



Special Ministries of Livingston
County
Volunteer Packet

About Us

Special Ministries of Livingston County was founded in 1972 to meet the needs of 6-7 local families. In 1980, Special Ministries was incorporated as a 501(C3) nonprofit agency under the auspices of St. George Lutheran and St. Patrick Catholic Churches. Currently, many churches in the Livingston County area partner with and support our programs. Special Ministries became funded by the United Way in 1981 and continues to receive United Way funding.

In 2017 we had 133 days of fun activities filled with 67 unique programs that served over 200 individuals with disabilities. Many of our participants require transportation in order to attend and we are able to meet that need by partnering with Livingston Essential Transportation Service (L.E.T.S) whom provides 89% of our transportation services. We also utilize our program staff and volunteers to help meet the demand for transportation requests.

All of our events have a minimal fee ranging from \$5-\$15 to help cover direct costs, food or supplies of the program and donations are used to help offset staff costs, administrative operations as well as planning.

The goal of Special Ministries is to provide a multifaceted range of quality programs that support children and adults living with disabilities. Our programs help people discover their full potential for social, emotional, physical, educational, and spiritual growth by nurturing connections to the community.



Helpful Hints

- **Appropriate Language**
 - We stress that the word “retarded” should never be used when describing or addressing the participants
 - Preferred language is called ‘Person First’. For example, we advocate for ‘people with disabilities’ rather than ‘disabled people’. A disability does not define any person!
 - Special Ministries provides nametags for both participants and volunteers and we encourage you to introduce yourself to all those that you meet

- **Toileting and Dietary Needs**
 - It is Special Ministries’ policy that participants needing one-on-one staff to care for them have their staff in attendance at SMLC events
 - Any other need falling in this category will be taken care of by SMLC staff but we appreciate your help in making sure those needs are met by bringing them to a staff member’s attention

- **Unwanted Hugs and/or Affection**
 - Encourage side hugs instead of full frontal
 - Say “no thank you” and walk away or suggest something that you’re okay with: a fist bump, a high five, etc.
 - If asking an individual to stop is unsuccessful, please ask any SMLC staff for assistance. If the individual has a caregiver present, it is also appropriate that you would ask them for help or advice

- **Any circumstance that makes you feel uncomfortable**
 - We encourage you to be assertive and make it known that you did not like the action or language used towards you
 - We also encourage you to tell a SMLC staff member about it so that the situation can be taken care of properly

What is People First Language?

People with disabilities are – first and foremost – people who have individual abilities, interests and needs. They are moms, dads, sons, daughters, sisters, brothers, friends, neighbors, coworkers, students and teachers. About 54 million Americans -- one out of every five individuals -- have a disability. Their contributions enrich our communities and society as they live, work and share their lives.

People with disabilities constitute our nation’s largest minority group, which is simultaneously the most inclusive and the most diverse. Everyone is represented: of all genders, all ages, all religions, all socioeconomic levels and all ethnic backgrounds. The disability community is the only minority group that anyone can join at any time.

The language a society uses to refer to persons with disabilities shapes its beliefs and ideas about them. Words are powerful; Old, inaccurate, and inappropriate descriptors perpetuate negative stereotypes and attitudinal barriers. When we describe people by their labels of medical diagnoses, we devalue and disrespect them as individuals. In contrast, using thoughtful terminology can foster positive attitudes about persons with disabilities. One of the major improvements in communicating with and about people with disabilities is "People-First Language." People-First Language emphasizes the person, not the disability. By placing the person first, the disability is no longer the primary, defining characteristic of an individual, but one of several aspects of the whole person. People-First Language is an objective way of acknowledging, communicating, and reporting on disabilities. It eliminates generalizations and stereotypes, by focusing on the person rather than the disability.

Disability is not the “problem.” For example, a person who wears glasses doesn’t say, “I have a problem seeing,” they say, “I wear/need glasses.” Similarly, a person who uses a wheelchair doesn’t say, “I have a problem walking,” they say, “I use/need a wheelchair.”

People with disabilities continue to seek accurate portrayals that present a respectful, positive view of individuals as active participants of society, in regular social, work and home environments. Additionally, people with disabilities are focusing attention on tough issues that affect quality of life, such as accessible transportation, housing, affordable health care, employment opportunities and discrimination.

Expectations

Appearance

- Dress according to the type of activity. For any event we encourage modest attire; please avoid short shorts, low necklines, vulgar content

Conduct

- Be actively engaged with participants - for example, only use your phone if you are taking photos
- Please ask participants before posting any photos of them or with them online
 - You must agree to and sign our confidentiality agreement (pg. 4)
- Please make sure to communicate your commitment to volunteer anytime before an event by calling the SMLC office at (810)299-6661 ext 106 or emailing us at info@special-ministries.org
 - Arrive 15 minutes before the start of an event.
 - Remember to sign in and grab your nametag
- After signing in, please meet with a SMLC staff member so that they can guide you through what needs to be done
 - For every event, you will be working one- on-one or in a small group with participants

Goals

- Our goal is to nurture relationships between volunteers and participants. We find that the best way to do this is for volunteers to commit to being regularly involved with our programs.
- Our motto is “Nurturing Connections to the Community for People with DisABILITIES”. We consider you to be a part of the community that we are connecting to.

Additional Volunteer Hours

- Every event requires volunteers; you can get program information from our quarterly newsletter online at www.special-ministries.org. Volunteer needs may also be posted on our Facebook page and at www.volunteerlivingston.com

Confidentiality Agreement

The purpose of this Confidentiality Agreement is to protect the identity and privacy of our participants. Staff, Volunteers and Board Members at Special Ministries' encounter personal and sensitive information about participants. It is very important to refrain from disclosing any information to third parties about our clients to avoid causing them harm or putting them at risk.

Confidential Information

Confidential information includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Identifying information about the participants, including name, address or phone number;
2. Information relating to the participants family;
3. Information regarding the participant's diagnosis, physical or cognitive status;
5. Any other information that would identify the participant or potentially place the participant and/or family members at risk.

Terms

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, you agree to the highest ethical standards and to abide by the following provisions:

1. All communications between Special Ministries' staff, volunteers, board members and participants are confidential.
2. The staff, volunteer or board member shall not disclose confidential information to a third party without the participant's express consent to release such information.
3. The staff or volunteer shall not disclose confidential information to a third party without Special Ministries' knowledge and consent.
4. I understand that as a staff, volunteer or board member I have a duty to keep participant information confidential throughout my term and after my status ends.
5. I understand that my failure to abide by the terms of this Confidentiality Agreement may result in the termination of my participation as a staff, volunteer or board member with Special Ministries of Livingston County. The purpose of this Confidentiality Agreement is to protect the identity and privacy of our clients. Staff, Volunteers and Board Members at Special Ministries' encounter personal and sensitive information about clients. It is very important to refrain from disclosing any information to third parties about our clients to avoid causing them harm or putting them at risk.

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I, _____, have read the above Special Ministries' Confidentiality Agreement and understand its terms and my responsibilities as a staff, volunteer or board member.

Email Address: _____

Signature of Volunteer; Date