SUMMARY: Update regarding the current impact of coronavirus precautions on Uplift Organization’s mobile outreach efforts to the homeless.

- Uplift is taking additional cautionary measures.
- Restrictions immediately in place and some will not be allowed to volunteer - temporarily.

As our city and our world respond to the coronavirus issue, Uplift Organization would like to update you on the efforts and actions we are taking in response to this outbreak.

We are closely monitoring news and information about the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) and are following guidelines outlined by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the Missouri Health Department, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and other local health officials.

We have also been in contact with Care Beyond the Boulevard, which is a volunteer-based, non-profit in Kansas City that focuses on providing mobile health care to the same homeless that Uplift serves. We have been in contact with other agencies, shelters, and mobile outreach groups around the city that serve the homeless population. We are committed to taking the best steps with the information we have during these rapidly changing circumstances.

COMMITMENT TO CONTINUITY:

Our friends on the streets rely on our trucks and our volunteers. We have served them every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday for 30 years without missing a single night. We are deeply committed to continuing to serve them. At the same time, the health, safety and well-being of all are of utmost importance to us.

As we each are volunteers, we are grateful for each other’s service and support of Uplift and the homeless. **We understand, that without hesitation, each of you generously think of the homeless we serve. At this time, we ask that we each make smart, careful decisions including when to serve and when to step back to care for yourself and others around you.**

If you need to remove yourself from a volunteer commitment, we understand and support your decision. We hope to have you rejoin our efforts later.

- For drivers and route leaders, we ask you to notify Ross. [email Ross](mailto:ross@uplift.org)
- For cooks, we ask that you notify Margaret. [email Margaret](mailto:margaret@uplift.org)
- For volunteers on the trucks, we ask that you notify Tammi. [email Tammi](mailto: tammi@uplift.org)
- And for warehouse sorters, please notify Jennifer. [email Jennifer](mailto:jennifer@uplift.org)
COVID-19 AND THE HOMELESS

As always, we want to ensure that our homeless neighbors are safe, supported and well cared for. Many of our homeless friends are particularly vulnerable because of their age, compromised immune systems, and lack of access to health care. As of Friday March 13th, there are currently ZERO known positive cases of COVID-19 in homeless persons in Kansas City.

We are concerned equally for our volunteers’ health as we are for the health of our homeless friends. In a conference call today, one health expert emphasized that the homeless are at a great risk of receiving the virus from our volunteers and called on us to take strong precautionary measures.

TEMPORARY RESTRICTIONS ON VOLUNTEERING WITH UPLIFT

We rely on volunteers for our operation and outreach and it has become necessary to take precautionary measures. As such, we have made the difficult decision to place certain limitations on volunteer opportunities (in our warehouse and out on our routes) for the next several weeks—at a minimum through April 15th—effective immediately.

The following will not be allowed to volunteer during this period:

- Anyone experiencing illness or fever over 100.5 degrees F within the past 36 hours
- Anyone between the ages of 60-70 with a chronic illness (especially heart, lung, or respiratory) or “immunocompromised” in any way.
- Anyone over the age of 70.
- Anyone who has recently travelled out of the country or to an area in the United States that has a high rate of COVID-19.

Anyone with these risk factors should contact your lead Uplift coordinator before volunteering.

If you are not feeling well, please stay home. This is especially true if you have a fever or if you have been exposed to anyone that has tested positive for, or has symptoms of, coronavirus (COVID-19). If you have a fever or have any difficulty in breathing, we are told the recommendation is to seek immediate medical care. A good test is to confirm that you can hold your breath for at least 10 – 15 seconds without coughing.

FEVER: Because fever is a primary symptom, every volunteer should take their own temperature before coming to Uplift. To support protection for volunteers and homeless, when you arrive at Uplift, we will have digital thermometers for you to take your temperature. If you are over 100.5 degrees, we will insist that you return home and not volunteer.

We will continue to rely on the support of Uplift’s recurring volunteers to allow us to care for our neighbors and provide them with the support they need during this time of uncertainty. If you are scheduled to volunteer with Uplift in the month ahead, we would hope to have you continue to volunteer, but only within these restrictions.
PREVENTATIVE MEASURES:

Effective **immediately**, we will be taking certain additional precautions. We are asking Route Leaders and Drivers to lead by example and ensure compliance to these measures. These include, but are not limited to:

- Anyone involved in food handling MUST wear disposable gloves at all times. Food handler’s hands should never touch one’s face, nose, eyes or mouth. If this does occur, gloves should be discarded and replaced immediately.
- Frequent hand washing at the warehouse and use of hand sanitizer. Minimize hand to face contact. Hand sanitizer will be made available on each of the trucks.
- Avoiding handshakes, hugs, or any other contact with another person (volunteer or homeless)
- Creating a zone of separation ("social distance") at our stops between our homeless friends and our trucks. We will require that the homeless not be within a 5-6 foot distance of our trucks and volunteers. We will also encourage the homeless to also have space and separation from each other as they wait in line.
- Additional cleaning measures for the trucks, kitchen, serving equipment, handrails, and other frequently touched items.

IN CLOSING:

Uplift is closely monitoring the coronavirus situation. We will continue to communicate with you as needed to provide updates and other relevant details that may impact our regular approach to serving the homeless. While we would rather not have to make such decisions that affect your opportunity to volunteer, we strongly believe this is the responsible path forward for the time being as we act out of an abundance of caution along with the rest of the local and global community.

We remain passionately committed to serving and protecting our homeless brothers and sisters, and we are grateful for your prayers, understanding and support as we all navigate this trying time together. We believe that a calm and vigilant approach will help all of us continue to serve our brothers and sisters on the streets.

Please feel free to reach out to Ross or Dan with any questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Dan Schipfer, President, Uplift Organization  schipfer@gmail.com / 816.885.3199
Ross Dessert, Coordinator of Route Operations  rossdessert@gmail.com / 785.551.0401
Keith Espelien, Chairman, Board of Directors  keithespelien@gmail.com / 913.433.4459

NOTE: This is an evolving situation and circumstances may change in the days and months ahead. As circumstances change, we will notify our community directly through email, our web page, and our social media accounts.
Is it coronavirus, or is it something else?

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<th>cold (gradual onset)</th>
<th>flu (sudden onset)</th>
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Source: CDC, WHO