

Welcome!

Welcome to the Toronto Vegetarian Association's Volunteer Handbook. We would like to thank you for the time and effort that you have dedicated to the Toronto Vegetarian Association (TVA). We depend greatly on volunteers to achieve our mission: "to inspire people to choose a healthier, greener, more peaceful lifestyle". Volunteers like you allow us to offer resources and information to people in the Greater Toronto Area about the benefits of a vegetarian diet.

This handbook is designed to introduce you to TVA and give you more information about volunteering with us. In the next section, you'll learn about our vision and values, and how each of our programs helps us achieve our mission. Then you'll find some of our commonly used policies and procedures for volunteer involvement, concluding with TVA's statement of Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities.

After reading the handbook, please read and sign the Volunteer Agreement (page 9) with TVA staff, your program leader or a TVA board member (see APPENDIX A). A copy will be kept on file in the TVA office, and a copy will be provided for your own records as well. You also have the option of completing a Record of Volunteering (see APPENDIX B) for your own future use.

While the Volunteer Handbook provides some background information about TVA and our volunteer policies and procedures, it's by no means a complete orientation to volunteering with us. So if you have any questions, just ask! We're here to help, and have other documents available such as tabling orientation and FAQs.

We hope you enjoy volunteering with TVA, and thank you again for your contribution.

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"As a volunteer-driven organization, the Toronto Vegetarian Association (TVA) is committed to providing volunteers with meaningful opportunities, as well as support and encouragement for the essential duties that they perform. Volunteers have always been the leaders of TVA, initiating new projects and ensuring the continued success of our core programs. It is through the work and commitment of TVA's volunteers that we are able to succeed in our mission to inspire people to choose a healthier, greener, more peaceful lifestyle."

–Approved by the TVA board of directors on February 10, 2009

Introducing the Toronto Vegetarian Association: Who We Are

Our Mission: To inspire people to choose a healthier, greener, more peaceful lifestyle.

Our Values:

The Toronto Vegetarian Association aims to:

- promote vegetarian and vegan lifestyles for the health of people, non-human animals, and the environment
- provide expert information about the ethical, environmental, and health implications associated with animal-based foods
- provide support to those interested in, considering, or practicing vegetarian and vegan lifestyles, regardless of their motivations
- celebrate Toronto's diverse vegetarian communities and cultivate their further growth

The Toronto Vegetarian Association will operate in a way that:

- embraces our grassroots, volunteer-driven history
- is fiscally responsible and forward-thinking
- is socially responsible and eco-friendly
- is open and respectful to new ideas and people from all backgrounds
- shows its appreciation of the contributions made by volunteers and staff

Our Vision:

We envision a world where people think critically about their food choices, where market forces drive food producers to provide healthier plant-based foods, and where all animals are treated with compassion and kindness.

We envision a green Canada that eats its greens, and enjoys a reputation as one of the healthiest countries on the planet. We want communities that care deeply about food issues. We see Toronto leading by example through its diversity of popular vegetarian restaurants and network of vegetarian-friendly organizations. The Toronto Vegetarian Association supports this vision by promoting a lifestyle that ensures a sustainable environment, healthy people, and the compassionate treatment of animals.

We are committed to a healthier future, a greener future, and a more peaceful future. We believe that vegetarian and vegan lifestyles will lead to such a future.

Volunteering with the Toronto Vegetarian Association: Office and Resource Use Guidelines

Booking Meetings

Meetings in the Toronto Vegetarian Association office should be booked with staff at least one week in advance by telephone (416-544-9800) or email (admin@veg.ca). Office bookings will be confirmed by staff. Meetings can also be booked for free at Metro Hall by TVA staff if given enough notice.

After-hours Office Access

Volunteers (including those with keyholder and door-code privileges) may have after-hours access to the office only when permitted by TVA staff. Volunteers and staff may only use the TVA office after-hours for TVA purposes. Please ensure that all lights are turned off, and that both the office door and the door leading outside are locked before leaving.

Office Equipment Use

TVA office equipment (including computers, telephones, appliances, etc.) is primarily for use by volunteers and staff working on TVA projects. Provided that this equipment is not being used for these purposes, it may occasionally be used by volunteers and staff for personal use at the discretion of TVA staff. When permitted by staff, the printer may be used to print no more than five (5) pages of personal documents.

Personal files should not be left on the hard drives of the computers. If found, these files will be deleted. When using computers for email and internet browsing, volunteers and staff are expected to exercise caution with respect to viruses. Volunteers and staff may not install any computer software or applications without the approval of senior staff.

Kitchen appliances may be used by all volunteers and staff. Dishes are also available for use by volunteers and staff. Please wash, dry, and put away all dishes immediately after use.

Food in the Office

Non-vegetarian items (meat, fish, fowl and the flesh of any animal) may not be stored in the fridge, heated in the microwave, or consumed on the premises. Alcoholic beverages may not be consumed on the premises.

Coffee, tea and other beverages stored in the office or in the fridge are considered communal unless otherwise labeled.

Reimbursement Policy

Volunteers and staff will be reimbursed for expenditures made on behalf of TVA, provided that expenditures are pre-approved by TVA staff or the treasurer, and provided that original receipts are presented within two (2) weeks.

Volunteers who travel by TTC will be reimbursed with TTC tokens for travel to and from volunteer shifts.

Volunteering with the Toronto Vegetarian Association: Volunteer Code of Conduct

Our Volunteer Code of Conduct provides volunteers with a set of clear expectations with regards to their volunteer involvement with the Toronto Vegetarian Association.

We ask all our volunteers to familiarize themselves with the Volunteer Code of Conduct and to follow these guidelines in their volunteer work with TVA. TVA staff share the responsibility of ensuring that the Code of Conduct is understood and followed by TVA volunteers, and that copies of the Code of Conduct are made available to all volunteers.

Commitment

TVA volunteers are expected to complete their duties in the way that these duties are explained to them through their job description and by TVA staff or their program leader. While there is usually room for flexibility with volunteer positions, volunteers are expected to comply with recommendations made by their supervisor.

TVA depends on our volunteers, and therefore needs volunteers who are dependable. We understand unforeseen circumstances such as illness can arise, however frequent, unexplained absences or lateness is considered unacceptable, as it would be with any other organization. Volunteers are expected to be on time for their volunteer shifts and available for the full duration of their shift, unless alternate arrangements have been made with their supervisor prior to the shift. When unforeseen circumstances occur, volunteers should give notice as soon as possible.

Some volunteer positions at TVA require volunteers to complete training and a minimum time commitment. Volunteers are expected to meet the commitments listed in their job description.

Representing the Toronto Vegetarian Association

Volunteers are expected to represent TVA's Mission, Values and Vision (see page 3) to the public in a manner that is open and respectful to new ideas and people of all backgrounds.

Volunteers may not advocate the consumption of meat, fish or fowl or the flesh of any animal while representing the Toronto Vegetarian Association or while otherwise on duty.

Media inquiries are best handled by TVA spokespeople specifically trained in media relations and briefed on the organization's formal position on various issues. We ask that if approached by the media while representing TVA, that volunteers speak explicitly of their own experiences, and not on behalf of the organization, unless requested to do so by senior staff. Volunteers who have read and are familiar with our Media Tip Sheet, may respond to media inquiries regarding the activities of TVA, however they may not describe the organization's position on specific issues, and are strongly discouraged from commenting upon controversial issues that could result in portraying a negative image of the TVA.

The following policy statement was approved by the Board of Directors, and may assist you in considering your interactions with the public.

Celebrating Vegetarian Choices: *The Toronto Vegetarian Association is an organization that brings together vegetarians of various motivations to work towards a common goal – to inspire people to choose a healthier, greener, more peaceful lifestyle. TVA defines a vegetarian as “someone who lives on a diet free of the flesh of any animals with or without the addition of dairy products, eggs or honey.”*

TVA celebrates all those who choose a vegetarian lifestyle. Some vegetarians are also vegan and these are two separate choices. We ask that staff and volunteers focus on celebrating the benefits of vegetarianism while accepting and supporting the choices made by fellow TVA supporters.

In order to develop a positive, open dialogue with members of the public, we must be respectful of everyone’s choices, whether we agree with them or not. Volunteers should remember that we all come to vegetarianism at our own time and for different reasons. When representing TVA, we ask that you keep this in mind as you promote TVA’s mission.

Confidentiality

Confidential information such as membership records and volunteer contact information are to be kept private and secure. This information should not be shared with members of the public under any circumstances.

Contact information for TVA members and volunteers can only be disclosed to TVA volunteers for the purposes of the Toronto Vegetarian Association.

Personally identifiable information will only be used to provide a product, information, or service as requested, to send information about our products, information or services, or for processing pre-authorized payments.

For more information on TVA’s Privacy Policy, speak with a staff or Board member.

Conflict of Interest

Volunteers are expected to reveal any potential conflict of interest where they might stand to profit directly or indirectly from the outcome of a decision, before participating in any discussion of this decision. Volunteers should not be involved as decision-makers where a conflict of interest, or the appearance of a conflict of interest, is found to exist.

Volunteering with the Toronto Vegetarian Association: Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities – Volunteer Copy

TVA volunteers have the right to:

- Receive support and feedback from TVA staff and/or program leaders.
- Be given a copy of the TVA Volunteer Handbook and a description of their position.
- Be engaged in a way that is open to new ideas and respectful towards people of all backgrounds.
- Have the opportunity to confidentially note their concerns and ideas for improvement to volunteer policies and procedures.

TVA volunteers are expected to:

- Read and understand the Volunteer Handbook.
- Be open and respectful to new ideas and people of all backgrounds.
- Remember that we all come to vegetarianism at our own time and for different reasons, and to keep this in mind when representing TVA and promoting TVA's mission.
- Follow the Volunteer Code of Conduct in the execution of their work with TVA.

Volunteer Agreement

“I, _____, have read and understand the Volunteer Handbook. I agree to follow the Volunteer Code of Conduct in the execution of my work with the Toronto Vegetarian Association.”

Volunteer (signature)

Date

TVA (signature)

Date

Please sign the Volunteer Agreement with TVA staff, a TVA board member (see the list in APPENDIX A), or your program leader. One copy will be kept on file at the TVA office, and one copy is provided to the volunteer.

Please feel free to list your skills and interests below, which may help in determining future volunteer opportunities suited to you with the Toronto Vegetarian Association.
