

GRATEFUL GATHERINGS

COORDINATOR'S GUIDE

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1. Finding Families to Help

It's important that the families GG helps are fully vetted by a 501c3 non-profit, and that a social worker or non-profit staff member refers the family to you. Specifically, you are looking for non-profs in your area that provide services to people who are transitioning out of homelessness, and/or that provide shelter to abused persons, etc. One place to find a listing of non-profs by city is "501c3lookup.org" You can then Google the individual non-profs listed to see which are likely to deal with people in housing transition.

Once you've identified your target agency(ies), you can either call the E.D (Executive Director) directly, and/or email them – letting them know about the service that GG provides and asking for a time to meet with them. Here's a sample email:

Hello, (E.D. name):

I'm contacting you on behalf of [Grateful Gatherings](#) — a 501c3 organization that provides furniture and household goods to families transitioning out of homelessness into their first home. Grateful Gatherings was started in the East Bay about xxx years ago. Just recently I volunteered to head up the (name of area) chapter.

We plan to hold 2/3/4 "gatherings" in (name of area) in the next 12 months or so. We are looking to partner with agencies that provide services to people transitioning out of homelessness, so they can refer families in need to us. I would like to talk with you about the possibility of partnering with you and some of your clients who may be able to benefit from this service.

Please let me know if you'd be interested in meeting — and some days/times that might work for you.

*Best Regards,
(name)
Coordinator
Grateful Gatherings (name of area)
(Phone number)
(email address)*

Criteria for Families to be Helped

When you meet with the representative of the non-profit you'll be partnering with, and each time a family is referred to you by a non-profit, it's important to go over

the criteria that families must meet in order to qualify for a “gathering.” Here are the criteria:

- They have to be endorsed by a 501c3 non-prof.
- They have to be willing to have a brief summary of their “story”, including their first names, included in the outreach that you’ll be doing to potential donors and posted on the SignUp Genius page — so usually a paragraph that tells a little about the family and how they come to need this assistance. If the family’s situation is sensitive for one reason or another, you may want to have the parent(s) approve your write of the “story” before you send it out.
- Also, they have to agree to have “before and after” pictures of their home taken, and pictures of themselves in the home as part of the “after” pictures. (If the family’s situation is particularly sensitive for some reason, it may be possible to exclude pictures of them in the “after” photos, but this should be a rare exception.) The story and pictures will eventually go on the Grateful Gathering website.
- They must have a confirmed lease for their “new” home and must be living in it on the day of the gathering.
- They should have minimal furniture/household goods in the home at the time of the gathering. If someone contributes a few items to them in the meantime, that’s fine, but GG generally provide pretty much everything.
- They have to clear out the apartment before the day of the gathering so we can move things right in. If they have already have furniture that will remain in the home post gathering, then it has to be in place before the gathering begins. In other words, GG will neither move existing furniture within the home nor move it out of the home.
- They have to be able to meet with us at their apartment about three or four weeks before the gathering date so we can ask them what they need, see what their preferences are, measure their home, etc
- They have to let GG in to their home on the day of the gathering. If bunk beds are involved, then they will have to let you in on the morning of the gathering to allow your team to set them up. In the afternoon of the gathering, they will, of course have to let you in and then they should leave their apartment for 2/3 hours while you set it up. Then they will be asked to return when you are finished. So, they have to be pretty much on call/available for the entire day of the gathering.

2. Preparing for the Gathering

Choosing a Date

Here are things to consider in choosing a date for the gathering:

- Gatherings are always held on Saturdays
- At least one adult from the family(ies) being helped must be available essentially all day of the gathering
- Confirm if Chris Flitter or Donna Somerville will be available to participate
- The moving service you are using needs to be available that day (confirm with Chris Flitter regarding Chipman's availability)
- It's best if the "gathering" date is not on a holiday weekend, as people will not likely be as available to drop off donations or volunteer
- Consider the three weeks preceding the gathering as the time you'll have for people to sign up for donations, so you probably don't want a major holiday, like Thanksgiving, to occur during that three week period
- If you are using a school as a drop off point, confirm that the school will be in session the week preceding the gathering so that they can get the word out to parents, etc. and so they can give you any needed keys the day before the gathering

Identifying a Drop Off Venue

- Churches and schools are good options to try for the drop off venue
- It's easiest to get a church or school to agree to be a drop off point if someone who is connected with the organization (church member or school parent) reaches out and asks
- If neither you nor anyone on your team is connected with a church or school, then you will want to reach out first by email, following up with an in-person visit.
- Here is an example of an email you may want to send to a church or school, asking if they will agree to be a drop-off point:

Hello, (Reverend or Principal):

I am reaching out to you to let you know about Grateful Gatherings, a (county/city) 501 c(3) non-profit that provides gently used furniture and household items for families moving out of poverty and homelessness. I started the (county/city) chapter of Grateful Gatherings in (insert timeframe); I live in (name of your neighborhood), near (name of church or school.) Every few months, we help a (couple of) formerly homeless family(ies) by totally furnishing their "new" apartment with donations of gently used furniture and new/gently used household goods. We get referrals on families who need help from local non-profits that serve the homeless, like (insert name(s) of

non-profs from whom you receive referrals.) Those of us who work on “gatherings” here in (name of county/city) do so on a volunteer basis.

Here is a link to the website [Grateful Gatherings](#) and here is a video that was recently made about the organization — showing it in action [GG video](#)

Our next “gathering” is coming up on (date of next gathering.) We’ll be helping a (two) formerly homeless Marin family(ies) by totally furnishing their apartment in one day. Donated items are dropped off at Glenwood School in the morning, and we take them to the apartment(s) and set everything up — including hanging drapes and pictures, filling kitchen cabinets with plates, pots and pans, et.c — in the afternoon. When the family(ies) return to their “new” home, they can just relax and enjoy it.

I’m reaching out to you to ask if we could use your parking lot on the morning of (date) as a drop off point for donations, from 8:00 am until 12:30 pm. We would not need access to any indoor facilities, except for a restroom—and we would totally clean up after using your premises. We also ask if we could include information about our upcoming gathering in any newsletters/outreach to your community. Specifically, we have an on-line sign up sheet where people can donate furniture or household goods — and we’d like to be able give your (church/school) community the link to that sign up list.

Thanks very much for taking the time to read this.

I’d very much like the opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss how we might partner with you in using your parking lot area for drop offs. Please let me know when would be a convenient time to meet.

*With gratitude,
(name)*

Coordinator

Grateful Gatherings (county/city)

<https://gratefulgatherings.org>