer to pray with them if you feel lead and they agree.

"People reached out to me with genuine concern and said, 'Hey, how are you doing?' and meant it." "We don't have to empty our pockets every time we see a homeless person, but to offer a cheerful word of encouragement, instead of a hurtful comment - how hard is that?" "I am no longer an isolated homeless person. I am no longer called weird names like 'crazy,' 'psycho,' and all that. I'm called 'George,' and I feel accepted."