

# Together We Thrive

## Volunteer Guidelines & Encouragement

**Saturdays in June | Calvary Church Santa Ana**

**Hosted by Tom and Gayle Shook**

### **First, thank you.**

We know many of you are giving up Saturdays, serving in the summer heat, helping with setup and cleanup, and stepping into unfamiliar situations simply because you care about people. We do not take that lightly.

Together We Thrive exists to create a joyful, welcoming place for Afghan refugee children and their families. Over the past several years many of these families have become part of our community here in Orange County. The children attend local schools, play sports, laugh, tease, compete, and act like kids everywhere — while their families also continue navigating the challenges of rebuilding life in a new country.

Our hope is simple: that families would feel safe, respected, cared for, and genuinely welcomed.

This is not about running a perfect program. It is about creating an atmosphere of kindness, patience, dignity, and joy.

Thank you for helping us do that.

### **Arriving & Preparing**

**Please arrive at church by 8:30 AM each Saturday.** This gives us time to connect together, receive assignments, prepare activity areas, go over the schedule, and help with setup before families arrive.

**We will gather together for volunteer prayer at 9:15 AM.**

### **General Expectations**

Please wear your nametag, stay engaged with the kids, help with transitions between activities, communicate concerns quickly, encourage children often, model patience and kindness, and avoid spending time on phones while serving.

Your friendliness matters more than having the perfect words.

### **Dress Guidelines**

**Women:** modest jeans, pants, or longer skirts; loose-fitting shirts; tops that cover shoulders and midsection. Please avoid tank tops, crop tops, exposed stomachs or shoulders, and very tight clothing.

**Men:** modest casual clothing, shirts at all times, and appropriate shorts or pants. Please avoid sleeveless shirts or

clothing with inappropriate graphics or language.

## **Cultural & Emotional Sensitivity**

Please avoid political discussions, debates about religion, comments about head coverings, cultural clothing, accents, or English ability.

Please do not ask children direct questions about war experiences, evacuation stories, family loss, or trauma connected to Afghanistan or relocation.

If children naturally share parts of their story, listen kindly, respond with compassion, and avoid pressing for details.

## **Child Safety**

Stay with groups at all times, avoid being alone with a child in a private area, redirect behavior calmly and respectfully, and notify Tom and Gayle Shook immediately about injuries or concerns.

Please do not yell at children, shame or embarrass them publicly, physically discipline them, or take them outside designated areas without permission.

## **Bathroom Guidelines**

Adults should only use adult bathrooms. Children should only use children's bathrooms. Volunteers should wait outside restroom areas rather than entering with children.

Volunteers should never be alone inside a restroom with a child unless there is an emergency situation and another adult is aware.

## **Photos & Social Media**

Do not post identifiable child photos without approval from Tom and Gayle Shook. Avoid publicly tagging refugee families. Ask before posting event photos or videos online.

## **Physical Interaction**

Appropriate interaction may include high fives, side hugs, handshakes, and encouragement during games. Please avoid rough physical play, extended physical contact, lap sitting, or carrying older children unless necessary for safety.

## **Discipline & Behavioral Situations**

When challenges arise: stay calm, lower your voice rather than raising it, redirect gently, encourage positive behavior, and ask Tom and Gayle Shook for help if needed.

Our goal is restoration, not embarrassment.

## **Medical Needs & Emergencies**

If a child is hurt or sick, notify Tom and Gayle Shook immediately, remain calm, help create space if needed, and do not administer medication unless directed by a parent or leadership.

## **Working Together as Churches**

Please speak respectfully about other churches and leaders, encourage one another, avoid criticism in front of families or children, and help create an atmosphere of unity and teamwork.

## **Confidentiality & Respect**

Please treat personal stories and sensitive information respectfully and avoid discussing family situations outside the program.

## **Including Every Child**

Please watch for children who are sitting alone, seem unsure socially, or are struggling to join activities. A small invitation or kind word can make a huge difference.

## **Why This Matters**

In John 17:21–23, Jesus prayed that His followers would live with unity and love in a way that people could genuinely see.

It is important that volunteers understand this is not a religious study, there should be no direct gospel presentation to children, and children should never feel pressured into spiritual conversations.

Our hope is to build trust, meaningful relationships, and an atmosphere of compassion and respect.

## **Final Thank You**

The children may not remember every game, craft, or activity — but they will remember how people made them feel.

We are grateful to serve alongside you.

— Tom & Gayle Shook