

AA,

After taking the training, it took a while before they reach out to me. They assigned me to team 11.

Team 11 consists of individuals who were not part of a large group. The other teams are primarily made up of church organizations.

The days we are called are on when the temperature drops below 36 with rain or 33 degrees.

The teams take turns for each night the shelter is open.

On each team there are leaders, who coordinate the schedule.

Time slots for volunteers are evening: 5-10 pm, overnight: 10pm- 5 am, and morning: 5-8 am.

Our team asked for volunteers first and then backups for the time slots.

I was a backup because I travel a lot for work.

They had sent us an email as soon as our team's turn was up. They also notified us of the expected date but we would be called for an unexpected event as well.

We were called on for an unexpected event. They emailed and texted us the day of. I volunteered, and my team lead said they needed help in the morning shift.

I arrived at 5:30 am. There were 41 people who used the shelter. There were 6 volunteers, most of which were still there from overnight.

It was an eye opening experience. There was a strong smell from the homeless due to lack of access to showers. It took adjustment to be able to bare the smell. Also a lot of the people were homeless due to certain mental conditions. Dealing and talking to them was a challenge.

The wake up calls started at 5 am. There were cooks making breakfast. Breakfast was till 5-7 am. Most of the people were awake by 6:30. We would wake up any stragglers as we sanitized and put away the cots.

They were allowed to leave some of their things in a bag. They were given kitchen trash bags to put their belongings and they put their names on it. A lot of them planned on being back for future occurrence.

There are 3 drop off/ pickup points.(library/ train station) I helped with the drop offs. I just accompanied the driver. They had two volunteers to a van for safety purposes.

For the most part they all had places to go. Some of them worked. They would go to an agency for daily work assignments.

Overall, it was an interesting experience. I would say that it was not easy and is not for everyone. The hardest part for me was being able to connect with the people.

Jzk,
Ahmad Siddiqui
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