

FORTRESS YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER



...igniting powerful change in the lives of urban youth.

VOLUNTEER MANUAL

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I would like to welcome you to Fortress Youth Development Center, a ministry to urban children and youth in Southeast Fort Worth. Thank for your interest in volunteering with us. We strive to offer relevant and life-changing opportunities to Christians who want to make a difference in the life of a young person. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive", and the giving of one's time to mentor and love a child is a valuable gift. We seek to structure our programs to be as volunteer-friendly as possible, utilizing all the time invested by each volunteer. I know that God can use your time here to ignite powerful change in the lives of our young people and in yours.

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Fortress Youth Development Center MINISTRY OVERVIEW

Fortress Youth Development Center's Core Purpose, Values, and Strategy

Core Purpose: Providing opportunities for inner-city children and youth to experience powerful life change in order to become productive Christian adults.

Values: Relationally Based (Prov. 22.6), Empowered by Jesus (2 Cor. 4.7), Unconditionally Committed (2 Peter 3.9), Efficient and Effective (Col. 1.9-10), Holistic (Phil 4.13)

Strategy: Form authentic relationships with children and youth by equipping them with life skills using the best spiritual, emotional, social, physical, and educational resources available.

Fortress Youth Development Center's Calling and History

We feel called by God to bring hope to the lives of children and youth and help break the cycles of poverty and spiritual oppression.

- 2005 - Began operation as an independent non-profit, birthed out of Fortress Church
- Fall 2005 - Obtained state-of-the-art software for 12-station literacy lab; enrolled 16 students in after-school literacy program (Fortress Literacy Center); 50 youth in summer program
- 2006 - 36 students enrolled in FLC
- 2007 - Hired two new full-time program staff and increased FLC enrollment to 56 students
- 2008 - Increased FLC enrollment to 60 (full capacity); launched twice-weekly preschool (Building Blocks Early Learning Center), 15 children enrolled (full capacity); started mentoring program (11 youth); first annual dinner/auction fundraiser; over 60 children enrolled in summer program (full capacity)

Fortress Youth Development Center's Ministry Model

Our model is based on building intimate relationships with children and their families for the purpose of discipleship and offering hope and opportunity. This model will evolve into prevention-focused program designs, yet will not limit resources and opportunities to all children and youth in our community. Our prevention programs include a 4-step process for children and their families and each will include summer and weekend supplemental activities:

1. Building Blocks Early Learning Center
2. Fortress Literacy Center - Elementary
3. Fortress Literacy Center - Jr. High
4. High School College Prep Program

Fortress Youth Development Center VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Fortress YDC exists to provide opportunities for inner-city children and youth to experience powerful life change in order to become productive Christian adults. Our four major programs are:

Building Blocks – Mondays and Wednesdays, 9am-2pm
Fortress Literacy Center – daily after school, 3pm -8pm
Summer JAM (Jesus and Me) – daily summer program
Sunday JAM – Sunday afternoons, 12-3

Strong Christian role models - teenaged, adult, male & female - are needed to facilitate these programs and encourage our students!

Building Blocks (preschool) – volunteering with this two-day a week program entails assisting the children with crafts, play, activities and lunch. There are also opportunities to help prepare curriculum, craft projects, etc. Building Blocks operates from 9:30 until 2:00 each Monday and Wednesday. The goal of Building Blocks is to develop meaningful relationships with the children and their parents and provide a fun, nurturing environment where the children learn not only academics, but also Godly concepts such as love, kindness and self-control.

Seeking committed weekly volunteers during the school year.

Fortress Literacy Center (elementary) – volunteering with this after-school program entails assisting students Kindergarten through 5th grade in our literacy lab, reading aloud, helping with homework and interacting during park time. The elementary portion of FLC runs from 3:15 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and every other Friday. The goals of FLC are to emphasize the importance of literacy, teach social skills, expose the children to life possibilities outside this neighborhood and to teach and model the love and salvation of Jesus Christ.

Seeking committed daily and weekly volunteers during the school year.

Fortress Literacy Center (junior high / high school) – volunteering with this after-school program entails assisting 6th – 12th grade students in our literacy lab, helping in the homework room and participating in our daily schedule. This portion of FLC runs from 6:00pm-7:30p.m. Monday -WEIGHT/WAIT training; Wednesday -Field Trip/ Bible Study;

Tuesday and Thursday -Homework and lab work

Tuesday and Thursday are the days we need volunteers during the school year.

Meal Provider – We serve 15 snacks and juice boxes each Monday and Wednesday morning in Building Blocks. Sixty snacks and juice boxes are served each day after school. Dinner is provided for 35-50 people on the first Thursday of each month during FLC Family Night. Out to Lunch with Fortress occurs on the first Thursday of each month.

Volunteers needed to provide snacks/meals for these events during the school year.

Mentor Program – A mentor is a trusted adult friend with a long-term commitment to providing guidance and support to a youth, with a consistent focus on assisting the development of the character and capabilities of the young person. *Fortress mentors must commit to one year of service consisting of weekly phone calls and monthly outings with their mentee.*

Organize a Fundraiser - If you choose to host a fundraiser on our behalf, our students and staff will be happy to assist. Past fundraisers have included: car washes, concession stands, calendar sales, garage sales and dinners.

Building and Grounds - There are many work projects for groups or individuals in and on the Fortress property, including but not limited to painting, cleaning, organizing the storage facility ('the barn'), small construction projects, simple repairs, office help, etc.

Community Service Sponsor - organize a group to work in the neighborhood to reach out and give back to the community. Projects could include yard work, house painting, community clean-up (picking up trash, cleaning up parks, etc.).

Sunday JAM - On Sundays, we run van routes and bring neighborhood children in for lunch and fellowship from 12:30-2:00 pm. Volunteers are needed to facilitate Bible classes, lead praise and worship, and simply participate with the youth. Other volunteer opportunities include bringing your group for a site visit to learn more about our programs, providing and serving lunch (100 people), or planning and coordinating a special event (cookout, field trip, etc.).

Fortress Counts - Fortress YDC depends on in-kind donations to keep its costs down and to better meet the needs of the children and families we serve. You may choose to do something as simple as setting out a donation box at your school or church. Our needs change monthly – please refer to our website for current needs, or sign up to be a monthly/quarterly participant. *Committed, enthusiastic volunteers needed to involve their churches, classes, groups in this program.*

Summer Meals - Every weekday during the summer, Fortress YDC welcomes anywhere from 100-200 volunteers, staff, and youth for Summer JAM. We provide most of these people both breakfast and lunch. *Volunteers needed to help make & serve meals.*

Host an Intern - Summer JAM is facilitated by college students who dedicate their summer to serving at Fortress. Host families are needed to share your home and an occasional meal with 1 or more interns from early June through early August.

Share your Hobby/Expertise - students are encouraged to learn a new skill or develop a new hobby during Summer JAM. Volunteers are needed to teach lessons and guide projects. Classes could include photography, writing, drama, singing, art, chess, dance, cooking, etc. The sky's the limit!

There are many ways for an individual or group to volunteer at Fortress. If you have an idea that's not listed, let us know. Chances are there is a way to plug you in. Ideas and suggestions are welcome!

Volunteers 18 and older will be asked to submit information for a criminal background check. Volunteer training is available and strongly encouraged for committed daily and weekly volunteers, especially those who choose to work directly with the youth. Volunteer hours will include planning, organizing and travel time.

Fortress Youth Development Center

VOLUNTEERING AS A GROUP

Youth groups, school classes, organizations, and other groups are encouraged to volunteer together where applicable.

Let us help your group or organization find volunteer projects. We will work with your group coordinator to identify the special interests of your group and match you with our needs.

Tips for Leading a Volunteer Group:

- You are the link between your group and the charities/clients with whom you serve.
- You are invaluable in setting a vision and setting the tone for all volunteers.
- You prepare, guide, and lead your team through their volunteer experience.
- You develop meaningful relationships with charities for the group, which make volunteer work successful.
- You learn about how your team can help meet the charity's broader needs, thus moving your group's volunteer experience from good to excellent.

As you consider volunteering, here are some aspects to consider:

- What type of project can you handle (scale of easy to more involved service projects)?
- What type of service work are your group members interested in?
- Determine any skills, experiences or talents among the members of your group.
- What are your resources? *Skills, tools, materials*
- What, if any, kinds of projects do you have in mind? *weekday, weekend, physical, clerical, fundraising work, throwing a party, organizing a cookout, hosting an outing....*

(borrowed from serviceleader.com and urbanministry.com)

Fortress Youth Development Center

VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENTS

Our volunteers need to be caring, flexible and motivated to work with children and youth. You also must meet the following requirements if you volunteer at least twice a month.

- Complete a volunteer application
- Attend an orientation session
- Turn in manual signature sheet
- Those 18 years old and older must pass a criminal background check

Standards of Conduct

Fortress YDC students deserve the best examples of conduct, decorum and good citizenship. If a volunteer violates any rules established by FYDC, including the following rules, that person may be subject to discipline up to and including immediate discharge.

The following violations are subject to disciplinary action:

- Inappropriate contact with youth
- Excessive tardiness or absenteeism
- Absence without notice
- Creating or contributing to a disturbance
- Insubordination
- Lying, cheating or stealing
- Use of FYDC facility and/or equipment without permission
- Malicious damage to FYDC property
- Gambling or conducting unlawful games of chance
- Illegal conduct of any kind

Code of Ethics

While acting in your capacity as a volunteer for Fortress YDC, the following rules shall apply:

1. Smoking or using tobacco products in the presence of children or youth is prohibited.
2. Using, processing or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs will not be tolerated.
3. Fortress Youth Development Center volunteers/staff shall not abuse children, youth or adults including the following behavior:
 - Any direct observations or evidence of sexual misconduct in the presence of or in association with a child, youth or adult;
 - Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse or evidence of abusive conduct towards a child or youth;
 - Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a child or youth;

- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a child, youth or adult;
 - The presence, possession or being under the influence of any illegal drugs;
 - The consumption of or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a function of Fortress Youth Development Center.
4. Fortress Youth Development Center volunteers must treat children, youth and adults of all races, religions and cultures with respect and consideration
 5. Fortress Youth Development Center volunteers shall not use or tolerate profanity in the presence of children or youth.

Dress Code

For the purpose of our program, we believe that all volunteers are serving and honoring God. We require that your dress be a reflection of this. Our Dress Code is as follows:

- Skirts and shorts must meet the mid-thigh
- Pants or skirts must not be so tight that they show underwear.
- No midriff is to be shown, either by length of shirt or when bending over.
- Shirts must not show cleavage or be thin enough to see through.
- Men must wear shirts at all time.
- Men's and women's bathing suits should be very conservative.
- Clothing with lettering or illustrations which are obscene or profane as defined by the majority of our society are not permitted. Clothing advocating the use of drugs or alcohol will also not be permitted.
- No sagging!

Criminal Background Check

Potential volunteers of Fortress YDC who are 18 years or older and who will have direct contact with children are required to authorize and pass a criminal background check.

Orientation

All new groups who will volunteer at least twice a month will receive an orientation covering issues such as FYDC philosophy, behavior expectations (i.e., dress code, discipline, use of computers, etc.) and the core programs.

Supervision

Each volunteer will be assigned an immediate supervisor. All concerns, problems, criticisms and suggestions should be brought to your immediate supervisor. Please feel free to express yourself.

Grievance Procedures

Any volunteer who has a complaint concerning the interpretation of any volunteer personnel policy should discuss the matter with his/her immediate supervisor.

Resignations

Resignation is defined as a separation from Fortress YDC as initiated by the volunteer. Please give 2 weeks' notice if you are no longer able to volunteer.

Personnel Records

Individual volunteer records are maintained and kept confidential. Please periodically update your Volunteer Information forms.

Guidelines for Working with Participants

- Introduce yourself to the participants.
- Treat participants with respect and dignity.
- Be dependable. Keep your promises.
- Leave your personal problems at home.
- Do not take participants away from Fortress YDC property without prior approval from your supervisor.
- Do not accept money, goods or gifts from participants. There are exceptions to this such as notes, homemade cards, etc. Contact your supervisor if there is ever any confusion.
- Inappropriate touching or contact with youth is prohibited.
- Avoid being alone with a child in any setting, particularly behind closed doors.
- If you have any knowledge of or become aware of any circumstances which may endanger the well-being or health of Fortress YDC participants, you must contact your supervisor.

Confidentiality

Personal information regarding Fortress YDC participants, paid staff and volunteers is to be regarded as confidential. This is true whether the information is written or verbal.

The exception is any information regarding suspected child abuse. If a child reports an incident of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse to you, it is required that a report be made to Child Protection Services.

Reporting Child Abuse

Under the Texas Family Code, anyone who works directly with children must report suspected child abuse. This means that if a child reports an incident of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse to you, it is **REQUIRED** that a report be made to Child Protection Services.

The following procedures have been recommended to help make certain that the mandates of the law are fulfilled.

If you suspect that a child has been abused, it is necessary that you **IMMEDIATELY** report your concern to the Executive Director or Director of Programs or another immediate supervisor.

To report any concern about child abuse, please contact Child Protective Services at 1-800-252-5400.

Injuries

All injuries must be reported to your immediate supervisor. In case of an emergency requiring professional response, dial 911.

Personal Belongings

Fortress YDC cannot be responsible for the loss of belongings or personal funds. It is the responsibility of each volunteer to safeguard personal belongings. It is recommended that items of personal or financial value be left at home.

Telephone and Cell Phone Usage

Our office telephones are restricted to the business of the organization. We ask that all cell phones be turned off inside the building, and that calls from cell phones be made and/or received only outside the building, except in the case of a clear emergency.

Transportation

Volunteers are forbidden to transport Fortress YDC participants to Fortress YDC activities in their personal vehicles unless specifically approved by the Executive Director or Director of Programs. A copy of the volunteer’s driver’s license and insurance are required in this case.

Media Relations

Written or verbal statements for publication regarding Fortress YDC will be released only by appropriate staff members.

I have reviewed a copy of the Fortress Youth Development Center Volunteer Manual and agree to comply with its policies.

Volunteer Name (printed)

Date

Volunteer Name (signed)

Date

Received by: _____

Date: _____

