

Bridges Run Training Guide for Volunteers

Introduction: This guide is designed to help you, the volunteer group leader, and your volunteers understand the roles and responsibilities of your volunteer commitment to Bridges. It is required that every member of your team view the volunteer training video found on our website (www.bridgesoutreach.org) or on YouTube ([film will be available in October, 2010](#)).

I. Overview

In September 1988, Geoff and Ginger Worden made their first of many Friday midnight trips to carry bag dinners, hot soup and coffee to the homeless on the streets of NYC. Their story, as told by Geoff Worden can be found at <http://www.bridgesoutreach.net/story.php>.

Each year, over 1,500 kind and caring volunteers from over 60 groups participate on a Bridges Run (outreach visit) delivering over 100,000 bagged brown lunches, 40,000 breakfast bags, literally tons of clothing and toiletries and other necessities. Hundreds of other volunteers help by donating brown bag lunches, toiletries, seasonal clothing and much more.

Since 1988, Bridges has not missed a weekly Run into New York City. Recognizing the need closer to home, Bridges expanded its outreach in 1996 to Newark and in 2002 to Irvington.

Bridges' mission is to bring the housed and homeless together in community.

Our vision is for:

- Housed and homeless people to form relationships based on dignity and mutual respect
- Homeless people to know that they are cared for and valued as individuals
- Housed people, especially students and their families, to have service opportunities that are meaningful
- Housed communities to understand the complex realities of homelessness and promote alternatives for positive change

II. Where We Go; Who We Meet

New York City: Bridges has not missed a Friday night Run to New York City since the first Bridges Run 1988. In lower Manhattan, we usually make two stops: Battery Park and near the Brooklyn Bridges. In total, we meet about 200 homeless individuals, mostly men and some families at each visit.

Newark:

Runs to Newark began in 1996. On Saturday mornings, we partner with several ministries in Newark who will host an “inside” Run at their church. After that, we set up the Run near Penn Station. In parallel, on two Saturdays a month, a second volunteer group visits the Emergency Residence Shelter at the Newark Y, engaging the children at the shelter in activities or hosting a monthly birthday party.

Irvington:

Runs to Irvington began in 2002 and expanded in 2004. On Sunday mornings, with volunteer assistance from the Township of Irvington, we set up the Run inside the Irvington Neighborhood Improvement Corporation. There we meet about 75-125 men, women and children.

III. Run Volunteers

Volunteers who join us on our street and shelter outreach are high school students with adult supervision from both private and public high schools, adults and teens from houses of worship, clubs, civic groups, neighborhoods and families.

How to become a Bridges Run Volunteer Group

1. Assign a Volunteer Group Leader – An adult must be the contact person for the group and is responsible to enlist volunteers for your Run and secure 300 brown bag lunches, toiletries and seasonal clothing.
2. Sign-up for a Run – The Leader will be sign up for the Run on the Bridges website, www.bridgesoutreach.org “sign-up.”
3. Use the Run Checklist, also found on the website, to help plan your Run. Planning a Run takes time, effort and resources. Start planning your Run well in advance.

IV. Planning the Bridges Run

The **Volunteer Group Leader** is the point person for the Run and will be in contact with the Bridges Run Coordinator during the planning of the Run. The Group Leader is responsible for all aspects of the Run and may assign or volunteers key roles in planning the Run.

The **Bridges Run Coordinator** is a member of the Bridges staff. He will be in contact with the group leader before the Run to go over details. He is trained and experienced. He will give an overview to the group when the group gathers at Bridges before the Run, will give instructions during the Run and is the “go to” person with any questions or problems. The Bridges Run Coordinator will communicate with the Volunteer Group Leader two weeks before Run to confirm:

- Run date & Location
- Time and place for volunteers to meet
- Number of Run Volunteers
- Transportation
- E-Z Pass for NYC
- Number of lunches
- Number of toiletry kits
- Answer other questions

V. What you will need for a Run

1. **Volunteers.** Volunteers are at the core of every Bridges’ Run. All volunteers must be at least 14 years old. All teens must be accompanied by adult chaperones with a chaperone to teen ratio of 1:5. A maximum of 15 volunteers are needed for a New York City Run and 10 volunteers to Newark and Irvington.
2. **Necessities.** All volunteers groups are requested to bring 300 brown bag lunches, toiletry kits and seasonal clothing for distribution. See www.bridgesoutreach.org “donate” for more information. Large quantities of seasonal clothing should be delivered to Bridges in advance of your Run for sorting. Sometimes groups will fundraise to purchase items for the lunches or toiletry kits or collect from their larger group. For example: A house of worship may put out a collection box for toiletries or non-perishable items for the lunches for the month before the Run, then purchase just the non-perishable items. A group can get together to make the lunches or individual can be asked to make 10 or 20 lunches. If you have 30 people making 10 lunches each, you’ve got 300 lunches!

- a. Brown Bag Lunches. The Brown Bag Lunch – each brown bag contains a sandwich of meat on sliced bread (mustard and/or mayonnaise packets on the side), a drink, a fruit (apples can be difficult to chew), salty and sweet snack and a napkin. Younger volunteers may decorate the bags.

GUIDELINES FOR SANDWICH MAKING

- Wash hands and use surgical gloves.
 - Approximately one pound of meat makes six to eight sandwiches.
 - Loaves of bread vary in size.
 - Call a grocery store a day or two ahead to order sliced meat.
 - Warehouse stores are a good place to buy fruit, drinks, and treats.
 - Use mayonnaise and mustard packets.
 - Avoid mayonnaise in warm weather.
 - Many of our friends have dental problems; please purchase soft fruit (no apples, please.)
 - Fruit cups are a good alternative to fresh fruit - please remember spoons.
 - Large packages of cookies may be divided and bagged.
 - Refrigerate and deliver fresh.
- b. Toiletry Kits – Toiletry items are very important to our friends on the street. New items and travel size are best. Large quantities of any item may be delivered in bulk. People often travel and collect the toiletries. Do a drive in your house of worship, school or office. [Bridges can help you purchase items wholesale.](#) Toiletry kits include one of each of the following items in a zip lock bag:
- Soap
 - Shampoo/conditioner
 - Deodorant
 - Lotion
 - Shaving cream (Bridges supplies razors)
 - Toothpaste
 - Toothbrushes
 - Lip Balm
- c. Seasonal clothing – for a complete list of everything that Bridges needs, see <http://www.bridgesoutreach.net/necessities.php>. Please sort the clothing ahead of time. As a general rule, Bridges is looking for clean, casual,

seasonal clothing in good condition. We request that large donations be delivered to Bridges in advance of your Run for sorting.

3. Transportation. All other volunteers must have transportation to the Run site. Bridges has one box truck that will be loaded ahead of time for your Run. The truck has capacity for only the Run Coordinators. For New York Runs, E-Z Pass saves time and keeps the group together. All drivers should print driving instructions posted from www.bridgesoutreach.org "outreach." An effort will be made for the group to caravan with the truck. However, stopping on the road is dangerous. If you lose the truck from your sight, use your directions and call the Run Coordinator. Before leaving, all drivers and Run Coordinators should exchange cell phone numbers.
4. Release forms. Required of all volunteers, release forms may be downloaded from www.bridgesoutreach.org "forms." Please print, sign and bring the forms with you.

VI. Important Information for Volunteers

- Avoid wearing jewelry, carrying excess cash, or bringing valuable accessories (iPod, for example)
- Defer to Run Coordinator immediately if you have a problem or concern
- DO bring cell phones – exchange numbers
- Don't accompany a child to a bathroom or out of the common areas when in a shelter
- Don't leave the common areas in a shelter
- Don't give money to anyone
- Don't go with anyone for any reason
- Don't open lunch bags to look for a specific item
- Don't wander away from the group
- Dress for weather – Bridges will go out regardless of weather. Keep in mind that it can get cold, especially at Battery Park.
- Follow all instructions of Run Coordinator
- Notify the Run Coordinator if you become uncomfortable
- Notify the Run Coordinator if you cannot fulfill a request
- Out of respect for our homeless friends, do not take photographs on the Run
- Review Safety Guidelines
- Stay in pairs

- Stay in sight of an adult from your group or a Bridges' Run Coordinator
- Stay with your group

VII. Your Run Day

- Convene at Bridges
 - Meet at Bridges, 120 Morris Ave, Summit, unless otherwise arranged with the Bridges Run Coordinator
 - Be on time – arrive at the designated time for your Run
 - The Bridges Run Coordinator will give an overview of what to expect on your Run and assign volunteer duties
 - Give Release Forms to Run Coordinator
 - Confirm Directions
 - Exchange cell numbers with Run Coordinator
 - Use bathrooms before leaving
- On the Road
 - Do not stop on the Road
 - Communicate by cell
 - If necessary, use directions to get to destination
 - If you arrive at the Run site before the Bridges truck, do not get out of your vehicle
- On the Run
 - Volunteers will take direction from the Bridges Run Coordinator.
 - You will be distributing food, toiletries and clothing at the direction of the Run Coordinator. Be friendly, talk to people, and share a moment. The Run is really about bringing housed and homeless together in community.
- Safety on the Run
 - Review the safety guidelines on the back of the Run Release.
 - Since the first Run in 1988, Bridges has worked hard to establish an atmosphere of respect on the RUNs. This respect among all Run participants has historically yielded a friendly environment.
 - A Bridges Run Coordinator accompanies each street Run and has a working relationship with all our homeless friends. The Run Coordinator works with the adult volunteers participating to monitor the Run. Cooperation and a spirit of gratitude prevail.

Bridges is grateful for the support of the hundreds of volunteers who join us in our outreach every year and who support our outreach with donations of brown bag lunches and breakfast bags, toiletry kits, gently used seasonal clothing and beyond. Your compassion eases the daily burden of our homeless friends.

"...we come here (the Bridges Run) because this is the nicest people are to us all week," a homeless friend on a NYC Run.