UNITY
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

2025 - 2026
UNITY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

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Welcome

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for serving as a volunteer at Unity Christian School! The Unity school administration realizes that we could not accomplish many of the things we do here at Unity without our volunteers. YOU are vital to the success of the school. Your time, talents, and resources are greatly appreciated. I truly hope that you find an area in which to volunteer that fully utilizes your particular talents, and that your volunteer experience with us is rewarding and positive.

There are a myriad of volunteer opportunities including reading in the classroom, making copies for teachers, selling concessions at athletic events, setting up Fine Arts events, assisting with Book Fairs, planning events like the Fall Festival, Father-Daughter Dance, Doughnuts for Dads, and the Southern Affair Dinner & Auction. The Lion's Pride PTO, Athletic Booster Club, and Fine Arts department all serve as important links between parent volunteers and the school, as these groups actually oversee many of these events.

The following information package includes pertinent details about Unity, and the roles and responsibilities of our volunteers. If you have any questions please contact Jeannie King, Director of Logistics & Planning.

Once again, welcome and thank you!

Sincerely,

Dr. John Barge

Head of School

About Unity Christian School

Unity Christian School opened in 1998 with 47 students enrolled in K4 to 5th grade. With the purchase of the former Battey Machinery building, located on the corner of Highway 53 and the Rome Bypass, Unity was able to expand classes to middle school and high school, with its first graduate obtaining a high school diploma in 2007. Today, Unity is a coeducational, college preparatory school that serves more than 390 students in grades Pre-K3 to 12. Unity students come from seven surrounding counties and represent more than 85 diverse church congregations. Unity is a Georgia nonprofit and is a 501(c)(3) organization.

Unity Christian School's Mission, Purpose and Strategy:

The mission of Unity Christian School is to partner with Christian parents in preparing their children to impact the world for Christ by pursuing their God-given potential in academics, leadership, and service.

Our purpose is to guide students to discover their identity in Christ through biblical discipleship and academic excellence.

The strategy is to cultivate critical-thinking in students through biblically integrated learning experiences.

We ask that all volunteers serving at Unity Christian School agree with our Statement of Faith and commit to uphold the Mission, Purpose, and Strategy of the school in their partnership and volunteer service. *We have provided a copy of the Statement of Faith attached as Appendix A.*

Volunteering at Unity Christian School

Purpose of Mobilizing Volunteers

- Provide an organizational structure through which parents and volunteers work with administrators, teachers, and staff to achieve spiritual and educational objectives of the school.
- Create a sense of community among volunteers.
- Ensure the safety of the students.
- Provide standardization and coordination of communication efforts.
- Provide policies and training support for all volunteers
- Encourage and stimulate parental participation in the life of Unity.
- Welcome new families and facilitate their transition into the Unity family.
- Comply with accreditation standards.

The Importance of the Volunteer

- Volunteers are VITAL to what we do at Unity Christian School. We absolutely could not do what we do without all our very willing, hard-working volunteers.
- There are myriad of service opportunities within the Unity community, including options for those who work outside the home.
- Volunteers assist the school in all of the following categories:
    - Teacher assistance
    - Administrative assistance
    - Special event planning
    - Fundraising

Volunteer Structure

- This manual is specifically designed to provide direction for all people who desire to serve in a volunteer capacity at Unity Christian School.

- No policy in this manual will supersede any school policy as outlined in the Faculty/Staff Handbook or the Parent/Student Handbook.
- All volunteers agree to serve without expectation of compensation.
- All volunteers must commit to the following: compliance with all guidelines set out in training and this manual, agreement with the Mission, Purpose and Strategy of UCS and affirmation of the UCS Statement of Faith, and agreement that as a volunteer, they are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for students, families, and employees.

Volunteer Policies

Screening

Serving in the Unity volunteer program is a privilege and requires the agreement of the volunteer to submit to a thorough screening process prior to being permitted to serve. The screening process is outlined as follows:

- Submit a Unity Volunteer Application
- Authorize school administration to obtain a background check
- Authorize school to contact references
- Attend a Unity Volunteer Training Session

Confidentiality

Confidentiality must be observed in all matters. Be professionally discreet, never publicly discuss students, parents, or educators. Especially if you hear sensitive information, be respectful and do not repeat sensitive information to others.

Communications

Modes of communication vary according to the volunteer position, as well as the preference of the club or organization chair, room mom, or teacher. If you ever feel as if communication is lacking, simply ASK! We want to improve communication, but we may need your help.

Standard of Appearance

- Dress within the spirit of the faculty/staff dress code, especially if you are working alongside the teacher in the classroom.
- Attire should be modest and in good taste.
- Modestly fitting jeans in good repair are acceptable.
- Blouses that are see-through or have spaghetti straps should not be worn.

Emergency Procedures

Should you be on campus during a drill or actual emergency, instructions are posted in each classroom indicating how to leave the building, as well as where you should report if there is a tornado. Look for a school employee to guide you.

Grievance Policy

Unity Christian School recognizes the need to have a biblical model for filing a grievance or resolving a conflict. The objective of this policy is to establish biblical guidelines for the resolution of conflict and grievances in the partnership between parents and the school. These guidelines, based upon Matthew 18:15-17, are to be followed as the means for resolving all conflict and grievance. The full policy may be found on page 26 of the Parent Student Handbook.

Volunteer grievance guidelines:

In situations where differences arise between volunteers or between a volunteer and staff, it is advised to first try to resolve these differences amongst the parties involved.

If a third party is needed, the Volunteer Program Coordinator (Advancement Department) is to be informed and involved. It will be his/her discretion as to what level UCS Administration becomes involved. Under no circumstances shall differences be made public or involve other members of the organization.

If the grievance is in regard to the Volunteer Program Coordinator, an appeal may be made directly to the Head of School.

Unity Christian School Volunteer-Student Interaction Protocol

Unity Christian School strives to provide a safe environment for students, families, employees and volunteers. The interaction between adults and children must be consistent in order for children to feel secure. Most often students will interact directly with teachers and administration. Relationships are built and students become very comfortable around the adults that they interact with on a consistent basis. However, there are times when students will also interact with volunteers with whom they have little or no opportunity to build relationships.

The following guidelines are designed to provide <u>consistency for interaction between Unity volunteers who do not regularly interact with students.</u>

Volunteers will:

- Wear an official Unity badge while on campus.
- Introduce themselves by name and position before initiating communication with a student who they are not familiar with.
- Formally introduce themselves again if there is any chance a student might not remember him/her.
- When possible, use the student's name while communicating with them.
- Not interact with a student in a disciplinary situation.

Mandatory Child Abuse Reporting

Teachers, administrators, and certain other employees of Independent Schools have long been subject to the mandatory reporting requirements of the child abuse reporting statute. The law provides it is a crime for a mandatory reporter knowingly and willfully to fail to report suspected child abuse.

Georgia law has recently been amended to include "child service organization personnel" as mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse. "Child service organization personnel" are defined as:

> [P]ersons **employed or volunteering** at a business or organization, whether public, private, for profit, not for profit, or voluntary, that provides care, treatment, education, training, supervision, coaching, counseling, recreational programs, or shelter to children. O.C.G.A. §19-7-5(b)(5).

This definition extends the mandatory reporting requirements to all employees – not just certain designated employees – and all volunteers – including parents, coaches, community volunteers, and board members of Unity Christian School. Volunteers are required to report, as explained below, suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to believe that a child is abused.

> Any person making a report or causing a report to be made in good faith "shall in so doing be immune from any civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed." O.C.G.A. §19-7-5(f).

A report may be made orally, in writing, or by electronic means to:

Rebekah Mathis, Elementary Principal
2960 New Calhoun Hwy NE, Rome, GA 30161
706-292-0700, ext. 313
rmathis@unitychristianschool.org

Volunteer Guidelines

General Guidelines

- All volunteers must check in at the front desk upon arrival. You will be given an official Unity visitor's badge, which is to be worn in a highly visible location.
- Please be prompt and dependable. Take your commitment seriously. People are counting on your presence at an appointed time. If you must be absent, please make every effort to contact the teacher, staff, or other parent volunteer.
- A volunteer should not be alone with an individual student. Further a volunteer should not be left solely supervising a group of students without a paid employee also present. This is for the protection of the student, the volunteer, and the school. In the event of an overnight fieldtrip, chaperones will receive specific instruction prior to the trip regarding expectations and responsibilities.
- Stay with the student group and teacher you are helping. Only attend the activities for which you are on campus.
- Seek to understand and accept all students.
- Follow rules established by the supervising employee.

- Any permission requested by a student/students (i.e. going to the restroom, getting a drink of water, going to the front desk, etc.) should be approved and/or given by a Unity employee
- Direct all disciplinary situations to your supervising employee.
- Volunteers serve in an effort to make the school process function at a higher level. All interaction between Unity students and volunteers must be positive in nature. In the event there is a conflict between a volunteer and a student it must be resolved by the supervising employee and not the volunteer.
- Be supportive, and do not gossip.

Volunteer-Unity Christian School Staff Interaction Guidelines

- Communicate regularly with the teacher or staff member with whom you work.
- You will be most helpful as a volunteer if you are willing to do whatever needs doing. But if you aren't getting to do the things you'd like to do, discuss that with the teacher after school hours.
- Support and supplement the instructional program of the teacher.
- Do not expect the teacher to have time to chat. Class time must be focused on the students. If you need to talk to the teacher about your student, make an appointment to talk outside of school hours.

Volunteer-Student Interaction Guidelines

- Understand the class rules so there are consistent behavior expectations for the students.
- Inform a supervising teacher or administrator when you witness students misbehaving.
    - It is NOT your responsibility to discipline the students. It is okay to ask students to stop unsafe or unkind behavior, but the next step is to let a teacher or other school employee know about the problem and allow them to handle it.
    - If you are having trouble with a student or group you are supervising, let the teacher know immediately, and ask him/her how he/she would like you to handle similar situations in the future.
- Do not raise your voice when speaking to a student.
- Never place your hands on a student.
- Never use corporal punishment.

    - Unity does not practice or permit corporal punishment
- Never be alone in a room with a single student.
- Always be in public places.
- Set a good example for our students, as well as the other volunteers, of Christ-like behavior.

Volunteers' Code of Conduct

- Take your commitment to our organization to heart, performing your duties to the best of your ability.
- Honor confidentiality.
- Respect the mission and goals of Unity Christian School.
- Deal with conflicts or difficulties in an appropriate manner as outlined in this manual.
- Respect the property of Unity Christian School.
- Be courteous, friendly and cooperative.
- Offer constructive feedback about our organization in an appropriate manner.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why do our volunteers need background checks?
One of our main priorities is to keep children safe.

Won't this move deter people from volunteering?
We are confident that all our volunteers will understand and appreciate the great extent we are going to in order to maintain a safe environment.

Do I have to go through the application and screening process every year?
Currently, the volunteer application process is done one time. However, Unity reserves the right to modify this practice and/or ask specific volunteers to undergo additional training and background checks.

Could Unity Christian School use a background check that was done by my church, another agency or employee?
Possibly, if completed within the past year. You should contact your church, employer or agency to get a copy and then bring the copy of the background check to the Volunteer Program Coordinator, and it will be determined if your background check is appropriate.

Is it my responsibility to get a background check?
UCS will obtain the background check on behalf of the volunteer. You need only to sign the application, which is available at the Volunteer Program Training.

Who determines if someone is "cleared" to volunteer?
The UCS Administration will review for approval/denial of volunteer status. Please note that UCS administration may deny an application to volunteer for any lawful reason and may or may not provide an explanation. This is solely within the discretion of UCS administration.

Who is maintaining the records?
Office of the Head of School

What privacy safeguards are in place? Who will be privy to the information?
UCS will maintain these reports. However, the information obtained from these searches includes public records from across the nation. Because of this, UCS cannot guarantee that the information is confidential. If an individual is concerned that a criminal background check will reveal something that they do not want disclosed, they should not volunteer to serve at UCS. UCS will not disclose this to any member of the public unless required by law to do so, but Georgia law does

require disclosure of most government records to members of the public upon a lawful written request (such as discovery in a legal action or reporting required by a state entity).

Do volunteers get a copy of the report?
Yes, they can ask for a copy.

Can they appeal a decision?
There will be no appeal procedure since there is no legal right to volunteer; UCS can always deny an application to volunteer absent discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.

Appendix A
Unity Christian School
Statement of Faith

- We believe the 66 books of the Bible (39 Old Testament and 27 New Testament) are the inspired, inerrant and authoritative Word of God. (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:21; Hebrews 1:1-2)
- We believe there is one God who manifests Himself in three distinct personalities: God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, but without division of nature, essence, or being. (Genesis 1:1, Matthew 28:19, John 10:30; Luke 3:22)
- We believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 10:33) who came down in human form (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, Luke 1:35), lived a sinless life (Hebrew 4:15, Hebrew 7:26), died on the cross (1 Corinthians 15:3, Ephesians 1:7, Hebrew 2:9), was buried, rose again (John 11:25, 1 Corinthians 15:4) and ascended to heaven to the right hand of God (Mark 16:19).
- We believe in the Holy Spirit, whose ministry to the world is the conviction of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment and whose indwelling ministry to the saints is the empowerment to live a godly life, dedicated to serving Christ and His church. (John 14:15–17, Romans 8:13–14, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, Ephesians 4:30, Ephesians 5:18)
- We believe in the total depravity of man. Man is without mercy before God in his natural state. (Romans 1:21-32)
- We believe in the necessity of the new birth for salvation, which comes through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. (John 3:16–19, John 5:24, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8–9, Ephesians 2:8–10, Titus 3:5)
- We believe in the reality of an eternal Heaven and an eternal Hell. (Matthew 25:46)
- We believe that the church is a body of born again believers who meet together for worship, fellowship and evangelism. (Eph. 5:25b-27)
- We believe in the return of Jesus Christ for all believers, dead and alive. (John 5:28-29, 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17)
- We believe in the sanctity of life and that life begins at conception. (Psalm 22:10-11; Psalm 139:13-15; Galatians 1:15; Matthew 19:18)
- We believe that marriage is between a man and a woman, and that sex outside of that relationship violates God's plan and Law. (I Corinthians 6:18-20; Ephesians 5:31-32)
- We believe that homosexuality violates God's plan and Law. (Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)
- We believe that God created mankind in two distinct and complementary sexes, male and female and that transgenderism violates God's plan and Law. (Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 19:4)