



# VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



Toward Zero Waste is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting waste-conscious living in North Carolina, through inspiration, education and action, because every small change matters.

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# Volunteer Handbook

## Our Mission

Toward Zero Waste is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting waste-conscious living in North Carolina, through inspiration, education and action, because every small change matters.

We are based in Cary, North Carolina serving North Carolina residents. We focus on helping individuals, families and communities move toward zero waste by minimizing waste of all kinds, one step at a time.

Find out more about our mission at: <https://towardzerowaste.org/>

Becoming more mindful of the waste that we create, combined with the conscious effort to reduce it, is an empowering step in the overall reduction of waste in our communities. By moving 'Toward Zero Waste' together, we will decrease the need for landfills and our carbon footprint on the Earth, and have a positive effect on our environment and our future.

## Our Vision

Toward Zero Waste sees a North Carolina where individuals, families, businesses and local governments are mindful of the waste they create and take active steps to drastically minimize landfill contributions. We see a North Carolina where reuse, refill, repair, composting and "bringing your own" are the norm, where recycle bins are used only when necessary and where garbage bins are used as a last resort. We envision a North Carolina where plastics, which can last indefinitely, are not used for 15 minutes then tossed. We hope for a North Carolina where Zero Waste is no longer a concept, but a way of life!

# The Toward Zero Waste Volunteer Experience

As a volunteer with Toward Zero Waste, you are helping to grow the zero waste mindset in your community. Together we encourage greater mindfulness around what we use and throw away and help people make small changes that multiply to positively impact our world. Living “toward” zero waste is a rewarding experience. Giving this movement the value of your time by sharing this message is one of the greatest gifts you can offer to our community and planet. For that, we are incredibly grateful! We wish you an enjoyable, safe, fulfilling and rewarding volunteer experience with us!

To learn more about volunteering with Toward Zero Waste and to ensure a fantastic volunteer experience, please take a few minutes to read this guide.

## About the Handbook

This handbook summarizes many of Toward Zero Waste’s volunteer policies and procedures. All Toward Zero Waste staff and volunteers are responsible for administering the policies described in this handbook. The Volunteer Coordinator, Toward Zero Waste Community Directors or staff will be happy to provide you with further information or clarification if needed.

The Toward Zero Waste officers may modify, rescind, delete or add to the provisions of this handbook at any time. If changes are made, we will be sure to notify volunteers as soon as possible.

This handbook does not create a contractual relationship or employee relationship between you (the volunteer) and Toward Zero Waste.

# Toward Zero Waste Values and Guiding Principles

Toward Zero Waste is guided by the following values and principles. While representing Toward Zero Waste at an event or on social media, please follow them as well:

**Education:** We believe the key to behavior change is education. We believe that most actions that contribute to environmental issues do so because these actions are the status quo. Through education, we believe individuals, businesses, corporations and local governments, alike, will begin to make the necessary changes.

**Mindfulness:** We strive to be mindful of our actions and the impacts they have on the environment. Becoming mindful leads to intentionality around changing the behaviors that cause those impacts.

**Intentionality:** We encourage taking intentional steps, however small, to begin building habits which make a living a “toward” zero waste lifestyle second nature.

**Respect:** Always respect others, especially when their viewpoint differs from yours. We celebrate our diversity and know that not everyone will always agree on everything.

**Kindness:** Be kind and understanding. The best way to change behaviors is with patient listening and gentle explanation.

**Tolerance:** The use of the word “toward” is intentional. We are not “all or nothing” in our approach. We believe that small changes matter, and small changes will lead to bigger ones.

**Leadership:** We strive to lead by example; instead of instructing “do this” or “don’t do that” simply share what you have done or have heard other people do.

**Integrity:** Being able to say “I don’t know but I will try to find out and get back to you” is a hallmark of a growth mindset. Environmental issues are complicated because of interconnectivity. No one has all of the answers.

## Our Staff Commitment To You

At Toward Zero Waste we truly appreciate your passion, service and dedication to our environment. We want to make sure you have an impactful and enjoyable experience so, we strive to:

- Provide you with adequate information, training and assistance so that you can be successful in your volunteer position.
- Provide you with guidance, goals and feedback.
- Respect your skills, dignity and individual needs.
- Be open-minded and receptive to your comments and suggestions.
- Treat you as a valued team member.

## Volunteer Program Staff Responsibilities

The Toward Zero Waste, staff responsibilities might include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Recruit people into appropriate volunteer positions
- Provide new volunteers with orientation and training to be successful
- Assist with scheduling or schedule volunteers for volunteer opportunities
- Maintain the confidentiality of volunteers' records and personal information
- Provide regular and appropriate recognition for active volunteers
- Provide ongoing support and assistance for volunteers
- Provide updated information about Toward Zero Waste activities and volunteer opportunities
- Process requests from Toward Zero Waste officers for volunteer assistance, including volunteers for events, initiatives and special projects in timely manner

## Overview of Volunteer Positions:

### **One-time Volunteer opportunities:**

There is a variety of volunteer activities available:

1. **Tabling:** setting up and manning a table at an event to educate people on the toward zero waste lifestyle.
2. **Blogger:** writes blogs for Toward Zero Waste about waste related topics.

3. Litter sweeps: organizes local litter sweeps.
4. Project based tasks: these can be things like sewing reusable bags, starting a composting program, etc...

For volunteer opportunities in other areas, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at [volunteer@towardzerowaste.com](mailto:volunteer@towardzerowaste.com). We are always looking for ways to engage and include volunteers like you because you help make our work possible, if you have an idea, please share it!

### **Long term volunteer opportunities:**

1. Community Directors: lead zero waste efforts in their local community. They can take on local issues themselves, or foster and support Impact Teams to take on these initiatives.
2. Project Managers: Coordinate local Impact Teams
3. Volunteer Coordinators: recruits, supervises and provides direction, coordination, and consultation for all volunteer functions.
4. Social Media Coordinators: someone who assists with social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
5. Grant Writers: identifies and applies for grants pertaining to Toward Zero Waste's mission and vision.
6. Event Coordinators: Coordinate events either statewide or locally.
7. Facebook group moderators: monitors Toward Zero Waste local Facebook groups and enforces the group guidelines.
8. Administration: assists with tasks like newsletters, website updates, etc.
9. Speaking/educating: is available to give talks about waste to other groups or organizations.

**Internships and service-based learning opportunities.** We encourage college students to participate in our internship program!

## Representing Toward Zero Waste

When you serve as a volunteer for Toward Zero Waste, what you say and do reflects on the organization as a whole. We know volunteers may have a variety of beliefs and

values when it comes to issues, and we sincerely accept this diversity of thought. But if there is an issue on which Toward Zero Waste has not taken a position, you should remain neutral on the matter while representing the organization. While we encourage you to be politically active in your personal life, our 501(c)3 prevents us from engaging in political campaigning as an organization. While you are volunteering for us, we ask that you refrain from implying that TZW has any political affiliation. This includes wearing clothing that promotes a candidate or political ideology. Any personal comments you make should be clearly identified as personal comments.

As a volunteer, you are permitted to act as a representative of Toward Zero Waste, but please do so only to the extent defined in your position for which you've been trained.

## Social Media Guidelines

Online communication tools such as blogs and social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) are the main venues people interact with Toward Zero Waste. As your behavior as a volunteer reflects on the organization, please use good judgment when contributing to the Facebook City Groups or other Toward Zero Waste social media venues. We encourage volunteers to join online conversations and spread the word about Toward Zero Waste, but please refrain from speaking as an official representative. If a request for an official statement is requested, please contact or direct the requester to contact your local Community Director or the Executive Team.

When you are engaging with others via social media *on behalf of* Toward Zero Waste, please keep in mind the following:

- Be accurate: Make sure you check your facts who's involved with the issue before posting. Take every precaution to gather the most current information available. Be the first to acknowledge and correct your own mistakes.
- Provide resources: Link back to our website (or valid studies) whenever you can so that people can see where your information is coming from.
- Be considerate: Please do not use profanity, derogatory language or personal attacks, or engage in any other inappropriate conduct.
- Be professional: Do not allow legitimate online explanations of a position or debate to devolve into personal attacks, fights or flame wars that would reflect poorly on you or Toward Zero Waste. If you have any doubts about the appropriateness of your involvement in an online discussion, please disengage

or do not get involved in the first place. Pass along any concerns as soon as possible to your FB Admin, Community Director or the Executive Team.

- **Protect sensitive information:** Protect Toward Zero Waste's confidential and proprietary information as well as the personal information of others. Get permission to use copyrighted content such as photos or videos, or to cite or reference our supporters, partners or suppliers. Do not disclose or use any confidential or business information about Toward Zero Waste, such as member or donor information. Do not disclose personal information about co-workers, volunteers or former employees.

You are encouraged and welcome to use your own social media platforms to help promote Toward Zero Waste's events, volunteer opportunities, advocacy, outreach and more. However, Toward Zero Waste volunteers are prohibited from starting any new social media properties that represent the organization. If you have any questions about this, please send an email to [admin@towardzerowaste.org](mailto:admin@towardzerowaste.org).

## Media Contact

Media relations can be complex. For that reason, we ask that you, as a Toward Zero Waste volunteer, not speak for Toward Zero Waste with media without prior permission from your Community Director and send all inquiries to him/her. Please note that media inquiries are extremely time-sensitive and should be forwarded to [admin@towardzerowaste.org](mailto:admin@towardzerowaste.org) as soon as they are received.

## Standards of Conduct And Customer Service

Toward Zero Waste upholds the highest standards of conduct. When you are serving as a Toward Zero Waste volunteer, we ask that you please do the same. Here are a few service guidelines that we kindly request you follow.

**Be professional.** As a Toward Zero Waste volunteer, please present an image that is both professional and appropriate to your working conditions. Remember, you represent Toward Zero Waste and the first impression you create may be a lasting one. Keep the following in mind:



- You should have a well-groomed appearance.
- Toward Zero Waste t-shirts and reusable name tags (if issued) should be worn and be visible when representing Toward Zero Waste in public. Other attire should be clean and appropriate for the setting.
- Food and drink are allowed at certain events but please keep in mind the zero waste mission of reducing use of single use plastics and walk the talk.
- No volunteer should ever smoke, drink alcohol or use drugs when representing Toward Zero Waste in public.
- Booth and exhibit areas should be kept neat and free of debris. Literature should be displayed neatly and be easily accessible.

**Be positive.** A positive attitude is contagious. Approaching your assignment with enthusiasm and dedication will positively impact other volunteers and community members. Some other tips:

- Raise concerns and share ideas in a positive fashion; focus on solutions, not problems.
- Respond positively to complaints; never argue with anyone or dismiss someone's point of view.
- Offer additional services and information; add value to each interaction.

**Be friendly, courteous and helpful.** Common courtesy goes a long way toward making a favorable impression on our community members, volunteers, donors, corporate partners and partnering organizations. Remember the following:

- A smile goes a long way. Smile when someone approaches you at an event or function.
- Use the person's name whenever possible, and don't forget good manners.
- Practice active listening: Give your undivided attention to the person with whom you are speaking
- Treat each person with kindness, and as an individual.
- Please don't use slang and technical jargon or terms that the other person may not understand.
- Encourage follow up by sharing organization contact information or ways to stay in touch.

**Be knowledgeable.** To help spread the mindset of Toward Zero Waste, it is crucial that you keep up-to-date with what's happening with the issues that affect the environment.

The public sees you as someone who represents Toward Zero Waste, and they expect prompt, courteous and accurate responses to their questions and concerns, regardless of your individual specialty or field of knowledge. So, please stay up-to-date on programs and services by reading the magazine and stories on our website, [towardzerowaste.org](http://towardzerowaste.org). Know and understand Toward Zero Waste's mission and guiding principles. If you don't know the answer to a question, say so. "I don't know, but I can try to find out" is a perfectly acceptable answer. Toward Zero Waste staff can help find the answers if they exist!

Thank you for your interest in volunteering and for reading these guidelines. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Volunteer Director. We hope to welcome you into our organization, so that you can use your skills to help our mission of Toward Zero Waste!

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