



**THE GLEANING PROJECT**  
of South Central Pennsylvania



**SCCAP**  
South Central Community Action Programs  
Empower • Engage • End Poverty

# VOLUNTEER MANUAL

## *Our Vision*

*We envision a South Central Pennsylvania where farmers are supported, the local food economy is thriving, and everyone can access enough food to lead a healthy, active lifestyles.*

## *Our Mission*

*The Gleaning Project is a nonprofit, collaborative effort to make good use of agricultural excess, reduce food insecurity and improve community health, and connect our community.*

## *SCCAP Mission and Values*

*SCCAP aims to empower families and engage the community to pursue innovative and effective solutions to break the cycle of poverty.*

*We believe respect is essential, hope inspires change, integrity creates trust, every person is valuable, diversity builds strength, and working together achieves solutions.*

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# INTRODUCTION

## History

In 2009, Jan and Jerry Althoff began gleaning under the umbrella of Society of Saint Andrew, a faith based gleaning network that works in several states throughout the county. They owned their own greenhouse, and therefore had connections with many area growers. They approached local nonprofits such as SCCAP, the soup kitchen, the Adams County Rescue Mission, and Survivors who explained that they only received fresh produce a few times a year, and their budgets were too constrained to purchase any produce and were thrilled to receive it. They recruited about 200 volunteers through churches and social clubs to help with the harvesting. Since Jan and Jerry still had a business to run, harvesting and distribution happened after 5PM, which was challenging since many of the agencies they distributed to were closed in the evenings.

After 4 years in, they were working long days 7 days a week and it began to take a toll on their health and wellbeing. They pulled together community leaders from SCCAP, United Way, the Food Policy Council to see what organization could take on gleaning. Around this time, conversations had been happening for a few years about the food gap among Circles families and SCCAP knew that access to fresh veggies was a clear need in the community. SCCAP also had cooler space, a forklift for unloading produce, an old weatherization box truck, and they were already receiving and distributing 80% of the produce.

In 2014, SCCAP got their first full time, year-round Gleaning Coordinator, Hannah Grose. The program also expanded to Franklin County with Jay Eury taking the lead on building that out. The Gleaning Project evolved from there, with growing our presence in the community, gaining more volunteers, and starting our two biggest fundraisers, Empty Bowls and Glean-A-Mania. In 2016 the Food Pantry in Adams County moved to a shopping model which opened up the indoor space for the produce stand. We also received a LUSH grant to build a 5 pallet walk in cooler.

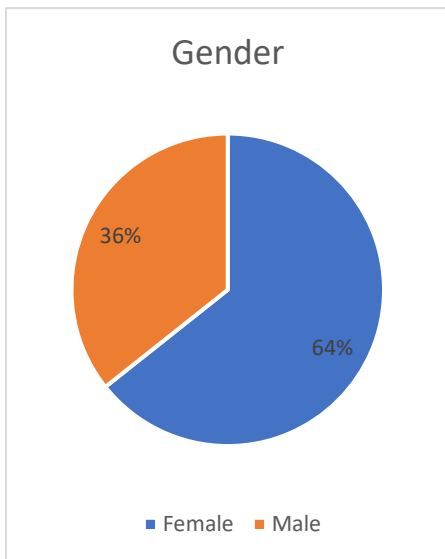
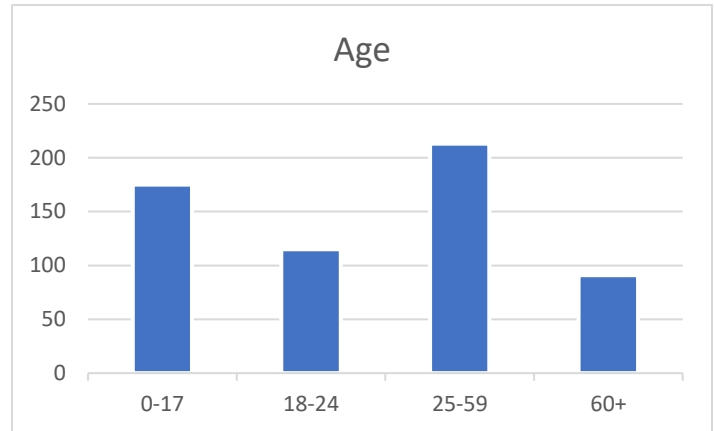
With the help of about 800 volunteers, each year we harvest and distribute about 250,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables that would have gone to waste.

# RECRUITMENT

With only 1-2 staff in each county, volunteers greatly increase our capacity to harvest and distribute fresh produce in our communities (our total volunteer hours are equivalent to two additional staff people). While we have a core group of volunteers who return each year, recruitment is necessary to offset volunteer turnover.

## Who Volunteers with The Gleaning Project

We have volunteers of different ages, abilities, and backgrounds who volunteer with us. Some volunteers have extensive knowledge of harvesting from working in gardens or on farms, while others do not. Our volunteers come from all across Adams and Franklin Counties, and some come from neighboring counties and into Maryland.



While we require children to be 16 and older to volunteer without a guardian present, we encourage families to participate and about 30% of our volunteers are youth. Seniors make up our smallest percentage of volunteers, but they are often some of our most engaged volunteers as they may have more flexibility in their schedules to attend events during the day. Following national trends, we have more women than men who volunteer with us.

Volunteers who are receiving or have received SCCAP services in the past are also encouraged to volunteer with us and make up 10% of our volunteers. One barrier to growing this number is that many of our volunteer opportunities are offsite (at farms and orchards), and therefore not walkable for families without reliable transportation. In Franklin County, we are able to drive some volunteers in our 15 passenger van.

## How We Find Volunteers

Volunteers come to us either as a group ranging from 5 to 45 people (church groups, youth groups like Girl Scouts, social clubs, service groups like Rotary, college groups) or as individuals/families who sign up on their own. In the winter months especially, but throughout

the year, we do as much outreach as possible to the groups above to recruit new volunteers. Once the weather starts warming up, we attend different nonprofit tabling events – Earth Day, Library FunFest, Gettysburg Green Gathering, farmers markets, and more to recruit volunteers at events where there may be individuals and families looking for outside, hands-on volunteer opportunities.

Volunteers also find us through word of mouth or online searching and may call or email us about ways to get involved. This is a great way to get volunteers because they are already interested in what we do, we just have to find the volunteer role that is best suited to their skills.

It is great that many of these events take place in late spring/early summer, so we can get volunteers engaged quickly once our gleaning season ramps up. When we are recruiting at these events, we always collect email addresses so they will be notified about upcoming gleans. We have a great pitch (family friendly, outdoors, giving back), so often the biggest hurdle is getting folks to break out of their comfort zone and sign up for a glean. People might stay on our email list for a few years before they finally make it out to a gleaning event.

## **What Volunteers Do**

We like to say there is volunteer role for everyone, because there is such a variety of tasks that are essential to making our operations work. In order to create a stronger volunteer identity around these tasks, we use these names internally and externally. Our [volunteer roles](#) are In Field Gleaner, Food Mover, Produce Stand Attendant, Gleaning Gardener, Food Saver, Fundraiser, Data Entry, and Cooking Health Education Friend (CHEF). Our primary volunteer needs are from May through November, but we use volunteers year-round, especially for off season fundraisers or produce packing. Generally, most of our volunteer roles last about 2 hours, but it really depends on the need and how much time the volunteer is willing to donate.

We like to give volunteers a good sense of the task they will be completing before they arrive and how long it will take. However, due to the changing nature of this work factors like weather, produce quantity or quality, might change the duration of the volunteer event. We try to remind volunteers that nothing is set in stone and that flexibility will help them have a much more enjoyable experience.

### *In Field Gleaner*

Our largest volunteer need involves going to the farm or orchard and helping to harvest excess produce. For more on this volunteer role, please see Operations.

### *Food Mover*

There are regular weekly opportunities to either pick up or deliver produce to our community partners, and folks can also be ["on call"](#) for large deliveries or to fill in for weekly volunteers.

### *Produce Stand Attendant*

This is an ideally weekly position that runs the duration of the season. Volunteers will assist with putting out and restocking the produce stand, helping community partner deliveries get packaged, and distributing recipe cards to answer questions about the produce items. It is important to get reliable, friendly, volunteers who can lift crates of produce and be able to find jobs during slow time at the stand.

### *Gleaning Gardener*

These volunteers bring in excess vegetables from backyard or community garden. After an initial orientation to the drop off process, they usually do not need much more guidance.

### *Food Saver*

These volunteers help with freezing or canning when we have too much of one item to easily distribute to our partners.

### *Fundraiser*

We need lots of volunteers to pull off our annual fundraiser. It is helpful to break them down into committees.

### *Data Entry*

This is a crucial role but can be challenging to fill since our data does not always come in the easiest format and requires some interpretation or follow up on behalf of the person inputting the data. It requires familiarity with Excel and/or Google Sheets.

### *CHEF*

This is one of our newest volunteer roles, but our most crucial. Volunteers demo ways to use the produce and provide samples and recipe cards at the stand.

## **Volunteer Intake**

### *For Individuals*

Once a volunteer has been recruited and has signed up for one of the above roles, the next step is to follow up and ask them to fill out a Volunteer Waiver. This provides us with valuable medical information should there be an emergency and allows the volunteer to waive SCCAP or the farm from any liabilities. If the volunteer does not feel comfortable signing the waiver online, they can also fill out the paper copy.

After they have filled out the waiver, Gleaning staff or a data entry volunteer should update their email preferences on MailChimp to ensure they are receiving the correct notifications.

### *For Groups*

Typically, groups must be schedule well in advance and are best suited for sorting potatoes or picking apples in the orchards. It is important to get as many details about the group from the leader right away. Some questions to ask might be:

- How old are the volunteers? What volunteer experience do they have?
- What experience does the leader(s) have leading the group successfully through a volunteer event?
- How is the experience being described to their participants?
- How enthusiastic are the volunteers?

It is okay to say no if a volunteer group will not meet volunteer needs. If they will, once a date has been set, the leader is in charge of double checking that their volunteers fill out the waivers, ideally before the day of the event. Leaders should be reminded that it is essential the group arrives on time and plans on staying for the duration of the glean.

Our cancellation policies are dependent on the farmer. Typically, we will still glean in light rain (not thunder), but if there is any concern about us getting stuck or ruining a field we will have to cancel.

# OPERATIONS

## **Preparation**

Before leading an in field glean, staff have been trained on the following two sections, When Volunteers Arrive and While Volunteers Work. Before leaving SCCAP, staff should think through the glean.



What special equipment or tools will be needed? What will volunteers be harvesting into? (Make sure it is clean and dry). Should the produce be packed into cardboard (for easy offsite distribution), IFCO collapsible crates (for use at the produce stand) or bulk containers (for large items like winter squash)? What volunteer tasks are available for folks with different levels of ability?

Staff should also be comfortable properly harvesting the produce item that will be gleaned. If they have questions, they should consult [this resource](#) or any other instructions or videos in advance of the glean so they can explain it to volunteers.

Staff will also need the Gleaning Now sign, Gleaner Care supplies (bandaids, sunscreen, bug spray, hand sanitizer, gloves), the water cooler, a sign in sheet and pen, the volunteer waiver binder, as well as any promotional materials for upcoming events.

When possible, staff should park the Gleaning Vehicle on the flattest surface possible with the nose pointing towards the exit. Place the Gleaning Now Sign in a strategic place so that volunteers will not miss you (please check with the grower first if they are not familiar with this practice).

While waiting for volunteers to arrive or while they are signing in, staff should check in with the farmer if the designated gleaning area has not already been pointed out. They should also ask if there are any plants or varieties not to glean and if there is produce that volunteers do not pick (bug infested, damaged, scraps) can it be left on the plant or should it be put on the ground or in a specific location? If you are new to the farm, ask about the location of the bathrooms and the best way for volunteers to purchase food from their farm or support them.

## **When Volunteers Arrive**

Unless it is a group glean, volunteers will typically arrive at different times. Staff or a trusted volunteer should tell them where to park their car, get them signed in (check that they have completed a waiver), tell them where the bathroom is, and tell them where they may sit or walk around until the rest of the volunteers have arrived. If the volunteers will be travelling to a second location (ie meeting at the market and traveling to the field) they should be informed of this upon arrival and plan to carpool to the field if possible.

If a group of volunteers is arriving a bus or van, make sure there is enough space to park it safely. Then, give them an orientation while a sign in sheet is circulated. If possible, staff should check in with the group leader before beginning the orientation to make sure that everyone filled out their waivers, and to ask the group leader to maintain communication about any concerns with the staff and to work hard and follow all directions so that the rest of the group will follow.

The staff will then gather everyone in a circle and give more context to The Gleaning Project and why we are doing this work. They will remind volunteers about the three rules of gleaning:

- Safety [In light of COVID-19, please review additional safety measures]
  - We are here to recover food, but also to stay safe and healthy.
  - Do some stretching to make sure you don't end up with sore muscles – produce is heavy.
  - Drink water! Show them where the cold water and cups are.
  - Look out for groundhog holes, bees, or other hazards and alert the coordinator if you find them.
  - Gleaners take care of each other, if we are in a large orchard be sure to grab a buddy. Always ask for help or make multiple trips if something is too heavy.
  - Scratches - even if it's a small scratch, come and tell me. "I don't want your blood on my food"
  - Sanitize your hands before you glean and after you touch your face.
- Quality
  - Demo quality control for that crop. Emphasize that picking overripe produce will just lead to the rest of produce spoiling in the cooler or after distribution.
  - If you wouldn't eat it, or give it to a child, leave it in the field.
  - Also demo efficiency and working smarter, not harder. Explain if you will be using the truck to collect produce and where they should leave it.
- Fun
  - Have an awesome time. Gleaning is the best.
  - We are so lucky to be invited to this beautiful farm or orchard.
  - Look at all this food! We get to take as much as we can handle, and give it to those right here in our community who could really use some fresh fruits and vegetables right now.
- 4th rule (more than a rule, really...)
  - Always thank a farmer.
  - Thank the grower that allowed us gleaners to come out.
  - Thank all our farmers so we can have more, better tasting food; prettier landscape, and more local, self-sustaining jobs.
  - If you can, support their market.

Some volunteer groups thrive off a little bit of competition or a challenge to glean a certain number of pounds. As long as volunteers keep safety as their priority, it is great to have something to motivate volunteers. Remind volunteers what time you plan to wrap up and when they should start heading back to the truck, and the cowbell cannot always be heard all throughout the field or orchard.

## **While Volunteers Work**

Staff will walk through every 15-20 minutes and check in on everyone to correct any quality control and connect with first time gleaners and make sure everyone is taking breaks and getting enough water. It can be tricky to correct a volunteer's harvesting technique, especially if they are confident that they are doing it correct. It is important to explain that the methods we

use are designed to keep the plants and trees safe (especially if they will produce again) and to keep the food safe for the folks who will be eating it.

They will also designate a few volunteers to help with quality control at the vehicle. Again, there will always be some volunteers who do not want to see any waste. Reminding them that storing damaged produce with whole produce will lead to much more rot either in our storage, or when people receive it. Ask them how they feel when they open the fridge and find a bunch of rotten veggies – chances are it does not feel great!

When all of the storage containers are full or it has been over two hours, staff will ring the cowbell and tell volunteers to gather around once again. Volunteers are invited to share how the glean went and anything new that they learned or a challenge they overcame. Staff will say how many pounds of food was recovered that day and share where it will be distributed.

Folks who receive gleaned produce are able to take some at this time or by the SCCAP Produce Stand hours, or volunteers can take some directly to a community partner. Staff will remind volunteers to support this grower if possible and consider buying from this grower that supports the community in this way (if they do, they should mention The Gleaning Project to strengthen our relationships with growers). Staff should take a group photo - 1,2,3, say GLEAN and thank the volunteers. If volunteer help is needed back at SCCAP, ask a few seasoned volunteers if they would be willing to help if they are able.

The staff will then thank the farmer again if possible and wait until everyone has left the farm safely.

## FOLLOW UP

### **Data Management**

Within a week of the volunteer event, all volunteer hours should be logged in the master data spreadsheet. For in field gleans, it is important to double check waivers to make sure you appropriately list a volunteer as a youth, senior, or low income. This is why it is crucial to have the waivers filled out completely. Paper waivers should be inputted into the online system if they are a regular gleaner.

From the volunteer waivers, we subscribe new volunteers to the requested MailChimp email lists.

During data entry, volunteer names should be spelled the same way each time. For returning volunteers who go by nicknames, refer back in the spreadsheet to see which name was used and stick with that. This makes sorting the data much easier later on.

At the end of the month, food mover and gleaning gardener data should also be tracked. Be careful not to duplicate – if a gleaning gardener brought in produce for multiple people their hours should only be counted once.

## **Communication**

Knowing when and how often to communicate with volunteers can be challenging. We use [Mailchimp](#) as our primary method of communicating with volunteers. Feedback we have received in the past is that volunteers like getting notifications towards the end of the week about volunteer opportunities during the upcoming week and we try to stick to this as best we can. However, due to the unpredictable nature of gleaning, there are often opportunities that come up mid-week, but we do our best not to overload volunteers with emails.

We occasionally communicate volunteer opportunities through Facebook, especially when they are last minute, and we do not have enough volunteers. Most of our volunteers communicate with our coordinators through email to sign up for a volunteer event. A few volunteers prefer to talk on the phone or even text.

It is important that our volunteers feel appreciated for all of the hard work that they do to keep us going. For our regular volunteers, this looks like thanking them often and trying to send them a message if they let us know about something going on in their lives such as a surgery or a new member of their family. In the past, we have also held appreciation events for volunteers, ranging from a small potluck to a cross-county event with a full breakfast buffet and certificates of appreciation.

## **Evaluation**

We have both formal and informal evaluation of volunteer experiences. Our formal evaluation comes at the end of each season through a Google Form that we send out to our complete volunteer list. If we have an appreciation event, we also distribute paper copies of the evaluation.

Informal feedback includes conversations with volunteers, especially trusted “hardcore” gleaners, but also first time or new volunteers to get a sense of what worked well for them and what did not work.