



Volunteer Handbook

2026

Welcome to Brazoria County Gathering Place Interfaith Ministries, Inc.!

We are grateful for your interest in becoming a volunteer. Serving with our organization can be both fulfilling and deeply rewarding. We support caregivers whose loved ones are living with dementia-related illnesses, including Alzheimer's disease, by providing them with much-needed respite and peace of mind.

Many of our volunteers feel called by Christ to serve in this ministry, and they are truly exceptional individuals. While volunteering is meaningful, it is important to understand that this work is not for everyone. Our caregivers entrust us with the care of their loved ones for several hours each week, and that responsibility is one we take very seriously.

Volunteers should be compassionate, friendly, loving, and patient, with a willingness to grow their knowledge and understanding of dementia. They should be able to engage participants in activities while using appropriate techniques that support individuals as they function within their own lived reality.

If you feel called to volunteer with us, we encourage you to reach out to a member of our Leadership Team to begin the process. We welcome all interested individuals and will provide the training needed to help you succeed in this important role.

Sincerely,

Christina Parker

Executive Director

Brazoria County Gathering Place Interfaith Ministries, Inc.

About Us

Gathering Place Interfaith Ministries is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization serving Brazoria County families affected by dementia. We provide respite, information, referrals, and support to caregivers, as well as programs for individuals with memory impairment that may help slow the progression of dementia.

The original Brazoria County Gathering Place social for individuals living with Alzheimer's disease began in December 2007 at Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church. Founder Brenda Maust, along with eight dedicated volunteers, welcomed nine participants for a four-hour program, allowing caregivers valuable time for rest and renewal.

Over the past 18 years, a hardworking and determined group of retired business executives, engineers, educators, social workers, nurses, therapists, ministers, marketers, and homemakers has built a comprehensive program offering caregiver resources and education to individuals and families throughout Brazoria County who are affected by dementia.

As a ministry made up of people from diverse backgrounds, income levels, denominations, and faith traditions, we value diversity, equity, and inclusion. These values are central to our mission and vision: ensuring that every individual affected by Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia has access to our programs and receives both help and hope following a diagnosis, regardless of circumstance or disadvantage.

Brazoria County itself is richly diverse, and our goal is to serve all populations through educational and social programming that reduces the risk of Alzheimer's disease through proactive care. These efforts support early detection, disease prevention, and

improved health outcomes across all genders, races, and income levels.

Our organization is intentionally high-touch and low-tech. Our reputation as a trusted community resource and as a leader in the fight against dementia has been built with great care. Our volunteers and staff are well trained, deeply committed, and highly valued. Volunteer retention at Gathering Place is exceptional, with some individuals serving continuously since 2008. In addition to training, we provide volunteers with a free one-million-dollar liability insurance policy through RSVP. Without our volunteers, our work would not be possible.

Gathering Place honors its past while looking toward the future. Our culture is compassion-driven and science-based, integrating the latest research, treatments, legislation, and best practices into our continually evolving programs.

We proudly partner with other nonprofit organizations, local governments, businesses, physicians, retired educators, and attorneys to educate our community and deliver actionable resources to Brazoria County families affected by dementia.

Mission: Help and hope for families affected by Alzheimer's and related dementias.

Vision: (1) we provide exceptional care and moments of joy to people who have dementia. We will provide a safe and loving environment where they feel successful and appreciated; (2) we provide life-affirming time "off" for caregivers so they may return to their care duties refreshed and rested; (3) we provide a comprehensive system of support and information to caregivers to increase their confidence in their abilities to provide care; and (4) we do all these things with love.

Leadership

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Code of Conduct

- At all times, in and out of the office, you are a representative of GPIM and should interact with members of the public with respect.
- In the office, your fellow volunteers, leaders, board members, participants and caregivers are valuable. We work in collaboration with one another to accomplish small tasks that move us closer to larger goals. Treat everyone with kindness and respect.
- We train all volunteers in HIPPA regulations and abide by HIPPA laws and regulations in all circumstances. When speaking to the public, do not share the names or other identifying details of a participant. To publish photographs and names of participants, caregivers must acknowledge on enrollment paperwork that it is okay for us to do so.
- Our community's need for education, information, and resources around Alzheimer's awareness is one of the main reasons we exist. When in the public forum, look for opportunities to expand our reach through partnerships, speaking engagements, or other means. Share these connections with the team at large whenever you make them.
- Promptness is a sign of respect, and all volunteers should be on time to events and any public engagements. If you are going to be late, please notify your supervisor immediately, and communicate any pressing engagements/obligations so the team knows how to proceed until you arrive.
- Volunteers are an essential piece to the success of GPIM and should be treated with deference. All communication and interactions should be respectful, including polite and encouraging speech, and reflect the gratitude we have for

their time and efforts to serve the mission and the participants of GPIM.

- No money, gifts, or loans from any caregivers or participants is allowed.
- Absolutely no romantic relationships between volunteers and patients with dementia.

Texas is a mandatory reporting state when it comes to suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of elder persons—even innocent without malice due to inability to care or other issues. This means reporting is required by law.

Day of Logistics

Each church runs its Gatherings a little differently. Gatherings begin at **10:00 a.m.** and conclude by **2:00 p.m.** This four-hour window allows caregivers to leave their loved ones with us while they run errands, attend appointments, or simply rest and relax.

Volunteers typically arrive at their location around **9:30 a.m.**, unless additional help is needed with setup. Always confirm your arrival time with your **Team Leader** so you know exactly when you are needed.

Participants usually begin arriving around **9:45 a.m.**, with arrivals continuing shortly after 10:00 a.m. Upon arrival, participants are seated at a table, and volunteers help make them comfortable by offering water, coffee, and a snack, if desired.

At **10:00 a.m.**, the gathering officially begins. Gatherings typically start with singing, followed by exercise.

The following activities are always included at each Gathering, though the order may vary by church:

1. Singing
2. Exercise

3. Devotional/Prayer (at the discretion of the minister)
4. Lunch
5. Arts and Crafts
6. Bingo

As a volunteer, your responsibility is to assist participants with each activity—not to do the activities for them. If a participant needs to move from their table, such as going to the restroom, a volunteer must assist them. **Volunteers and children can play Bingo BUT they cannot win prizes. Prizes are for the participants.**

Volunteers should not sit together away from participants or socialize with one another during the Gathering. Volunteers should also refrain from using their phones. Our responsibility is to ensure that participants are having fun, feel cared for, and remain safe at all times. **Participants are always the top priority at each Gathering.**

What You Should Do During a Gathering

- Keep smiling, look interested, and use appropriate touch.
- Congratulate the participant on a job well done or a great attempt! Call the person by name frequently and find something that you can genuinely compliment them on.
- Between activities, engage them in conversation at the table. Offer water often unless there is some reason we should not.
- Watch to see that no one wanders!
- Watch to see if people who are at risk of falling look unsteady.
- Watch participants to make sure they are engaged. Report to your Team Leader if you don't think an activity engaged the participant.
- Be friendly and supportive to family members.

- Be mindful that 60% of Alzheimer's patients will attempt to wander.

What You Should NOT Do During a Gathering

- Do anything for the participant that she can do for herself, however it isn't uncommon for people to forget how to eat. In that case, we help them hold cutlery.
- Chat unnecessarily with other volunteers. If you want to chat, by all means, do so—just go to the kitchen and grab a cup of coffee when you're not needed.
- Assume a bored or distracted look—participants may think you are angry or upset with them. Keep smiling and keep good eye contact.
- Mind your body language and your tone of voice—the participant may think you are upset or don't want to be there with them.
- Do not give medical advice to families.
- Do not accept gifts from a person who has a dementia diagnosis.
- Do not enter a toilet stall to assist a person without having another volunteer with you.
- Dispense medication—the family does this.
- Never criticize a participant.

Emergency Plan

If an emergency arises, the participant's caregiver(s) will be contacted immediately. In situations requiring medical attention, **Dale Libby, Christina Parker**, and the **Team Lead** must be notified right away. If the participant needs to be transported to the hospital, one of the individuals listed above will accompany the participant and remain with them until the caregiver arrives.

Volunteer Roles

Each gathering location has several trained volunteers, most of whom are members of the host church. Each church has a **Team Leader** to whom all volunteers report. This individual manages all logistics related to the gathering and leads planning meetings prior to each event to ensure all situations are anticipated and prepared for.

Most gathering locations also have **Kitchen Angels**, a group of volunteers responsible for preparing and serving meals to participants. This allows other volunteers to focus their time and energy on engaging with participants and supporting planned activities.

In addition, each gathering location has designated volunteers who lead exercises, arts and crafts, singing, and Bingo. The remaining volunteers sit at tables with participants to encourage involvement and ensure that each person is participating, having fun, and feeling supported.

Volunteer Tools

- In-person training twice a year, in August
- Training modules
- Videos related to dementia and dementia care
- Books
- Other volunteers
- Leadership Team

Contact Us

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Volunteer Handbook Acknowledgment and Receipt

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the **Volunteer Handbook**. I understand that the handbook contains important information regarding the organization's mission, policies, procedures, expectations, and volunteer guidelines.

By signing below, I acknowledge that:

- I have received a copy of the Volunteer Handbook.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to read and become familiar with its contents.
- I agree to comply with the policies, procedures, and standards described in the handbook while serving as a volunteer.
- I understand that the handbook is intended as a guide and may be revised, updated, or modified by the organization at any time. I understand that I will be notified of significant changes as appropriate.
- I understand that signing this acknowledgment does not create a contract of employment or guarantee any volunteer assignment or duration of service.

Volunteer Information

Volunteer Name (Printed):

Volunteer Signature:

Date:
