

New Volunteer Info Sheet



Deerfield DFS Background:

Our mission is to provide recently immigrated refugees and displaced individuals with essential household items enabling them to create a home environment in their new surroundings within the Chicagoland area.

Through the volunteer efforts of multi-faith organizations and community members, we assist 7 households weekly, offering a personalized shopping experience for their current needs as well as the dignity of choice. We have 5 shopping rooms for household goods, furniture (2), children's clothing and bedding.

Refugees helped at our location in Holy Cross School in Deerfield have been from 26 countries todate: Afghanistan, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Syria, Venezuela, Cuba, Russia and other countries. As of September 1, 2024, 1,050 families have filled a car with needed items for their new home since January 2022.

Who Shops at DFS:

One hour appointments are typically scheduled by an RCC volunteer working as a lead for a registered family that has recently moved into housing. There is an online request form requesting basic information to assist volunteers on shopping day. Erin Dubin monitors the requests and approves as appropriate. Refugees that create a detailed list of needs and share ahead of time have been more successful in getting their needs matched. An hour goes very fast.

Demand continues to be greater than availability thus families can come to DFS one time. They can continue to work with their volunteer lead to source additional needs via the RCC network and identify other sustainable community resources i.e. food/closet pantries, Catholic Charities, WIC, thrift stores etc.

What to expect when sorting at DFS:

Our intent is to offer items you'd share with a family member or friend. Therefore, donations need to be evaluated prior to putting out for selection. Wiping down items, pulling cracked/chipped items, recycling stained/torn textiles, removing new or garage tags/stickers, testing electronics are all part of the process. We repackage bulk donations to extend our potential reach of new products and regularly reorganize displays to make them more shopper friendly and help expedite the selection process.

Holy Cross graciously provides this space at no rent. Therefore, we are responsible for vacuuming and taking out the garbage and recycling. We also take every effort to downstream plastic, non-working electronics and items we don't want responsibly. We try to connect with other RCC stores to share overflow products, mostly clothing, when possible. We are not however a drop point for shelter, police, airport targeted goods.

DFS Policies

- Donations are for client appointments - not volunteers.
- It's preferred you sign up to assist so the coordinator can prioritize projects.
- DFS has a CRITICAL NEEDS list which is updated regularly. You are welcome to bring in, solicit family and friends for items on the list when you come in to volunteer.
- Please check the ACCEPTED list prior to asking about other potential donations.

- Items not on either lists can be discussed with Nikki to determine a match prior to bringing in.
- Do not use in-store inventory as a guide for needs. Sometimes we try things because they were dropped off - it doesn't mean we want to continue to stock items. It's a balance of available space and needs.
- DFS has an email, website and Facebook page:
 - Deerfieldfreestore@gmail.com
 - Deerfieldfreestore.com
 - [Deerfield Free Store at Holy Cross](#) is our Facebook page. Please follow/like for updates.

Other FAQ:

- How do shoppers get their furniture selections home?
 - Volunteers working with families navigate transportation. They can reserve items for 1 week to make necessary arrangements.
- Can people take anything they want?
 - Appointments are for the household. Not extended family and friends. They can make their own appointment if they qualify.
 - Volunteers that assist shoppers provide guidance on limits and make suggestions. Signs are posted to assist in communicating limits.
- How do you communicate with non-English speakers?
 - Many volunteers use Google translate though other apps are useful too.
 - Shoppers are given a Welcome letter available in several languages to assist in setting expectations.
- Are you a 501(c) 3?
 - As a shared ministry at Holy Cross Church, donation receipts are available for tax purposes.
 - Through the archdiocese we are a Qualified Charitable Organization.
- When can donations be dropped-off?
 - There are 3 weekly drop-offs: Tuesday 5-7pm, Wednesday 1-3pm and Sundays 12-2pm
 - No appointment is needed when the items are on the current needs list **EXCEPT** furniture, which needs to be approved and scheduled for drop-offs via DeerfieldFreeStore@gmail.com.
 - Once approved, furniture can be scheduled for a Tuesday evening 5-7pm, Wednesday afternoon 1-3pm or Sunday 12-2pm.
- Are there other times to help?
 - There are shopping appointments Tuesday afternoon and evening, Wednesday mornings and Sunday afternoons. If you are interested to assist with any of those times, please send an email to DeerfieldFreeStore@gmail.com or sign up directly on the website within the VOLUNTEER tab.
 - There are sorting opportunities Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons 1-3pm.
- Can I bring my children to help?
 - Discuss with the lead for the day prior to signing up. In general, teens have found lots of opportunities to help at DFS; however they need to be accompanied by a parent/guardian.
 - For safety reasons, those under 18 yrs. need to stay in a work group with their parent/guardian at all times. This is not a reflection of their abilities, but rather one of policy and safety.