YOUR JOURNEY STARTS HERE
SITE HANDBOOK
#WASHINGTONDC
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> Introduction
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 the best resource for you during your pre-departure planning is our website, which can be found at amizade.org

> Amizade’s Mission & Vision
Amizade inspires empathy, catalyzes social action, and links diverse communities through Fair Trade Learning. We want to create a world where diverse communities connect freely, forge lasting relationships, and build a more just world together.

> 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
The United States of America is one of the world's wealthiest nations, especially when it comes to agricultural production, yet enough food goes to waste each day to feed every hungry adult and child. Some five million children go to bed hungry each night, due to inefficiencies in the food processing and distribution networks. An equally staggering number have no bed to call their own as they experience homelessness. As housing prices rise and homelessness is criminalized, the leading cause of homelessness is not criminal activity but, rather, lack of affordable housing. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the history, causes and consequences of hunger and homelessness through service-learning opportunities at a wide variety of partner organizations. Through a series of site visits, guest speakers and discussions, participants will compare the strengths and limitations of a broad range of efforts to improve hunger and homelessness in America. In addition to volunteering at soup kitchens, fresh food markets and organizations specializing in assisting and empowering people experiencing homelessness, participants will be afforded opportunities to connect their service experiences to wider conversations around racial injustice, gentrification and lack of affordable housing.

> 2. The On-Site Experience

> The Amizade Experience
The time that you spend in Washington D.C. is sure to be one filled with many new experiences: new outlooks, new cultures and new situations. You can enhance your Amizade experience by examining some of the literature addressing food security and homelessness throughout our nation and, particularly, in the District of Columbia. Starting your service experience with a general idea of existing policies and approaches can help you to better prepare for your program. However, it will allow you to connect with new friends, raise difficult issues, foster critical reflection, generate momentum towards creating change and begin to understand an entirely different experience and place. That's a lot to accomplish in such a short amount of time, yet much of it will happen. This experience is about immersing yourself deeply into the complexity of hunger and homelessness issues—so much so that you realize that your time on the program can't possibly suffice to see and understand all of Washington D.C., much less the spectrum of issues contributing to and perpetuating hunger and homelessness in the United States. 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 a new environment. That means it is characterized by something called a “lack of redundancy.” Lack of redundancy refers to an absence of continuously present and reliable systems and products. With transportation, it means buses may be delayed. 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, local foods. “Okay, good,” we have a great deal more of this 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!

> 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.

> 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 experts to determine appropriate donations and any other related planning. The Site Director will work closely with you when you first arrive to help arrange everything. It is essential that all concerns and specialized requests during your program be directed specifically to the Amizade Site Director who will work in conjunction with our community partners and contractors.

> On-Site Orientation
Upon arrival in Washington D.C. 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.
> **Flexibility**
Flexibility is the most important element on an Amizade program. Itineraries may change at the last minute for health, safety, and security reasons, in order to meet current community needs, or to 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**
Housing ranges from group hostels to 3-star hotels, depending on what is appropriate for your group. You will get more information about your group's specific type of housing during the pre-departure orientation. No matter what type of housing you're in, please observe the behaviors of the people around you, be aware of your surroundings, and remember that you are a guest in this area. Try your best to adapt and learn what's around you.

> **Transportation on Site**
Volunteer groups are responsible for having transportation to D.C. Once you arrive, you will use public transportation. The Washington D.C. area has one of the most convenient public transportation systems in the world. Visitors always note that the Metro (Washington D.C.‘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**
For the majority of programs, most meals during the program will be covered by Amizade and eaten as a group. Depending on your housing, the group may cook meals together and prepare packed lunches, or dine out in the city. Some of our partner organizations will offer meals to volunteers during their scheduled service times.

You will get more information about your group's specific meal plan, including meals that are not included (if any), during the pre-departure orientation. Meals will address the dietary restrictions and/or allergies of the group. Some snacks will be provided between meals, but you may also bring or purchase your own snacks.

> **Note to Vegetarians and Vegans**
Amizade will make every effort to provide vegetarian and vegan options. It is easy to find vegetarian and vegan options in DC. If you typically like to supplement your meals with additional protein and vitamins, we encourage you to bring healthy snacks and vitamins with you. Please indicate your dietary needs and restrictions on your Amizade Participant Information Form.

> **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 usually no laundry facilities available at your lodging. Laundromats are available in the city, but you're visiting for 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

SOME - So other might eat  
http://some.org

DC Central Kitchen  
http://www.dccentralkitchen.org

Street Sense  
http://streetsense.org

Lonely Planet  
Washington DC  
http://www.lonelyplanet.com/usa/washington-dc

> 4. Preparing for Your Program

> Download the Vamoos App

We ask that you download the app before your program begins. Enter the user ID and passcode shared by your group leader to find your program. Vamoos is a convenient way to access information about your program, including maps, itineraries, and important documents. Find it on your phone's app store.

> 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 and residents 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/
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 or ridesharing service.
- COVID-19 mitigation is very important to ensuring a safe and healthy experience, not only for you, but for the community as well. In addition to mandatory vaccination, we ask that you adhere to standard social distancing and hygiene best practices, including mask wearing, hand-washing, and maintaining distance in closed spaces.

Drug Use
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.

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. Always ensure they are legal in the community you are visiting.

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.

6. Money Matters

Accessing Money
Washington D.C. has a multitude of ATMs and banks located throughout the city. Credit and debit 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. General Packing List

>> PLEASE PACK LIGHTLY!
You should bring a maximum of two bags. Ideally, this includes one medium-sized suitcase/duffel/backpackers 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 or electronics. Amizade is not liable for lost, stolen, or damaged articles.

Recommended packing list
- Documents: health insurance card, passport and/or ID, vaccination cards
- Backup digital copies of all important documents
- Cell phone and charger (check roaming rates)
- Money: ATM/credit cards (set travel alert with bank), US cash ($100 or less), Local currency (small amounts if possible)
- Cell phone and charger (check roaming rates)
- Universal travel outlet adapter (when applicable)
- Water bottle
- Masks, hand sanitizer, and other PPE
- Notebook or journal and pens
- Knapsack or backpack
- Towel and washcloth
- Toiletries – just the basics such as toothbrush, toothpaste, travel-size shampoo, soap, menstrual products
- Sun protection - Hat, sunscreen (reef-safe recommended, sunglasses
- Bug repellent
- Prescriptions in original bottles (be sure to bring enough for the entire program and verify that your medicine is legal in destination)
- Over-the-counter medications (headache, stomach, band-aids, anti-itch cream)
- Preferred snacks (like granola or protein bars)

Clothing:
- One nicer outfit
- Socks and underwear
- Pajamas
- Rain gear
- Shower shoes or flip-flops
- Comfortable (closed-toe) walking shoes
- Weather-appropriate clothing (swimsuits, winter jackets, etc.)

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, flags, or t-shirts with your institution’s logo, or magnets with a picture of your city.

Specific items for Washington D.C.
Some of our partners in DC have dress codes for volunteers, which are strictly enforced. To ensure that you will be able to participate in all program activities, please pack and be prepared to wear the following items. Keep in mind that you will be participating in service activities during multiple days of the program.
- Closed-toe shoes (not crocs) that are comfortable for walking and standing
- Loose-fitting (just not skin tight) shirts that cover your shoulders, armpits, and stomach
- 1-2 pairs of long pants that are not leggings. Our partners do not allow leggings at service activities. Shorts (that fall below the knee) can be worn at some, but not all service activities.
- Baseball cap and/or hair ties, to tie hair back during food-related service activities.

Amizade will remind you about specific items to pack for Washington D.C. and answer any questions about clothing during your pre-departure orientation. Please remember to check the weather and your itinerary as you pack.
> **Cultural Adjustment**
Cultural adjustment is a term used to describe the variety of reactions including stress, excitement, or frustration that can occur when you travel to a new culture. People sometimes feel unsure about what is appropriate in the new culture, confused about how to manage daily tasks, amazed by a new cultural practice, frustrated with managing language and cultural barriers, and/or generally vulnerable. This is normal and affects people at different times throughout a cultural immersion program. It is possible to experience cultural adjustment even if you’re traveling within your home country — no two communities are exactly alike! Remember to rest, eat, and take care of your physical and emotional needs in order to function at your best! Don’t be afraid to communicate how you’re feeling.

> **Reverse Cultural Adjustment**
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 in the community they visited. Many people feel alienated, knowing that they have grown while many of those around them remain the same. This is also a normal reaction. 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 connect you.

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> **AMIZADE CONTACT INFORMATION**
If someone from home needs to contact a volunteer with an emergency message and can’t reach them directly, they can phone the Amizade US office to relay a message.

- **Amizade US Office Phone:**
  412-586-4986.
- Have the person leave:
  - Their name
  - Your name
  - Their phone number
  - The message to be relayed

*For non-emergencies, please try to limit phone calls to Amizade’s business hours: 9 am - 4 pm EST from Monday - Friday.*

- **Amizade Emergency Phone #**:
  412-586-4986. In an emergency, call the Amizade office phone number at any time. The line is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week during volunteer programs.

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Your journey has now started!

See you in Washington D.C.