



**Friends of
Grand Rapids
Parks**

Volunteer Handbook

February 2024

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WELCOME!

Welcome to Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (FGRP) – I’m so glad you have decided to volunteer with our organization!! Your efforts demonstrate your community engagement and support for the betterment of our city’s parks, trees, and green spaces.

We believe that each volunteer contributes directly to achieving our mission and we hope that you will take pride in helping our team. I hope that your experience here will be enjoyable, and rewarding.

This handbook will introduce you to Friends of Grand Rapids Parks and provide a basic overview of the practices and procedures which provide us all – employees AND volunteers – with guidance and direction. It will also explain the culture, programs, and expectations for all volunteer activities. Although I encourage you to read this handbook in its entirety, I trust you’ll know who we are not by the words in this document, but through your everyday experiences with your FGRP Team Leads.

Whether you plan to be with us for one day or many on a regular basis, I encourage you to embrace our core values: care, collaboration, growth, J.E.D.I (justice, equity, diversity, & inclusion in the outdoors), and play, and always act in the best interest of our organization.

Our vision is that of thriving parks and sustainable urban forest that actively support our community’s economic, environmental, and cultural health. I’m excited to have your talents as a volunteer on our journey!

Stoked,

Stacy Bare

[INSERT DIGITAL SIGNATURE]

Executive Director
Friends of Grand Rapids Parks

About “Friends”

During the recession of 2008, the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation Department experienced budget cuts, leading to downfalls in park maintenance.

A group of neighbors recognized that they had the ability to band together and address these needs – and Friends of Grand Rapids Parks (or Friends, as we often call it) was born. At this time, volunteers often invested in basic park maintenance to keep these spaces open for children throughout the city.

Today, the City of Grand Rapids has a strong and thriving parks department, and Friends’ role has changed. We work in partnership with the department to meet the goals of the city’s Master Plan by creating stewards for parks and trees.

Four pillars of action

- Volunteerism
- Urban forestry
- Park activation
- Philanthropy

Our Mission

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks is a 501(c)(3) Michigan nonprofit organization. We work with the community and city to plant, grow, and maintain parks, trees, and trails to ensure the healthiest city in North America! Our Mission directly supports the vision for the City of Grand Rapids Parks and Recreation in creating and supporting a healthy, vibrant community. When we are successful, the community is successful!

Handbook Purpose

This volunteer handbook exists to inform volunteers about key FGRP policies, processes, and cultural guidelines. It is designed to provide general information and is intended to complement your own good judgment, common courtesy, and professionalism. This volunteer handbook applies to all volunteers, regardless of project or activity performed.

This handbook supersedes any previously issued handbooks or policy statements addressing the subjects outlined here. Because a volunteer handbook can't address every situation, please feel free to ask questions about this handbook or your selected activity.

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks reserves the right to revise, add, or delete language from this Handbook as well as interpret or supplement this Handbook at any time, in its sole discretion. Any volunteer who violates the policies or guidelines in this handbook will be dismissed from the worksite or assignment.

Please take the time now to read this handbook carefully. Sign the acknowledgement at the end to show that you have read, understood, and agree to the contents of this handbook.

1.0 Volunteering

Engagement Philosophy

Volunteers are one of the greatest resources we have at FGRP. People like you, who give their time, energy, and talents to help provide beautiful community green spaces, are essential to our ability to achieve our mission. We are committed to creating opportunities for the community to be involved in our work, and many of our initiatives would not be possible at all if volunteers were not involved. Our program volunteers are priceless!

Benefits of Volunteering

As a volunteer at FGRP, you will have the opportunity to provide service to the community and contribute to the FGRP mission to provide “Thriving parks and sustainable urban forests that actively support our community’s economic, environmental, and cultural health.”

You will have the opportunity to use and enhance your skills and perhaps gain valuable experience that will help you in the future. We strive to provide our volunteers with a positive work environment, necessary training, supervision, evaluation, and recognition. In return, we expect you to honor your commitments to the organization, respect other staff members and volunteers, and perform your assigned duties to the best of your abilities

Definition of a Volunteer

You are considered a volunteer if you, without compensation or expectation of compensation beyond reimbursement for volunteer related expenses, perform a service at the direction of and on behalf of FGRP. Friends of Grand Rapids Parks welcomes adults, youth, families, and groups to volunteer within our organization’s programs and does not discriminate against any volunteer because of race, color, age, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability.

It is mandatory that all volunteers complete a volunteer waiver before participating in a project. One is included with the handbook acknowledgement at the end of this document, or it can be completed online or on the day of the event.

Minors as Volunteers

Most of FGRP's volunteer opportunities are great for teens and even children to participate in! We do not require a parent or guardian on-site for volunteers 14 years and older; however, all volunteers under the age of 18 must have their waiver signed by a parent or guardian before they may begin service. Volunteers under 14 must be accompanied by an adult. The volunteer tasks assigned to a minor will be performed in a non-hazardous environment and will comply with all appropriate requirements of child labor laws.

Group Volunteers

Many of FGRP's programs accept one-time volunteer service from groups, including high school and college service groups, church groups, and employees on corporate service days. Youth may participate in one-time group volunteering activities with the permission and supervision of their leaders. Group leaders assume responsibility for obtaining any necessary parent/guardian permission.

Classification of Volunteers

Corporate Volunteers

The FGRP volunteer program provides an excellent opportunity for corporate groups and organizations to give back, while growing their own teams stronger. We will organize a park or tree project for our corporate supporters.

Residential Volunteers

The FGRP volunteer program has opportunities for individuals or families to contribute their time and talents. In some cases residential volunteers will be organized into groups for specific projects. In other arrangements, FGRP connects passionate neighbors with their local park, and provides tools and support to help bring their vision to life. These "Adopt-a-Park" stewards commit to leading four park beautification projects per year.

Volunteer Team Leaders

Many projects welcome larger groups of volunteers, so we are grateful for the leadership of volunteer team leaders who supervise other volunteers. Certified

Neighborhood Foresters have gained specific skills through FGRP's four classes and multiple hands-on projects. These volunteers have the opportunity to lead volunteer groups, scout projects, and prune trees independently.

Special Event Volunteers

Community events like Movies in the Park and Pumpkin Parties, and fundraisers like Green Gala need many hands to make them happen! These volunteers express an interest and will be notified when help is needed with check-in, setup, and more.

2.0 Your Volunteer Day

What to Wear & Bring

Be prepared to get dirty! Wear clothes you are comfortable possibly getting oil-based paints, woodchips, and dirt on. All volunteers for tree planting and pruning projects must wear closed-toe shoes. We also suggest layers. You can work up quite a sweat planting trees!

Volunteers should bring a snack and water. Alcoholic beverages are not permitted at worksites and are only allowed at ticketed and regulated fundraising events. Friends of Grand Rapids Parks does its best to provide a water source for volunteers but this is not always possible. Bring bug spray and sunscreen if you are prone to mosquito bites or sunburn.

Weather

Quite often, we plant trees and clean up parks in (light) rain or shine! Our team monitors weather reports if inclement weather is expected, and will send out an email communication before the project time if we decide to cancel. All projects will be postponed in the event of thunder.

Work Time, Schedules & Punctuality

You will be notified of the time, date, and location of each volunteer assignment. Please contact the FGRP Volunteer Coordinator if you will be late or unable to attend on your scheduled day or time.

Pets

Pets (dogs, cats, reptiles, birds, and any other type of live animal), although beloved, are not allowed at the worksite. This rule does not apply to service animals. Please talk with the Volunteer Coordinator if you have any questions.

3.0 Volunteers' Rights and Responsibilities

A volunteer has the right

- To be treated as an equal partner with FGRP employees working toward our Mission.
- To have sound leadership and a clear job assignment.
- To have safe and enjoyable working conditions.
- To provide feedback, positive or negative, and receive full attention for your opinions.
- To be free from discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying or coercion.
- To have the opportunity to make a difference. And, you do!

Your responsibilities as a Volunteer

- If you have criticism about another volunteer or worker, you should express this to your Team Lead or the Volunteer Coordinator.
- To notify the Supervisor as early as possible if you are unable to work the scheduled time or day.
- Attend orientation and training sessions.
- Always be considerate and work as a member of a team.
- Carry out assignments in good spirit and seek assistance from experienced volunteers or your Team Lead whenever you may need guidance or help.
- Accept the right of FGRP to dismiss a volunteer because of negative performance or harm caused by their actions.
- To communicate personal limitations, such as, transportation needs, time

constraints, or other challenges that could interfere with volunteering. Your Team Lead may be aware of other volunteer opportunities you may engage in.

- Able to work with the culturally diverse population of our community.
- Adhere to FGRP's Code of Conduct and other policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.

4.0 Equipment

Use and Safety

There is no need for you to bring any outdoor tools from home. You will be provided with shovels and any other equipment to perform your worksite activities. You may also be given a bright or reflective vest for visibility as part of the group and for safety purposes.

It is imperative that equipment is always used in a safe and responsible way and in the manner in which the tool is intended. If you are uncertain on how to perform an activity, please ask your Team Lead. Everyone is responsible to maintain a healthy and safe work environment. Please report all safety hazards or injuries to your Team Lead immediately.

At the end of your work day, all FGRP-issued tools and materials must be returned to your Team Lead.

5.0 Conduct & Inclusion

Inclusion

All are welcome to volunteer! Friends of Grand Rapids Parks provides equal opportunities without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sexual preference, age, or disability. Volunteers are expected to follow all instructions given by FGRP employees or Team Leads at volunteer projects.

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks conducts business honestly and ethically, always striving to improve service and operations. We will ensure honesty, fairness, respect,

responsibility, integrity, trust, and sound judgment in all that we do. With that, FGRP volunteers are also expected to adhere to high standards of personal integrity and conduct as they interact with fellow volunteers, FGRP employees, and our parks' friends and neighbors.

Conduct

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks' values our volunteers and wants to provide a positive and rewarding experience. We also have a reputation built on exceptional service to our park partners and neighbors, so please adhere to the following regarding your fellow volunteers, FGRP employees, and our park partners and neighbors:

- Treat everyone with the utmost respect and courtesy.
- Never argue with or act in a disrespectful manner. The use of disrespectful or foul language will not be tolerated.
- If there are problems or challenges with any individual, please talk with your Team Lead.
- If you are concerned about harassment or discrimination, please refer to our harassment policies.
- If a partner or neighbor makes a suggestion or expresses concern about our services, please inform your Team Lead.

Tobacco, Alcohol & Substances

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks aspires to create and sustain a healthy, substance-free volunteer environment. Volunteers should only work when they're fit for the activity and free of any effects of illegal drugs, alcohol, or cannabis. Use of tobacco products, including but not limited to, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vaping, cigars, pipes and smokeless tobacco is prohibited at any FGRP worksite or inside any of the FGRP facilities. Likewise, alcohol is not allowed at any FGRP worksite; the only exception is at ticketed and regulated fundraising events.

This policy does not prohibit you from the lawful use and possession of prescribed medications. We do ask that you talk with your doctor about the medications' effect on your ability to work safely, and promptly disclose any work restrictions to your Team Lead. If any volunteer is displaying behavior indicating they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, they will be asked to leave the worksite for the day for their own and others' safety.

Liability and Insurance

If you are willfully negligent and do damage, cause injury or harm, you will likely not be covered by the organization's liability insurance.

Anti-Harassment Policy

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks is committed to a work environment that is professional and harassment-free for all employees and volunteers. Harassment includes, without limitations, verbal, physical, visual, and innuendo. It also includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical contact and other verbal or physical conduct, or visual forms of harassment of sexual nature when submission to such conduct is either explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of volunteering or unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment for volunteers. Volunteers should report any issues to their Team Lead. Any incidents will be investigated fully and as confidentially as possible.

Friends of Grand Rapids Parks will take appropriate action where it's discovered that a claim has merit. If FGRP determines that harassment has occurred, corrective action will be taken to effectively end the harassment. This may include removing a volunteer from an assignment and disqualifying them from future engagement with Friends.

Policy Against Violence & Weapons

The safety and security of our volunteers, employees, vendors, contractors and park partners and neighbors is important. Therefore, the following are prohibited and will not be tolerated:

- Any act or threat of violence made by a volunteer against another person's life, health, well-being, family, or property.
- Any act or threat of violence or intimidation that endangers the safety of volunteers, employees, vendors, contractors, or park partners and neighbors..
- Any act or threat of violence or intimidation made directly or indirectly by words, gestures, or symbols.
- Use or possession of a firearm or weapon in the course of the volunteer project or gathering.

The terms used above are defined as follows:

- **Intimidation** — A physical or verbal act toward another person, the result of which causes that person to reasonably fear for their safety or the safety of others.
- **Threat of violence** — A physical or verbal act that threatens bodily harm to another person or damage to another's property.
- **Act of violence** — A physical act, whether or not it causes actual bodily harm to another person or damage to another's property.

Volunteers must report any behavior that compromises FGRP's ability to maintain a safe work environment. All reports will be investigated immediately and confidentially, unless there is a legitimate need to know. Volunteers who violate this policy will be asked to leave immediately and may be subject to criminal charges.

Acknowledgement of Receipt and Review

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Volunteer Handbook and understand that it is my responsibility to read the entire Handbook. I agree to comply with the Handbook rules, policies, and guidelines as well as any revisions made to the Handbook in the future. I specifically understand the following:

- If I violate the Handbook's rules, policies, or guidelines, I may be asked to leave and not be allowed to volunteer at FGRP.
- This Handbook supersedes and replaces any and all prior Handbooks and any inconsistent verbal or written policy statements.
- No oral statements or representations can change this Handbook.
- Nothing in this Handbook is created to infringe on any available legal rights.
- If I have questions about the content or interpretation of this Handbook, I will contact the Volunteer Coordinator.

Volunteer's Signature

Volunteer's Printed Name



Friends of Grand Rapids Parks Volunteer Waiver

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____ Age: _____ Gender & Race: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Household Size: _____

Best Phone: _____ Email: _____

Emergency Contact Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Emergency Phone: _____

Release, Waiver of Liability and Assumption of Risk

By signing this Registration and Emergency Medical Authorization Form (the "Registration Form"), the undersigned (the "Participant") hereby releases and discharges Friends of Grand Rapids Parks ("FGRP") and its officers, directors, employees, contractors, agents and any other related parties ("Representatives") from any and all actions, claims, and/or demands for damages, wrongful death, or personal injury that the Participant now has or may have in the future arising out of an injury or loss sustained as a result of participation in FGRP activities or events. Participant, covenants, represents, and warrants that he/she does not have any health or medical conditions that would affect his/her ability to participate in FGRP activities or events. Furthermore, the Participant agrees that the Participant and his/her assignees, heirs, guardians, and/or legal representatives shall not make a claim against or bring suit against FGRP or its Representatives for any injury or damage resulting from the acts of FGRP and/or its Representatives, however, such acts are caused and whether such acts are active or passive.

Medical Release and Waiver

The Participant hereby authorizes FGRP and its Representatives to take whatever actions may be necessary to obtain emergency medical care in the event such care is warranted. These actions may include, but are not limited to, the following: (1) attempting to contact the Participant's relative, parent, guardian or other emergency contact; and (2) calling 911 for emergency assistance and allowing emergency personnel to transport the Participant by ambulance or otherwise to a hospital as recommended by such emergency personnel. The Participant understands that the Participant shall be solely responsible for any and all medical costs incurred as a result of a medical emergency and subsequent treatment.

Photo Release:

The Participant hereby grants Friends the right to use the Participant's image and/or likeness for publication and promotional purposes. The Participant agrees that FGRP may use the Participant's image and likeness in any form and in any forum, including, without limitation, print, video, and/or other analog or digital form via the internet, television, or other promotional or display medium. The Participant further agrees that any uses described may be made without additional compensation or consideration. The Participant grants FGRP the right to crop or treat the Participant's image and/or likeness in its sole discretion and agrees that FGRP may choose to use such image and likeness now or at a later date. The Participant hereby waives any right to inspect or approve any finished work that includes the Participant's image or likeness.

By signing this Registration Form, the Participant acknowledges that the Participant has carefully read this Registration Form and fully understands and consents to its contents. The Participant also acknowledges that the Participant signs this form of its own free will.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Guardian Signature for minor volunteers

Date
