



Volunteer Handbook



Welcome!

And thank you for joining our volunteer team. This manual is meant to provide you with information about our organization and answer any questions you may have about our operations and policies. We hope that you find a connection to our educational approach and our animal care practices as you read this handbook. We want this to be an educational and rewarding experience for you, and we welcome any and all feedback about the program. Please feel free to contact our Operations Manager if you need to for any reason at: kaleigh@charliesacres.org.

Mission

The mission of the sanctuary is to provide lifelong care for rescued farm animals who were abused or destined for slaughterhouses, and to educate people on the humane treatment of animals and plant-based food options through education and advocacy.

We are a 501(c)3 non-profit sanctuary, which means all donations are tax deductible.



History

Charlie's Acres was founded in the fall of 2016 by founder, Tracy Vogt. Tracy had always had a passion for animals and realized there was a huge, underserved population of animals that society tends to ignore: farm animals. She decided to open a sanctuary for abused and abandoned farm animals while maintaining a focus on education and plant-based diets. She chose the location of Charlie's Acres based on the proximity to San Francisco, other Bay Area cities, and the popular wineries nearby. Within a month after purchasing the property, Tracy rescued her first pig, Gertrude, who was found in an evacuation zone of the Blue Cut Fire in Southern California.

Expectations

Charlie's Acres volunteer position is an unpaid position. The relationship between Charlie's Acres and volunteers can be terminated by either part without advance notice and/or without any requirement of cause.

Animal Care

As a volunteer, we expect that you are dedicated to providing the best possible care for our rescued residents. These animals have all been given second chances at a happy life, and we intend to give them just that. All of our animal residents should at minimum, have access to fresh water, receive a healthy diet, have access to a comfortable shelter, receive regular and prompt veterinary treatment, be provided opportunity to express normal behaviors, have sufficient space, have companionship, and be free of fear and distress.

Public

You are expected to represent Charlie's Acres in a positive light when interacting with the public, whether on site during tours, or off site. We have a stronger voice as an organization if we are on the same team and working together to educate the public on animal rights issues. It is important to us that you are knowledgeable about the species that live here and why they need sanctuary. We welcome you to ask questions and staff is happy to provide resources for further learning. We also invite all volunteers to attend a community tour of the sanctuary to learn more about the struggles farmed animals face.

Minors

Minors 14+ may volunteer alongside their parents. Minors 16+ may volunteer on their own, but it is highly preferable that a parent or guardian attend the volunteer orientation, so that they have a solid idea of what the volunteer position entails. All volunteers under the age of 18 will begin at the Yellow level and may work their way up to Green level.

Visiting

We ask that you are a regular volunteer for a minimum of 3 months and get permission from staff on a time and date prior to bringing friends and family to the sanctuary. At that point, volunteers are welcome to bring small groups of friends and family on our community tours for free, so that you can share what you do.

If you have friends or family you'd like to show around who are not able to make one of our scheduled community tours, please reach out to staff about scheduling an alternative time. Please do not show up with anyone who has never been here without first asking staff.



Bringing a friend or family member to accompany you on a volunteer shift may be approved on a case-by-case basis and only with prior permission from staff.

If you would like to come visit with the animal residents in addition to your volunteer shift, all visits must be pre-approved by staff on duty and take place during the hours of 8 am to 5 pm.

Open Communication

We encourage an open communication policy and would love to hear thoughts and suggestions from our volunteers. If you see an opportunity for improvement, please speak up! This is especially true when it comes to animal care. If an animal appears to be injured or distressed, please alert staff.

Complaint Procedure

We expect all staff and volunteers to be kind and respectful to each other. If you ever have an issue with another person, whether it's a volunteer or a staff member, we encourage you to discuss it with that person directly. If you are uncomfortable doing that, please discuss it directly with Kaleigh or another staff member. We will do our best to help resolve the issue, as we want everyone to be comfortable.

Role, Hours, and Schedule

Schedule

Each volunteer needs to complete their orientation before their first shift. The orientation will consist of an explanation of the rules and regulations of our sanctuary, safety information, and daily protocol (sign-in sheets, radio use, etc.) Once this is completed and both parties decide the volunteer position is a good fit, then the volunteer can expect an email welcoming them to the volunteer team and sent instructions to sign up for shifts.

We use [signup.com](https://www.signup.com) for our volunteer shift scheduling. You may sign up for any shift offered, unless it specifically states that the shift is for a more experienced volunteer than yourself. Typical animal care volunteer shifts are between 9 am-12 pm, or 2 pm-5 pm. Additional shifts for tour assistance, enrichment, landscaping, or events may be listed as well. Shifts do not have to be on the same days each week.

Each regular volunteer is asked to commit to a minimum of four shifts every month for the first three months. Once you are on the schedule, we will be using that information to reflect staff schedules, so if you can't make a shift, we greatly appreciate as much advance notice as possible. You can cancel via [signup.com](https://www.signup.com) or text or email staff directly if you need to cancel last minute.

Task List

Tasks around the sanctuary vary on a daily basis, and we generally keep an ongoing projects list in the Receiving Barn tack room. As a volunteer, you are expected to help the care staff with cleaning stalls and yards, preparing food, washing dishes and laundry, creating enrichment, assisting with on-site events, and interacting with our residents to better prepare them for groups of visitors. Please inform us of any limitations you may have due to allergies, back or knee pain, asthma, or anything else that may hinder your abilities to do more physical farm work. We will do our best to accommodate any of these limitations.



Common Volunteer Tasks:

Food Prep – Sorting produce donations and chopping produce for the pigs.

Stall and yard clean-up - There is always poop scooping to be done! Both inside in the stalls and outside in the larger pastures, along with inside the bird coops.

Barn cleaning- Cleaning up inside the barn, in the sink areas, the fridges, in the tack rooms, and in the main walkway through the middle of the barns.

Facilities- Sometimes extra hands are helpful in building enclosures and enrichment for the animals or maintenance tasks. Landscaping and fire preparation tasks vary by season.

Extras- There are always lots of projects going on around the farm. Depending on your experience level and willingness/ability, we may ask for your help with any of these as they arise. If you are interested in doing a produce pick-up on your way to your shift, we can train you on that as well.

Volunteer Groups

All Volunteers:

- All treats for animals must be approved by staff. Please do not feed without staff permission.
- Out of respect for our rescued animal residents, please do not consume animal products on site.
- Double check that all gates are securely closed behind you.
- Use [signup.com](https://www.signup.com) calendar to sign up for volunteer shifts.
- Must carry a radio at all times.
- Must comply with most current sanctuary policies regarding COVID19.
- Should wear a name tag while on site to identify them as a volunteer.

Yellow Volunteers

All volunteers under the age of 18 will begin as a yellow level. A minor in the yellow level is considered green when accompanied by an adult who has undergone a volunteer orientation. When a yellow volunteer has demonstrated strong understanding of safety protocols, radio use, and general volunteer procedures, they may be cleared by staff to move up to the green group.

Yellow Volunteers:

- Can clean in any barn stall or pasture that animals are locked out of.
- Can go in with green level animals supervised by a senior volunteer, staff member, or guardian, or with the explicit permission of a staff member.
- Are paired up with a staff member or volunteer until comfortable with layout of sanctuary and procedures.
- Can bring small groups of friends or family on a scheduled community tour for free after three months of volunteering.
- May have additional restrictions placed by a parent or guardian.

Green Volunteers

All volunteers 18+ begin in the green group once they've completed an orientation. After three months of regular volunteering, a green volunteer may send an email requesting to be trained in the blue group.



This decision is subject to staff discretion and the comfort level of the volunteer. Volunteers may remain in the green group if they volunteer infrequently or are uncomfortable going into blue and purple level pastures.

Green Volunteers:

- Can clean in any barn stall or pasture that animals are locked out of.
- Can go in with green level animals unsupervised.
- Can accompany yellow level volunteers in green animal pastures.
- Are paired up with a staff member or volunteer until comfortable with layout of sanctuary and procedures.
- Can bring small groups of friends or family on a scheduled community tour for free after three months of volunteering.

Blue Volunteers

After three months of regular volunteering, volunteers can discuss the opportunity to move into the blue group with staff. Most regular volunteers will remain in the blue group for an extended period of time.

Blue Volunteers:

- Volunteer on a regular schedule.
- Demonstrate solid communication with staff regarding schedule.
- Demonstrate good radio policy.
- Can sign up for summer bedtime shifts.
- Can go in with blue and green level animals unsupervised.
- Can supervise green level volunteers in blue level areas.
- Can bring friends with them to volunteer with prior staff permission.
- Can be trained to drive on the Kubota and Mule.

Purple Volunteers

On some occasions, highly experienced, regular volunteers will have the opportunity to move into the purple group. This is subject to staff discretion.

Purple Volunteers:

- Can go in with horses supervised by staff.
- Can go in pasture with Farm Pigs after radioing staff for approval (No volunteer should be in a pig stall while Punky has access).
- Are able to assist with health checks, hoof trims, weights, etc.
- Are able to answer questions about routine from newer volunteers.
- Can assist with rescues as needed.



Safety

We want you and everyone else on site to feel safe at all times. Always follow safety guidelines and be aware of where all safety equipment is kept, should you need to use any of it.

Contact Information

Below is a list of contacts, should you need to cancel one of your shifts late notice, or if you have any questions. Please contact Kaleigh first, as she is the volunteer coordinator. If for any reason you can't reach her, make your way down the list.

Kaleigh kaleigh@charliesacres.org 707-509-0161	Rhianna rhianna@charliesacres.org 845-389-8487	Ryan ryan@charliesacres.org 419-322-6774
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Radios

Always pick up a radio when you arrive on site. Make sure to verbally check-in and let everyone on duty know you are here. Just a simple "Hi, it's _____ checking in" will suffice. Use the radio throughout your shift, responding to staff and other volunteers, and letting staff know when you will be changing tasks. Don't be afraid to ask questions. If you are unsure about anything, please let staff know. At the end of your shift, verbally check out on your radio, and hang it up to charge. It's very important that everyone on site knows who else is on site at all times.

Emergency Situations

If you see something (a fire, leak, a pig attempting to escape an enclosure, a goat running around, flooding, a tree branch about to fall, etc.) please alert the staff! These situations can be scary and unpleasant but can also be diffused quickly if the whole team is aware of what's going on right away. Should we need to evacuate, the sanctuary manager will take the lead and delegate tasks to everyone on site. As a volunteer, you are not required to help with emergency evacuation protocol.

Incident Reports

If you are injured on site at any time, you must immediately contact staff, and fill out an incident report as soon as possible. This must be filled out with as much detail as possible. If you are on site during an animal fight or injury, staff may ask you details about what you saw so that we can better fill out an animal incident report.

Code of Conduct

As a member of our volunteer team, you are expected to follow all rules and regulations. Please be aware that as a team member, both on and off site you are representing our organization and are expected to conduct yourself professionally when talking about Charlie's Acres.

Dress Code

You will get dirty, so please dress appropriately! We require close toed shoes and long pants to be worn on site at all times. Other safety equipment, such as gloves, hard hats, eye protection, etc. will be provided to you on an as-needed basis. You are of course welcome to bring your own if you rather. Please use good judgment in wearing clothing with logos or messages that may be not be appropriate.



Alcohol and Substance Abuse

We are committed to maintaining a safe and productive environment for everyone on site at all times. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, possession, and/or use of drugs and alcohol is prohibited. We ask that you do not consume any non-prescription drugs or alcohol on site, or report for a shift under the influence of any drugs or alcohol. Working with animals can be very dangerous, and it is important to be alert and aware of your surroundings at all times.

Smoking Policy

No smoking is permitted on site at Charlie's Acres, due to hazards relating to animal health and fire risk.

Social Media Policy

We encourage you to take photos (and selfies) with the animals, as this is fun and makes for a great Facebook post. However, we ask that you are respectful of our policies and public relations with anything you are posting. Please do not give out secure information about the property, animal medical issues, personal information about staff, etc. If you're not sure if something is okay to post, please let staff know before posting on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.).

Corrective Procedure

Charlie's Acres has the right to terminate any volunteer at any time at the discretion of staff. We will correct you if we see you doing something wrong or dangerous to yourself or the animals, or something objectionable to our mission. However, if that behavior continues, you will be asked to leave.

Change in Policy

While every effort is made to keep the contents of this document current, Charlie's Acres reserves the right to modify, suspend, or terminate any of the policies, procedures, and/or benefits described in the manual with or without prior notice to volunteers.



Charlie's Acres: Volunteer's Release of Liability

This Volunteer's Release of Liability (the "Release") is entered into by Volunteer in favor of Charlie's Acres, a California nonprofit corporation, and its directors, officers, employees, founders, affiliates, agents and representatives (collectively called "Charlie's Acres"), in consideration for Charlie's Acres permitting the undersigned to volunteer at Charlie's Acres' facilities and interact with Charlie's Acres' animals.

1. Volunteer Participation. I have freely and voluntarily agreed to participate in certain activities on the property owned by Charlie's Acres (the "Property") as a volunteer. I understand that all services performed by me will be performed on a strictly voluntary basis and without compensation or benefits of any kind.

2. Guidelines. I understand that I must comply with all of the rules, agreements and protocols that are established and may change from time-to-time by Charlie's Acres (including, but not limited to, department-specific rules), and that my volunteer privileges may be revoked or suspended by Charlie's Acres at any time for noncompliance or other safety issues.

3. Assumption of Risk. I understand that volunteering for Charlie's Acres can be potentially dangerous and that I may interact with animals that, even under the best of circumstances, may be unpredictable and may bite, kick, crush, scratch or head butt or transmit zoonotic diseases. I understand I may also be exposed to campfires, farm vehicles, ongoing construction, debris, power tools, downed or live electrical wires, property that has been damaged or in need of repair, slippery or wet surfaces, mud, standing water, falling rocks or tree limbs, uneven or rocky ground or holes or crevices in the roads or ground. I understand and acknowledge that my volunteering is not without risk of serious injury, illness, disease, death, loss or damage to property, and I fully assume all risks in connection therewith. I fully understand that Charlie's Acres owes me no duty of care to keep the Property safe in connection with my volunteer activities, and does not assume responsibility or liability for any injury to persons or property caused by any act or omission of other persons or animals on the Property.

4. Financially Responsible. I understand that *I am solely financially responsible* for any medical treatment or care for any injury or illness resulting from my volunteer activities, whether through my own health insurance coverage or otherwise. I have been encouraged to consult with a medical professional to address any concerns prior to my volunteering, including, for example, any recommended vaccinations before handling animals. I hereby give my permission for Charlie's Acres to arrange for emergency medical care in case of an accident and agree to release Charlie's Acres from any liability associated with obtaining such emergency medical care.

5. Liability Release. In consideration of my participation as a volunteer for Charlie's Acres, and good and other valuable consideration, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, I, together with my spouse, heirs, successors, representatives and assigns (collectively, the "Releasing Parties"), agree to assume all responsibility for, and to forever release, waive, discharge, indemnify and hold harmless Charlie's Acres, including its directors, officers, employees, agents and affiliates, and their respective successors and assigns (collectively, the "Released Parties"), from any and all liability, claims, demands,



losses, damages, actions and judgments of every kind and nature whatsoever which the Releasing Parties may have or which may hereafter accrue to them, against any of the Released Parties on account of any property damage, death, personal injury, illness or disease, and the treatment thereof, including those caused by negligence or carelessness attributable to the Released Parties, whether known or unknown, foreseeable or unforeseeable, relating to my participation as a volunteer for Charlie's Acres. In connection with this Release, I knowingly, willingly and expressly waive the provisions, claims, rights and benefits of the California Civil Code §1542 (or any equivalent statute), which provides: "**A general release does not extend to claims which the creditor does not know or suspect to exist in his favor at the time of executing the release, which if known to him or her must have materially affected his settlement with the debtor.**"

6. Confidential Information. I agree to hold all Confidential Information in strict confidence and to take all actions reasonably necessary to protect the confidentiality of such Confidential Information both during and after my volunteer services. "Confidential Information" means any information that a person exercising reasonable business judgment would understand to be confidential, personal, sensitive or proprietary with respect to Charlie's Acres (including any of its directors, officers, employees, agents or affiliates) that is disclosed to me or to which I have access in connection with my volunteering at Charlie's Acres.

7. Miscellaneous. The above terms and conditions constitute the entire agreement between me and Charlie's Acres, which will remain in full force and effect until expressly revoked or otherwise terminated by Charlie's Acres in writing. By signing below, I give my consent without reservation to the above terms and conditions and represent that I have read this Release and fully understand it is a release of liability and that I am giving up substantial rights, including the right to sue and recover damages. I further represent that I am of legal age and legally competent to execute this Release and that I do so of my own free will. I have not relied on any representations of any kind or character not contained in this Release. I expressly agree this Release is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by law.