FORSYTH COUNTY PUBLIC
LIBRARY

FCPL Volunteer Handbook

Thank you for your interest in volunteering!

Welcome to Forsyth County Public Library!

Forsyth County Public Library (FCPL) welcomes your interest in volunteering with us! We know you have many options to serve your community and we deeply appreciate your desire to give the generous gifts of your time, energy, and skills to our Library. Volunteers like you make it possible for us to effectively serve our community!

Public libraries serve a unique function in the community and volunteering to serve at your library can offer many personal rewards. For instance, as a volunteer, you can:

- **Expand your skills and knowledge** of Library organization and services, literacy campaigns, and program development!
- **Make a meaningful contribution** to your community of fellow library patrons as well as the Forsyth County community as a whole.
- **Meet new people** with similar passions as well as a variety of interests and backgrounds.
- **Better understand the Library's impact** on a community of learners, information-seekers, and patrons of all ages.

The FCPL Volunteer Program assists the Library in carrying out its mission to provide access to materials, information, and programs delivered by a courteous and informed staff to all members of the Forsyth County community. We recruit volunteers as needed to assist staff with work activities, projects, and events.

This handbook provides information about policies, procedures, and expectations pertaining to volunteer work at FCPL. We ask that all prospective volunteers familiarize themselves with the information in this handbook. If you have any questions or need specific guidance, contact the **Human Resources Office.**

About the Library

The Forsyth County Public Library system currently includes **five branches**:

1. **Cumming** branch, the main branch located just north of Cumming Square.
2. **Denmark** branch, near Denmark High School in Southwest Forsyth.
3. **Hampton Park** branch, on Settingdown Road in North Forsyth.
4. **Post Road** branch, located on Post Road in West Forsyth.
5. **Sharon Forks** branch, located on Old Atlanta Road in South Forsyth.

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Since our Volunteer program began in 2010, library volunteers have donated nearly 80,000 hours of their time to the library. The Volunteer Program is administered by the Human Resources Office, located in FCPL's Administrative Office building adjacent to the Cumming Branch. Screening activities for new volunteers are usually conducted at this location.

What Are the Qualifications to Volunteer?

All volunteers must meet at least the following base requirements:

- Volunteers must be **at least 16 years old.** Exceptions can only be made for those applying to be a VolunTEEN who are at least rising 9th graders. The VolunTEEN program is a summer-only program that is separate from the main Volunteer Program.
- Volunteers are asked to **make a specific time commitment** for their service, which varies by assignment. (Program Support and Shelving volunteers are asked to commit to at least 3 months.)
- Volunteers must **have the skills and the physical ability** to perform the work involved in the assignment.
- All Volunteers must **successfully pass a background check** before beginning volunteer work.

Although we recognize the value of community service associated with school projects or civic organizations, FCPL does not typically offer those types of volunteer assignments. **FCPL does not offer court-ordered community service hours.**

Volunteer Service

A volunteer is someone who performs tasks or services of their own free will, without expectation or receipt of wages, benefits, or compensation of any kind. This is not an employment relationship and volunteers are not eligible to receive any compensation or employment benefits while in volunteer service.

Volunteer opportunities may be available at different times in different departments of the Library. **Some volunteer needs might be ongoing while others might be short-term or seasonal.** For instance, there might be a need for volunteers to sort and shelve library materials throughout the year, to help out during children's programs in summer, or to help with a one-time project of unpacking and labeling new materials.

Schedule - Because the Library is open seven days a week, we are particularly interested in volunteers who can offer flexibility in the hours they are available. We understand that many volunteers will have limited availability and we appreciate what each person can offer. When reviewing applications, we will take into consideration each applicant's availability in comparison with our operational needs.

Physical Demands - **Volunteers should be aware of the physically demanding nature of most library activities**, which typically include repetitive hand motions, lifting items of various weights, and a significant amount of standing, walking, carrying, bending, stooping, and twisting motions. Before applying for a volunteer assignment, you should review the physical demands of the position to ensure you are able to safely perform the work.

Becoming a Volunteer

A limited number of volunteer assignments are available at a specific time. As a result, not everyone who applies will be selected for an assignment.

Postings - Volunteer openings are posted on the Volunteer page of the FCPL website: www.ForsythPL.org/volunteer. The quickest way to learn of new volunteer opportunities is to sign up to receive **Volunteer Alerts** to your email whenever new openings are posted. Each posting will describe the responsibilities, qualifications, location, and time commitment of the position.

How to Apply - Applicants should complete a Volunteer Application, which can be downloaded from the website or obtained from any branch, and submit or mail the completed application before the deadline on the posting. Applications are only accepted while the position is posted and will not be accepted after the deadline. Each application should reflect the opening in which the applicant is interested. **Note:** Applicants who are not selected for current openings may request that their application be reconsidered for opportunities posted within one year of their original submission date by emailing FCPL-Volunteers@ForsythPL.org.

Selection Process - Applicants will be selected based on their qualifications in relation to FCPL's operational needs as well as on their ability to commit to a consistent schedule of volunteer hours. Applicants can expect to undergo telephone screening, skills testing, interviews, and background checks. FCPL maintains the right to deny a volunteer position to anyone it feels is unsuitable for any reason.

To promote a safe work environment for patrons, staff, and volunteers, criminal background checks will be required of all potential volunteers. In addition, individuals in volunteer assignments that involve operation of a motor vehicle (either a personal or library vehicle) in the course of their volunteer work will be required to undergo driving history checks. FCPL recognizes the sensitive nature of information contained within background reports and driving history checks and will maintain confidentiality of information.

FCPL reserves the right, at any time and for any reason, to make changes in the nature of a volunteer assignment, to reassign a volunteer to a different project or assignment, or to terminate the volunteer relationship.

Minors - Volunteers **must be at least 16 years old** and individuals under 18 years old must have written agreement from a parent or legal guardian. Exceptions to this age requirement are made only for the VolunTEEN program. Although minor volunteers are not considered employees, Georgia's child labor laws also apply to the volunteer service hours worked by minor volunteers.

Training and Evaluations

New volunteers will receive an orientation to the Library as well as training in the duties of their assignment. Library supervisors and staff will provide ongoing training and guidance for volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to promptly ask any questions they may have about tasks, policies, procedures, or other information to help them effectively do their work.

We recognize that volunteers want to do a good job and can benefit from feedback about their work. Although there is no formal evaluation process for volunteers, they can expect to receive feedback through periodic meetings and informal discussions.

Work Schedule

Each volunteer position involves a specific type of work schedule and an applicant's ability to work the required hours is a major factor in choosing the individual for the assignment. Once a volunteer commits to a schedule, the Library plans workload accordingly and counts on the volunteer to fulfill their commitment. **Volunteers are expected to contact the Library if they will be unable to work their assigned shift, if they will be late, or if they need to leave early.**

We appreciate the hours of service donated by our volunteers and we ask that each volunteer sign in for each shift and accurately record the hours they work. A Volunteer Time Log will be provided for this purpose. This data is collected as part of the library's annual report to the Georgia Public Library Service and is also used for volunteer appreciation each year.

Expectations of Volunteers

FCPL counts on its volunteers to perform their voluntary service in an appropriate manner. It is not possible to describe expectations for every situation that may occur, but following are some examples of specific expectations of all volunteers:

- Follow all library policies, rules, and guidelines.

- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of all information related to patrons and their use of the library.
- Refrain from expressing any personal, social, political, or religious views to patrons in the course of your volunteer work.
- While on duty, give your full attention to volunteer activities, minimize socializing and personal business, and work safely.
- Uphold your commitment to your schedule, arrive on time, and give prompt notice of any change in your availability.
- Learn library tasks, follow instructions, work cooperatively with library staff, and demonstrate dependability and reliability.

Because we place a high value on volunteer service, **we incorporate a Volunteer Agreement into our volunteer relationships.** The Volunteer Agreement is a simple document that outlines the Library's expectations of each volunteer. Each new volunteer will receive this document during their orientation process and will be asked to sign it before beginning volunteer service.

Dress Code

Volunteers are expected to follow the Library's professional appearance dress code. A volunteer badge will be issued to each volunteer and should be worn at all times while working. It should be positioned above the waist, and if possible, close to the lapel. Badges may not be worn outside of the library and must be returned to the Library when a volunteer leaves service.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is very important in a public library, particularly relating to patron information. **The confidentiality of library records is stipulated in Georgia Law (Official Code of Georgia Annotated 24-9-46).**

All records relating to patrons and their borrowing history are confidential. This policy applies to all library records or knowledge held by library staff members and volunteers, including, but not limited to, the circulation of library materials, computer database searches, interlibrary loan transactions, information requests, requests for photocopies of library materials, title reserve requests, or any in-house use of library materials. **If a volunteer is not sure whether certain information is considered confidential, the volunteer should assume that it is confidential until clarification can be obtained from a supervisor.**

Library Facilities

Volunteers are welcome to use staff restrooms and break room facilities. All individuals who use the break room are asked to assist in keeping it clean. Please keep in mind that the Library does not have secure locations to store personal or valuable items and cannot be responsible for any lost or stolen personal items. Volunteers are expected to park in areas of the parking lot that are typically designated for staff parking.

Safety, Accidents, and Emergency Situations

Everyone working in the Library is expected to make safety a part of their daily routine and follow common sense safety procedures. Volunteers should be alert at all times to potential safety hazards and immediately report any unsafe conditions or acts. Volunteers should follow safe procedures for performing tasks (such as using appropriate methods to lift heavy objects and using back braces, handcarts, or other devices to assist with lifting or moving activities) and notify supervisors of any problems or concerns they may have in safely performing tasks. **All workplace injuries and accidents must be reported immediately** to a supervisor, department manager, or the Human Resources Office. Volunteers should become familiar with emergency plans established within their assigned work area as well as their assigned role in the event of an emergency situation.

Liability Insurance

Volunteers working in the library are covered only by FCPL's general liability insurance. FCPL will not provide any medical, health, accident, or workers' compensation benefits for any injuries sustained while functioning as a volunteer. In the case of personal injury or accident, the volunteer is to rely on their own personal insurance resources. In addition, volunteers who drive their personal vehicles in the course of their volunteer work should be aware that liability follows the owner of the vehicle, they are responsible for maintaining their own automobile insurance, and they are not covered under FCPL's automobile insurance.

Employment with FCPL

If a paid library position should become available, current volunteers may apply and be considered under the same conditions as current FCPL staff members.

Release from Volunteer Service

The volunteer relationship may be ended at any time, for any reason, by either the volunteer or FCPL. Volunteers selected for assignment to a special project will end their agreement when that project is completed or terminated. If a volunteer is unable to adequately perform the duties assigned, the volunteer will be released from service.

The Library will address problems in the performance or behavior of volunteers. Minor problems may be addressed verbally or in writing. More serious problems will result in release from volunteer service. Examples of situations that will result in release from service include, but are not limited to: failure to meet physical or mental standards of performance; failure to follow policies, procedures, rules, or guidelines; breach of confidential information; frequent absence or tardiness; falsification of documentation; reporting under the influence of drugs or alcohol; tampering with library materials; theft, abuse, or misuse of property or funds of the library, its employees, or its patrons; misuse of access to library systems and facilities; illegal activities; or violent or inappropriate actions.

Upon release from volunteer service, volunteers must return their badges as well as any other Library property (e.g. training/reference books, keys, computer storage devices, etc.). After release from volunteer service, access to the Library is limited to public areas only.

Summary

This manual was developed to outline general guidelines and procedures for volunteers and is subject to change at any time. Any questions about the Volunteer Program can be directed to the **Human Resources Office at** FCPL-Volunteers@ForsythPL.org.

Thank you for your interest in volunteering!