

# Mission Arlington grapples with volunteer shortage as donations increase

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Sep 4, 2020



Mission Arlington sits Sept. 3 in Arlington. Mission Arlington continues to serve the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

By Peyton C. North, The Shorthorn staff

Mansfield resident Trina Atsegbua said she has never seen a slow day ever since she started volunteering at Mission Arlington two months ago.

The nonprofit began to notice a shortage of volunteers at the beginning of March. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, it took about 2,500 volunteers on average per week to organize the donations, but now there are not as many volunteers coming in.

“We need all the help we can get,” Atsegbua said as she put together another food package for the next person in line. “But it's just up to people to make the decision to come in and help out.”

Jim Burgin, Mission Arlington communications person and pastor, said the shortage of labor has delayed the donation process. A trip to collect furniture from a donor used to take three days to complete, but it now takes up to several weeks.

Staff member Whitney Morgan said at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the biggest concern was the shortage of food and people not getting what they needed.

But the situation changed as the COVID-19 pandemic grew more prevalent.

Morgan said some volunteers have chosen to stay home for personal health issues but continue to donate food when they can.

While the number of volunteers has decreased, the number of donations such as food, clothes and medicine has increased, Burgin said. There was a 364% increase in the amount of food the nonprofit has given out in the first half of this year.

“The community has been very generous and very giving,” he said. “But there’s obvious concern[s] about [the] virus, so the volunteers have been slower to come in during these days.”

People have come with donations like they have all the money in the world, he said.

“They act like they just bring us stuff without thinking about it, but we know it cost people to stop by the grocery store and get \$200 worth of food,” he said. “But their spirit is such, like, no big deal.”

He said people come and give back to the community that once helped them.

“Every volunteer makes a difference, if just one person comes and helps us sort clothes or maybe carry couches to people, it makes a big difference,” he said.

The way to become a volunteer is to just show up, he said.

“All they need to do is to come in, and we’ll get them going,” he said.

The donation process is just as easy, with no paperwork needed. People can drop off donations from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday to Saturday. A financial donation can be done through the shelter’s website, by mail or in person.

Mission Arlington currently accepts donations including food, clothing, furniture and more. The basics such as tuna, peanut butter and canned foods are their biggest need.