

Northwoods Habitat for Humanity

Volunteer Handbook

P.O. Box 1067
Bemidji, MN 56619
(218) 751-4649

**Habitat
for Humanity®**

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Welcome

First and foremost, thank you for your interest in volunteering with Northwoods Habitat for Humanity! We are delighted that you have taken this step to learn more about how you can support us as we partner with people from all walks of life to provide low-income families new hope in the form of simple, decent, affordable housing throughout our community.

The ultimate purpose of Habitat for Humanity is to make poverty housing and homelessness socially, politically, and religiously unacceptable in today's world. It is our hope that you will join us in this spirit of partnership and that your efforts with Habitat for Humanity will prove enjoyable and fulfilling. Since Habitat for Humanity is a volunteer-driven organization, we rely on volunteers like you to help families in need realize the dream of owning a decent, affordable home. Volunteers greatly impact every facet of our organization, from working on our construction sites and helping to produce our newsletters, to staffing special events, and serving on our committees.

This manual will provide you with general policies and practices of Northwoods Habitat for Humanity. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with the contents of this manual, as it will answer many questions concerning our organization and outline how volunteers like yourself can contribute. In order to retain necessary flexibility in the administration of policies and procedures, Northwoods Habitat for Humanity reserves the right to amend any of the policies and/or benefits described in this manual at any time.

For more information you may visit our website at <http://www.habitatbemidji.org/> or call us at (218)751-4649.



Hours of Operation, Location and Contacts

Hours of Operation

Office hours are typically Monday – Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please contact our office or check our website at <http://www.habitatbemidji.org/> for current volunteer needs.

ReStore hours are Wednesday-Friday 10 AM -5 PM, and Saturdays 9 AM -1 PM.

Construction Sites Hours during build season are specific to the project(s).

Physical Address and Mailing Address

Northwoods Habitat for Humanity
1357 Exchange Ave SE
Bemidji, MN 56601

Northwoods Habitat for Humanity
P.O. Box 1067
Bemidji, MN 56619

Contact Information

Telephone: (218) 751-4649

ReStore: (218) 444-6398

Fax: (218) 444-3105

Website: <http://www.habitatbemidji.org/>

E-mail: habitat@paulbunyan.net

Observed Holidays:

Memorial Day

4th of July

Labor Day

Thanksgiving (Thursday and Friday)

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

New Years Day

Good Friday

Staff

Geri Hickerson	Executive Director
Sandra Erpelding	Administrative Assistant
Carlyn Whitney	Receptionist
Brandon Mustful	Community Engagement Coordinator
Tyler Hunt	ReStore Manager
Maverick Mckenzie	ReStore Associate

Affiliate Board of Directors

Chair, Mike Moen

Vice Chair, Vanessa Osborn

Secretary, Chris Hamilton

Treasurer, Joan Nelson

Richard De La Hunt

Jodi Schroeder

Patty Morris

Jeremiah Peterson

Mitch Rautio

Jim Pinsonneault

Jody Westgaard

Kari Carlson

Joy Johnson

Amber Hildebrandt

Vision and Mission of Habitat for Humanity

Vision

Every Beltrami and Clearwater County resident has a decent, affordable place to call home and the necessary tools to ensure long-term financial stability.

Mission Statement

Building simple, decent, affordable homes in partnership with God's people in need in Beltrami and Clearwater Counties.

Core Values

Northwoods Habitat for Humanity believes:

1. Every family has the right to a decent home.
2. A decent home is an important ingredient for building strong families.
3. Strong families are the backbone of thriving neighborhoods.
4. Thriving neighborhoods are the cornerstone of caring communities.
5. Community members, churches, business and organizations need to be engaged in the local fight against sub-standard housing.
6. Sub-standard housing needs to be made a matter of public conscience.

Philosophy

Northwoods Habitat for Humanity (NHFH) is a local affiliate of Habitat for Humanity International serving the counties of Beltrami and Clearwater.

NHFH builds and renovates homes with volunteer labor and donated materials whenever possible. Generous individuals, faith communities, corporations, foundations and other groups provide construction materials, labor and money.

We work in partnership with the families who purchase our homes. We sell houses to people who do not qualify for conventional bank loans. Volunteers and the partner families provide most of the labor. By controlling costs and adjusting the mortgage terms, monthly house payments are set so they do not exceed 30% of annual income. Mortgage payments received from homeowners are recycled back into the Fund for Humanity, which is then used towards to build more homes.

Age, sex, race, nor religion plays a part in the selection of a partner family. The Family Selection Committee bases its selection on three criteria:

- 1) Need – the applicants must be residing in inadequate housing and be unable to secure market-rate financing to solve their housing needs.
- 2) Ability to pay – the applicants must be able to pay the mortgage costs, maintenance, and upkeep of a house.
- 3) Willingness to partner with NHFH – the applicants must be willing and able to invest 300 hours in “sweat equity” per adult in the household.

History of Habitat for Humanity

Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI)

Founded in 1976 by Millard and Linda Fuller, Habitat for Humanity International seeks to end poverty housing worldwide. We are an ecumenical Christian housing ministry working to build partnerships with people in need of simple, decent, affordable homes. The houses are sold to partner families at no profit, through zero-interest loans. Today, Habitat has helped build or repair millions of houses and served more than 46 million people around the world.

Habitat is a hands-on, grassroots ministry that gives people the opportunity to put love into action. We provide a hand up, not a hand-out. Homeowners invest hundreds of hours of “sweat equity” into building their homes, aside from monthly mortgage payments. Families are chosen based on their level of need, their willingness to partner, and their ability to repay the 0% interest mortgage.

Northwoods Habitat for Humanity (NHFH)

In the late 1980s Keith Zeh, then Pastor at Calvary Lutheran Church, expressed his vision that lower income families in the Bemidji area should have a decent place to live. This vision of "what ought to be" began to be realized through the creation of the Bemidji Area (Northwoods) Habitat for Humanity in 1990. Since that time our local affiliate has constructed or rehabbed sixty homes in partnership with committed families who were unable to purchase their own home without a hand up.

Pastor Zeh was the champion whose vision inspired the creation of our local affiliate. The incorporation of Northwoods Habitat for Humanity may not have been possible without Keith's vision and extraordinary effort. It's also fair to say that it would not have been sustainable without the steadfast commitment of scores of people, organizations, and businesses that have served the organization through financial contributions, volunteer labor, or board/committee service.

The first NHFH house was completed in the winter of 1990, and the most recent home--#60--was completed and dedicated in 2022. Northwoods HFH has averaged building slightly more than one house per year since 1990. We have expanded our house building efforts to meet the need for affordable housing in our area over the past two years, and are now building two or three homes per year.

In February, 2007, the Board of Directors made the decision to open the ReStore. A Habitat concept, the ReStore is a project that provides revenue to pay operating expenses of the affiliate and further provides revenue to increase construction activity. Donated material is sold to the public at 20 to 60% of retail price. This is generally material that would have been hauled to the landfill, but is now recycled at our ReStore. Stocked with donated building material, large appliances, furniture, plumbing, and lighting fixtures, the ReStore opened on April 26, 2007.

With substantial funding from the Neilson Foundation, a grant from Beltrami County, and a low interest loan from First National Bank, Bemidji, the ReStore building was purchased in February 2008.

In the spring of 2008, the expansion of our general service area to include all of Beltrami County and all of Clearwater County was accomplished. At the same time, the name Bemidji Area Habitat

for Humanity was changed to Northwoods Habitat for Humanity to better portray our broad service area.

In the fall of 2011, in response to the great need for basic home maintenance, the Board launched a new program, A Brush with Kindness (ABWK). Focusing on neighborhood revitalization and assisting the elderly, frail, and low income homeowners in our community, ABWK volunteers make minor cosmetic repairs such painting, installing decks and accessible ramps, landscaping and such. In addition, in the Spring of 2013, Habitat for Humanity of Minnesota provided funding to do Critical Home Repair (ABWK-CHR) such as roof replacement, siding, windows, doors, plumbing, heating and other major repairs. The need in Beltrami and Clearwater Counties is great and without advertising the program has exploded.

Just as the mission of Habitat for Humanity International is to eliminate sub-standard housing across the planet, the mission of NHFH is to eliminate sub-standard housing in Beltrami and Clearwater counties. This is accomplished by partnering with qualifying families, working side by side with them, teaching them home building and maintenance skills, and then selling the homes to them at no profit and 0% interest. The mortgage payments we receive from our partner families go back into the fund for humanity to build more homes in our communities.

What a Volunteer Can Expect From NHFH

Volunteers can expect enjoyment knowing their service experience with us will help eliminate poverty housing in our community. They will be given training and resources for helping in their chosen gift of volunteering, if required. Volunteers will feel fulfillment recognized by serving a family in need. A daily devotional gives the following image, which seems appropriate for what Habitat for Humanity does: The Kingdom of God is built on willing hearts. When we choose to follow God, we are laying the bricks of his kingdom and creating a sturdy foundation for others to stand on. Get involved, and if you feel God leading you toward a big opportunity, take it. But don't be too proud to serve in small places: Sometimes it's the little things that make all the difference.

At Northwoods Habitat for Humanity, our vision for volunteers is to:

- Treat volunteers with courtesy and respect;
- Utilize the skills brought by volunteers;
- Help volunteers develop new skills;
- Give volunteers interesting and challenging assignments;
- Provide volunteers with a written volunteer job descriptions;
- Provide volunteers with the tools and information needed to carry out volunteer assignments;
- Provide support and guidance to volunteers using experienced staff or volunteer leaders;
- Resolve the concerns of volunteers on a timely basis, and
- Recognize the invaluable service of volunteers to the work of Northwoods Habitat for Humanity.

Volunteer Types and Opportunities

Office

Based in our Bemidji office, office volunteers perform a wide range of administrative tasks in support of Habitat's business responsibilities. Duties may include filing, preparing mailings, data entry, answering the phone, or compiling and/or updating databases.

Helping Hands

Volunteers may help plan and host special events and fundraisers, compile newsletters, mailers, baking and various other tasks that do not have a long-term commitment.

Construction

These are volunteers who help in building and construction of new homes and repair on existing homes. The *Site Supervisor* oversees a project from beginning to end, organizing, training, and supervising volunteers. (Please see our construction volunteer manual for further policies & procedures.)

ReStore

There are various roles within the ReStore including: cashier, warehouse helper, custodian, deconstruction, sales, & pick-up.

Board of Directors

Recruitment for Volunteer Board Members includes extensive experience in finances, fundraising, non-profit, marketing, and the legal field. We are specifically looking for diverse candidates who reside in Beltrami or Clearwater counties and have a passion for helping community members in need of a place to call home.

Speakers

Gain personal knowledge of the organization by volunteering one or more days on site, and stay current with NHFH operations by studying available materials, websites, etc. Attend events during the year to stay abreast of organizational happenings, be able to present information to groups, businesses, churches, etc.

Committees with Volunteer Opportunities

Resource Development

The Development committee is responsible for planning and implementing events and/or programs to raise funds and seek home sponsorships for Northwoods Habitat for Humanity. It develops sustainable giving as a means to eliminate substandard housing by soliciting financial support from corporations, individuals, civic groups, foundations, and faith partners. The committee works to get the word out about upcoming events and opportunities with NHFH.

Family Selection

Methodical and trustworthy individuals screen, interview, and work with families that have applied for homeownership. The committee implements family selection policies and procedures.

Family Support

Family Mentor Volunteers are organized, caring, and timely individuals who mentor partner families before and after construction. They ensure that the families know what is required in the area of sweat equity, provide a record of that time requirement, and help in the transition to homeownership. These mentors also help the families in the areas of budgeting and home maintenance.

Site Selection/ Building

Volunteers assist with finding and evaluating land selection issues. They make recommendations to board on future builds, evaluate construction process and make suggestions on ways to improve. They review and update build designs as needed. Additionally, they ensure compliance with HFHI and grants, ensure Energy Star and MN Green Communities concepts and procure certification, procure new local donors for gift-in-kind, and determine construction costs.

Finance

The Finance committee oversees the implementation and administration of policies and procedures for handling and accounting of the finances of the corporation. They prepare an annual revenue and expense budget for submission to the full Board of Directors and they work closely with the Fund Development sub-committee to coordinate development of the resources needed to meet the revenue goals of the budget. The committee monitors the implementation of the budget; and when necessary, makes recommendations to the Board of Directors regarding adjustments to the budget.

Volunteer Policies and Procedure

Process to Register

If someone is interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact the Community Engagement Coordinator at (218) 751-4649 or at cechabitat@paulbunyan.net, or fill out the Volunteer Interest Form at <http://habitatbemidji.org/>. From there the Coordinator will contact the individual to meet and determine what volunteer role will be best for that person. The individual will then view a New Volunteer Orientation session and fill out all of the proper paperwork. Each individual will work with the Coordinator to create the best schedule that works for that volunteer.

New Volunteer Orientation

Each new volunteer must view the New Volunteer Orientation video. Confirmation that the video was viewed must be sent to the Community Engagement Coordinator. The video is available on our website and YouTube.

Attendance and Punctuality

In order to ensure a smooth operation, we ask that volunteers extend NHHF common courtesy in informing us of absences, late arrivals, and early departures. Volunteers are essential to Habitat; we depend on you and miss you when you are not here. In return, NHHF will let volunteers know as soon as possible of any changes in scheduling or cancellations. All volunteers must sign in at the beginning of their shift and sign out prior to leaving.

Harassment & Discrimination

NHHF is firmly committed to providing a positive work environment free of discrimination and bias. Each volunteer is personally responsible for maintaining such a work environment. NHHF prohibits any actions, harassment, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's sex, sexual preference, race, ethnic background, age, religion, physical condition, or other legally protected characteristic. Any conduct or action, whether overt or subtle, which creates an offensive or hostile work environment is prohibited and will be grounds for immediate disciplinary action. No volunteer, male or female, should be subjected to unsolicited or unwelcome sexual overtones or conduct, either verbal or physical.

Any volunteer who feels that he or she is a victim of sexual or discriminatory harassment is encouraged to let the harasser know that his or her behavior is unwelcome, if safe to do so. Additionally, volunteers who feel they have been harassed must immediately report the matter to NHHF'S Executive Director. It is Habitat's belief that everyone has a right to freedom from harassment in the workplace, on the basis of race, ancestry, place of origin, color, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, gender, age, record of offenses, marital status, family status, handicap, or sexual orientation.

Inclement Weather

In case of inclement weather at the NHHF building follow all posted protocol. If at a work site, the site supervisor will direct the volunteers. In case of inclement weather on workdays the site supervisor will contact the volunteers who are scheduled. If a volunteer has any questions, she/he may contact NHHF directly at (218) 751-4649.

Drug & Alcohol Use

Volunteers of NHHF are required to be medically (physically, emotionally and mentally) capable of performing the required work, free from the presence of illegal drugs, alcohol, and substances that diminish or impact their ability to perform the job. Any volunteer found under the influence of an illegal drug or abuse of prescription drugs, in possession of, using, selling, trading, or offering for sale illegal drugs or alcohol during business hours or on affiliate property or in an affiliate vehicle will be subject to termination of the volunteer role with NHHF. Lastly, volunteers with a drug, alcohol, or other substance dependency issue are urged to seek professional treatment.

Smoking

In keeping with NHHF's intent to provide a safe and healthy work environment, smoking is prohibited in and around the office building. At construction sites, smoking is prohibited inside the homes and 25 feet surrounding the home. In recognition of federal law, any volunteer under the age of 18 is prohibited from smoking while volunteering for NHHF.

Sexual Offender

NHHF performs a background check once an application is received of all key volunteers, staff, and board members prior to acceptance of participation.

Dress Code

Everyone is expected to dress appropriately for the job in which they are performing. In general, clothing needs to be clean, not provocative in any nature, nor display disturbing messages. Basic hygiene also applies to all volunteers. Dress code is subject to change depending on each project.

Media Communication

Members of the media are occasionally present at Habitat events and build sites. Please keep the following things in mind if you deal with members of the media:

- You do not have to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable answering.
- Do not be afraid to simply say, "I don't know", if you cannot provide accurate information.
- Please refrain from commenting to the media on behalf of the organization – keep simple remarks limited to your positive, personal experiences.

Social Media

Anything that uses the name Northwoods Habitat for Humanity or ReStore also represents the entire organization. A social media presence helps build and shape Habitat's brand. It is not a personal forum, but a place where the writer can use personal experiences and ideas to inspire and motivate people to support the mission of Habitat for Humanity. All your public comments on social media sites should reflect the organization's mission to build simple, decent, affordable homes in partnership with God's people. When Habitat volunteers choose to use social media, they must be aware of the following guidelines because of their connection with Habitat.

1. Volunteers are personally responsible for what they post on social media.

2. When talking about Northwoods Habitat for Humanity or the ReStore, volunteers will always identify his or her name and role. If applicable, the volunteer will make it clear that they are not representing the organization.
3. When volunteers are posting personally, they will include a disclaimer stating that the posted content expresses the view of the individual and not Habitat for Humanity.
4. In all cases, volunteers will respect applicable law, including copyright and trademark laws.
5. Volunteers will not disclose confidential or sensitive information, or use social media to insult, embarrass or expose any organization, donor, co-worker, another Habitat volunteer, or anyone associated with these parties.
6. Volunteers will not cite or reference donors, employees, Habitat homeowners, volunteers, or supporters without proper consent.
7. Volunteers may not use slurs, personal insults or obscenity or engage in other conduct that is inconsistent with Habitat's mission.
8. Volunteers will not pick fights with, violate the privacy of or make offensive remarks about others.
9. Volunteers are encouraged to state facts accurately and cite appropriate sources.
10. Volunteers will avoid using public social media sites, such as LinkedIn or Facebook, to have informational-sharing exchanges with other Habitat volunteers. Personal email is a better forum for such exchanges.

Insurance Information/Accident

Volunteers are not covered by workers compensation insurance. We ask that all volunteers accept full responsibility for their own safety. If an accident does occur, proper protocol will be followed. All volunteers in and around construction materials, including ReStore, will be required to complete a waiver.

Safety

All volunteers must maintain a safety conscious attitude while volunteering for NHFH. Everyone must remain cognizant of their surroundings and maintain a situational awareness of their working environment. Permission must be given by a site supervisor for any use of equipment. Volunteers are responsible for asking for help if unsure of anything.

All new volunteers will take an on-line safety course prior to starting. This course takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and is located at <http://www.hfhvolunteerinsurance.com/>.

Volunteer Code of Conduct

Northwoods Habitat for Humanity is an ecumenical Christian organization dedicated to eliminating poverty housing. Our Christian organization maintains a code of conduct that continues to be of high standards. The following is a code of conduct for all volunteers associated with Northwoods Habitat for Humanity.

- The volunteer agrees not to accept financial donations from any outside source without the written consent of Northwoods Habitat for Humanity.
- The volunteer agrees not to disclose any confidential information related to any volunteer activity at Northwoods Habitat for Humanity.

- The volunteer agrees not to publicize or authorize the use of the name, emblem, or service for personal gain.
- Northwoods Habitat for Humanity is a drug-free volunteer work environment that holds the highest of standards related to safety. The volunteer agrees not to be under the influence of any illicit drug or alcohol while performing volunteer duties. Medications prescribed by one's physician are acceptable, provided the use of such drugs does not adversely affect job performance or safety, or the safety of other individuals in the workplace. If the volunteer is under medical treatment, it is his/her responsibility to consult and get the approval for volunteer work activity.
- Northwoods Habitat for Humanity strives to develop a Christian, stress free work environment. Should conflict arise between volunteers that cannot be resolved at time of the occurrence, the volunteer may initiate NHFH's grievance procedure. We will do everything possible to resolve the matter in a professional manner.

Grievance Filing

The purpose of the volunteer appeal procedure is to provide a means for volunteers to resolve their work place concerns with management. All volunteers of NHHF may file a grievance under this section. Although every action will be taken to avoid grievances arising, occasionally it will be necessary to follow this procedure:

1. Attempt to discuss your grievance with your supervisor or committee chairperson and work out the problem.
2. If you are unsatisfied, submit in writing your complaint to your supervisor or committee chairperson.
3. The supervisor or committee chairperson will respond within 5 days.
4. If you are not satisfied within 10 days of your written complaint, you may appeal by submitting your written complaint to the Executive Director (or if the complaint is with the Executive Director, then submit it to the Board President).
5. The Executive Director or president should respond within 5 days.

If you are still unsatisfied, you may ask that your written complaint be taken to the executive committee of the board. Within 30 days the executive committee will act on your grievance, affirming or denying your request, choosing to investigate further, or choosing to take the matter to the entire board. The executive committee's decision is final.

Volunteer Dismissal

Northwoods Habitat for Humanity is a not for profit organization that values respect and cooperation. NHHF engages many volunteers every day from a variety of walks of life. As a result, the staff and volunteers are expected to abide by certain standards of conduct. Volunteerism is a mutual privilege that NHHF and its volunteers share. It is understood that individuals who choose to volunteer with NHHF do so under their own volition. Therefore, they are not required to participate and are free to terminate their involvement with NHHF at any time, for any reason, without explanation.

It is also understood that NHHF elects to partner with volunteers. NHHF requires volunteers to comply with all volunteer related policies, including, but not limited to: filling out waivers, signing in, punctuality, attendance, and appropriate behavior. Often volunteers have been chosen by NHHF for assignments with specific requirements. NHHF reserves the right to review a volunteer's performance based upon the qualifications for their assignment. Upon acceptance of a volunteer position with NHHF, it is understood that NHHF reserves the right to end its relationship with any volunteer, at any time, for any reason.

If an incident arises, NHHF will abide by the following procedure:

1. Verbal warning- must be documented with the Executive Director.
2. 2nd warning- formal, documented discussion with the ED.
3. Solution not resolved, results in dismissal- conducted by the ED.

NHHF also reserves the right to terminate its involvement with a volunteer **immediately** for unacceptable conduct. Unacceptable conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Theft
- Sexual harassment, including the use of sexually inappropriate language

- Distribution of illegal drugs on a NHFH site
- Volunteering while under the influence of alcohol or other control substances
- Discrimination based upon sex, age, ethnic background, race, religion, sexual preference, or physical condition
- Criminal behavior while on site
- Continuous, voluntary negligence of safety procedures
- Voluntary endangerment of staff or other volunteers, including emotional danger
- Usage of NHFH property for criminal behavior
- Illegal possession of a firearm on site

If any of the above conduct is witnessed, it is to be reported to the appropriate site supervisor or NHFH Staff. Once reported, the ED will be in charge of investigation and dismissal.

Volunteer Liability Waivers

The waivers serve two related and very important functions. First, they provide legal protection to the affiliate in case of potential lawsuits. Equally as important, they help to educate the volunteer about the potential hazards of volunteering with the affiliate.

1. All volunteers, including partner families working at a construction site, warehouse, or office complex will complete a Waiver and Release of Liability form before any volunteer work.
2. It is the policy of NHFH that children under the age of 16 are not allowed on work sites while there is construction in progress. It is further the policy of NHFH, that while children between the ages of 16 and 18 may be allowed to participate in the construction work, ultra-hazardous activity such as using power tools, excavation, demolition or working on rooftops is not permitted by anyone under the age of 18.
3. In addition to completing the Waiver and Release of Liability Form, all construction volunteers and partner families will sign in the site log book at each volunteer location as well as review the construction safety information.
4. Waiver and Release of Liability forms will remain in effect for one year at which time a new form will be required.
5. Waiver and Release of Liability forms will be retained on file for at least one year beyond the statute of limitations counting from the last day the volunteer works with Northwoods Habitat for Humanity.