YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE
SITE HANDBOOK
#APPALACHIA
Amizade’s Mission & Vision
Amizade empowers individuals and communities through worldwide service and learning. We seek to create an equitable world where all people can connect freely and forge lasting friendships.

Amizade’s Commitment
At the heart of Amizade is the sincere belief that intercultural understanding and the development of global citizens is essential to our increasingly connected global world. We are committed to providing you with an intercultural experience that allows you to make concrete contributions to a community resulting in a deeper understanding of your role in the global community.
1. Approach to service

> Ethic of Service
Amizade strives to promote an “ethic of service” on all our programs. This means that we envision the entire experience as one of service to our fellow human beings. There will be scheduled time for completing service projects on each program, but we also encourage you to carry your ethic of service with you throughout the program. You can do this by volunteering to help with food preparation, cleaning, or various other daily tasks.

As guests in the host community, Amizade volunteers are encouraged to act respectfully in all community interactions. The global service experience provides a unique opportunity to learn from the traditions, beliefs, and customs of a new community. Since most Amizade volunteers come from outside of the community, they are often seen as “ambassadors” representing their countries and are able to use this opportunity to share positively about their culture. At the same time, volunteers have the unique opportunity of experiencing another culture while taking the time to absorb and respect new world views.

> Volunteer opportunities
In Appalachia, Amizade partners with Sustainable Williamson. Sustainable Williamson is a project of the Williamson Health and Wellness Center that aims to improve the region through local health & wellness programs, sustainable agriculture initiatives and fair trade tourism. Volunteers will participate in these initiatives through building/restoring raised bed gardens, assisting local farmers during growing season and attending local health classes.

2. The On-Site Experience

The time that you spend in Appalachia is sure to be one filled with many new experiences: new outlooks, new cultures, and new situations. Therefore, the Amizade experience is enhanced by looking at some of the things that have been written in relation to the country and the issues over the last several years, getting a rough idea of what’s happening, and going with an informed set of questions in mind. The entire experience is about getting in deep enough and starting to dream enough to realize that your time there can’t possibly be enough to see and understand all of Appalachia or Williamson, WV, but it can be enough to get an idea of it, connect with new friends, meet and struggle with some significant challenges, make connections, create difference, and begin to understand an entirely different kind of place. That’s really a lot for such a short amount of time, yet much of it will happen.

And all of this will take place in the context of a relatively unpredictable environment. Unpredictable does not mean that it is unsafe. All programs work through our partner individuals and community organizations. Unpredictable simply describes the “climate” of Amizade programs’ in Appalachia. That means it’s characterized by something called a “lack of redundancy.” Lack of redundancy refers to an absence of continuously present and reliable systems and products. With water supply, that means it may go out sporadically. With transportation, it means buses may be delayed. In stores or restaurants, it may mean the things they sell are not what they advertise outside, but rather whatever they have in stock (or can quickly get from a neighbor) inside. All of this relates to an absolutely essential ongoing Amizade motto, which is:
"OK, GOOD."

"Okay, good" refers to moments when we show up for transit at the right time, yet quickly learn that transit will not be arriving for eight hours. "Okay, good," we have an opportunity to hang out in Williamson. "Okay, good" refers to moments when we long for some familiar comfort foods, but we have another helping of the same, exotic local foods. "Okay, good," we have a great deal more exotic local food than most of those around us. "Okay, good" refers to times when we’re crammed into transportation (cars, vans, trains) in a way that we did not previously believe was possible. "Okay, good," we have transportation and are moving to our desired destination more easily than most people in the area. "Okay, good" is about remembering – even when we feel that we are struggling – that we are fortunate for the opportunities to travel and serve; that we are still in amazing places with incredible people; and that life will go on even though (unlike in our local environment) the day-to-day life is just not all that predictable. Of course, "Okay, good" is also useful when the last leg of the return flight home doesn’t connect at the right time!

> Site Director

The site director is the primary program contact responsible for coordinating volunteers. The site director is responsible for coordination of logistics such as greeting volunteers, arranging housing and meals, setting up cultural experiences with local community members, and often leading reflection discussions. Coordination also involves setting up the service project, arranging transportation to and from various locations, partnering with local masons and builders, procuring building supplies, and any other related planning. The site director will work closely with volunteer placements when they first arrive to help arrange everything.

> On-Site Orientation

Upon arrival in Williamson, WV., Amizade will hold a program orientation for all volunteers. Many issues such as health, safety, and security will be addressed as well as site logistics, standard procedures, and other important information that will benefit each volunteer to know.

> Group Living

Amizade programs generally have a strong core element built around group living. For many people, living, volunteering, studying, completing projects, and spending leisure time in a group may be new. Therefore we ask all Amizade volunteers to approach group interaction with flexibility, openness, and constructive communication. We strive to respect each other’s space and needs while also supporting each other to achieve personal goals on the program.

> Amizade Staff

Amizade programs are staffed by a variety of motivated, trained people. We encourage you to get to know the staff members that will be coordinating your volunteer program. Any concerns or questions during the in-country experience should be directed to the appropriate Amizade staff.
> Flexibility
Flexibility on behalf of the participants is the most important element on an Amizade program. Itineraries may change at the last minute in order to meet current community needs or participate in unexpected opportunities for recreational, educational, or cultural exploration. Many aspects of traveling are unpredictable and time-consuming, so be prepared to enjoy the unexpected surprises and embrace the opportunities they provide.

> Meals
Amizade staff will provide a light breakfast each morning. Most days, Amizade will provide participants with food to pack a lunch. Dinners will vary from a few group meals cooked at your lodging site, to going out to experience local restaurants, or even home cooked meals with community members when possible.

The group should work together to come up with a list of foods that everyone is comfortable with. Upon arrival, the group (directed by the Amizade Site Director) will go shopping together to choose items everyone can agree upon.

> Note to Vegetarians
Please be sure to note your dietary restrictions on your Volunteer Application in advance to the program. Amizade’s Site Director will be prepared with this information, but also upon arrival please verbally confirm any restrictions.

> 3. Local Considerations
For more information on the region and our partners:

| Official Website of the City of Williamson: [http://www.cityofwilliamson.org/](http://www.cityofwilliamson.org/) |
4. Preparing for your program

> Transportation to Site
We recommend volunteers flying in and out of the Charleston, WV airport. However, it is possible to fly into Lexington. All volunteers are required to arrive on or before the scheduled program start date and depart on or after the scheduled finish date. If participants arrive early or stay late, the individual volunteer must make his/her own arrangements for food, lodging, and airport transfer.

> Transportation on Site
Volunteers are responsible for arranging their own transportation from the airport to Williamson and for the duration of the program. Amizade can arrange for group transportation for an additional fee.

> Travel Documents
US citizens will need standard proof of identification (such as driver’s license or passport) if traveling to the site via airplane. Please check with your airline for acceptable forms of identification.

If you are a non-US citizen, you must check with the consulate in your country regarding travel documents including passport and visa requirements.
5. Health and Safety

General Notes
- Traveling often affects one’s health, so it is imperative that all volunteers are in good physical condition.
- Typical travel ailments include stomach upsets and diarrhea, bug bites, jet lag, minor cuts, scrapes, bruises, and sunburn. Please feel free to bring travel-sized portions of over the counter medicines such as headache medicine, stomach medicines, sun block, bug spray, band-aids, etc.
- An on-site Amizade staff member will have a first aid kit.

Prescription Medicines
If you have prescription medicines, bring them in the original prescription bottles with your name on them and bring an ample supply for the duration of your program.

The Best Medicine is “Preventative Medicine”
Throughout the program, please rest and drink plenty of water. While on the program, let the Amizade staff know if you have any concerns about your health and contact them immediately if you experience a health emergency.

Amizade Medical and Insurance Form
All volunteers are required to complete and submit the Amizade Application that includes background medical information. It is imperative that you complete this form as comprehensively as possible so Amizade staff can best prepare on site.

Safety
While participants are on site for the service project, it is essential that participants adhere to all safety requirements and guidelines as determined by the service project supervisor and their staff.

Cell Service & Wifi
Cell phone service is limited in certain areas outside of Williamson. Certain networks are better connected than others. In downtown Williamson, most networks will have some connectivity. While wifi is not guaranteed at the lodging location, frequent stops overlap at offices and other locations that have wifi.

6. Money Matters

Spending money
Please bring some spending money to use for costs beyond those covered by the Amizade fee. For some programs, locals have made handmade crafts that may interest you to purchase. There is also the opportunity to buy souvenirs at the “Coal House”.

Amizade Global Service Learning > Site Handbook > Appalachia > • www.amizade.org
> 7. Packing List

> What to Wear?
First and foremost, participants should plan and pack according to the weather, climate and temperature. Most service projects will require some level of physical activity so packing comfortable clothes is essential. You may consider bringing clothing that you don’t mind getting dirty.

It is also important to remember that you are acting as "diplomats." While living in Williamson, you represent not only your country of origin, but also your university or organization, Amizade and even yourself. It is highly recommended that, along with packing for the climate of the region, you pack clothing that is tasteful, respectful and conservative.

> Recommended packing list
- **Documents:** photo id, airline tickets, personal health insurance information, and ATM/credit cards
- **Bedding:** sleeping bag or sheets & blankets
  - Pre-arranging for bedding can be possible with additional costs.
- **Water bottle!**
- **Notebook or journal and pens**
- **Cell phone**
- **Knapsack or backpack**
- **Towel and Wash cloth**
- **Toiletries – just the basics such as toothbrush, toothpaste, travel-sized shampoo, and soap**
- **Prescriptions in original bottles** (remember to bring enough for the entire program!)
- **Clothing:**
  - Casual/Outdoor Clothing for Recreation
  - For service: Clothes that can get muddy.
  - Pajamas
  - One long sleeve shirt, sweatshirt, or jacket
  - Shower shoes or flip-flops
  - Shoes (for walking and/or construction)
    - Mud boots are recommended.
  - Cool weather items for nighttime
  - Sun protection: bandanas, hat, sunglasses and sun block
  - Rain coat (optional)

> Gifts
You may choose to bring small gifts or thank you cards.

>> PLEASE PACK LIGHTLY!
You should bring a maximum of two bags. Ideally, this includes one medium-sized suitcase/duffel bag and a smaller daypack for daily activities. You should be able to carry your luggage comfortably by yourself. Please use your best judgment regarding valuables. Amizade does not recommend that volunteers bring expensive jewelry, electronics, laptops, etc. Amizade is not reliable for lost or stolen articles.
> 8. While you are away / Returning home

> Culture Shock
Culture shock is a term used to describe the emotional stress that may occur when a person travels to a new culture. When experiencing culture shock, people sometimes feel unsure about what is appropriate in the new culture, confused about how to manage daily tasks (such as banking or telephoning), frustrated with managing language and cultural barriers and generally vulnerable. This experience is normal and affects people at different times throughout a cultural immersion program. Remember to rest, eat and take care of your physical and emotional needs in order to function at your best!

> Reverse Culture Shock
Many participants find that they encounter difficulties when transitioning home. Volunteers will be happy to return home and visit with family and friends, but after the initial reunions take place, they often find that they experience problems when trying to communicate the experience that they had abroad. Many people feel alienated, knowing that they have grown while many of those around them remain the same. It may help to connect with others who have had similar travel experiences, as they understand the need to talk about the experience in greater detail. If you would like to be connected with past participants from an Amizade program, please let an Amizade staff member know, and we will facilitate that for you.

> Drug Use
Amizade in no way encourages the use of or purchase of drugs while visiting any of our sites. As an organization, our primary concern is that of the safety of our volunteers. For this reason, we adhere to a drug-free policy for all of our programs. We ask that all volunteers please respect this as a rule of Amizade. Failure to comply with this rule is grounds for removal from the program.

> Contacting Home
As previously mentioned, cell phones generally work in Williamson and Internet is available at the local coffee shop. It is recommended to have two group email draft prepared to all parents, family and necessary friends to confirm your safe arrival and to confirm your departure.

> AMIZADE CONTACT INFORMATION
If someone from home needs to contact a volunteer with an emergency message, they can phone the Amizade US office to relay a message.

- **Amizade US Office Phone**: 412-586-4986. This phone line is staffed 9 am – 4 pm EST from Monday - Friday.
- **Have the person leave**:
  - Their name
  - Your name
  - Their phone number
  - The message to be relayed
- **Amizade Emergency Phone #**: 412-444-5166. This phone line is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during volunteer programs.