



Volunteer Manual

Creating a Hunger-Free
Community

Our Vision:

Creating a Hunger Free Community.

Our Mission Statement:

Helena Food Share serves our neighbors in need by providing food in a respectful and dignified way, and by working with others to eliminate hunger in the greater Helena area.

Our Food Sharing Philosophy:

We believe that no one should go hungry.

We believe that access to food is a basic human right.

We believe nutritious food is a building block for healthy communities.

We believe in handling food respectfully and eliminating food waste.

We believe in the spirit of human kindness.

We believe that by working together, we accomplish more.

We believe every gift is significant.

We believe that by sharing food, we share hope.

Thank you for joining us in our mission!

Welcome from Jordan Evertz, Executive Director

We deeply appreciate our volunteers—our doors wouldn't be open without you! You are the heartbeat of Helena Food Share, coming from diverse backgrounds and bringing dedication and hard work. Your ability to listen and solve problems is invaluable, and your passion for advocating for our customers shines through in everything you do. Each day, we count on you to create a welcoming and safe environment, helping to remove the stigma around seeking assistance. There are many ways to support our organization, and we recognize that your kindness extends beyond your shifts. We are truly humbled by your commitment to ending hunger and honored to be the stewards of this communal generosity, serving as conduits for the sharing that takes place. Together, we will strive until no one in our community faces food insecurity. Thank you, volunteers!



Jordan Evertz

Our Programs

The Grocery Share Market is our largest food distribution program; in fact, it's what most people mean when they talk about Helena Food Share. Often, people are surprised when they first visit the market and find it looks and feels like an actual grocery store. That is our goal! We intentionally use a choice-based model that allows shoppers to pick food based on their food preferences and dietary needs rather than simply handing them a box. Providing freedom of choice aligns with our mission to treat everyone with dignity and respect. Most of our volunteers support the Grocery Share program, and we strive to offer the best customer service in town - whether serving our customers in the market or our donors who are dropping off food. Other programs include Kid Packs, Senior Commodity Boxes, Holiday Meal Share, Emergency Food Packs, Mobile Panties in East Helena and Lincoln, Food Is Care, Kitchen Production, and Garden.

Our Funding

The greater Helena community generously provides the finances and food needed to accomplish our mission. We receive financial support from local individuals, churches, businesses, service clubs, community foundations, and through local, state, and federal grants. Additionally, we keep our doors open because of ongoing food donations from grocers, local gardeners, farmers, hunters, and generous folks like you!

Our Customers

Our customers, like everyone else, sometimes need a little extra help. We firmly believe that no one should go hungry, and we strive to ensure that accessing food is straightforward and without barriers. While we do have an intake process for receiving services, our food sharing is not based on income. Anyone who needs food can receive it without judgment. When asked to describe our customers, it's challenging because we serve a diverse group of individuals and families in Helena. Most do not define themselves by the financial circumstances that led them to seek assistance. We look for volunteers who treat our customers with dignity and recognize the value that each person brings to our community.

Individual Volunteer Opportunities

There are several ways you can volunteer with Helena Food Share. Individuals seeking a regular position may volunteer in the Market through our Grocery Share program, Grocery Rescue, and Kid Packs delivery, Kitchen or Mobile Pantries.

Grocery Share Market Support

Before committing to a position in the market, we encourage you to consider a few factors: Would you prefer having a lot of interaction with people, or do you enjoy more behind-the-scenes work? Are you able to handle physically demanding tasks, or would you feel more comfortable working at a desk? We offer a variety of volunteer opportunities to suit all skill levels and comfort zones.

MORNING SHIFTS: Cleaning, Stocking, and Readyng the Market & Kitchen

Do you enjoy starting your day by helping your community? Each day, 10,000 pounds of food go out the door, and this all begins with cleaning the market and stocking the shelves. Morning volunteers play a crucial role in our daily operations. Whether it's mopping the floors or bagging produce, we must present our best selves when the doors open.

7:45-12:30 Grocery Store Rescue (Driver Support)

9:30-11:30 Morning Market Assistant, Produce Processor, or Sorting & Donation Door

9:30-11:30 Repackaging Products (Eggs, Oatmeal, Lentils, etc.)

Afternoon Shifts: Market & Kitchen

Do you value community? Do you enjoy working with the public and learning the names and stories of the people you help? Do you like being physically active and seeing the direct impact of your hard work? When our doors are open, we are looking for friendly problem solvers who can keep the food moving and support our customers.

12:15-3:45 Welcome Station: Greeter/Intake

12:15-3:45 Grocery Floor: Market Assistant & Boxing Station

12:15-3:45 Produce Processor, Kitchen Assistant, or Sorting & Donation Door

12:15-3:45 Repackaging Products (Eggs, Oatmeal, Lentils, Etc.)

Evening Shifts: Market

Do you have daytime commitments but still want to give back to our community? This opportunity is for you! On Mondays and Thursdays, we extend our hours to better serve our customers, and we need friendly volunteers to help assist them and keep our shelves stocked.

3:30-6:45 Welcome Station: Greeter/Intake

3:30-6:45 Grocery Floor: Market Assistant & Boxing Station

3:30-6:45 Sorting & Donation Door

On-Call Shifts

If you can't commit to a regular, ongoing shift, please inquire about becoming an On-Call volunteer or about other food distribution opportunities, such as Senior Commodities or Mobile Pantry.

Other Opportunities

Our community is essential in keeping Helena Food Share's doors open. Many individuals are eager to help, but their availability doesn't always match our regular Grocery Share Market shifts. If you share our passion for food-sharing, one of the following opportunities could be the perfect way for you to contribute:

The Helena Food Share Kitchen

Do you have culinary experience and a passion for cooking? The kitchen is a busy place, creating delicious and healthy food for our customers. **Kitchen Assistants** help with prepping ingredients (washing, peeling, and cutting), preparing recipes under the guidance of our Kitchen Manager, and assembling and packaging finished products for distribution. More experienced volunteers may be given a recipe to follow independently and produce a finished dish in a timely manner. If you have a tasty recipe you'd like to share, skilled cook volunteers can occasionally introduce their own ideas, often specializing in areas of expertise, such as baking or soup production.

Each day, we rescue 1,000 pounds of produce from local grocery stores and businesses. **Produce Processors** help sort through fresh produce to ensure that only quality items are available for our customers. Volunteers use their passion for vegetables to create beautiful displays, making our customers feel like they're shopping in a grocery store. If you prefer a quiet environment to accomplish tasks or enjoy working with a group of friends while chatting, repackaging might be the right job for you!

We often receive bulk food items that need to be **repackaged** into smaller, more manageable portions for our customers, and we could use your help! All volunteer tasks in the kitchen vary based on what is needed, and volunteers are asked to help keep the kitchen compliant with Lewis and Clark County Health Department regulations. This means that volunteers should clean their area at the end of their shift and assist with dishwashing, cleaning and sanitizing kitchen equipment, doing laundry, sweeping and mopping, and taking out the garbage. Many hands make light work when everyone pitches in!

Food Demos or Leading a Cooking/Nutrition Class

Are you good at stretching ingredients, budgeting for groceries, or sharing healthy cooking tips and skills? Our Charlie Cart mobile kitchen and our teaching kitchen provide excellent opportunities to teach new skills and share recipes, both in the Market and in a classroom setting. Contact [Jonathan Hockett](#) for more info.

Gardening

Do you enjoy growing your own food? Our garden may be the perfect place for you. Garden volunteers keep things growing by watering, weeding, planting, and harvesting.

Data Entry/Office Work

Do you enjoy computer work like data entry, numbers, Excel sheets, and formulas? Each of our programs involves a variety of clerical tasks, such as filing, sorting, and alphabetizing. If this type of work interests you, please know it's valuable to us. It is the key to Helena Food Share providing the best possible service.

Group Volunteer Opportunities

Much of our work is made possible by volunteer groups! **On-site group opportunities** include food repackaging, Kid Pack builds, Emergency Pack builds, Mobile Pantry builds, Holiday Meal Share distribution, seasonal gardening, and cleaning and maintenance of our facilities. **Off-site group opportunities** include organizing food drives—both community-driven and those hosted by grocery stores—and participating in fundraising events.

Program staff will determine whether a group project aligns with our current needs, taking into account the group size and the time of year. For example, we typically have more group opportunities during the holiday season. In November alone, it takes over 500 volunteers to run our programs!

Guidelines

Groups should designate one person to contact Helena Food Share's Volunteer Manager to discuss possible opportunities and to fill out a group volunteer application. Call 406-443-3663 x 106 to reach the Volunteer Manager or send a text to our mobile volunteer phone, 406-461-8152.

- Group volunteer projects – repackaging, Kid Pack builds, cleaning, sorting, etc. – projects will be determined by the current need.
- While we try to accommodate the group's preferred date, we can only schedule an opportunity if there is a space available, staff to supervise, and the need.
- Group projects will not exceed a 2-hour shift, and a 20-minute tour of the market may be included for all on-site group activities.

Age Requirement and Supervision

- Children between the ages of 12-16 may volunteer after hours for food repackaging with an adult supervisor. Volunteers MUST be at least 16 years of age to offer their individual services without adult supervision.
- One adult supervisor is required for every 5 volunteers less than 16 years of age.
- The group leader will be asked to fill out an application before the volunteer opportunity.
- Special needs volunteers require 1 adult supervisor with decision-making skills for every two special needs volunteers.
- Supervisors must work alongside their volunteers. If staff feel there is inadequate supervision of children, volunteers may be asked to leave or moved to another project.

Community Service Volunteers

Our community service volunteers can fill various volunteer shifts based on our needs. As with all volunteers, we require prospective community service volunteers to complete an application first. This application will ask for the number of hours mandated by the court or agency you are affiliated with. Additionally, you will need to schedule an appointment to meet with the Volunteer Coordinator or Program Manager.

We encourage community service volunteers to communicate directly with us and discourage parents, friends, or partners from calling to inquire or schedule hours on your behalf. We look forward to meeting YOU in person!

Rules for Community Service

1. Community Service that is related to charges of an act of violence or sexual offence is prohibited.
2. Every shift must be scheduled in advance. No walk-in opportunities are available.
3. Community Service shifts will be scheduled based on the available openings, not based on how many hours are assigned by the program or sentence. We cannot guarantee hours.
4. You cannot miss more than two scheduled shifts — there are no exceptions.
5. Headphones and cell phone use are not allowed during your shift.
6. Staff will sign off on your hours after each shift, but volunteers must keep up with their own timesheets and report their hours to the court or agency requiring the community service.
7. You must be able to work well with customers, volunteers, and staff.

Our Expectations

When you volunteer at Helena Food Share, you can expect a lot of direct service and human interaction. Your tasks will go beyond picking up trash and washing dishes—though those may be part of your responsibilities as well. You will be asked to perform various tasks that contribute to excellent customer service. At Helena Food Share, our goal is to create a welcoming environment for everyone who visits. If at any time during your volunteer shift we observe that our customers are not being treated with respect, or if you fail to complete your assigned tasks, we may ask you to leave your shift and may not be able to reschedule you.

We are fortunate to have a large group of dedicated volunteers who regularly fill our shifts. As a result, we don't often have open spots available. We want you to be a part of our team, but we expect you to work as hard as our existing volunteers. If we schedule you, we ask that you be present, engaged, and flexible during your shift. Our customers deserve your attention and kindness.

It takes individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences to keep our operations running smoothly. We have discovered that some of our best long-term volunteers come from community service initiatives. We hope you will consider continuing to volunteer with us after fulfilling your community service requirement.

Let's discuss how you can help us advance our mission. ***What inspired you to choose Helena Food Share?***

Opportunities for Families with Children

We love having kids involved, but due to the movement of food and equipment in our market and warehouse, we have strict age restrictions for safety reasons. No one under the age of 16 is allowed to volunteer in the market during morning shifts or shopping hours. However, there are many ways a family can be involved:

- **Grocery Store Food Drives:** These are the best ways for families to make a direct impact on the Helena Food Share mission! Shoppers love seeing kids at the front doors with smiling faces and a grateful attitude. Food drives are a great place to teach the basics of what Helena Food Share is all about, without putting our customers' privacy or your child's safety at risk. Ask our Volunteer Manager to add you to the on-call food drive list, or create your own food drive at your school, church, or community organization. [Visit our website](#) to see how to host your own food drive.
- **Nutritious Food from the Earth:** We invite families and children to visit or participate in our Demonstration Garden located along Boulder Ave. Whether you're planting, weeding, harvesting, or just enjoying the flowers, everyone is welcome to join us. If you have a backyard garden and have extra herbs, produce, or fruit, we would also greatly appreciate any donations.
- **Prepping Recycled Plastic Bags:** We can supply large bags of recycled plastic bags for younger children to sort, flatten, and stack in crates. We go through 5 or more crates of bags each day, so you are providing a valuable service while teaching your kids the importance of recycling. We'll supply the crates and bags!
- **Distribute Flyers and Posters for Helena Food Share:** We distribute informational posters around town for various events and programs related to Helena Food Share. We can provide you with posters and a list of businesses in specific neighborhoods where you can hang or drop off these posters.
- **A Family Shopping Trip for Helena Food Share:** Families often shop for Helena Food Share and bring their children along to donate food. Before your shopping trip, we can provide you with a list of the items we need the most. When you drop off your food, we may be able to offer a brief after-hours tour of the market for families with young children, depending on staff availability. We ask that you schedule this tour in advance. The tour might also include a short demonstration of how we sort and stock food, allowing your children to help stock some of the items you just donated. This activity provides a wonderful full-circle lesson on the importance of giving!
- **Sharing Food at Home:** Engage in conversations about food around your dining table. Teach your kids about hunger, why food is nutritious, budget shopping, how to stretch meals, and the importance of not wasting food. Demonstrate the value of sharing. By sharing resources without expecting a thank-you or anything in return, you help create a more equitable world for them to grow up in. We are particularly impressed by children who host **sharing birthday parties**, where friends bring cans of food instead of gifts. Some of our most generous donors are, in fact, children with big hearts.

Training & Guidelines for All Volunteers

There are many ways to approach each volunteer shift, and no two days in the market are ever the same. We are looking for flexible, problem-solving volunteers who can remain calm and kind in what can often be a chaotic environment. To help you feel prepared for your first shift, we ask that you attend our weekly tour before you begin. We offer safety orientation and regular safety training.

During your first shift, all welcome station volunteers will be accompanied by a staff member, while other volunteers will be partnered with an experienced volunteer. We rely heavily on our experienced volunteers to guide new team members, so don't hesitate to ask a staff member if you have any questions or if you start to feel overwhelmed.

Scheduling and Tracking Time

We rely almost entirely on our volunteers offering their time, so please make sure to sign in and out for every shift. Tracking your hours is essential for our organization, as it helps us demonstrate how valuable our volunteers are to our programs.

Because your presence is so important, we ask that you treat your volunteer position like a job. If you're unable to attend your shift, please call or text the Volunteer Manager. Your contributions are vital, so providing at least 24 hours' notice allows us to find a replacement more easily. If you know in advance that you will be unavailable, please mark your dates on the calendar located across from the volunteer sign-in station.

If you miss more than two consecutive shifts and we have not heard from you, we will assume you wish to be removed from the schedule. Thank you for your commitment to being here throughout the year!

Personal Safety

Your tasks as a volunteer will soon become habits, so it's important to develop safe practices. If you have questions about how to lift a crate properly or need information about safety precautions, please ask a staff member. Never push yourself beyond your physical comfort levels. If you need help reaching, lifting, or moving something, don't hesitate to ask for assistance. Volunteers who wish to use a manual pallet jack must complete training with a staff member and receive approval before using the equipment.

We can distribute more food when our volunteers are safe, happy, and healthy. We move over 10,000 pounds of food each day, and many shifts involve varying levels of physical exertion. Please stay aware of the food movement around you and prioritize your safety at all times. We will do our best to assign tasks that match your abilities. In return, we ask that you inform us if any assigned tasks feel too challenging. If there is an injury or a near miss, please notify a staff member immediately. **Your health and well-being are very important to us!**

Food Use Policy

We are here to share food, so please help yourself to snacks in the volunteer room during your shift. Don't hesitate to take breaks when you need them and remember to stay hydrated while you work. If you require food assistance outside of your shift, please sign up for our services. It's important to enter each shop into our system. This allows us to track the weight of food that goes in and out, which is essential for assigning a dollar value to the food for accounting and auditing purposes.

Problems and Crisis Management

While we aim to create an environment similar to a regular grocery store, there is one key difference between customers and volunteers—you choose to be here. We understand that some of the tasks we ask you to perform can be challenging. If you feel uncomfortable or notice any disruptive behavior, please alert the staff. Be mindful of your limits; we encourage you to take a break and step outside for some fresh air if needed. Ultimately, our primary goal is to provide our customers with accessible, healthy food. We strive for excellent customer service and do our best to support both volunteers and customers in any situation.

Communications from Helena Food Share

We will contact you about shifts and other essential volunteer details via the Helena Food Share business phone at 406-443-3663, the HFS volunteer mobile phone at 406-461-8152, and by email at volunteer@helenafoodshare.org. You can contact us by any of these methods. You may receive emails through our CRM software, bloomerang.com.

Food Safety & Guidelines

We prioritize the health and safety of our customers. All market staff are trained in safe food-handling practices by the Kitchen Manager or Operations Coordinator. Additionally, our market and building are subject to annual inspections by the Lewis and Clark County Health Department. We make it a daily goal to exceed safety standards, even though we only receive an official visit from the department once a year. Many of our customers face a higher risk of illness or have complex financial or medical situations, making the potential impact of a food-borne illness particularly severe. It is our goal to provide safe, quality food for all our customers.

Food Safety Guidelines:

- Perishables are good for 10 days past the listed date
- Non-perishables are good for 1 year past the listed date
- Refer to the guidelines in the Sorting Room and ask staff if you are unsure
- When in doubt, throw it out!

Repackaging Guidelines:

- Each group will receive training on basic food handling and will be asked to wash hands, wear gloves, hair nets or hats, close-toed shoes, and wear proper and clean clothing.
- Food, open drinks, gum, and personal items are not allowed in the repackaging area.
- Volunteers must be healthy at the time of the repackaging project, and anyone showing signs of illness will be sent home immediately.
- If you have been ill with vomiting or diarrhea, please wait at least 36 hours since your last symptom to volunteer.

Food Movement Guidelines

- Staff will provide a short training and safety orientation.
- Groups moving or sorting food should have at least two designated lifters who can lift 25-50 lbs.
- Children and volunteers with health or physical issues should not lift full crates.
- Ask a staff member if you need help lifting or moving a heavy object.
- Climbing on equipment and pallets of food is strictly prohibited. Do not stand on pallets or crates.
- Never stack filled crates more than five high. *(continued on the next page)*

Food Movement Guidelines (continued)

- Only trained volunteers may use pallet jacks. Please ask staff to move pallets or let the Operations Coordinator or Operations Manager know if you'd like to be trained.
- Always be aware of traffic and food movement around you. Plan a path before moving something heavy.
- Watch where you walk. Avoid trip hazards and slippery surfaces.
- Always use carts to move product.
- Break heavy crates and boxes down into smaller, lighter units.
- Be mindful of weight distribution on carts.
- Wear close-toed shoes.
- In case of injury, let staff know immediately!

Helena Food Share Code of Conduct

- Treat people with dignity and respect.
- Adhere to the confidentiality statement.
- Bring light-heartedness to your shift.
- Be friendly with the customers. Listen to their stories. Share your own.
- Be careful of language that separates volunteers from customers and/or staff. Remember, we are all working toward the same goal.
- Step outside to take phone calls. Stay open and acknowledge the person in front of you.
- Your safety is important. Watch out for food movement. Read the monthly safety tips.
- Confrontations will happen. Find and talk to a staff member. Take a few moments to breathe.
- Use your best judgment when stocking food. If you wouldn't eat it, don't put it out.
- If you get tired, drink water, take a break, and sit down. We are all better at our jobs when we are rested.
- Stay flexible. Respond quickly. Problem solve. Remember, staff have your back.
- Treat the food, while in our care, with respect—from receiving it, to distributing it to shoppers.
- Above all else, be kind, and give freely to your neighbors.

Helena Food Share Confidentiality Statement

Information obtained about individual customers while volunteering at Helena Food Share is confidential. All records related to specific individuals or families must be treated as confidential. However, general information or statistical data that does not identify any individual or family is not considered confidential and may be used at the staff's discretion. Our confidentiality policy reflects our mission to treat everyone with dignity and respect. It is essential that you respect and prioritize our customers' privacy.

Our Commitment to our Volunteers

We want Helena Food Share to be a welcoming space that offers opportunities and fosters community for everyone who walks through our doors. Our goal is for you to have a meaningful volunteer experience while you're here. We want you to feel supported and appreciated. We are dedicated to creating an environment that encourages open communication, teamwork, and, most importantly, a genuine sense of joy in sharing with our neighbors. **We wouldn't exist without our volunteers. Thank you!**