



**Tremendous
Hearts**

Frequently Asked Questions: Volunteering With Tremendous Hearts

HOW MANY VOLUNTEER POSITIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

Tremendous Hearts admits volunteers on a rolling basis. The final number of volunteers will depend on the needs of our service partners, the quality of the applicant pool, the times of year that applicants wish to begin, our success in raising funds to provide sponsorships to those who require financial support and the range of professions represented amongst applicants.

WHAT TYPE OF SKILLS ARE REQUIRED MOST IN SOUTH AFRICA?

While the formal system of Apartheid ended in 1994, there is still a residual economic and educational “apartheid” amongst the poor, who in South Africa are typically of black or coloured racial groups. This is a result of the inferior or interrupted education for people of color during Apartheid. Many children’s homes and other OVC-supporting organizations were founded by courageous South Africans who have a heart for OVC’s in their community but may not have had much education or formal business experience. One day they take in 2 or 3 children who were living on the street and shortly they are running a home of 50-100 children in some cases, while also managing staff and a facility.

While the skills needed vary greatly by organization, there are a few skill sets that are always in short supply. They include physical therapy, occupational therapy, psychological or pastoral counseling, accounting, fundraising, organizational development specialists, nurses, public health workers, clinical social workers, physicians, early childhood educators, and teachers.

HOW DO I APPLY?

Every person wishing to volunteer with Tremendous Hearts must complete the Volunteer Application Form found on the Tremendous Hearts website. Tremendous Hearts admits volunteers on a rolling basis. Applications may be submitted via email or mail.

WHAT IS THE LIKELIHOOD I WILL BE ACCEPTED?

Your success in gaining a placement will be based on the quality of your application, supporting materials, skills and experience. We have a lengthy application and screening process to ensure that our service partners receive not only the most qualified volunteers, but those most suited to working cross culturally in a developing country like South Africa.

Successful candidates will be outstanding in their chosen field and be able to demonstrate clearly that they can commit their full attention to their service partner and project while they are in South Africa. Applicants who are not successful in achieving a place with Tremendous Hearts are most welcome to apply again after a 12 month waiting period.

IS THERE A FEE TO VOLUNTEER?

No. Tremendous Hearts is a non-profit organization and our operating expenses are covered through fundraising. Volunteers are expected to provide for their own travel and living expenses unless they have been provided with a Tremendous Hearts Sponsorship to cover their housing and transportation.

CAN I APPLY FOR A PLACEMENT OF LESS THAN 6-12 MONTHS?

Generally, no. Our service partners are interested in building the capacity of their organizations and this takes time. It's important that our volunteers are available to our service partners for a period of time long enough to make real and sustainable improvements to the organizations they serve. Only in very special circumstances will we consider short term placements. Applicants who are interested in a short-term volunteer placement should contact one of the many organizations that provide volunteer vacation opportunities.

I WOULD LIKE TO DO A "GAP YEAR" IN SOUTH AFRICA, CAN I DO THIS THROUGH TREMENDOUS HEARTS?

Tremendous Hearts is committed to providing to our service partners volunteers who are highly skilled and experienced professionals. We have a strong preference for volunteers who have completed 4-5 years in their chosen profession after completing their education and who are 25 years of age or older. Applicants who are under 25 or who are just commencing work in their chosen profession may want to apply to one of the volunteer vacation programs operating in South Africa.

IS THERE AN "UPPER AGE LIMIT" TO VOLUNTEERING?

No. In fact, Tremendous Hearts is geared for mature volunteers who are interested in using their significant professional and life experiences to improve the prospects for South Africa's most vulnerable children. We welcome older volunteers who are "young at heart," and in excellent physical and mental health.

DO YOU ACCEPT COUPLE TEAMS?

We do accept couples but each member of the couple must apply and qualify individually. In addition, if sponsorships become available, it is unlikely that more than one sponsorship will be awarded within a family.

MAY I BRING MY CHILDREN?

Tremendous Hearts will consider requests to bring children on a case by case basis. Tremendous Hearts' focus must be on providing volunteers who are able to focus completely on their voluntary commitments and improving the lives of South Africa's orphans and vulnerable children. Our volunteer policy limits the amount of time volunteers have to travel during their service year and none of our service partners will allow volunteers' children to be present on their sites for liability reasons. Volunteers who bring their children will be responsible for locating and arranging child care, schooling, obtaining visas and providing all financial support for their children.

IS FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE?

Volunteers who would like to be considered for a sponsorship should complete the Sponsorship Award Application Form. The award will take the form of Tremendous Hearts' providing housing, utilities and transportation. Sponsorship housing and transportation will be shared by a team of volunteers. Sponsorship recipients will be responsible for their own travel, medical and living expenses. The availability of sponsorships depends entirely on the success of our fundraising. Please enquire about availability before applying for sponsorship.

CAN MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE DONATION TO TREMENDOUS HEARTS TO SUPPORT MY SERVICE YEAR?

Unfortunately Tremendous Hearts cannot receive donations designated for the support of a particular volunteer at this time.

DO YOU OFFER PLACEMENTS ELSEWHERE IN AFRICA?

No. Tremendous Hearts' current focus is on the informal settlements and disadvantaged areas in and around Cape Town, South Africa where the need for OVC support is great. If you are interested in projects based outside of this area you will find a number of other reputable organizations on the web that can assist you in finding a placement in your preferred location.

WHERE ARE TREMENDOUS HEARTS' SERVICE PARTNERS LOCATED?

Most of our service partners are located in the informal settlements ('townships') and disadvantaged areas in and around Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa. Volunteers will need to be comfortable driving to and from these areas during the day.

IS THERE TRAINING AVAILABLE?

Tremendous Hearts' orientation and training program includes a Red Cross First Aid course, basic language training (isiXhosa or Afrikaans), and orientation tours of Cape Town and the informal settlements. In addition, there are weekly team meetings to provide support to, and share information amongst, team members.

WHAT LANGUAGE IS SPOKEN AT THE SERVICE PARTNER FACILITIES, WILL I BE ABLE TO COMMUNICATE?

South Africa has 11 officially recognized languages including English which is the mother tongue of 8.2% of South Africans. English is taught in the school system and broadcast on local television networks and most South African adults are conversant in English. Many pre-school South African children do not, however, speak English. Depending on the location of your service partner the main language spoken in and around the facility will most likely be isiXhosa or Afrikaans. Tremendous Hearts will arrange for volunteers to be enrolled in a basic isiXhosa or Afrikaans course as part of the orientation and training program.

WILL I HAVE A SUPERVISOR AT THE SERVICE SITE?

Each service partner operates differently. In some instances your project supervisor will be located and working with you on a daily basis. In others, volunteers will need to be prepared to work independently. Even though there will always be an employee of the service partner on hand, they may not be in a position to direct you or offer advice on your project. Provisions for support and supervision will be part of the initial project planning process that takes place with the volunteer, Tremendous Hearts and the service partner at the beginning of the volunteer assignment.

HOW MANY OF THE CHILDREN CARED FOR BY TREMENDOUS HEARTS' SERVICE PARTNERS ARE HIV+ OR HAVE AIDS?

South Africa's Constitution carefully protects the rights of children, including the right to privacy concerning health. Many service partners have policies against discussing HIV and AIDS status with anyone other than medical staff. In addition, it is against the law for a child to be tested without the family's consent and, since lack of family is often the reason for a child to be placed in a home, there are frequently children whose status is unknown. As such, it is very hard to know exactly how many children have AIDS or are HIV+ in any given home or project. It is reasonable, however, to assume that given the seriousness of South Africa's AIDS epidemic, that every children's home or OVC project will have children who are HIV+ or who have AIDS. All of Tremendous Hearts' service partners practice universal precautions and these will be taught during orientation and training.

MAY I BRING CASH OR GOODS TO GIVE TO THE CHILDREN OR THE ORGANIZATION I WILL SERVE?

Tremendous Hearts' role is to build the organizational capacity of our service partners including their resource development capacity. The most important donation Tremendous Hearts volunteers can give is the gift of their expertise, energy, time, and physical and emotional support. Accordingly, volunteers should not give donations of money or goods to their service partners as this does not build capacity and will undermine their relationship with their service partners. In addition, if a volunteer is asked by a child or service partner for a donation of any kind, the request should be referred to the Tremendous Hearts' office for response. Volunteers who are specifically building fundraising capacity may from time to time assist in raising money or goods donations with their service partner, but this is done only after a formal planning process that includes a sustainability plan for after the volunteer returns home.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL I HAVE TO TRAVEL WHEN I AM IN SOUTH AFRICA?

Volunteers are expected to honor the time commitments made to their service partners which, although they will vary from placement to placement, will essentially be from 9am – 5pm, five days a week with weekends free for personal time. Tremendous Hearts recognizes South African public holidays and volunteers will not be expected to work on days which are holidays for their service partners. Since many service partners' offices are closed between December 24 and January 2, volunteers will have the holiday week off. In addition, volunteers may also take up to two weeks to travel after their first 3 months of service. Travel weeks must be scheduled at least a month in advance with Tremendous Hearts and the service partner. Volunteers wishing to spend more than two consecutive weeks traveling are encouraged to travel before their start date or after their end date and to include this additional time in their "in-country" dates on their application for an RSA Visitor's Permit.

CAN TREMENDOUS HEARTS HELP US PLAN SIGHTSEEING OR CULTURAL EXCURSIONS?

Tremendous Hearts' focus is on providing highly-experienced long-term volunteers to our service partners. As part of our Orientation and Training program, we will orient volunteers to Cape Town and visit a few of the local cultural sites together. We can also make recommendations on local options for weekend sightseeing. We recommend that volunteers purchase a travel guide or locate a travel site on the web for South Africa (Lonely Planet, Frommer's, etc). For more extensive tours and travel, we recommend that volunteers work directly with a travel agent.

WHAT IS YOUR POLICY ON SMOKING?

Tremendous Hearts volunteers are not permitted to smoke during their service hours, even if it is done out of view of the children and service partners. Additionally, no smoking is allowed in the Tremendous Hearts house, on the house grounds or in the Tremendous Hearts vehicle. This policy is strictly enforced. Volunteers who violate this policy may be considered for dismissal and will be expected to pay for any cleaning services required to restore house, property or car to their smoke-free condition.

WHAT IS YOUR POLICY ON DRUG USE?

The use of drugs is illegal. Any volunteer who is found asking for, buying or using drugs will be dismissed immediately and may be reported to local authorities. This policy is strictly enforced. Dismissed volunteers are responsible for all costs associated with their separation from Tremendous Hearts, criminal prosecution, if any, and their early return home.

WHAT IS YOUR POLICY ON ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION?

Tremendous Hearts volunteers may not consume alcohol before or during their service hours. Volunteers are allowed to drink alcohol as long as their drinking complies with local law, does not endanger their personal safety or the safety of fellow

volunteers, and does not present a negative image of Tremendous Hearts to the community. Volunteers resident in Tremendous Hearts provided housing may drink alcohol at home provided it is done responsibly. Volunteers whose drinking interferes with their volunteer service, damages the image of Tremendous Hearts in the community or endangers anyone's safety will be dismissed immediately. This policy is strictly enforced. Dismissed volunteers are responsible for all costs associated with their separation from Tremendous Hearts, and their early return home.

WHY DO YOU REQUIRE A CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK?

A police clearance or criminal background check is required by the Republic of South Africa to complete an application for a Visitor's Permit. In addition, because our partner organizations are involved with the care of children, it is critical that Tremendous Hearts ensures that none of our volunteers have a criminal history involving children, even if the volunteer's particular project does not specifically involve working directly with children.

HOW SAFE IS CAPE TOWN?

Cape Town is like most big cities in the U.S. and Europe - some areas are safe and others are not. It is important to be aware of your surroundings and not take unnecessary risks as you would anywhere in the world. Try to avoid walking alone at night, avoid wearing obviously flashy jewelry and expensive cameras around your neck, and don't leave valuables unattended. Traveling in the informal areas to our service partners is also generally safe during daylight hours. Further information on living and traveling safely in Cape Town will be covered as part of the Volunteer Orientation and Training Program.

WILL I NEED A CAR?

Yes. The safest places to live are not within walking distance of the service sites. Public transportation in Cape Town can be unsafe, particularly if you are traveling alone. Taxi "wars" and train strikes are also common and can interrupt service for 3-4 days at a time. In addition, volunteers using public transportation may spend an inordinate amount of time (2 hours each way) traveling because of the inefficiency of the routes. Sponsored volunteers will be provided with one car for every four volunteers and will need to coordinate their daily travel. Please refer to the Volunteer Basic Planning Information sheet for more information on renting and buying cars in South Africa.

CAN TREMENDOUS HEARTS HELP ME FIND HOUSING?

Sponsored volunteers' housing is part of their sponsorship. Tremendous Hearts' House will accommodate 4 volunteers with shared bathrooms and kitchen facilities. Self-funding volunteers are responsible for finding and paying for their own housing. We recommend that volunteers arrange for a month of temporary housing in a B&B before they arrive and begin their research on housing before they leave home. The first two weeks of your volunteer assignment will be dedicated to orientation and 'settling in,' including time to find housing. Please see our Volunteer Basic Planning Information sheet (for more information on housing in Cape Town. Tremendous Hearts staff are also available on an adhoc basis to assist with housing-related questions.

HOW MUCH SHOULD I BUDGET?

Please see the Budget Planning Worksheet for information on budgeting.

IS TREMENDOUS HEARTS A RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION?

Tremendous Hearts welcomes volunteers and provides its services to people of all faith traditions and expressly does not proselytize. Tremendous Hearts' founding and work was inspired by Marilyn Votaw's personal Christian faith and her call to the mission field. Faith-based non-profit organizations play an important and substantive role in the social and cultural development of South Africa as they do in most developing countries. Accordingly, many of our South African service

partners are faith-based organizations. Volunteers who would find it uncomfortable working with people of faith or for faith-based organizations may find serving with Tremendous Hearts challenging.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON CAPE TOWN AND SOUTH AFRICA?

Please see the *Get Familiar With RSA - Recommended Reading & Viewing sheet* for suggested resources.

WHO CAN I CONTACT WITH SPECIFIC QUESTIONS?

If you have any specific questions not found on the Tremendous Hearts website or within this Frequently Asked Questions sheet, please email info@tremendoushearts.org and we will contact you directly.