



FARM OF THE CHILD

Volunteer Program Essentials 2011

And whosoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me . . .
. . . Y el que recibe en mi nombre a un niño como éste, a mí me recibe.

Matthew 18:5

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Volunteer Commitment Form

All volunteers are asked to commit to the following mission statement, philosophy, and principles.

Mission Statement of Farm of the Child

In gratitude for the great love that Jesus Christ gives us,
we decide to unite ourselves and form a community
to care for needy children and to promote the development
of a productive society of devout Christians.

All volunteers are asked to sign the volunteer commitment form to verify that they understand the aforementioned statement and commit to:

honor the mission statement of Farm of the Child.

lead a moral life that honors the dignity and equality of each individual, using the Catholic Church as their guide.

participate in activities agreed upon by community such as mass, prayer, retreats, and spiritual events that will nurture more personal and communal spiritual life.

offer their gifts and energy to form community and to adapt to the changing needs of the community and project.

strive to be patient, caring, and flexible in response to the challenges of community life and cross-cultural living.

be accountable to themselves and their house community for responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, and constant communication.

spend time and form friendships with the children on the Farm that witness the love of Christ.

Accepting God's call to be a volunteer at the Farm of the Child is a serious commitment. You have been chosen for a reason and have a special place to fill. There will surely be challenging times, as there will be joyful times. Please take this commitment seriously and refer back to this pledge during difficult moments remembering that you have made a decision. The children, the house parents, the Honduran staff, the religious sisters, and your fellow volunteers, are relying on your full participation and dedication for the duration of your 27-month term of service.

I. General Information

A. Overview: Farm of the Child (“the Farm”)

Finca del Niño/Farm of the Child is a Honduras-US partnership that operates a children’s home in Trujillo, Honduras.

Finca del Niño is the recognized name for the children’s home in Trujillo, Honduras where our children live and where we serve as volunteers. Throughout this guide, we will refer to the orphanage as Farm of the Child (or “the Farm”).

- Ysmary Trejo is the on-site Director of Finca del Niño.
- Three Franciscan Sisters oversee the daily activities on the Farm along with Ysmary. These women work “in community” at the heart of the Farm’s mission “to care for needy children and to promote the development of a productive society of devout Christians.”
- Approximately 90 people live on the Farm. This includes the orphans, volunteers, house parents, and Sisters.

Farm of the Child USA is a recognized non-profit organization whose sole purpose is to support *Finca del Niño* in Honduras.

- The Executive Director of Farm of the Child USA is Andrea McMerty-Brummer (vol ’02-’05). Andrea communicates with the on-site Director on a regular basis.
- Farm of the Child USA is comprised of a U.S. Board of Directors and various committees of former volunteers and long-time supporters. The board serves as an advising group to the Farm and assists the Farm in fundraising and volunteer recruitment.

Farm of the Child functions as a result of a cooperation of efforts among the on-site Director, the Franciscan Sisters, the volunteers, the house parents, and the U.S. Board of Directors.

B. Volunteer Program

i. Term of Service

Volunteers make a 27-month commitment to Farm of the Child. All volunteers arrive at the Farm on October 1st, 2011, after completing two months of language training. This term of service will end in December 2013.

ii. Spiritual Life

Spirituality is the basis and heart of life at Farm of the Child, and it is celebrated in the Roman Catholic tradition. Volunteers come to the Farm

to personally develop their relationships with God and to share their faith journey with one another. When facing hardships in relationships with others and in our work, our community prayer life serves as a source of strength to resolve difficulties.

iii. Fundraising

Farm of the Child provides room & board for all volunteers. Volunteers are asked to raise approximately \$10,000 to cover preparation costs, language school expenses, health insurance, and living stipends. You will find that fundraising also provides a valuable way for others to share in your volunteer experience.

Do not worry! Volunteers who put in the effort are successful! Additionally, we will provide you with a lot of information, tips, and templates to help you in your fundraising endeavors.¹

iv. Language

The volunteer community is bilingual. Volunteers need to learn Spanish to communicate with their community members and with the people in Honduras. For volunteers who do not speak Spanish proficiently, a minimum of two months in language school is required. Volunteers are provided with information on recommended schools that former volunteers have attended.²

C. Where Is Farm of the Child?

Farm of the Child is located in Honduras on the beach, 7 km (about 4.5 miles) west of the town of Trujillo in the department of Colón.



¹ See page 28 of the 2010 Volunteer Handbook, also available on our website

² This information can be found on page 33 of the 2010 Volunteer Handbook

D. Area Surrounding the Farm

The vast majority of the Farm's neighbors are poor, rural farmers.

A handful of wealthy property owners also live near the Farm, mostly along the coast.

A project of retirement and vacation homes for Canadian is currently under construction on the road between Trujillo and the Farm.

E. Honduras

i. Overview

Honduras is the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and has a population of 6.4 million people.

Honduras has a democratic government and there are two major political parties: the National Party and the Liberal Party.

The country's economy is based on agriculture and is largely dependent on remittances (money sent home) from the United States.

ii. Weather

Overall Honduras has a warm and humid climate.

Trujillo is hot and humid most of the year. During the rainy season (October-March) tropical storms provide a break from the heat.

II. Life on the Farm

A. Layout of the Farm

The Farm has six houses filled with children, a convent, the Director's house, and the volunteer house.

There is a medical clinic, a food/supply storage building, a few administrative offices, and a construction building with carpentry shop and auto repair garage.

The primary school is comprised of 6 stand-alone classroom buildings and an administration/library building. The middle school is housed in a separate building with 3 large classrooms and a computer lab.

The heart of the Farm is our chapel where we gather for many prayer events.

Additionally, the Farm rents two apartments in the city of La Ceiba (three hours west of Trujillo) where the adolescents- separated by gender- live with a volunteer. This is a service opportunity for second-year volunteers, outside of main volunteer community.

B. Safety

The Farm takes the safety of it all its residents very seriously. As result, there is a 24-hour guard on the property to deter any possible prowlers and assist if there is an emergency, but it is safe to walk around during the daytime.

From sunset to sunrise, multiple guards patrol the property. While most areas of the Farm are well lit, we ask that all volunteers practice caution and walk in pairs at night.

Public displays or perception of wealth can be tempting to a thief! The volunteer house has been broken into in the past, presumably with the intent to steal money or electronics—no one was harmed.

It is **STRONGLY RECOMMENDED** that all volunteers arrive and remain on the Farm property by 9:30pm each night. Additionally, the Farm urges volunteers to lock doors and to either safely store valuables or to leave them in the US.

C. Volunteer Accommodations

i. Housing

Single Volunteers—Single volunteers live together, separated by gender, in a simple cement home. Two to three volunteers share a home, each having his/her own bed and storage space.

Married Volunteers—Married volunteers share separate, but similar housing.

ii. Water/Electricity

The Farm has (cold!) running water and electricity.

iii. Laundry

Volunteers hand wash their clothes or may choose to pay a local woman to wash their clothes.

iv. Food/Drinking Water

The volunteer community receives a weekly supply of food similar to that which the orphan homes receive, including: rice, beans, pasta, vegetables, flour, sugar, powdered milk and coffee. Portions of chicken, fish, beef, eggs, cheese and margarine are also distributed.

While the tap water is potable, there is a water purifier in the main volunteer house. Some volunteers grow accustomed to drinking the tap water.

v. **Medical Care**

Volunteers are required to have health insurance during their stay on the Farm.³

For standard, non-urgent care, volunteers use the health clinic on the Farm, which is staffed by volunteers who are medical professionals.

vi. **Communications with Home**

Mail— You are able send/receive mail to the Farm. It takes an average of 2-3 weeks for letters/packages to arrive.

Internet— There is no internet on the Farm. Volunteers are able to use one of the four internet cafes in town. It can be challenging to maintain regular email correspondence during your stay at the Farm.

Phone— There is a phone in the volunteer house where volunteers can receive calls and purchase pre-paid phone cards to make calls. There is a phone in the administration office which can be used for work-related calls. Volunteers are discouraged from using personal cell phones, but are able to choose to have one AFTER their first six months at the Farm, and for use EXCLUSIVELY off-site.

D. A “Typical” Day on the Farm

Farm life tends to follow this general schedule:

5:30am-- Wake up

5:45am-- Volunteers' Gathering Prayer

6:00am-- Morning Prayer for entire Farm community

6:30am-- Breakfast; Morning Chores and Routine

7:15am-- School/ Work Day begins

12:45pm-- School Day ends; Lunch

1:30pm-- Study Hour

2:30pm-- Afternoon Activities/Vocational Programs/Work/Personal or Kid Time

6pm-- Dinner

7pm-- Rosary/Prayer/Adoration

9pm—Bedtime

E. Farm Rules: We live in Community

Each member of the Farm community is responsible for respecting all members of the community.

³ You will be provided with list of possible international health insurance companies and plans. Several current volunteers have a group health plan through *Seven Corners, Inc.*; each group member pays \$1,050/year.

All members of the Farm community are asked to maintain confidentiality with respect to the lives of all children and adults, as well as any internal situation.

We draw your attention to a select few Farm rules⁴:

- Daily morning and evening prayer and weekly Sunday mass are required for everyone on the Farm.
- No child is to be hit, pinched, yelled at, or mistreated for any reason. Appropriate methods of discipline will be reviewed at orientation.
- Dating is absolutely not permitted between any members of the Farm community.
- Drugs are illegal and there is a no tolerance policy at the Farm. Smoking and drinking are not permitted on Farm grounds.
- There is a conservative, modest dress code. In accordance with local culture, females are asked to limit earrings to one in each ear, in the lower part of the lobe. Males may not wear earrings. All other piercings are to be removed. Males may not have long hair. Tattoos, which are associated with gang culture in Honduras, should be covered from view whenever possible.

F. Travel to Trujillo from the Farm

The Farm is 7 kilometers (about 4.5 miles) from the town of Trujillo.

Volunteers usually go to town at least once a week, where you can email, make calls, eat at a restaurant, and do some basic shopping.

There is a bus that passes the Farm a few times each day or volunteers can combine trips using a Farm vehicle with other volunteers to take care of business in town.

III. Service Opportunities at the Farm

A. VOLUNTEER FIRST

Due to the nature of the Farm and caring for fifty orphaned and abandoned children, there will always be varying needs and unexpected emergencies that arise in this community situation—this work is a true team effort!

You will be charged with specific responsibilities during your time at the Farm. However, we are all united in our commitment to the four pillars & must be flexible to attend to the needs of the project and one another—we are a

⁴ A complete list of rules can be found on pages 14 & 15 of the 2010 Volunteer Handbook. All rules will be reviewed extensively at the new volunteer orientation.

community.

B. Responsibilities

Upon arrival at the Farm, volunteers receive three weeks of orientation. During that time you will learn more about life on the Farm and about the various positions. After orientation, each new volunteer will receive specific responsibilities according to current Farm needs and his/her abilities & gifts!

Depending on the number of volunteers, Farm needs, job preferences, some jobs will be modified and volunteers will share roles or assume more than one responsibility.

It is essential for the functioning of the Farm that volunteers are open to and flexible with job placements!

The following are service opportunities at the Farm:

- Volunteer Coordinator
- Maintenance Coordinator
- Spiritual Life Coordinator
- Vocational Programs Coordinator
- School Administrator (Sub-Director)
- Middle School Teacher
- Elementary School Teacher
- Physician
- Physician Assistant
- Nurse
- Nurse Midwife
- Psychologist
- Social Worker
- Accountant
- Adolescent Program House Parent (in La Ceiba for second-year volunteers)