

Volunteer Handbook



Dear Volunteer

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Gilda's Club!

On behalf of our entire staff team, we appreciate the help you provide in making possible the free, year-round cancer and grief support programming offered through GCGR. We so value your time and talents and hope always to provide you with a rewarding and fun volunteer experience.

We couldn't do it without you! Volunteers are the driving force behind all that we are able to accomplish. Volunteers are the public face of Gilda's, our most effective communicators, our biggest fans and – along with our members – you are the biggest inspiration behind what we do.

We ask that you continue to spread the love and share in the important work of Gilda's Club. Whether you choose to volunteer a little or a lot, know you are helping keep the red door of Gilda's Club Grand Rapids open to those in need of support as they face life's toughest challenges.

Thank you for the help you provide in creating a warm and welcoming Clubhouse for our members and so much more. Please know that we are truly In This Together, here to help you along the way and thrilled that you are part of the Gilda's Club Family.



With deepest appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Benjamin A. Mepham". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Benjamin A. Mepham
Volunteer Manager,
Gilda's Club Grand Rapids

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Important Contacts

Call the parlor desk to be connected with staff

Parlor Desk

parlor@gildasclubgr.org

(616) 453-8300

Ben Mepham, Volunteer Manager

bmepham@gildasclubgr.org

(616) 453-8300 x121

Gilda's Club Locations & Hours

Grand Rapids Clubhouse

1806 Bridge St NW

Grand Rapids MI 49504

Lowell Clubhouse

314 South Hudson St

Lowell MI 49331

Hours of Operation

Mon. - Thurs., 9:00AM-9:00PM

Fri., 9:00AM-1:00PM

3rd Sat., monthly, 9:00AM-1:00PM

Hours of Operation

Tues., 12:30-8:30PM

Need to get ahold of us?

Running late? Need to cancel a shift?

If you are running late or if you need to cancel a shift happening in fewer than 24 hours, **PLEASE CONTACT THE PARLOR DESK** by calling **(616) 453-8300**.

Please update the parlor host and ask to be connected with staff.

Make changes or cancel shifts scheduled more than 24 hours away by contacting your Volunteer Manager.

Our volunteers all have important jobs to do and we will need some time to find a replacement for you if something comes up. Please get ahold of us as soon as you can. We appreciate the heads up!!



Our Mission

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids provides free emotional healthcare to children, adults, families and friends on any kind of cancer journey or those grieving the death of someone in their life due to any cause.

Our History

Founded with love by cancer survivors, we officially opened the doors of Gilda's Club Grand Rapids on February 15, 2001. However, the grassroots movement to bring a Gilda's Club to our community began in the spring of 1996 by local philanthropist Twink Frey. As a cancer survivor, she knew personally the lack of social and emotional support resources available to her when she was going through her diagnosis, treatment and life altering "after effects." She was joined by two other local cancer survivors – Deb Bailey and Susan Smith – and, together, these three women set about the task of founding Gilda's Club Grand Rapids.

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids

Locally Based and Independent

The Cancer Support Community (CSC) has over 170 locations worldwide including 46 licensed affiliates and health care partnerships across North America. Even though Gilda's Club Grand Rapids is affiliated with the CSC, we are independently operated by a locally based Board of Directors. We are our own charitable 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Supported 100% Through Charitable Gifts

We support our free programs entirely through cash donations and gifts primarily given through individuals (54%), foundation grants and corporate support (16%), and fundraising events including LaughFest (30%). (Based on \$1.3 million fiscal year 2018 operating budget). We receive no government grants, fees for service, health care reimbursements or ongoing funds.

Sustained by Volunteer Power

While we have a core professional staff at Gilda's Club Grand Rapids, part of the way we are able to offer our program free of charge is through the incredible efforts of our volunteers – who donate their time in many ways.

Skillfully Led with a Focus on the Program

Under the leadership and guidance of the Board of Directors and our President, we are proud to say that 79 cents on every dollar raised goes to our programs. Twelve cents of every dollar helps us raise the funds needed to support our Clubhouse and programs, while the remaining nine cents goes to administration. One hundred percent of every dollar raised stays right here in West Michigan.

Gilda's Story

Gilda Radner was born to make people laugh.

As one of the “Not Ready for Prime Time Players” featured in the original cast of the groundbreaking Saturday Night Live, Gilda Radner charmed us with characters like Rosanne Rosanneadanna, Emily Litella, and sniffly-nosed Lisa Loopner who always got an affectionate “Noogie” from co-star Bill Murray. We remember her for the phrases she created with writer Alan Zweibel, such as “Never mind!” and “It’s always something.”

Her legacy is the range of her comedic characters, her films with her husband, Gene Wilder, and her work on Broadway, including *Gilda Radner: Live from New York*. But she played another role, a part she called “The Invisible Cancer Woman” in the saga of “The Adventures of the Independent Bald-headed Chemo Patient.” When Gilda was diagnosed with ovarian cancer on October 21, 1986, she wrote about this and other experiences living with cancer in her book, *It's Always Something*.

During her treatment, Gilda became part of a cancer support community, and she wished that anyone dealing with cancer would be able to receive the kind of support she found there. After she died at the age of 42 on May 20, 1989, Gene Wilder along with Joanna Bull, Gilda's cancer therapist, began to plan Gilda's Club, a free cancer support community. The first Gilda's Club opened in New York City in June 1995.



Our Motto

In This Together...Learn, Share, Laugh

Our program includes opportunities for education, support and fun. Below are a few ways that we put this ideal into action.

Learn

Gilda's Club offers *lectures* on topics of interest to members such as "Updates in Breast Cancer Treatment" and "Chemo Brain" provided by oncologists, nutritionists, nurses and other experts.

Workshops – experiential, hands-on activities facilitated by a volunteer with expertise in a particular field happen regularly within our Clubhouse and include yoga, dance and classes in cooking and arts and crafts.

Share

Sharing happens in *committed goup meetings* facilitated by licensed professionals for those impacted by cancer or grief, including children and adults. Meetings are structured around a common diagnosis or interest such as breast, prostate and lung cancer.

Suppers Together are meals provided free to the whole family in a community setting every Monday-Thursday evening starting at 5:15PM, year round.

Laugh

Connecting with others in a fun context is one of the most prominent aspects of Gilda's Club. We regularly invite members to attend *Social Gatherings* and events such as potlucks, movie nights, musical performances and holiday parties, including Halloween Noogiefest, one of our most popular member events. Many of our events, including the West Side walk and Gilda's LaughFest, are open to members as well as the general public.

Common Myths

Help us dispel some common misconceptions

Gilda's Club is just for women

Nearly half of our membership is comprised of men and children. Gilda's Club is free, welcoming and open to all regardless of income, type of cancer or type of death.

Gilda's Club provides support for specific cancers (i.e. breast, ovarian) only

We offer support for those journeying through any/all cancers AND for all types of grief regardless of the cause of death.

People live at Gilda's Club

Gilda's is a place for community and it is nonresidential. Despite its homelike setting, members do not live at the Clubhouse.

Gilda's Club is a depressing place

Members say that they get their smile and laughter back in the Clubhouse. Our mission is to help members regain a sense of normalcy in their life through this journey.



Spreading the Love

Be an ambassador

Volunteers are our greatest ambassadors, truly the public face of Gilda's Club and the people making first impressions regularly. We look to you to help create a warm and welcoming Clubhouse. Please do all you can to strike up meaningful and thoughtful conversations with members within the Clubhouse and, no matter where you are, help educate the general public about Gilda's Club Grand Rapids, the work we do and our volunteer program.

Helpful questions to ask

- Have you been to Gilda's Club before?
- Do you know what kind of help Gilda's provides?
- Did you know Gilda's Club serves a free meal to members every Monday-Thursday?
- Did you know GCGR is one of the largest and busiest Gilda's Clubs nationwide?
- Have you heard about the grief support program at GCGR?
- Have you been to Gilda's LaughFest?
- Did you know that all programming at Gilda's Club is offered to anyone in the community absolutely free?
- Were you aware that Gilda's Club programming also happens in classrooms and hospitals throughout greater-Grand Rapids?
- Would you like to learn about how get involved as a volunteer?



The Gilda's Club Team

Zack Berends	Project Coordinator
Melissa Budynski	Program Staff
Leigh Conard	Finance Director
Hannah Dayton	Marketing Communication & Events Manager
Mark Dillon	Building & Grounds Manager
Auna Dwelle-Olson	Program & Admin Coordinator
Kelsey Gerber	Business Manager
Deb Graham	Administrative Staff
Lehanna Hardy	Program Staff
Wendy Jones	Office Coordinator
Lindsay Jousma	Director of Program Operations
Molly Keating	Program Staff
Ben Mephram	Volunteer Manager
Beth Nelson	Clinical Manager
Mitch Neubert	LaughFest Sponsorship Manager
Sandi Oosse	Program Staff
Julie Petrie	Program Staff
Emily Robertson	Kitchen Coordinator
Joanne Roehm	Director of Strategic Initiatives & LaughFest
Shawn Ruetz	Director of Development & Engagement
Beth Shepherd	Program Staff
Pam Strebel	Housekeeper
Dorace Van Meurs	Clinical Program Director
Chris VanRaalte	Finance Assistant
Daryl Vogel	Vice President of Development
Tracey Whiting	Minority Program Coordinator
Wendy Wigger	President

Meet your GCVLT

Gilda's Club Volunteer Leadership Team

The Gilda's Club Volunteer Leadership Team (GCVLT) are a group of top-tier, leadership volunteers with Gilda's Club. Throughout the year, working closely with staff, the GCVLT streamlines materials and procedures related to the volunteer program. The team regularly completes project work related to volunteer recruitment & retention, volunteer training, special event-planning, volunteer incentives & appreciation, group volunteer coordination and more.

Most Gilda's Club events have at least one GCVLT member present, there to run Volunteer Headquarters, help oversee the event and provide direction and leadership to general volunteers. GCVLT are typically involved with LaughFest as well.

The overarching goal of the GCVLT is to ensure the smoothest running and best, most fun and fulfilling volunteer experience for everyone involved.

Your GCVLT are

Fred Creager

Eric Egeland

Leslee Hardebeck

Joanna Hodges

Don Looman

Tara Lovejoy

Interested in joining the GCVLT?

We'd love to have you with us on the team! For more information, contact Ben at bmepham@gildasclubgr.org. Application and interview required.

Getting Started

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with us!

There are many ways you can get involved and help as a Gilda's Club volunteer. We welcome individual volunteers aged 16+* and encourage volunteering alongside friends and family. Most volunteer shifts are between 3-6 hours and, depending on the related programming or event, may take place mornings, afternoons, evenings, late-night weekdays and on the weekends.

Groups of colleagues, students, etc. commonly volunteer with Gilda's Club, most often in our kitchen, on our grounds or at a special event. We work directly with groups both small and large in size to find the best fit.

Whether you volunteer a little or a lot, know you will be bringing smiles and laughter to the lives of many, all while helping keep the Red Door of Gilda's Club Grand Rapids open!

Attend a New Volunteer Orientation

All first-time individual volunteers are required to attend a New Volunteer Orientation prior to signing up for a shift. Orientations are generally offered twice a month at Gilda's Club Grand Rapids and monthly at Gilda's Club Lowell.

At orientation, prospective volunteers will take part in a guided tour of the Clubhouse, learn about the mission/history/philosophy of both Gildas Club and Gilda's LaughFest, and will get information about the many ways to get involved.

Sign up for a New Volunteer Orientation by visiting gildasclubgr.org/get-involved

* We welcome volunteers 16 years of age and older. Volunteers aged 15 and younger may be permitted to volunteer with Gilda's Club and/or LaughFest. This is to be determined on a case by case basis and requires a guardian/parent to volunteer alongside the minor. Note, some LaughFest events require volunteers to be aged 21+.

Volunteer Teams

Join a team that is the best fit for you

Below is a list of volunteer teams along with a description of basic roles & responsibilities. Joining a team is the most typical way volunteers get involved as well as the best way to stay informed about upcoming opportunities.

Noogieland Team

Actively engage in play and supervision of children aged 0-8 in our play area, Noogieland. Assist social workers facilitating activities, games, discussions, story time, etc. aimed at teaching positive coping skills as they face life's toughest stuff.

Desk Receptionist Team

Uphold the warm & welcoming clubhouse environment that Gilda's Club strives to create for all guests. Make a positive first impression over the phone and face-to-face, greet members, answer phones, assist with staff projects, etc.

Youth Program Team

Assist Social Workers in the facilitation of cancer & grief support programming and activities for teens/tweens aged 8-18 years, Wednesday/Thursday evenings.

Program Instructor

This team is comprised of specialized volunteers able to host workshops, teach classes, give lectures, etc. for Gilda's Club Members.

Ambassador Team

Spread the love of Gilda's at special events, info booths and career/volunteer fairs. Distribute promotional materials, provide Clubhouse Tours and encourage individuals to become members and/or get involved in our Volunteer Program.

House & Grounds Team

Help keep the Clubhouse environment warm & welcoming through cleaning, organization and decorating of indoor spaces. Help keep our surrounding gardens, pathways and flowerbeds on the grounds looking their best.

Office Team

Assist Gilda's Club Staff in office/administrative work and projects including office organization, phone calls, computer work, hands-on projects and database updating. Office and computer experience preferred.

Events Team

Help at Gilda's Club events open to the public and/or member events. Events include West Side Walk, Gilda's Club Open, Halloween NoogieFest and the Holiday Party. Volunteer roles include décor, greeting, food area, activities facilitation, retail, event photography, transportation and more.

Meal Team

Assist with preparing the Gilda's Club bi-monthly program calendar mailing for distribution and with other event-related or fundraising-related mailings.

Transportation & Errands Team

Transportation opportunities include driving shuttles and golf carts at special events or moving supplies. Errands range from delivering Gilda's Club programs to area hospitals and doctor's offices to helping shop for supplies needed by staff.

Mail Team

Assist with preparing the Gilda's Club bi-monthly program calendar mailing for distribution and with other event-related or fundraising-related mailings.

Card Team

Hand-write thinking of you, thank you and bereavement messaging in cards for members, donors, sponsors, volunteers, etc. Language and cards provided. Other opportunities include the creation of decorative hand-made cards.

It's Always Something Team

Volunteers on this team help in any number of unforeseen ways. As Gilda said, "It's Always Something!" Be 'on call' to help with short-notice requests, last-minute projects, assist with special projects, and reinforce volunteer staffing at events.

Volunteer Application

Fill out a volunteer application

Prospective volunteers are asked, typically at New Volunteer Orientation, to complete a Volunteer Application, providing us with basic details, selecting volunteer teams and specifying other areas of interest. After you submit your application, staff will be in touch to provide information on next steps for getting started. Volunteers may be asked to update their details and team preferences on a periodic basis.

Get started on your application now by visiting gildasclubgr.org/volunteer-application-form

Additional Training

Attend Team-Specific Training Sessions

Please note, the following teams require additional volunteer training beyond New Volunteer Orientation and/or interview before approval:

- **Noogieland Team**
- **Desk Receptionist Team**
- **Youth Program Team**
- **Program Instructor**
- **Ambassador Team**
- **Office Team**

If you have apply to any of these teams, staff will be in touch with you directly with upcoming training dates and times or to request an intererview.

All other teams do not require additional training for approval. Staff will meet with you briefly at the beginning of your shift to cover information related to your role and to provide direction.

Other ways to get involved

Please let us know if you would like to receive more information on these other ways to get involved and volunteer with us:



Gilda's LaughFest

LaughFest volunteer applications go live each January. Consider joining as a general volunteer on the Smile Team or become part of a special team or leadership team. New Volunteer Orientations and special team training sessions take place in January/February. 150+ LaughFest events take place over 10 days in March with volunteers at all of them. More information at laughfestgr.org.

Club Red

Club Red is a young professionals networking group who works educate the community about our Gilda's Club mission and programs. Engage in creative fundraising, serve members at the Clubhouse, plan/attend events and more.

Camp Sparkle

Named after Sparkle, Gilda Radner's Yorkshire Terrier, Camp Sparkle is a free summer day camp offered throughout July to children who have been impacted by cancer or grief. Assist staff in equipping children with positive coping skills while having fun.

Gilda's LaughFest



About Us

Gilda's LaughFest, the nation's first-ever community-wide festival of laughter, has quickly earned a reputation for being one of the nation's marquee events for both participants and artists. This major 10- day Midwest festival is based in Grand Rapids and includes events throughout West Michigan. Created by Gilda's Club Grand Rapids and launched in March 2011 to celebrate laughter for the health of it, the festival features stand-up, improv, film, showcases, and a variety of seriously funny stuff.

We are serious about our "funny" here. LaughFest brings together a diverse audience of children and adults every March to honor laughter as an essential part of emotional health and well being. And what better time for a laughter festival than when it's typically cold, icy, and distinctly un-funny outside?

All proceeds from LaughFest benefit the programs offered through Gilda's Club Grand Rapids, a free community with a comprehensive program of education, structured sharing times, networking, lectures, workshops, and social activities designed to support emotional health.

Volunteer help makes LaughFest possible

LaughFest seriously couldn't happen without the help of hundreds of volunteers. Opportunities include greeting & ushering, collecting donations, selling merchandise, event photography, transportation, production & logistics including audio-visual as well as volunteer leadership roles. Get involved at laughfestgr.org.



Gilda's Club Lowell

Volunteer at our Lowell Clubhouse

Gilda's Club Lowell is located in a renovated farmhouse at 314 South Hudson Street in a space shared with Lowell Senior Neighbors. Programming for members happens on Tuesdays, weekly, and features support groups for children, teens and adults, educational lectures & workshops and fun activities for all ages.

For more information about our Lowell partners visit pinkarrowpride.org, lowellcommunitywellness.org and seniorneighbors.org.

Get involved by joining a Gilda's Club Lowell Volunteer Team. Apply to volunteer at gildasclubgr.org/volunteer-application-form. See next page for a list of Lowell Teams along with a description of basic volunteer roles & responsibilities.



Adult Program Mentor**

Help recruit new adult members, serve as a mentor to those impacted by cancer or grief, assist in coordinating lecturers and workshop leaders.

Meal Team

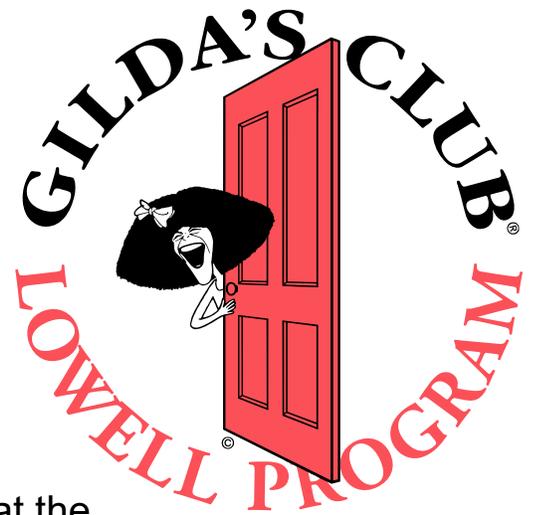
Commit to helping in the kitchen by setting-up the dining room, serving food to members and cleaning-up post-meal. Prepare thank you cards for meal assistants and providers.

Garden Team

Help keep gardens, pathways and flowerbeds on the Lowell Clubhouse grounds looking their most beautiful.

Social Activities Team

Plan and volunteer at social events for Gilda's Club Lowell members, including Holiday Parties. Decorate, plan food & entertainment, recruit volunteer help, etc.

**Warm & Welcoming Team****

Provide a “warm and welcoming” Clubhouse environment by greeting & assisting our members at the front desk., answer phone, assist with staff projects, etc.

Youth Advisory Team

Promote community-wide awareness of the Youth Program in schools, churches, etc., brainstorm, plan for and host annual teen retreats. For teen volunteers only.

Youth Program Team**

Help provide childcare in Noogieland daytime/evenings, assist Social Workers in facilitating children's programming, assist with planning family-friendly activities.

It's Always Something Team

Assist with a variety last-minute needs as they come up, run errands, help fill volunteer slots at events after short-notice cancelations, etc.

*Please note, teams with ** require training and/or interview before approval.*

Basic expectations

Volunteering with Gilda's Club

We are thrilled that you have chosen to be part of our volunteer force! We want to equip you with what you need to know so that you are at your most confident and successful and most likely to have a lot of laughs along the way. Below are a few simple reminders of the expectations we have for our volunteers.

Be an Ambassador / Be 'On Stage'

Help to create a warm & welcoming environment for those you connect with at the Clubhouse and off-site, whether members, other volunteers or the public in general. Learn all you can about our organization and help spread our mission of emotional health and healing within the community. Represent Gilda's Club positively at all times and stay positive and friendly in the presence of staff, the general public and, above all, members. Know that everything you do matters in creating a positive experience and impact.

Commit & Understand Your Role

Be committed to your volunteer role, your schedule and your team meetings. Follow through on additional team training as required. Read our communications and call-outs, sign up for shifts as your schedule allows. Understand your role and responsibility so that you are clear on what you are doing and who you are helping.

Flip It Up!

Anything can happen during a Gilda's Club shift – and usually does! We ask that you be flexible and open to doing what is needed in the moment, even if it isn't what you were expecting and not exactly what you signed up for. Your willingness to flip it up, provide support and reinforcement and make the most of the opportunity is much appreciated! Please be understanding if we need to reassign you or release you from a position in the moment.

Be Inclusive and Embrace Diversity

Foster an environment of inclusion and respect. This means accepting ideas different from your own and embracing individuals from all walks of life, ability, ethnicity, race, age, language, gender expression and sexual orientation. Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated.

Dress the Part / Wear Your Volunteer Badge

Please dress appropriately for representing Gilda's Club – khakis/nice jeans are fine. Please always wear your volunteer name badge (given to you at the Parlor Desk at your first shift). Volunteers at some events will be given a special shirt. Otherwise, you may wear a Gilda's Club shirt, an outfit with a 'splash of red,' or LaughFest shirt. We recommend wearing comfortable shoes and encourage volunteers to accessorize with GCGR and/or LaughFest bling (Yellow Up!). Volunteers not appropriately dressed will be released from their assignment.

Sign-in & Sign-out / Be on Time

All volunteers are required to sign-in and sign-out for all shifts. For shifts at the Clubhouse, check in at the parlor desk upon arrival and use your volunteer badge to sign in at the kiosk. For off-site events, check in with staff or leadership volunteers and to receive direction and answers to any questions you may have.

Communicate / Don't 'No-Show'

Shift changes for events more than 24 hours away can be made by calling, emailing or through the Volunteer Portal. To cancel shifts starting in less than 24 hours (for any reason), please contact Volunteer Manager, Ben Mepham, at bmepham@gildasclubgr.org or (616) 453-8300 x121. Far-advanced notice of shift cancelations is greatly appreciated, allowing us sufficient time to find a replacement for the volunteer role.

Volunteers who 'no-show' at shifts/events may be released from further association with the Gilda's Club Volunteer Program at the discretion of staff.

CRITICAL – If you are ill, please contact us and plan to cancel your shift. We must not put the health of our immunocompromised members at risk.

Additional policies & considerations

Things to remember

Conduct / Alcohol & Tobacco Policy

Volunteers are asked to refrain from using profane language and to not use tobacco products while on duty, anywhere on site or off-site in relation to Gilda's Club. If you smoke prior to your shift, please ensure your clothing does not smell. Please do not consume alcohol while wearing a volunteer t-shirt. The consumption of alcohol before/during your shift is not allowed.

Valuables

Gilda's Club does not guarantee locked spaces in the Clubhouse or at most events for your valuables. Please leave important items in your car or at home. Gilda's Club Grand Rapids is not responsible for lost, stolen or unattended belongings. Please check with the parlor desk host for lost and found items.

Incidents & Harassment

In the case of an incident or accident involving any Gilda's Club volunteer, member or guest, please fill out an Incident Report Form. Forms are available at the Gilda's Club front desk. All laws pertaining to harassment apply to your volunteer participation with GCGR. For assistance, contact Gilda's Club Grand Rapids staff at (616) 453-8300 or in person at 1806 Bridge St NW, Grand Rapids MI 49504.

Accommodations

Gilda's Club Grand Rapids does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, age, veteran status, or disability. All volunteers will be given equal opportunity and we appreciate you keeping us up to date about any physical conditions or limitations you might have. You are not obligated to participate in any activities which may cause you injury or distress. Note that some roles may be better-suited to some volunteers than others; refer to volunteer team & role descriptions when signing up to volunteer.

Bless & Release Policy

Your volunteer service is considered at-will and may be terminated by Gilda's Club Grand Rapids as a result of missed shifts or unacceptable behavior. Gilda's Club reserves the right to end a volunteer's association at any time for any reason. Likewise, volunteers may end their association with Gilda's Club at any time. At events, Gilda's Club and Gilda's LaughFest staff, as well as leadership volunteers, have the right to release any volunteer who is not needed due to overstaffing or who is behaving inappropriately.

Food and Drink

We try our best to provide water and small snacks at most events. Please be prepared to work your entire shift without a break for meals. We encourage you to bring your own snack. Please refrain from eating and drinking in direct view of festivalgoers / keep food items hidden at retail tables, etc.

For Your Safety

Please be sure to drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration, wear sunscreen while outside, wear comfy shoes, dress appropriately for cold weather and the outdoors, familiarize yourself with restrooms and emergency exits and, where applicable, first-aid locations within and around venues. Ask staff and lead volunteers for more info to the point that you feel comfortable.

Your safety is important to us. In the case of severe weather that requires cancelation of an event we will alert you via email and/or phone. Please keep your contact info up to date so that we can reach you.



Safety Protocols

For any of the situations listed, please listen carefully to instructions given by Gilda's Club staff, as they have been trained and know how to handle the situation at hand. Do your best to support the needs of staff in the moment.

Exposure to Bodily Fluids

To minimize exposure to the transmission of bloodborne infectious diseases, all volunteers should follow universal precautions and body substance isolation techniques. Being exposed means that another person's blood or other bodily fluid touches your skin, eyes, mouth or other mucosal surface. Upon exposure, wash the area with soap and water. Report the exposure right away to staff. **DO NOT** decide on your own whether you need more care. **DO NOT** delay telling staff after you have been exposed. Staff will help determine next steps.

Fire

In the event a fire alarm sounds, leave the building immediately via the nearest stairway exit (never elevator). If possible, before you leave the room: turn on the lights, open the drapes, close windows and door(s). Do not return inside the building until instructed to do so by the fire department. When possible and if smoke is present, carry a towel to place over your nose. If you are unable to leave the building, create an area of refuge and signal for help.

Inclement Weather

In the case of severe weather conditions where thunderstorms / lightning will be present, we will alert you of event cancelation. Please be sure your contact information is up-to-date so that we can reach you. At events already underway, staff will notify volunteers of a cancelation due to weather and release volunteers.

Tornado

In the event of a tornado, all individuals present at Gilda's Club should gather in the Noogieland hallway, downstairs by the elevator and bathrooms. **DO NOT** use the elevators or walk through the parlor / front desk area (avoid any location with windows). Use stairwells only.

Interacting with members

Depending on your chosen volunteer role and areas of interest, you may be interacting directly with our members as they are on their cancer and/or grief journeys. The following provides some basics on how Gilda's Club goes about creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere and on how to approach, talk to, and help our members.

Share in Creating a Positive Experience

Our goal at Gilda's Club is to create a warm and wonderful experience for families living with cancer and grief. They are managing enough in their lives and we consider it our responsibility to bring good energy, a positive attitude and a caring heart to all we do.

Ask for Assistance

As a volunteer, we do not expect you to be an expert on everything we do, especially when it comes to our full range of cancer and grief support group programming. Please ask questions and be sure to contact a staff person if you are unsure of the support or activities offered.

Greet Everyone

When in the parlor, kitchen, or other "active" areas of the clubhouse, please greet everyone with a smile and be sure they have been assisted in some way. Every new visitor is special to us and should be directed to someone from the Gilda's Club staff.

Communicate we are here to help

When communicating with members or guests it is important to convey that Gilda's Club offers "something for everyone." If you don't find what they are looking for on the calendar, please ask staff.

And remember...enjoy yourself, the Clubhouse and the community!

Use of language with members

Language is full of words that convey commonly held beliefs about cancer, its treatment and the experience of cancer. Many of these words and phrases have negative connotations that impact how we think, feel and relate to one-another. At Gilda's Club we try to avoid words that reinforce popular misconceptions. And we do not use words that communicate fear, dread or hopelessness. There is life and hope after a diagnosis and, no matter what happens, we go on this journey together.

Instead of...	Use...	Why?
Victim/ cancer victim	People living with cancer, someone on a cancer journey, a new normal	People live with cancer, are not victimized by it
Doing battle, struggling with, fighting for	Live with, regain control and/or well-being	Live fully, no matter what the outcome. Less aggressive
Stay positive (chin up, etc.)	This is a place to express a full range of feelings, not all have to be positive	Allows for times of great sadness and depression
Safe haven	A warm and welcoming Clubhouse, a support network of family and friends	Safe everywhere, not just at Clubhouse
Clients or patients	Member / Clubhouse Member	More welcoming. We do not provide medical or social services
Lost, passed away	Died or death	Clearly delivers message, less abstract, kids process more effectively
Killed themselves	Died by suicide	Changes perspective
Going backwards	Engaging at a deeper level	Revisiting an issue does not mean you are failing

Feedback & sharing experiences

We appreciate your feedback

Feedback / Surveys

We will seek feedback from you on a regular basis through surveys and conversations. We value and appreciate your feedback about your time as a Gilda's Club volunteer and use your ideas to tweak and improve our Volunteer Program year over year. Please let us know what you feel we are doing well and what we can do even better to make your volunteer experience with us truly enjoyable. Moreover, you are more than welcome to get in touch with us to share your thoughts at any point by emailing volunteer@gildasclubgr.org.

Follow us

Check us out on social media where you can get updates, view fun photos and special live streams from events, etc. We love to see your photos as well, so please use the hashtag #gildasclubgr when posting your comments and reactions!

- Facebook: [/gildasclubgr](https://www.facebook.com/gildasclubgr)
- Twitter: [@Gildas_Club_GR](https://twitter.com/Gildas_Club_GR)
- Instagram: [@gildasclubgr](https://www.instagram.com/gildasclubgr)



Frequently asked questions

Email volunteer@gildasclubgr.org any time w/ questions

What do I do if I need to cancel my shift or if I am going to be late?

Contact your Volunteer Manager or Volunteer Program staff as soon as you can by calling (616) 453-8300 x121 and emailing bmepham@gildasclubgr.org.

Do you have volunteer opportunities for families or groups?

Yes, we have many ways for families and groups to volunteer with us. The most common ways groups get involved are grounds work, helping in the kitchen and working on special projects. Contact us for more information and to get started on planning.

Can minors (under age 18) volunteer at Gilda's Club?

Gilda's Club believes in the importance of modeling volunteerism. We welcome volunteers 16 years of age and older. All volunteers under the age of 16 are required to have their guardian/parent present during their scheduled volunteer shift. Our youngest helpers (under 10 years old) most often work alongside parents/guardians in our kitchen. This is determined on a case-by-case basis.

How many hours do I need to volunteer?

This is up to you. We appreciate any help you are able to give. Some roles are for one-off events, others might turn into a weekly or monthly commitment. Know that whether you volunteer a little or a lot, it helps to support our mission and keep Gilda's Club open and free to members. We ask that you stay active by volunteering at least once a year.

Can I volunteer with Gilda's LaughFest?

We love when our Gilda's Club volunteers become LaughFest Volunteers and vice versa. Please email volunteer@laughfestgr.org for more information on how to get signed up.

Are there volunteer opportunities on the weekend?

Most of our volunteer opportunities happen during the week (between 9AM-9PM). We do have several special events throughout the year where volunteers can get involved, most of which happen on the weekend. Volunteers interested in late-night and weekend opportunities may wish to get involved with LaughFest (which has events morning, afternoon, evening, late-night, etc. throughout the week and weekend).

Can members be volunteers and vice-versa?

Absolutely! We have many Club Members who wish to give back and volunteer.

How do I help someone become a Club Member?

Call us at (616) 453-8300 and speak with the parlor desk host who will connect you with the right staff person to get started.

Other questions?

We welcome your questions and comments! Contact your Volunteer Manager, Ben Mepham, at bmepham@gildasclubgr.org or (616) 453-8300 x121.

Life IS ABOUT
not knowing,
having to change,
TAKING *the* MOMENT
& making the BEST of it,
WITHOUT KNOWING
what's going to
HAPPEN NEXT.
-gilda Radner

THANK YOU Gilda's Club Volunteers

We are Truly In This Together

When you volunteer with Gilda's Club, you are instrumental in helping to shine a light on Greater Grand Rapids and our wonderful community.

Whether you choose to volunteer a little or a lot, know you will be bringing smiles and laughter to the lives of many, all while helping to keep the Red Door of Gilda's Club Grand Rapids open to those in need of support as they face life's toughest challenges.

