



Hands On Gulf Coast Volunteer Information

Hands On Network leads a national civic movement bringing people together to tackle tough community problems through service. We are a growing Network of local nonprofit organizations that act as civic action centers —helping people “be the change” in their communities through effective volunteer action. The Hands On approach inspires volunteers, creates leaders, and changes lives.

Hands On is rooted in the belief that every individual has the power to make a difference. We know that engaged citizens are the cornerstone of a vibrant democracy, and that effective volunteer action is a path to broader civic involvement. Hands On is a proven *approach* to community gain, a unique *network* of innovative organizations, and a broad *movement* advancing civic engagement. Our work is characterized by action, innovation and impact.

Hands On Gulf Coast

In partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service, The Home Depot and other national sponsors, Hands On Network is supporting the volunteer-driven recovery and rebuilding of the communities impacted by the hurricanes of 2005. Our Civic Action Centers in New Orleans, Coastal Mississippi, and Alabama will serve as the convening points for area community organizations and faith-based groups to coordinate service delivery and deployment centers for volunteers from across the country to provide the human capital necessary for the vast rebuilding that is needed in the region.

About the Civic Action Centers:

Hands On Network’s Civic Action Centers serve as a nexus of volunteer activity in the communities where they are located: Biloxi, MS and New Orleans, LA. These centers are equipped to house visiting volunteer groups; host and maintain a toolbank of materials and supplies to equip these groups of volunteers are daily projects in the community that are led by Hands On Network and partnering organizations in the region; and serve as a resource center for the community, its residents, and leaders on innovative strategies for volunteer-based solutions to the rebuilding effort.

The Biloxi Civic Action Center

This Civic Action Center was initially started by Hands On USA, an operation of Hands On Disaster Response. Hands On Disaster Response acts as a first responder with the intentions to set-up operations to help the immediate needs post disaster. Once Hands On Disaster Response achieved their goals and due to the scope of the disaster, HON took over the operation, allowing them to start preparing for the next disaster.

HON greatly appreciates our volunteers for the courage it takes to dive into an unfamiliar environment and the drive to daily choice to give up your own time to support another in need.



Hands On Gulf Coast Volunteer Information

Along with enthusiasm comes the desire to do the greatest good possible. Sometimes the work that is offered or arranged for our work crews may not be what would appear to be the most rewarding or emotionally satisfying, but even that work has an impact on the community. For example, we may have a crew clearing trees for a home of a middleclass able-bodied man; while that may not be as rewarding as giving ice to a family of three in an area of town greatly devastated... this is a community. That man may own an auto-garage that has been running non-stop since the storm. His garage may be one of the few still open servicing the ice trucks that are bringing in such a valuable resource. By helping him out with his home and relieving some of his pressure, he can better focus on his business and his work... This is an exaggerated example of how a community is connected, but on some level this holds true.

When HON decided to come help people, we came to help all the people of the Gulf Coast. We didn't come to only help those who appreciated our work, and we didn't come to only help one demographic. Some people may take for granted the assistance we provide and that is ok. We came to help them regardless if they thanked us at the end of the day. We came to help them without regard to their skin tone, income level, or attitude. Our mission is to help rebuild the communities of the Gulf Coast by rebuilding one life at a time. Each life still being lived here is one more opportunity for HON to make a difference and rekindle a spark stripped away by Katrina. It doesn't matter what neighborhood that spark is created in... each one will continue to make this area a brighter place to live.

With an ever changing group of volunteers the dynamics and morale will continue to ebb and flow. Something to always remember is that we are in a disaster area where things are not always normal, easy or dependable. The experience of volunteering is a mentally and physically draining experience and on top of that we ask our volunteers to share a close living environment and interact and work with people of all personality types. Patience, understanding, forgiveness and compassion go a long way.

We welcome the concerns and opinions of those who choose to share their time and energy with us and we make every effort to evaluate the needs of the community and assess how we best can make an impact. If a volunteer has an issue with the organization's philosophy or approach, this concern should be addressed. Many of our protocols develop and improve over time, but our approach may not be congruent with the needs of every volunteer. As an organization, it is not possible to be everything to everyone so we recognize that we will lose some volunteers. There are many other opportunities available for assisting in the disaster, and everyone should feel welcome to seek a situation that better suits their needs.

We hope that those who choose to work with us are able to put their trust in HON to create a life changing experience for our workers and to make a lasting, effective impact on the Gulf Coast.

We reserve the right to ask any volunteer to move on if we feel that they are not working as a good fit with Hands On Network.



Hands On Gulf Coast Volunteer Information

Living at HON

This is a unique communal living situation with many people sharing limited space and facilities. It is an exercise in flexibility and tolerance to live and work in this environment. Having said this, it can be an amazing opportunity to create new friendships and learn from each other.

If you choose to sleep inside be respectful to the other volunteers you are sharing your space with. Limit the amount of space you and your belonging occupy as there is limited space for the large number of volunteers we house. Please keep your personal belongings to a confined space either between the head of your bed and the wall or along the width of the foot of the bed. Long term volunteers have the opportunity to set up small tents in the back of the sleeping area. We ask that short term volunteers refrain from pitching tents inside as there is limited space.

We are not a shelter or distribution center. Our housing and equipment are limited to our volunteers only. If a person shows up looking for supplies, or a place to stay, escort them to the office and let someone there help them.

Outside Living

Many people tent outside, please be courteous to all those who choose to do so. After 10pm keep your noise level to a minimum as some people are tired and want to sleep. Fire pits are not allowed and there is still a no-burn law in Biloxi. Firewood for above ground fireplaces should not be taken from the trees on our property.

Food

Breakfast and dinner are cooked by volunteers and served at base. Please volunteer to cook a meal regardless of previous culinary experience, there are always people around to help and if all fails there's always last minute pizza delivery.

Lunch is eaten in the field each day, typically at the Salvation Army, or you may pack a bag lunch on the way out the door. There are always tables of snacks available and restaurants near by if you are really hungry.

Bathrooms / Showers / Laundry

The bathrooms are cleaned and maintained by volunteers, so do your part to keep our home nice and tidy.

There is an indoor shower that is usually very popular at the end of the day and therefore has a



Hands On Gulf Coast Volunteer Information

sign-up sheet and a four minute limit. The outdoor showers were lovingly hand built by our resident MacGyvers and generally have a shorter wait.

Laundry facilities are located in the tool building and are free of charge.

Entertainment

The Beauvoir Methodist Church has been kind enough to lend us their facility and has asked us that while they tolerate beer consumption in moderation they would rather not have any conspicuous alcohol use by the volunteers. Please respect their wishes and abide by these guidelines.

Our host church has services at 9:45 every Sunday and truly appreciates any volunteers who would like to partake. They also allow a Jewish Synagogue that was destroyed to use their space for Friday night service. (This means that our vehicles need to be moved off their parking lot Friday night, Saturday night and all day Sunday. They can be moved to the back field.)

There are cinemas close by and are often visited by HON volunteers seeking distraction and mediocre popcorn, ask someone for the location/more info.

Wireless internet is available, personal use is welcome, but please do not view illicit material.

The “Spin Cycle” is located in the laundry building and is the place for conversation after the 10pm quiet hours. Please refrain from smoking and be sure to remove any beverage containers as members from the church do go into that building.

Sanitation / Cleanliness / First Aid

TAKE PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CLEANLINESS OF OUR BASE.

If you make something dirty, clean it up. Smoking is not allowed in any of the buildings on site. If you smoke outside, please dispose of your butts in the trash. The church graciously lets us use their space. By leaving beer caps and butts on the ground outside we disrespect the gift they have given.

Please remove work boots in the foyer before entering the main room; this will keep the mud and scary muck out of our house.

Please wash your hands as soon as returning from the worksite; this will help to keep the risk of group wide illness at bay. Also, please shower and or change into home clothing when you return from the work sites. Do not lounge around and or show up for dinner with yuck still on



Hands ON
GULF COAST

Hands On Gulf Coast Volunteer Information

your body and clothing.

Please do not leave a water bottle half-full or half-empty (depending on your outlook). We have a limited amount of bottled water, but the water fountain water is safe to drink.

If you are injured while at Hands On please let one of our health care professionals know. Any cut/scrape (however minor) should be disinfected and dressed appropriately immediately. If there is a medical emergency in the field or at the base please call 911 and base immediately. There are some over the counter medications (ibuprofen / acetaminophen, allergy meds) and general personal health items (Band-Aids etc.) under the shower board.

Pets

While most of us are animal lovers, our volunteer center is not the right place to have pets. We do not allow volunteers to bring pets or take in strays. Under some limited circumstances pets are temporarily allowed to stay outside. These pets need to be kept on leashes and picked-up after by the person responsible for the animal.

Work

The work is organized and managed through a system of work orders run through the East Biloxi Coordination and Relief Center. If someone approaches you regarding work they would like done and they live in East Biloxi, you should send them directly to the Coordination center. If they are not, you can give them the office number at base camp and we may have other resources that we can refer them to. NEVER promise residents any help. They have been jerked around and disappointed by many other organizations and we want to refrain from needing to let them down should we be unable to do it.

Make sure your crew heads out with a radio, water, protective wear and a first aid kit. While crew leaders are there to help organize the work, you should also take some responsibility for your safety.

For current projects, please check out our website: www.handsongulfoast.org