YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE
SITE HANDBOOK
***#WASHINGTONDC
This Handbook was written to provide you with useful information regarding your participation in an Amizade sponsored program. It answers many of the frequently asked questions by previous participants. Read this entire handbook carefully and contact our office if you have any questions. Please note that best resource for you during your pre-departure planning is our website, which can be found at amizade.org.

> 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 service experience provides a unique opportunity to learn from a new community. Since most Amizade volunteers arrive at service under the Amizade umbrella, they are often seen as “ambassadors” representing Amizade, your school, state and/or home community.

Volunteer opportunities
Each night some five million children go to bed hungry. As many as 3.5 million people each year have no bed to call their own, as they experience homelessness. And as rents rise and homelessness is criminalized, the leading cause of homelessness is not any criminal activity, but lack of affordable housing.

Participants will have an opportunity to learn about and explore the root causes of hunger and homelessness. Then, participants will contribute with a variety of service partners to see the wide range of efforts to improve the hunger and homelessness situation in America through a series of site visits, guest speakers and discussions. Participants will be volunteering at soup kitchens and with various organizations that specialize in assisting and empowering the homeless population.

2. The On-Site Experience

The Amizade experience

The time that you spend in Puerto Rico 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 abroad can’t possibly be enough to see and understand all of Puerto Rico or the Caribbean, 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 Puerto Rico. 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 Washington D.C. "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 cramped 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 Washington DC, 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.

> Group Leader from customized Group’s Organization

For customized group programs, Amizade recognizes that there are assigned group leaders that act as chaperones or spokespersons for a group. In this instance, the Amizade Site Director will work in cooperation to meet the desires and special needs of the group. It is essential that all concerns and specialized requests be directed specifically to the Amizade Site Director who will work in conjunction with our community partners and contractors.

> 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 program 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!

**Housing**

Volunteers will be staying at a hostel, which has dorm-style rooms of 12-16 beds each. You may be sharing the rooms with other groups, and the rooms may be mixed with men and women in the same room. Each volunteer will have his/her own bed, but will need to bring pillows and bedding (sleeping bag or sheets and blanket) as well as towels and toiletries. Volunteers will have access to a kitchen, meeting space and bathrooms.

**Transportation on site**

Volunteer groups are responsible for having transportation to the lodging site. Once you arrive, you will use public transportation. The Washington, DC area has one of the most convenient public transportation systems in the world. Visitors always note that the Metro (Washington DC's subway/rail system) is remarkably clean and convenient. You will travel side-by-side with daily commuters and tourists on the bus and metro. Amizade will provide Smartrip cards, public transportation passes that are good for travel on the metro and the bus, which you will return at the end of your program.

**Meals**

The hostel is equipped with a full kitchen and has ample storage space. There is a refrigerator and dishwasher. DC Central Kitchen and SOME will provide meals to the volunteers during their scheduled volunteer times. At other times, you will prepare your own meals with groceries you purchase, or dine out. If requested, your Amizade coordinator can take the group on a grocery shopping trip upon arrival. Depending on your program, meals and groceries may or may not be included in your program fee. Please contact the Amizade office for details regarding your specific volunteer program.

**Note to Vegetarians**

Amizade will make every effort to provide vegetarian options, but sometimes they will need to be supplemented with further protein and vitamins. We encourage vegetarians to bring healthy snacks and vitamins with them. Please indicate your dietary needs and restrictions on your Amizade Medical Form so we can best prepare for you.

**Laundry**

Amizade encourages participants to pack enough clothes for your journey and to bring clothing that can be easily washed in a sink and hung to dry. There are no laundry facilities available at your lodging. While laundromats are available in the city, you are visiting for only a short time and do not want to spend time watching your clothes wash and dry!
> 3. Local Considerations

For more information on the region and our partners, please visit:

- National Coalition for the Homeless
  [http://nationalhomeless.org](http://nationalhomeless.org)
- SOME - So other might eat
  [http://some.org](http://some.org)
- DC Central Kitchen
  [http://www.dccentralkitchen.org](http://www.dccentralkitchen.org)
- Street Sense
  [http://streetsense.org](http://streetsense.org)
- Lonely Planet Washington DC

> 4. Preparing for your program

> Transportation to Site
Volunteers and groups are responsible for arranging transportation to Washington D.C. An Amizade staff member will be available to meet you upon arrival.

> 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.

If you need to obtain a visa to the United States, you can visit the US consular site for further information at:
[http://www.travel.state.gov/](http://www.travel.state.gov/)
5. Health and Safety

Safety information

- 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.
- An on-site Amizade staff member will have a first aid kit and information on local medical facilities.
- As a volunteer in the community you will have local companions and friends. Volunteers should observe and imitate local customs regarding safety. Regardless of where you are it is best to travel in pairs, especially at night. Be cautious with your money and make sure you store it in a safe place or money belt. If you have any concerns about traveling at night, especially, Amizade recommends you take a taxi.

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 Medical and Insurance Form prior to participation. It is imperative that you complete this form as comprehensively as possible so Amizade staff can best address medical situations on site. On this form you will also list your immunization record. Please consult with your physician regarding your healthy participation in the service work and activities for your program and recommended immunizations.

It is the responsibility of every Amizade participant to make sure that they have adequate medical coverage for the duration of any Amizade program.

6. Money matters

Washington, DC has a multitude of ATM’s and banks located throughout the city. Credit cards are widely accepted at the majority of restaurants, stores and tourist attractions.

Spending Money

Please bring some spending money for souvenirs and for costs beyond those covered by the Amizade fee, such as meals (if they are not included in your program), taxi fare, etc.
7. Packing List

>> 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.

> Recommended packing list
- Documents: personal health insurance information, and ATM/credit cards (and copies of each in a separate place)
- money belt or wallet
- Family photos to share with the community
- Postcards of your hometown to share with the community
- Water bottle
- Notebook or journal and pens
- Travel alarm clock
- Watch
- Camera and film
- Knapsack or book bag
- Towel and Wash cloth
- Bedding
- Toiletries – just the basics such as toothbrush, toothpaste, travel-sized shampoo, and soap
- Prescriptions in original bottles (be sure to bring enough for the entire program)
- Over-the-counter medications (headache, stomach, band-aids, anti-itch cream)
- Clothing (Please dress according to the appropriate season)
- T-shirts
- One nice outfit
- Socks and underwear
- Pajamas
- One long sleeve shirt, sweatshirt, or jacket
- Shower shoes or flip-flops
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Hat, scarf, cold weather items in winter

> Gifts
You may choose to bring small gifts or thank you cards for community members. Ideal gifts include those that reflect who you are and where you are from. For example, you may bring pens, caps or rally flags with your university’s logo, or magnets with a picture of your city.
8. While you are away

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 safety for 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
Pay phones are available throughout the city and cell phone reception is usually very good. In addition, there are internet cafes located throughout the city.

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.

To call the United States from Jamaica, dial 00-1-area code-local number. For instance, if you were to call Amizade from Jamaica, you would dial 00-1-304-293-6049.