



Assisi Heights

Volunteer Handbook

Cover Photo Credit: Sister Marlene Pinzka

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Section One

Welcome from the Sisters of St. Francis

We are pleased that you have chosen to join our volunteer program, to give of your time and talent to the Sisters of St. Francis at Assisi Heights. Your presence with us enhances the quality of life for our resident Sisters, and provides important assistance to our hospitality to the public through our tours and liturgies.

This handbook introduces you to the Sisters and to Assisi Heights. It offers you basic guidelines for volunteering here and answers questions you might have. If you find that at any time you might have a question or are unsure of something, please ask! The Volunteer Coordinator, or other staff, will be pleased to respond to give you the information that you need or to refer you to someone.

As a volunteer, you join us in having compassionate hearts of hospitality willing to serve in the spirit of the Franciscan tradition. We hope that this experience will be a rewarding one for you. Thank you for your willingness to share your life with the Sisters and to offer your gifts through the various volunteer opportunities you engage in.



Sister Ramona Miller

Sister Ramona Miller, OSF
Congregational Minister, 2018-2022

History of the Rochester Franciscan Sisters

The official Cooperative Title of the Franciscan Sisters of Rochester is "The Sisters of St. Francis of the Third Order Regular, the Congregation of Our Lady of Lourdes of Rochester Minnesota." The community, founded in 1877 by Mother Alfred Moes, had twenty-five original members. Soon other women joined them.

The Sisters opened schools in Owatonna and Rochester, and in 1889 founded St. Marys Hospital. A nursing school, run by Sisters, was begun at the hospital in 1894. While some Sisters became nurses, instructors, and administrators at the hospital, others continued in the profession of teaching. The Franciscan Sisters of Rochester, pioneers in secondary education for young women, also founded the Winona Seminary, which in 1907 became the College of St. Teresa.

Over the last century, the Sisters have served in the fields of education, nursing, administration, pastoral ministry, chaplaincy, social work, human services, peace and justice, retreat leadership and others.

Although the majority of the Sisters throughout the Congregation are now retired, most are involved in various outreach efforts as well as peace and justice advocacy. The Rochester Franciscans today number approximately 155 Sisters with 90 living at Assisi Heights. Many Sisters live independently at Assisi Heights. Two of the floors are considered "Healthcare" floors since they have nursing staff available every day of the week. Some Sisters in those areas need minimal assistance while others have greater needs. Many of our volunteers are involved in activities with Sisters from the Healthcare floors.

At the present time, other Rochester Franciscans can be found living in different parts of Minnesota, California, Colorado, Illinois, Missouri, Montana, New Mexico, South Dakota, Texas and Bogotá, Colombia.



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Today Assisi Heights is home not only to Rochester Franciscans, but also a Poor Clare Community. The Poor Clares, a cloistered order of women, are part of the larger “Franciscan Family” throughout the world. When the small group in Bloomington, Minnesota, decided that it was time to close their Monastery, the Rochester Franciscans were happy to welcome them on February 7, 2018. The Poor Clare Sisters live a cloistered lifestyle, occupying a floor on the south wing at Assisi Heights.

History of Assisi Heights Volunteer Program



Members of the lay community have been providing volunteer services to the Sisters of St. Francis at Assisi Heights for almost fifty years. It was in 1972 that Sister Bernadette Servaty (shown below, left) moved from Winona to Rochester and initiated the volunteer program. She invited a group of women to meet with her and brainstorm ideas. Recruiting began through local church bulletins and “word of mouth.” It didn’t take long before there were 20 women involved in “Friendly Visiting” and planning social events and parties with the Sisters. Two lay women - Evelyn Cashman from St. John’s Catholic Church, and Lee Smith from St. Pius - served as the chairperson and vice chairperson of the group. Under the direction of the various Sisters, the volunteer program flourished and expanded and included both women and men. In 1993, Margaret Helminska served as the first lay Volunteer Coordinator for Assisi Heights.

Over the years, the program has grown and changed according to the needs of the Sisters and the creativity of volunteers. As more and more Sisters deal with aging issues and health concerns, volunteers play an even more important role at Assisi Heights.

We welcome and are grateful for all of the women, men, youth and children who come to Assisi Heights to offer their time, care and talents to the Sisters of St. Francis.

Photos courtesy of Assisi Heights Archives



Section Two

Assisi Heights Mission Statement



Mission Statement

The mission of the
Assisi Heights Sisters and staff
is to provide a spiritual home
and sanctuary of hospitality
and compassion
for each other, for Rochester Franciscans,
for the broader community,
and for all who come to serve
and be served.

Philosophy of Volunteer Program

We recognize that each person is blessed with a variety of gifts and talents, and gratefully acknowledge the generosity of those persons who wish to freely share their gifts, talents, time and energy, in volunteer service to the Sisters of St. Francis. We seek to place volunteers in positions in which they best can give of their gifts and talents, but hold at all times the safety and well-being of the Sisters as our primary goal.

Guidelines for Interacting with Sisters



While volunteers serve in a variety of ways, the majority of the Assisi Heights volunteers have direct interaction with the Sisters. Some volunteers will be involved in regular activities on our Healthcare floors, while other volunteers may help transport Sisters in wheelchairs to the chapel, to the main dining room, or to events in our Spirituality Center. Volunteers may meet Sisters in the hallway while giving a tour of Assisi Heights, or while browsing in our bookstore. Therefore, we offer these general guidelines for interacting with Sisters in whichever capacity you serve.

- Approach Sisters from the front.
- Introduce yourself.
- Call the Sister by her title “Sister” and her first name, or simply “Sister” or by the name that she has requested that you use for her.
- Initiate conversations with a greeting and a pleasant smile.
- Speak clearly and maintain good eye contact.
- Be at the same level as the Sister you are talking to whenever possible.
- Be aware and sensitive to any disabilities or impairments Sisters might have.
- Be patient. Always treat Sisters with respect. Allow Sisters time to respond and to move slowly.
- Keep conversations pleasant, uplifting, and appropriate.

Sisters’ Rights



Assisi Heights is the home of the Sisters and they have certain rights.

- Sisters have a right to feel safe and to be treated with dignity, respect, care and compassion.
- Sisters have a right to their own privacy, and thus, always knock on a Sister’s door and request permission to enter. Identify yourself as a volunteer.
- Sisters have a right to expect that personal information they share with you will be honored and held in confidence.
- Sisters have the right to their property, and thus, any gift offered by a Sister of her property or money should be politely refused.
- Sisters have the right to choose which activities they wish to participate, and to refuse participation in an activity.
- Sisters have the right to freedom from physical, verbal, sexual, financial or any other forms of abuse.

Any suspected violation of Sisters’ Rights should be reported immediately to the Volunteer Coordinator or Director of Residential Life.

General Volunteer Guidelines



- Please sign-in when you enter the building at the volunteer desk (located in the front lobby, northwest corner, across from the switchboard) and sign out as you leave. Include your name, the time, and the number of your volunteer hours that day.
- Remember to wear your identification badge which is kept at the volunteer desk.
- Work only in the assigned area. If you would like to have a change in your assignment, please talk to the Volunteer Coordinator.
- Please notify the Assisi Heights reception desk (507-282-7441) if, for any reason, you will not be available for your assigned responsibility.
- If you are ill, PLEASE DO NOT COME. Wait until you are well.
- Ask for assistance with any question you have, if you have difficulty or are unable to complete a task, or are unsure of a situation.
- If you note an emergency, advise someone in charge of the situation as soon as possible.
- Respect the confidentiality of what you learn about and/or from the Sisters.



Section Three

Policies and Information

Volunteer Application and Orientation Process

Prospective volunteers must complete a screening process which consists of a written application, personal references, and an interview with the Volunteer Coordinator.

All new volunteers will receive a general orientation and tour of Assisi Heights. There are confidentiality statements and waivers that must be signed by volunteers.

The Volunteer Coordinator will work with the applicant to determine the area in which the volunteer can best be of service and then refer the volunteer to the appropriate person who oversees that particular area.

Once a decision has been made as to where the new volunteer will serve, there may be further training by the Coordinator who oversees that specific area of service (Healthcare Center, Life Enrichment Department, Spirituality Center, Liturgical Ministry, Assisi Heights Tours or Garden Work, etc.) All volunteers will have a supervisor of their chosen area of service who can provide ongoing assistance and support.

Our regular volunteers may be offered various enrichment opportunities or further training to enhance the service that they provide and to give necessary required updates.

Regular volunteers may be required to have a background check, depending on the specific area of their service.



Dress Code



Since volunteers are involved in various services opportunities, everyone is asked to dress appropriately for the task. Those working in the garden will need to dress differently than those giving tours or assisting at Mass or leading an activity with Sisters.

Volunteer Badge



Volunteers will each be given a badge on their first day of service and must wear their badge at all times when volunteering at Assisi Heights. There may be certain exceptions such as for those helping with outside work.

Parking



Volunteers may park their cars in front of the building or the overflow lot to the right of the drive as you come up the hill. Please do not use the spaces marked “reserved” nor in the circle outside the main chapel.

Personal Belongings



There is a coat rack located to the left as you walk into the main Assisi Heights door. We ask that you do not bring any valuables into Assisi Heights.

Recording Volunteer Hours



All volunteers are asked to record their volunteer hours. There is a section for documenting time in the Volunteer “Sign in/out” booklet in the front lobby of Assisi Heights. If you are providing volunteer service from off the Assisi Heights campus, a tracking form will be provided for you.

Card and Gift Shop



A Card and Gift Shop is located at Assisi Heights, near the dining room. It is managed by the Sisters and generally opens Monday through Sunday from 12:15pm – 1:15pm. You can find Assisi Heights honey, books, handcrafted items, cards and artwork created by our Sisters and Cojourners, as well as DVDs about the Rochester Franciscans. Feel free to browse and make purchases.

Meals



If your volunteer time extends over one of the meal times or if a Sister invites you to share a meal with her as her guest, you may eat in our dining room free of charge.

If you wish to have a meal in the Assisi Heights dining room at any other time, a meal ticket should be obtained at the front desk. A meal ticket can be purchased for breakfast, lunch or an evening meal.

No Smoking Policy



The Sisters of St. Francis have designated Assisi Heights building and property to be “smoke-free” and thus, smoking is not allowed anywhere on the property.



Mutual Respect, Harassment and Abusive Behavior



In keeping with the Mission Statement of the Assisi Heights Sisters and Staff to provide “a spiritual home and sanctuary of hospitality and compassion...” we strive to create an environment of mutual respect, care and consideration for all Sisters, Staff and Volunteers. Disrespect, harassment, bullying and abusive behavior will not be tolerated. Any volunteer that experiences or witnesses this behavior is asked to report it immediately to the Volunteer Coordinator or Director of Residential Life.

Confidentiality



As volunteers interact with Sisters and staff, you may learn personal information about someone’s life, their family, their health status, etc. It is critical that this information be kept confidential. Volunteers are asked to sign a Confidentiality Form and will also be offered training regarding what is considered confidential information. If there is any question at any time, it may be directed to the Volunteer Coordinator or Director of Residential Life.

Photo Release Form



The Sisters of St. Francis promote their mission, values and programs through their website, Facebook page, and various newsletters. You will be invited to sign a photo release form if any pictures are taken of you with Sisters that might be used in any way to help promote the mission, values and programs of the Sisters. It is in no way obligatory for you to sign the form. If you sign the form and your photo is used, you may request a digital copy for yourself.

Cell Phones, Photos and Social Media



We recognize that it is important to carry cell phone with you for many reasons, but ask that you do not make personal calls during your volunteer time, except for emergency reasons.

While volunteers are asked “not” to take any pictures with their cell phones or cameras, there may be times that the Volunteer Coordinator or a designated staff member takes pictures of special events and gives you a digital copy of the picture to remember the occasion.

Volunteers are not to post any pictures with the Sisters on social media. However, there may be times that the Volunteer Coordinator sends pictures to the Director of Communications at Assisi Heights for posting on the Assisi Heights Facebook page.

Gifts



For the protection of the volunteers and Sisters alike, volunteers are asked not to accept gifts from individual Sisters or to give gifts to individual Sisters. Exceptions can be made on the discretion of the Volunteer Coordinator, Director of Residential Life, or Life Enrichment Coordinator.

If a volunteer wants to give a gift to all of the Sisters on a corridor or all the Sisters at Assisi Heights (such as a special treat for a holiday), that should be discussed and approved by the Life Enrichment Coordinator or Director of Residential Life.



Volunteers Bringing Young Children



All volunteers who have been approved to bring their young children/grandchildren with them to visit the Sisters are obliged to supervise the children at all times.

Pet Policy



Although the Sisters living at Assisi Heights are not allowed to keep any pets, many of them gain great comfort and delight in visits from pets. Thus, volunteers may bring their pets to visit the Sister on the Healthcare floors at Assisi Heights if the following procedures are met:

1. Visiting pet owners must provide evidence of all vaccinations for their pets.
2. Volunteer pet visitors will be oriented through the Life Enrichment Coordinator.
3. Life Enrichment staff is responsible for alerting the volunteer regarding residents who may have allergies or fear of animals to make sure those residents are not visited.
4. Life Enrichment staff or a Sister must escort pet visitors while they are here, unless approved by the Life Enrichment Coordinator prior to the visit. Pets are not permitted in the kitchen areas, dining room, and medication storage or in clean sterile supply areas.
5. Pets must be kept on a leash or under direct control at all times.
6. Pet owner must have their own liability coverage under their personal homeowner's policy.



Section Four

Safety Issues

Wheelchair Safety



1. Healthcare staff will assist Sisters in getting into wheelchairs and apply necessary belts. If the belt needs to be adjusted or removed, ask nursing staff for assistance.
2. Before moving a Sister in a wheelchair, be sure her feet are securely on the footrests, and her arms and hands are not extending over the sides of the armrests. It is safest if the Sister's hands are on her lap, with her elbows kept close to her body.
3. Ensure that all blankets and other objects are safely tucked in with nothing sticking out beyond the arm rests.
4. Tell the Sister before you move her so she is prepared.
5. When pushing a wheelchair, go slowly at all times, especially when entering doorways and elevators and avoid quick turns.
6. Lock the wheelchair on both sides when the Sister will be sitting in one place.
7. Enter elevators by pulling the wheelchair backwards onto the elevator.
8. Exit elevators by backing out whenever possible. This means turning the wheelchair around on the elevator. It is best if the large wheels to the rear of the chair go through the door first, whether entering or exiting the elevator.
9. When going down an incline, pull the wheelchair backwards down the incline. When going up an incline, push the wheelchair up, e.g., with the Sister facing the incline.
10. When taking a Sister in a wheelchair off the Healthcare Unit, report to the Healthcare staff the name of the Sister you are taking.
11. When returning a Sister to the Healthcare Unit, report to the Healthcare staff the name of the Sister returned.
12. Never remove a Sister from a wheelchair. Call a nursing care staff member for help if a Sister wants to get out of her wheelchair.

Wheeled Walkers with Seats on Them



Volunteers should never push the Sister while she is seated on one of these walkers.

Please Under No Circumstances Ever...



- Remove a Sister from her environment unless permission has been obtained and you have been instructed or given permission from staff to do so.
- Assist a Sister to the bathroom.
- Remove a Sister from a wheelchair or bed.
- Assist in feeding a Sister.
- Help a fallen Sister back up, but get staff to help immediately.
- Answer a call light.
- Enter a room where a Sister is in isolation. (If a Sister is in isolation from a communicable disease, an isolation card will be placed on the door so you will know she is in isolation.)

Contact Nurse Manager When...



When any safety concerns arise with the Sisters from the Healthcare floors or with Sisters in other parts of Assisi Heights, contact a Nurse Manager immediately. Volunteers are given a list of emergency numbers to call during their initial orientation and are asked to keep it with them during their volunteer service. If volunteers misplace that list, a new list can be obtained from the Volunteer Coordinator.

Infectious Disease Protection



As part of the initial training, volunteers will watch a video that addresses important information about infectious disease protection. If questions or concerns come up during your volunteer service, please be sure to ask one of the nurses or the Volunteer Coordinator.

Special care in all aspects of personal hygiene is needed because of the fragility and vulnerability of the elderly Sisters regarding infectious diseases.

Below are a few tips to remember whenever you volunteer:

- **If you are sick, please stay home until you are well.**
- If your volunteer activity includes cooking, baking, preparing snacks, feeding, or carrying meals trays, it is imperative that you wash your hands well before handling the food.
- If you feel a cough or sneeze coming on, bend your arm and use your elbow or another part of your arm that is covered with fabric. If you have no sleeves, then please use a tissue and discard the tissue in the trash can immediately afterwards. Wash your hands right away with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Keeping hands clean is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of many contagious diseases.

1. Wet hands.
2. Apply soap.
3. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
4. Scrub your hands for at least twenty seconds (You can hum the “Happy Birthday” song twice from beginning to end).
5. Rinse your hands well under clean running water.
6. Dry hands with paper towel.

When soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Containers of hand sanitizer can be found throughout the building.

- Apply the product to the palm of one hand and rub it all over the surfaces of your hands until your hands are dry.

Flu Season



Volunteers who serve on one of the Healthcare floors at Assisi Heights are asked to provide proof of their annual flu shot or to wear a mask during flu season which officially begins on October 1st and goes through the month of April.

COVID - 19



Assisi Heights follows guidelines from the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health regarding safeguards for the protection of Sisters, staff, families, volunteers and other visitors.

Face masks and social distancing protocols are in place. Everyone is strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated before coming to Assisi Heights. There is a health screening procedure upon entering the building.

Volunteers will be kept abreast of changes as we move forward with the infectious disease prevention.



Section Five

Weather Emergency Procedures and Fire Safety

Assisi Heights is a concrete structure and will provide considerable protection for most severe weather. It is very important that volunteers be prepared for emergencies and know the procedures at Assisi Heights.

The Mayo System will automatically announce over the Assisi Heights Public Address (PA) System on a 24/7 basis, the information for severe weather, including winter storm watches and warnings, severe thunderstorm warnings, and tornado watches and warnings. Stay in safe areas until the “all clear” is announced.

Tornado Safety



A tornado watch means that weather conditions are favorable for tornados to develop while a tornado warning means that a tornado has been sighted or indicated on the weather radar.

Should a warning be issued, seek shelter away from windows and outside walls. Listen closely for any instructions that may be given with the warning through the paging system.

There are designated areas throughout the building. Depending on where you are in the building if you hear the sirens sounding, please seek shelter in a designated area listed below:

Ground Floor - Center Hallway by Tekakwitha (“Tek”) Lounge
First Floor - Hallway behind serving lines in the Dining Room
Healthcare Center - Follow instructions from Healthcare staff
4th Floor - 4th Francis West and North Hallway

Fire Safety



Alarms will sound if smoke or fire is present or if an alarm box has been activated. If you hear the fire alarm, stay calm and do not run. Listen for instructions from the Emergency Management Team. Do not use the elevators (unless instructed to do so by the Emergency Management Team).

Strobes will flash and the alarms will sound on the floor where the fire is located. For example, if the fire is located on 2nd Clare, the alarm will sound on the entire 2nd floor.

If smoke or fire is present, you will be told how to evacuate and may be asked to assist Sisters. If no smoke or fire is present, stay in the hallway, as a group, until notified of an all clear or given further instructions via the intercom.

Remember, stay alert and calm and listen for instructions.



Prayer of Saint Francis

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

- Amen.





Sisters of Saint Francis
Rochester, Minnesota

www.rochesterfranciscan.org