



A Community Meal for All - Becoming “WE” instead of “them and us”

The vision behind Room at the Table is that we are eating a Community Meal TOGETHER, providing food for those who are hungry and also establishing community connections. We want this to be a time of togetherness for all, not just those in need. By partnering with all kinds of different individuals and groups across the Shoals, we are able to make Room at the Table for all. We believe that our community is stronger when we are united in serving one another.

Our goal each night at the meal is to create an atmosphere of “WE” instead of “them and us”. It is much more important HOW WE SERVE than WHAT WE SERVE.

Specific Food Team & Volunteer Instructions:

When you sign up to be a food team, you will be asked to provide food for 150 servings as well as bring 12-15 volunteers to help serve and clean-up. You can choose the menu item you would like to serve, but we ask that you check with our Coordinator Emily Rhodes in advance, so that we can make sure we don't have duplicates on our menu. Information about how to sign-up is at the end of this packet.

If you are going to serve as an Individual Volunteer, you can contact Emily about signing up for a specific shift. Individual volunteers are not responsible for bringing the food – they are there to provide support to the Food Team and the meal.

You can either cook your meal on-site in our kitchen or bring it pre-cooked and just warm it before serving. There is a large convection oven, commercial gas stove, a commercial dishwasher and all of the kitchen supplies needed. If you plan to cook on-site, please be aware that you are going to prepare 150 servings, so please choose a menu item that is not extremely labor intensive and has relatively easy clean-up.

We open the doors to our guests at 5:15pm and begin serving the meal at 5:30pm. Most Food Teams arrive at 4pm to begin getting the meal together. A Room at the Table Team Leader will be there every evening beginning at 4pm. They will walk you through all of the specific meal procedures, rules and help orient you in the kitchen. If you need to get in the kitchen before 4pm to cook, you can make that arrangement with the Coordinator in advance.

At 4:30 pm, you will join for a Team Huddle. This means stopping the prep you are doing and coming together. This is a very important time together and is for everyone. The huddle won't last long, but it allows everyone to get on the same page before the door opens and serving begins. During huddle, each person will be assigned to their specific area for the

evening. Some will serve drinks, make coffee, roll silverware, be on dishwasher duty, be a door greeter, help monitor the bathrooms, sweep, mop and wipe the tables down.

We ask that everyone wear a Room at the Table apron which will be provided so that all of the guests will know who to ask for assistance. We want to encourage an environment of teamwork and togetherness.

Tea, Lemonade, Water and coffee is provided. The supplies for those are already at the Dining Hall. You don't need to bring those with the food. A procedure for serving drinks is posted in the kitchen. All of the normal condiments are provided. We eat with real dishes, cups and silverware. A commercial dishwasher is in the kitchen and you will have a team to help you work the dishwasher and dry the dishes.

It is important that we follow health guidelines, which includes wearing food gloves when serving, following safety guidelines with food prep, not having any volunteers who are sick, and washing hands. Reminders will be posted in the kitchen.

After the meal has been served, which is generally about 6pm, depending on how many are in line and after all volunteers have also eaten, we will begin clean-up. All volunteers, including the Food Team will participate in clean-up. A list of what needs to be done will be posted in the kitchen. When everyone works together, clean-up is finished very quickly. We anticipate that all of the tasks will be done and everything is done by 7pm. Please make sure your team knows to plan on staying until the clean-up is complete.

Some Tips on Interacting with our Guests:

An important part of our community meal is developing community. This requires getting out of your comfort zone and intentionally interacting with one another. Here are some tips which help make the experience for everyone.

- Make eye contact and smile
- Don't "hide" in the kitchen.
- Don't automatically assume everyone has the same needs. We generally allow those with mobility issues to go first, followed by mothers with young children.
- Some guests need assistance with their plates – you can offer to carry their plates to their tables.
- If they ask you for seconds, let them know that we will announce that once everyone has gone through the line and we are sure we have enough for everyone.
- There are signs posted about where the guests can go, where the restrooms are and where the smoking area is located. If you are unsure of these, ask the Team Leader.
- We don't do takeout meals unless there is a specific need and that will be determined by the Team Leader. If someone requests a to-go plate, ask the Team Leader.
- If there is a medical issue with a guest, please go find the Team Leader immediately and they will handle the issue.

- If a guest seems upset – or gets in a disagreement with another – stay calm and find the Team Leader. They have been trained in how to handle conflict.
- If any of the guests have requests for additional needs or services (such as help with utility bills, gas money, etc.) you will refer that request to the Team Leader. Room at the Table is only about a hot meal, served 7 days a week. We are unable to assist with those requests, but we do provide information about resources where they may find more help. If you are asked to help with a need, we ask that you simply direct that person to your Team Leader.
- It is important that volunteers maintain a sense of confidentiality about who eats with Room at the Table. While we do everything that we can to reduce the stigma of a “hand out”, we want to maintain the privacy and dignity of all of our guests.
- Please don’t become so involved in the serving and cleaning that you are too busy to interact and have time for connection. We want it to be a fun and relaxed time instead of feeling rushed or hectic. *It is more important HOW we serve than what we serve.*
- **Please plan on eating on the night you volunteer! Include the number of volunteers in your food plan. Interaction among everyone is one of the most important parts of the evening. Even if your volunteers don’t wish to eat, ask them to plan on having a glass of tea. You can determine how this will work among your team during the huddle time.**

Thank you for your interest in participating with Room at the Table.
You are a vital part of making this happen every night and we are honored and grateful that you have chosen to serve with us.

Don’t forget - It is more important HOW we serve than ~~WHAT~~ we serve!

www.roomatthetableoftheshoals.com

Krista Manchester, Director
Emily Rhodes, Coordinator
Craig Perry, Team Leader
Jessica Broadfoot, Team Leader
Mollie Holland, Kitchen Coordinator