

Junior Volunteers at Hutchison House

Every summer Hutchison House is lucky to have a group of 40 to 50 young volunteers help us with our Scottish Teas. These young people are members of our Junior Volunteer program. Junior Volunteers are children between the ages of 8 and 13 years old. They come to Hutchison House 4 or 5 times a summer to help us by serving Scottish Tea to visitors. Every spring forms are sent out to the junior volunteers who participated the year before as well as to any child who has reached the age of 8 and would like to participate in the program. Children who are new to the program are interviewed and then a training session is held at the beginning of the summer for all junior volunteers. At this training session they learn what is expected of them and how to serve the customers. They get a chance to practice by pretending to serve their peers during these practice sessions. They receive their schedules for the month of July at the training session.

When junior volunteers arrive at Hutchison House for their shift they are expected to set up tables for tea on the terrace or in the Keeping Room if it is raining. Once they are done and they get into costume and gather in the Harvey Connal Room to take part in activities provided by staff or they bring an activity of their own from home. Sometimes the children go outside for an activity like croquet. When visitors arrive the juniors take turns serving tables. If there are enough customers during the afternoon everyone will get at least one table to serve. Once the visitors at the table that they have served leave they are responsible for clearing it and resetting it. The children are often left tips by their customers. These tips are all put in a jar. The money collected from the tips is used to buy supplies to make the Christmas decorations for the Festival of Trees tree, the end of summer Junior Volunteer Party and a donation to charity on behalf of the Junior Volunteers. At the end of the afternoon the juniors clear and put away the tables, get out of costume and if there are leftovers they get to have a piece of scone for themselves.

Once junior volunteers reach the age of 13 they are given the opportunity to train to be an apprentice tour guide. Every year two or three of the tea servers that are old enough decide to become tour guides. They receive their own training session and are scheduled with experienced adult volunteers so that they can learn how to give a tour and greet visitors appropriately. They are encouraged by the experienced guides to give partial tours of the rooms they feel comfortable with until they are ready to give a whole tour by themselves. High school students may log their hours and use them for the mandatory community service requirements for 40 hours prior to graduation.

New for volunteers this year is the opportunity to be an apprentice gardener. Children will have the opportunity to work with members of the garden committee to learn about the Hutchison House Gardens and how to maintain them. Many of the gardening shifts will be in the morning. Children will learn how to prune, weed, and water while learning about the various flowers and herbs surrounding the house.

The junior volunteer program at Hutchison House provides children with a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, get valuable volunteer experience, gain confidence interacting with adults as well as speaking in public. If you have the opportunity to visit Hutchison House this summer and are given a tour or served tea by one of these enthusiastic young people be sure to thank them for a job well done!