

**FORTRESS**



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

## **VOLUNTEER MANUAL**

### **Fortress Youth Development Center**

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Welcome to Fortress YDC and our wonderful VOLUNTEER program! VOLUNTEERS are a vital part of ministry; in 2009, over 5,000 hours were VOLUNTEERED at Fortress. We appreciate any time that you can give either at home or in our programs.

**To love what you do and feel that it matters...  
how could anything be more fun? ~Katherine Graham**

My name is Stacy Kocur; I began my career here at Fortress as a VOLUNTEER in 2004. Over the years, I mentored young women, launched a scrapbooking ministry, tutored students in reading, wrote newsletters, helped chair our first auction, taught Bible classes, cooked and served meals, and fell madly in love with Fortress and its mission. In 2008, then-Executive Director Michael Thames offered me a staff position as Communications Director, and it was in the months immediately following that I finally discovered what I want to be when I grow up. I'm working my dream job in a profession that I thoroughly enjoy for an organization that has my heart and soul. I'm excited for you to discover the same joy!

**Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot,  
nothing is going to get better. It's not. ~Dr. Seuss**

We strive to offer relevant and life-changing opportunities to Christians who want to make a difference and ignite hope in the lives of children who are born into generation poverty. 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 priceless gift.

Please take a few minutes to look over the VOLUNTEER Handbook and VOLUNTEER for any programs that fit your needs and interests. The last section contains our VOLUNTEER application and two forms; please fill those out and return them to my office. Once I review them, we'll set up an interview and a tour of our programs, and then place you in a VOLUNTEER position that will benefit Fortress and our beautiful kids, and abundantly bless you at the same time.

We value your investment and strive to make efficient use of your time and resources. I know that God can use your time here to ignite powerful change in the lives of our young people and in yours.

**We can do no great things, only small things with great love. ~Mother Teresa**

If you have any questions regarding the VOLUNTEER program, please give me a call at 817.335.1007. My e-mail address is [stacy@fwydc.org](mailto:stacy@fwydc.org).

Thanks for VOLUNTEERING!

For His Children,

Stacy Kocur  
Director of Communications and Volunteer Programs



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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 – Transitioned from a church outreach program to an independent non-profit and began operation as Fortress YDC; obtained state-of-the-art software for 12-station literacy lab; enrolled 16 students in Fortress Literacy Center (FLC) (grades 6-8); enrolled 50 youth in summer program.
- 2006 – Enrolled 36 students in FLC (grades 1-8).
- 2007 – Hired two full-time program staff and increased FLC enrollment to 48 students (grades 1-12).
- 2008 – Enrolled 62 students in FLC; launched new program, Building Blocks Early Learning Center, and enrolled 15 pre-school students (operates 2 days/wk).
- 2009 – Hired full-time Communications Director, added PreK and Kindergarten component to FLC and Summer JAM, added new outdoor playground. Enrolled all programs to capacity, with waiting lists for each.
- 2010 – Hired new Executive Director

### ***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



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## **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. 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 with homework, developing mentoring relationships (you will be paired with a specific child for the school year), reading aloud, playing games, and participating in activities. 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 6<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> 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 a weekly visit after-school at Fortress, and one monthly outing outside of Fortress 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.



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**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 between 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.

**Birthday Parties** – host a monthly party at Fortress to honor the students celebrating their birthday that month.

**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!**



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## **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.

Groups serving on a singular basis (a one-time event) do not need to fill out paperwork. Groups who will serve on a regular basis, or more than twice in one year, must have each member fill out all appropriate volunteer paperwork (see page 9).

### **How Can My Group Get Involved?**

#### **Fortress Counts!**

Organize a donation drive at your church or office. Imagine this: if each lady in Bible Class bought an extra roll of paper towels next week.... if the guys you play basketball with contributed a gas card twice a year... if your Sunday School class filled a basket with office supplies...if your youth group collected juice boxes for a month...just imagine! Those numbers wouldn't seem like much to each individual, but they'd add up BIG for Fortress! Our kids count on Fortress. Fortress counts on *you*!

#### **FLC Family Night**—*1st Thursday every month during school year*

Serve Fortress Literacy Center students and their families in one of the following ways:

- Provide and serve meal
- Provide entertainment (skit, puppets, musical performance, etc)
- Be a Guest Speaker, addressing topics such as parenting, making choices, financial management, spiritual and life testimonies, etc.

#### **Prayer Drive**

Schedule a "Prayer Drive" with a Fortress staff member, which will take your group on a guided tour of the Fortress neighborhood. We'll share the area's history and the current struggles and vision of the community, followed by a focus on three pressing prayer needs at three specific locations: community development (Historic Evans Plaza, children and families (Hillside Park), and the homeless (Presbyterian Night Shelter). This is always a powerful testimony to the work God is doing through Fortress YDC, and is often a heart-awakening experience

#### **Service Projects**

Building Maintenance and Beautification

- Simple repairs, small construction projects, landscaping, general clean-up
- Set up, decorate and clean-up for a Fortress event
- Organize a fund-raiser (car wash, donation drive, garage sale, etc)



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## **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? *Week day, weekend, physical, clerical, fundraising work, throwing a party, organizing a cookout, hosting an outing....*

(borrowed from [serviceleader.com](http://serviceleader.com) and [urbanministry.com](http://urbanministry.com))



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## **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 to volunteer:

- **Complete a volunteer application**

- **Attend an Orientation**

All new groups and individuals who volunteer at least twice a month will attend an orientation class. Fortress YDC staff will present an overview of our core programs, our mission statement and purpose, as well as policies and procedures.

- **Criminal Background Check**

Potential volunteers of Fortress YDC who are 18 years or older are required to authorize and pass a criminal background check.

- **Sign and turn in the Release and Waiver of Liability**

- **Sign and turn in the sheet at the back of this manual**

This sheet is confirmation that you have read, understood, and agree to the following:

### **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 or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs will not be tolerated.
3. Fortress YDC 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 YDC volunteers must treat children, youth and adults of all races, religions and cultures with respect and consideration
5. Fortress YDC volunteers shall not use or tolerate profanity in the presence of children or youth.
6. Personal use of Fortress YDC facilities and/or equipment without permission is prohibited.



## **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.

## **Logging Hours and Cancelling Hours**

Upon arrival at Fortress, volunteers must sign in at the Visitor Center. Upon departure, volunteers should log the hours served and sign out. Volunteer hours include planning, organizing and travel time. Should you need to cancel a scheduled volunteer opportunity, please notify your supervising staff member as soon as possible so arrangements can be made to replace you if needed.

## **Supervision and Grievance Procedures**

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

## **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.



- 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, 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.



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I have received a copy, read & hereby acknowledge my concurrence with the policies and procedures regarding the volunteer requirements of Fortress Youth Development Center concerning any work I may perform as a volunteer and any involvement I may have with the youth of Fortress Youth Development Center.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Volunteer Name (signed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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