

Heart of Dinner

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Educator + School Partner Guide: Heart of Dinner's Student Volunteer Program

Effective May 2025

Thank you for your interest in Heart of Dinner's Student Volunteer Program for students seeking verified student volunteer hours. We deeply appreciate your role in guiding students through our structured process to make a meaningful impact in our community. This guide will help you support your students in contributing to our mission with care, integrity, and purpose while meeting hour verification requirements.

Our Mission

Heart of Dinner addresses food insecurity, social isolation, and loneliness among Asian American older adults in under-resourced communities through weekly care packages containing culturally thoughtful meals, hand-decorated bags, and handwritten notes.

Key Program Details

Two Volunteer Pathways:

1. **Remote Volunteering (All Ages)** - Decorated bags and/or handwritten notes
2. **On-Site Volunteering (Ages 18+ only)** - Wednesday operations in NYC

Hour Verification Standards:

- **Remote:** 3-5 quality bags = 1 hour; 5-8 quality notes = 1 hour
- **On-Site:** Full shift attendance required; full participation throughout shift required; no partial hours verified

Critical Requirements:

- All students must complete our [registration form](#) before volunteering
- **No retroactive verification of student volunteer hours for work done prior to proper registration**
- All work evaluated against specific quality guidelines
- Students track their own hour requirements and deadlines

Why Remote Volunteering Works Best for Students

Remote volunteering offers flexibility and accessibility while meeting our operational needs:

- All ages are able to participate
- Creative expression at students' own pace
- Flexibility around academic schedules
- Classroom integration opportunities
- Direct impact on Elders who treasure these personal items

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Our on-site operations have strict limitations:

- Only open to volunteers 18+ for safety and liability reasons
- Fast-paced environment
- Designed for experienced volunteers
- Working within strict timeframes
- Students must arrive promptly at the start time
- Full shift attendance is required from beginning to end
- Active participation and engagement throughout the entire shift is necessary
- Hours can only be verified when all these requirements are met
- **If student is late, or leaves early, or is distracted and does not make an effort to support operations throughout the shift, we cannot verify partial hours for incomplete participation because:**
 - Each volunteer position is carefully calculated in our operations plan
 - We cannot accommodate late arrivals or early departures without disrupting the entire workflow
 - When someone arrives late or leaves early, it creates a gap affecting all other volunteers
 - Other volunteers must take on additional work, potentially compromising quality
 - Our borrowed spaces have strict timeframes we must honor
 - Our Elders depend on consistent, punctual deliveries each week for their weekly nourishment

Important: We have very limited volunteer spots, and shifts fill quickly. If students are facing a deadline for verified hours and no on-site shifts are available, they can switch their preference to remote volunteering anytime via the [student dashboard](#).

How You Can Support Students

Before Students Register:

- Review our landing page requirements with students
- Emphasize that registration is mandatory before starting any work
- Help students understand our quality standards are non-negotiable
- Discuss realistic timelines for meeting their hour requirements

Supporting Student Success:

- Emphasize that students must follow the specific guidelines provided in their welcome email after registration
- Help students understand that revision requests are part of quality assurance
- Encourage timely completion of all required forms and submissions
- Reinforce that partial work or incomplete participation = no hours

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When Students Struggle:

- Remind them that our small team capacity requires strict adherence to processes
- Help them see quality standards as respect for the Elders we serve
- If students can't meet requirements, guide them toward organizations with more flexibility
- Support students in understanding that hours are earned through quality work, not just time spent

Important Reminders for Students:

- We review work against specific guidelines - not all submissions are automatically approved
- Students must self-monitor their hour goals and plan accordingly
- Quality matters more than quantity
- Full commitment is required - we cannot make exceptions

Building Character Through Heart of Dinner's Student Volunteer Program

Help students understand that following our structure teaches valuable life skills:

- Responsibility and follow-through
- Attention to detail and quality
- Respect for those we serve
- Understanding that meaningful impact requires both heart and discipline
- Each decorated bag and handwritten note carries not just creative expression but genuine caring
- When we complete tasks with attention and care, we honor the dignity of our Elders
- Consistent follow-through transforms good intentions into real impact
- This experience teaches that making a difference in community requires heart, action, and commitment
- Heart of Dinner volunteering experiences help develop empathy that extends beyond service hours
- These qualities—responsibility, consistency, and heart-centered action—serve students well in all future endeavors

Questions? Email students@heartofdinner.org (include your school and role). Response time: at least 5 business days due to our small team's critical operational priorities.

Thank you for partnering with us to provide meaningful service opportunities while maintaining the quality of care our Elders deserve.