

Volunteer Opportunities In and Around Edgewater:

A Just Harvest

By Rose Gruenwald

A Just Harvest, located at 7653 N Paulina St. in Rogers Park, seeks to fight hunger and poverty by providing meals, training and job development, advocating for policies that would make a more just society and the development of urban agriculture. Its values include feeding hunger, cultivating abundance, seeing beyond and building power within the Rogers Park community and the greater Chicago community at large.

Volunteers can donate their time in the community kitchen, or in the programs, Northside P.O.W.E.R. or The Genesis Project. Northside P.O.W.E.R. organizes and advocates for policy, while The Genesis Project provides job training and development, mentoring, business planning, and engagement in urban agriculture. It also always needs volunteers with skills in IT, marketing, plumbing, painting, carpentry, graphic design, photography, videography, administrative work, fundraising and communication skills.

I had the opportunity to speak with Fernanda Ayala, operations assistant at A Just Harvest, about exactly who and what the organization is looking for in a volunteer. I also received information from the volunteer coordinator about when volunteer coverage is needed.

Is volunteering at A Just Harvest very physical? Are there volunteer opportunities that are less physically active?

While most of the work in our community kitchen involves walking around and lifting boxes that are medium heavy, this doesn't mean we don't have less physically demanding tasks. We do have a lot of volunteers who are seniors. Depending on the person's capabilities, we try to assign tasks well suited for them.

How would you describe the ideal volunteer for your organization?

We would describe our ideal volunteer as someone who can follow instructions, listens well, works well with others, and who is eager to help the community.

What are some unique aspects of volunteering at your organization that volunteers should be prepared for and/or excited about?

We believe our volunteers should be prepared to serve the patrons with patience and kindness. We appreciate seeing people excited to be doing something positive and helping out those in need. One of the most unique aspects of volunteering at our organization is the opportunity to serve and work with people from all walks of life. A lot of our volunteers develop good relationships with the patrons that sometimes end up being lifelong.

Coming up, A Just Harvest is looking for volunteer coverage on Thursdays and Fridays. If this sounds like the organization for you, you can let the organization know you're interested by going to the "Volunteer" section of its website at <https://ajustharvest.org>. At the bottom of the page, there is a form to fill out. You also may contact the organization by email or phone, at info@ajustharvest.org or (773) 262-2297.